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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS





The large kitchen garden, groaning with rows of beans, cabbages and catmint, was replanted by the current owners under the guidance of horticultural writer and designer Mary Keen. In one corner, its whitewashed walls merge with a loggia, which in turn adjoins the main house



## LUTYENS BROUGHT TO LIGHT

Previous owners of this Edwin Lutyens property buried its Arts and Crafts interiors under gloss paint and neo-Georgian fireplaces. Called in by the current incumbents, interior designer Veere Grenney stripped away these 'improving' layers, emphasised the extensive windows of the house and punctuated its restored simplicity with works by the likes of Le Corbusier and Grayson Perry. Annabel Freyberg uncovers the full story. Photography: Christopher Simon Sykes





Echoing the drawing-room leaded windows are lacquered-metal armchairs, c1954, by Colette Guéden. Nearby, a box sculpture by Donald Judd hangs above a bookcase by Jacques Adnet. Irregular-legged side tables by Pierre Chareau are topped with vases of flowers. Veere Grenney designed the ottoman, covered in Lelièvre velvet, as well as the fabric on the sofa and armchairs





Left, from top: in the hall, a Grayson Perry pot stands on a Lutyens-designed table bought at auction. Between 'Annabel' linen curtains by Veere Grenney, the door is a replica of the original; the house and loggia in a sea of flowering plants; the butler's pantry is fitted with Lutyens-style cupboards salvaged from elsewhere in the house. Main picture: above the Heal's dining table, bought at Blairman's, is a chandelier by Jean Royère. Smaller versions hang above an oak sideboard, c1940, by Charles Dudouyt from Gordon Watson. On the right is a large Anish Kapoor sculpture





Each of the eight bathrooms in the house is bedecked with antique fittings from The Water Monopoly – in this case the bath, radiator and bow-fronted double basin. The slatted white chairs are by Josef Hoffmann







**MANY PEOPLE DREAM** of restoring a house to splendour. The focus of this fantasy is usually a centuries-old ruin set in a romantic tangled garden à la *Sleeping Beauty*. The house featured here is at the centre of a glorious garden of many parts. More unusually, it is a masterpiece of the very early 20th century. When its current owners first came here it was suffering not so much from disrepair as bad disguise, its beauty hidden under neo-Jacobean panelling and neo-Georgian niches and fireplaces. Peeling back the additions of the 1970s, 1930s and beyond revealed an interior of startling modernity and simplicity – one well suited to contemporary family living. Thanks to some skilled re-creation, careful thought as to how the spaces would be used in the 21st century, and a mixture of period and sleek 20th-century Modern furniture, this Arts and Crafts house and its gardens now work, and look, better than at any time in their former incarnations.

Achieving this required dogged detective work. As the property's architect was the young Edwin Lutyens, the owners contacted Peter Inskip for help. A distinguished conservation architect – Castle Drogo, Osborne House, Waddesdon Manor and Strawberry Hill have all benefited from his work – Inskip is also the author of an architectural monograph on Lutyens. For matters horticultural – including replanting borders installed by Lutyens's frequent collaborator, Gertrude Jekyll – the garden writer and designer Mary Keen was enlisted. When it came to furnishing the house, the owners turned to Veere Grenney, an interior designer with a gift for finding contemporary pieces that look at home in historic settings, and for working with clients with art collections.

Although the Arts and Crafts style was highly fashionable at the turn of the 20th century, tastes had changed a few decades on, and successive owners decided to 'improve' the original features of the house. 'It was boxed up progressively from the 1930s onwards,' Inskip explains. 'People thought they'd smarten the interior up and mucked it around instead.' In the hall, cracked panelling allowed Inskip to look behind it, discovering wallpaper dating from c1910, and behind that 'pure-white distemper, which was original and ran up to the ceiling. These were very simple rooms.' Burrowing in archives he found early photographs to back this up, showing an all-white interior with no cornices and flush skirting. 'The house has a hierarchy,' Inskip explains. 'The drawing room is the only room to be enriched architecturally and to have a cornice. It also boasts a Mannerist chimney piece, whereas other fireplaces are simple brick ones – small in the bedrooms, larger downstairs.' With the help of these photographs Inskip rebuilt the long-gone brick fireplace in the dining room and the grander one in the drawing room that had been covered up, its protruding mouldings cut off.

