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TEXT DAVID NICHOLLS | PHOTOGRAPHS SIMON UPTON

SHORE ENOUGH

Though on the Norfolk coast, this handsome Regency house wears its beach credentials lightly, thanks to designer Veere Grenney, whose masterful mix of practical and decorative elements has created an elegant, liveable interior

EXTERIOR The Grade II-listed brick-and-flint house is set within beautiful **gardens** designed by Xa Tollemache.

ENTRANCE HALL **Walls** in Paint & Paper Library's 'Ziggardy' archive design in a custom colourway set off the warmer tones of the **door curtain** in fabrics from Sandra Jordan's Prima Alpaca collection, sourced from Holland & Sherry, and the brass 'Florin' **wall light** from Jamb. The internal door offers an inviting glimpse of the study



‘I think six to eight people is the maximum number that can sit together to chat,’ explains Veere



DRAWING ROOM (*both pages*) The ‘Montauk’ hemp **wallcovering** from Cowtan & Tout provides the backdrop for a **sofa** covered in copper velvet from Rogers & Goffigon and a mix of vintage and custom **armchairs** in MM Design and George Spencer Designs fabrics arranged on a ‘Crosshatch’ **rug** from Carini. An **ottoman** in Namay Samay’s ‘Lerio’, blue **cushions** in its ‘Zeimoto’ and a pair of antique blue glass **lamps** from James McWhirter add subtle pattern and colour. The bespoke **banquette** in Guy Goodfellow Collection’s ‘Olive Sacking’ in cocoa is teamed with a 19th-century Hoshiarpur **side table** with bone inlay from Westenholz Antiques and a vintage **spoon-back chair** designed by Michael Taylor for Baker Furniture





From the beginning, the owners were very clear that they wanted to use the house all year round,’ explains interior designer Veere Grenney. The couple, who have five children and a large extended family, had just bought the handsome Grade II-listed Regency house in a pretty Norfolk village on the coast and asked Veere to help make it better suited to their needs. He was the obvious choice, having decorated their main

house, also in East Anglia (featured in the June 2017 issue of *House & Garden*). Such familiarity is a boon for any designer taking on a project; Veere knew their tastes and how they lived.

‘The house hadn’t had much done to it for probably 100 years, so it was a major building project,’ he says. And the property would have to work hard: the summer months would mean sand and ice cream and garden doors flung open to the salty sea air but, for a substantial part of the year, the elements contrive to necessitate fireplaces and cosy nooks. The owners are also consummate entertainers and so, on wet weekends or winter’s days, with the eight-bedroom house at capacity, there would need to be enough living spaces to accommodate everyone.

Much of the original two-storey house faces the sea, with early-20th-century additions at the rear giving the building a bit of extra heft. These parts include a self-contained flat for guests, as well as a large kitchen and dining area. The latter is a handsome and fairly utilitarian open-plan space, where natural woods mix with painted joinery and complementary stone.

On a console table in the dining area, there is a piece of coral and a shell-inspired ceramic, but these are the only real concessions to ‘beach house’ style. As Natasha Greig, creative director of Veere Grenney Associates who has worked with Veere for over 20 years, explains, they included subtle nods to the seaside. The walls of the drawing room are lined in hemp, which has a somewhat beachy feel, and there are stripes on the banquette (‘but not nautical stripes’, she insists) and lots of bamboo furniture. ‘Generally, it’s Regency bamboo,’ says Veere, implying the priority was to furnish the house in a way appropriate to its architecture rather than its location. ‘The most important thing was the owners wanted a relaxed country house feeling, and the impression that nothing is precious,’ he adds.

The interiors are elegant, but Veere is right, it is not a precious space. It feels and looks incredibly comfortable and is so well thought out. The drawing room, for example, is fairly large and has been expertly carved up into smaller areas, so it can be used by different groups at the same time. ‘I think six to eight people is the maximum that can sit together to chat,’ explains Veere. ‘If you have more, you end up firing shots across everybody in the conversation and it’s awful.’ Around the fire is a seating area large enough for eight and, behind this, a card table, which can accommodate four. There is also a cosy banquette where another four could very easily gather. ‘It’s perfect for a wet afternoon when everyone is inside,’ he says.

