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ROOM BY ROOM

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a modern  
Hamptons look*

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AUGUST 2020

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HOME BEAUTIFUL



# HOMES

THE STORIES, STYLE AND LOVE THAT MAKE A HOME BEAUTIFUL



HIGH HOPES *page 50*



# HIGH HOPES

A COUPLE'S COMMITMENT TO A DREAM – AND THEIR DEDICATION TO DETAIL – TURNED AN AWKWARD SYDNEY COTTAGE INTO A SPACIOUS, GRACIOUS FAMILY HOME

Story *LYNNE TESTONI* Styling *FIONA GOULD* Photography *CHRIS WARNES*

**SUNSHINE DAYS** Light, bright and lovely, this north Sydney abode that homeowners Kristie and John share with their four children Isabella, 14, Lachlan, 12, Olivia, nine, and Hamish, seven, captures a modern Australian take on classic Hamptons style. Positioned on the top floor, the open-plan living room is a magnet for the whole family and takes full advantage of the breathtaking views. The top floor boasts beautiful cathedral ceilings, a detail the homeowners love. "It's things like that that make our house our home," says Kristie. A dark timber floor – for similar try the Brown Black from Royal Oak Floors' Architect Collection – was installed throughout to make the area one cohesive space. A navy Canvas and Sasson sofa provides a counterpoint to the crisp, white cabinetry, painted in Dulux Lexicon Quarter – which is the same white that's used throughout the house. >







A decade ago, when homeowners Kristie and John bought their tiny cottage overlooking the bay in a covetable pocket of Sydney's north, it was a classic case of the worst house in the best street. Back then, they had one small child – three more followed – and one big dream for what their family home could become.

An awkward floor plan, a block with limited access and no redeeming architectural elements highlighted the need for an overhaul, but that turned out to be a huge challenge. One architect designed their perfect house at three times their budget ("He broke my heart," recalls Kristie); another advised them to knock it down; a third suggested selling up. Undeterred, she started researching her perfect home – mood boarding, planning and buying special pieces. Her heart was set on a Hamptons look (she has every copy of *Home Beautiful's* Hamptons special issues) and she wanted to get every detail right.

Eventually, the couple found their perfect match in builders Cape Cod Australia and their designer Barbara Szymanski, who came up with practical solutions to create their dream home without knocking down the original. "The foundations were amazing," explains the owner. "In the 10 years that we lived here we didn't even get a crack in it. We knew that they were really solid double-brick walls." The family rented a house down the street

and monitored the build over the 12 months it took to complete. Key changes included the existing top floor, which was extended and reworked to include an open-plan kitchen and living area, along with a master suite and a second bedroom. The ground floor contains three more bedrooms for the children, along with a laundry and main bathroom. "I was there constantly," says Kristie. "I just quite liked going and thanking everybody. I think having a positive attitude is contagious." Her presence ensured a smooth build and kept things organised. "Most things were chosen a good six to 12 months in advance," she recalls. "I didn't leave it to chance."

The couple sourced most of the pieces for the new house, from the front door (custom-made by a company in the NSW Southern Highlands), to furniture, taps and tiles. "The reality is that we worked every weekend for a year," recalls John. "We would get stuff delivered on Friday and we would haul it up ourselves on Saturday and Sunday so that it was ready for the builders on Monday."

Their dedication paid off – the build was finished on budget and the family moved in earlier than expected. And it didn't take long for them to savour the sunny results. "We only lived here for about three or four days before John had an overseas trip and I was here with the kids," recalls Kristie. "I kept waking up and walking into our beautiful living area with the sunshine and I just couldn't believe it was our house. There are so many mornings like that."

**FOYER** For Kristie, the success of her home comes down to the finer things, including Hamptons-esque wainscoting that welcomes guests at the entrance to the home. "The thing about my personality is that I'm very determined and I'm a finisher," she says. "Details really are the finishing touches." Black accents, care of a simple side table, form a chic contrast to the mainly white canvas, which is seen on the walls and the open shelving of the butler's pantry, above. For a similar collection of white wares, try Maxwell & Williams.