He also stripped white gloss paint off numerous windowsills to reveal the original oak, which was then scrubbed as Lutyens intended. The result: 'A remarkable thing, whereby

From top: interwar oak panelling was removed from the hall, painted and installed in this guest-room in the 1930s wing of the house. William de Morgan tiles adorn the fireplace; Grenney designed the room's four-poster; the walls of the master bedroom were painted by Alistair Erskine in homage to Charleston. The coffee table is by Jean Prouvé. Opposite: one of the beds in a children's guest-room is Arts and Crafts, c1900, sourced by Martin Levy at Blairman's. The others are replicas by Hannerle Dehn







Clockwise from top left: Lutyens designed the gardeners' bothies in one corner of the kitchen garden. Beneath the three pitched roofs are two rooms – one a potting shed and store, the other a small sitting room; in the potting area, produce from the kitchen garden can be washed and displayed on the shelves, which were designed by Peter Inskip, for the cook to choose from; the bothies retain their original door, with Arts and Crafts handle





you are looking through trees at more trees.' Inskip talks rapturously of the great house designer's skill in treating the garden as an extension of his architecture. 'Lutyens always wanted to build huge houses,' he explains, 'and early on he did that by extending the house outwards with a series of walled gardens. This is one of the first places he did that.'

Grenney and his client responded to the plainness of the newly revealed rooms by deciding initially to furnish the house in a 'simple Lutyens way', with Arts and Crafts and early 18th-century furniture. 'However, as the project progressed we had the idea of filling it with mid-century French furniture – everyone from Jean Prouvé to Charlotte Perriand,' says Grenney. 'And throughout, the most important thing was comfort.'

The choice of furniture and furnishings is judicious and considered, the palette gentle and muted, with pleasingly textured wood and metal in both the detail of the architecture and individual pieces. Off-white walls and rush matting on scrubbed oak floors provide a unifying backdrop. But the harmony and calm thus achieved is not at the expense of variety. 'There is an extraordinary collection of different periods,' Grenney enthuses. 'It might seem rather strange to have a Donald Judd box wall sculpture above an Adnet bookcase, but it works visually. Sometimes it's a subversive mixture – a decorative pot could be Elizabethan until you get up close and see surprising things going on, because it's actually by Grayson Perry. There's a whimsy to it.'

The architecture itself could present furnishing problems. Inskip praises 'the wonderful way the windows wrap round the corners of rooms so you get very good views'. But the emphasis on light and looking out made it hard for Grenney to find curtains that didn't detract from the windows, while covering them when needed. For the drawing room, he came up with his own floor-to-ceiling grey linen, pleated sculpturally and hung outside the main window frame. The edges of these curtains are hand-embroidered with a browny-red motif evoking Charleston, the Bloomsbury-decorated house in Sussex.

The whole project took three years. As well as furnishing and uncovering the original architecture, major work was undertaken to reorder and extend the 1930s 'back of house' additions, including a new kitchen and boot and laundry rooms. This was done in true Lutyens vernacular; a striking feature are the internal windows that punctuate interior walls.

Meanwhile, the garden was replanted. Of particular delight is the whitewash-walled vegetable garden, with rows of beans, cabbages and hot-hued lavender. Best of all are the Lutyens-designed gardeners' bothies, with three neat pitched roofs and original doors. They form a little kingdom on their own: in one you can make a cup of tea; the other is a pretty potting shed, decked with racks, trugs and wickerware in which to display produce. In other words, the best garden sheds ever ■  
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From top: internal windows overlook the foot of the stairs; a downstairs passage leads past a bathroom to the entrance, where a jacket hangs on a Le Corbusier rack; at the end of the bedroom corridor is a ladder-back chair by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, c1903, from the Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow. A hand-blocked 'La Pensée' Mauny design lines the walls. Opposite: due to the fact that the staircase has an oak veneer rather than being solid wood as Lutyens preferred, Inskip thinks it may not be original