DINING AREA **Panelling** in Paint & Paper Library’s ‘Steel V’, **curtains** in Carolina Irving’s indigo ‘Patmos’ linen and Howe ‘Klint’ **chairs** on a Sinclair Till **rug** create a spectrum of blues evocative of the sea. The hornbeam **table** was custom made by Christopher Bell. **KITCHEN** **Units** in rich ‘Squid Ink’ by Paint & Paper Library are complemented by dark Vals stone **worktops**. **HALL** The bespoke Luke Irwin **rug** tones with the Moore & Giles ‘Kipling’ leather on the ‘Clarence’ **sofa** from Max Rollitt



Speaking with Veere about interior design is an opportunity to learn from one of the great masters in the industry. In a career that initially saw him training under Mary Fox Linton in the Seventies, before becoming a director at Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler and then setting up his own studio in 1996, he has done it all and influenced countless other designers. As such, even his off-the-cuff remarks can seem like words of wisdom that should be acted upon immediately. I mention how much I admire the first-floor corridor in this house, which is not to discredit the main rooms – it is just that it is completely wonderful. ‘We always make sure our corridors are as interesting as any other room,’ says Veere. ‘Connecting spaces are absolutely vital.’

This one snakes its way past the staircase from one end of the house to the other and has new floorboards, painted white and stencilled with a red chequerboard outline. It conjures up a mood somewhere between Scandinavia and the Hamptons. The wallpaper is patterned and there are patterned curtains at what has become an internal window, overlooking the kitchen-dining room in the extension below. As Natasha says, ‘When you get up in the morning and walk out of your bedroom and there’s a lovely painting right in front of you and pretty wallpaper and a chair, it makes you so happy doesn’t it? You should put the things you love where you see them the most.’

There is a completely different feel at the other end of the corridor, which is more back-of-house, with a spare room and a children’s bedroom. The walls here have been covered in new bead-and-butt panelling with a huge linen cupboard designed by Veere. ‘People always forget linen cupboards,’ he says. ‘There are eight bedrooms in this house and if you’re going to use it every weekend, filling it with friends and children, guess what? The linen cupboards have to be enormous.’

If it is possible for a designer who has worked on projects as varied as a villa in Mustique, a ranch in Wyoming and a flat in London, to have a signature, Veere’s would be his inimitable way with windows: big ones, small ones, awkward ones; windows in rooms with high ceilings; windows in rooms with low ceilings. What is so distinct in his approach is not so much the curtains themselves, but his take on pelmets. ‘A good couturier will make a hat that works with the dress and is in proportion to the dress. And a pelmet is not dissimilar,’ he says. His studio has dozens of different styles – some curvy, some geometric, others straight. The proportions are largely decided by eye, depending on the size of the window and scale of the room.

‘When I worked for Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler, we tended to use a loose pelmet that fitted in with the John Fowler mould. But I came more from the David Hicks stable – I love something that is far more tailored.’ Where fabric-covered hard pelmets are used in this house, they are the finishing touches of a sophisticated space. Many clients are initially resistant to something as fusty-sounding as a pelmet. But, as Natasha says, ‘They are really another architectural detail of a room.’ And it is this kind of thinking that has, for so long now, made Veere’s projects so very special. And a constant source of inspiration for so many designers around the world □

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Veere Grenney Associates: veeregrenney.com



CORRIDOR Curtains in Veere’s ‘Tabitha’ linen for Schumacher frame the internal window. **BEDROOMS** Each has a strong colour scheme, with **beds** in marine ‘Rafe Stripe’ by Veere for Schumacher and ‘Malmaison Rayure’ in cedrat from Pierre Frey, and **curtains** in scarlet ‘Lin Glacé’ from Rubelli. **BATHROOMS** Jamb’s ‘Carter’ **lights** flank a Queen Anne Revival mirror in the traditional cloakroom. The custom stencilled floor picks up on the **door curtain** in Chelsea Textiles’ ‘Raindrops’ in indigo