**KITCHEN** The kitchen was a long time in the making. Kristie (taking a break in the space with daughter Isabella) bought the light fittings – 'Darlana' linear lanterns from Circa Lighting in New York – and stored them for almost a year before they were installed. The soft blue in the island bench (which is mirrored in the ensuite bathroom vanity, see page 56) is Dulux Elusive Blue, aptly named because it took the owner a long time to settle on. "I saw an image on Pinterest a couple of years ago and it was of a shopfront with stunning black and white awnings, and a really pale blue colour on the brick," she says. "I took an image of it and it became my colour palette for almost the whole house." >





**WE LOVE...**  
*a finer detail*

The wainscoting was a last-minute decision and Kristie spent six months hand-painting it in Dulux Lexicon quarter throughout the house. "The guys who did the timber carpentry work did an awesome job of it," says John. "But then the painters were going to cost some ridiculous amount in paint, so Kristie did it instead." She adds, "It really was a labour of love." Visit [dulux.com.au](http://dulux.com.au).

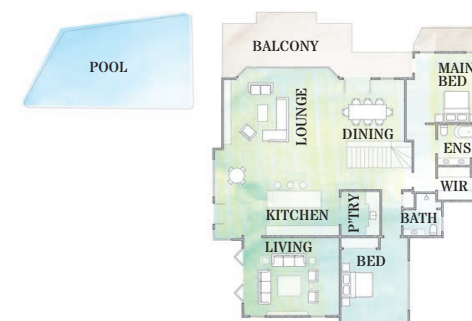


"ALL THESE SPACES SORT OF EVOLVED IN A SENSE – WE DIDN'T REALISE HOW *lovely* IT WAS GOING TO BE" ~ KRISTIE

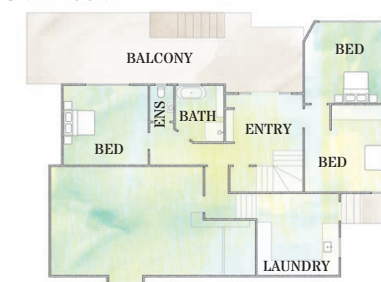


**FLOOR PLAN**

**FIRST FLOOR**



**GROUND FLOOR**



**DINING ROOM**—The family spends most of its time on the top floor, which features a combined living and dining area (opposite) plus kitchen. Kristie and John made a last-minute decision to include a cathedral ceiling here, which helps make the space even more grand and light-filled. A 'Newport' round table and 'Chippendale' dining chairs in White, from Abide Interiors, was the sociable choice for the family of six, and a white pendant light from Emac & Lawton makes a statement. The classic 'Louvre' sideboard in Black from Canvas and Sasson (above left), provides a contrast to the white dining chairs and an opportunity to display favourite finds, while the stunning artworks (opposite & above left) that evoke a boho sensibility are from Coral Coast Living (@coralcoastliving).

**CASUAL LOUNGE** This welcoming retreat (above right) is tucked away behind the main entertaining space on the top floor. "I call it the TV room because I didn't want a TV in the main area of the home," says Kristie. "It's another room where we have the beautiful raked cathedral ceilings and it's cosy, but feels really luxurious." The family often gathers here on the leather sofa from Alliance Furniture Trading and chic white stools for down time. "We're a really busy family, everyone's got all their activities, but sometimes, like on a Sunday afternoon, we'll do something really daggy such as watch a David Attenborough doco, or a movie with popcorn, if it's raining." >

ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDSIGN.COM ARTWORK (TOP RIGHT) CASBRAH DESIGN





“I OFTEN JUST LEAVE THINGS FOR HALF AN HOUR AND *sneak* into MY ROOM JUST TO RECHARGE MY BATTERIES” ~ KRISTIE



**ENSUITE** The vanity in Kristie and John’s bathroom was custom made and painted in the same soft blue as the kitchen island (Dulux’s Elusive Blue), with traditional Brodware tapware and sinks which were sourced from Just Bathroomware. The sconce lights from Emac & Lawton are a chic addition, while the classic bath by Victoria & Albert (right) makes a masterful suite statement, with tapware from Brodware to match the elegance of the bath’s shape. The look is completed with the Carrara marble tiles from Tiles4Less, which have been laid in an of-the-moment herringbone pattern.

**MAIN BEDROOM** A spectacular chandelier from Alfresco Emporium takes centre stage in the couple’s luxurious space. “I love my bedroom just because it’s a beautiful sanctuary and I’ve got four kids to escape from!” says Kristie with a laugh. “It’s got this beautiful outlook and it’s just a lovely light and bright room.” She sourced the divine bedhead from Mayvn Interiors and paired it with a mirror from Freedom and bedside tables from Coral Coast Living, while the charming ottoman (Xavier Furniture has some elegant Hamptons-inspired options) is positioned for a perfect view. The couple decided on what John calls an “upside-down” floor plan for their home, with the living spaces and main bedroom on the top floor to take advantage of the spectacular view. “We wanted to make the best of that – although we stole some of the space for our room, the parent’s retreat,” he explains. >







"I TOOK THE PROJECT  
ON LIKE A JOB  
AND I WOULD GO  
OUT AND VISIT  
SHOWROOMS *every  
single day*" ~ KRISTIE



**HAMISH'S BEDROOM** The navy-blue paint colour in Hamish's room (opposite & top left) was hard to choose. "We went through nine million paint samples," says Kristie with a laugh. "I kept driving around to every possible paint supplier in Sydney, and John kept saying, 'No that's not the one, too purple, too dark'. So we came up with Sydney Harbour by Porter's Paints, which we just loved. The fact that it's called Sydney Harbour meant we were sold." Sweet beds from Adairs are matched with linen made from The Boathouse at Palm Beach tablecloths as a nod to the 12-year-old's nautical themed room. The print is from One World Collection while the vintage-look model ship was found at Coral Coast Living.

**OLIVIA'S BEDROOM** Nine-year-old Olivia has a dream bedroom, painted in Fairy Pink by Dulux and featuring a beautiful vintage desk, which was found at an antiques store in Bowral. Added personal layers come care of a Winnie-the-Pooh print (at rear) that belonged to Kristie as a child, a mouse artwork (artist unknown) that originally belonged to Lachlan and a chair that was bought when Isabella was born, 14 years ago.

**POWDER ROOM** The petite powder room (left), just off the main living space is decorated with understated style, using the same tiles as the main ensuite. Kristie sourced the freestanding 'Canterbury' basin from Just Bathroomware while the silver-framed mirror is from Cafe Lighting & Living. >



**OUTDOOR DINING** The front porch was reworked into a casual poolside dining area and is now John's gin-and-tonic spot, says Kristie, pictured with Hamish and John (and Lilli, the miniature labradoodle). She sourced all the exterior lights from Pottery Barn in the US, including this pendant and had them shipped over. The coffee table from Alfresco Emporium doubles as a storage basket. "It's great for storing outdoor cushions and the kids' goggles and pool paraphernalia," she says. The classic sofa and armchairs from Decor Etc (bought through Coral Coast Living) are an elegant match to the furniture choices inside.



*This luxurious laundry takes its colour cues from the kitchen and has a fabulously inventive accessory: a ladder from Provincial Home Living that doubles as a drying rack.*



**FLOORING**  
For similar, try Royal Oak Floors' Architect Collection.



**PAINT** Sydney Harbour by Porter's Paints.

**INSIDE STORY**  
**KRISTIE & JOHN'S HOME**

**WHO LIVES HERE?**  
Kristie, a homewares buyer; her husband John, a technology consultant; their children, Isabella, 14, Lachlan, 12, Olivia, nine, and Hamish, seven; Lilli, a miniature labradoodle, Cloud the rabbit and Ruby the guinea pig.

**THE PLUS OF LIVING IN THE HOUSE BEFORE RENOVATING?**  
John: "Living there helped us understand how the sun moves in winter and we've now got four of our five bedrooms that get sun in the morning and everyone wakes up feeling good with a bit of vitamin D."  
**ANYTHING YOU'D DO DIFFERENTLY WITH THE RENOVATION?**  
Kristie: "In retrospect, the only regret is not putting underfloor heating in the downstairs laundry. We did that in both bathrooms upstairs that were brand new and it's fantastic."  
**FAVOURITE SPOT FOR ENTERTAINING?** "When we have friends over, we'll go from the upstairs balcony to the downstairs balcony and the pool level is in between so we can see the children swimming."

**SOURCE BOOK**  
**BUILDING & DESIGNER** Cape Cod Australia, [capecod.com.au](http://capecod.com.au).  
**COLOUR CONSULTANT** Ann King, [annking.com.au](http://annking.com.au).



CABINETRY COLOUR Elusive Blue by Dulux.

**"THE DOWNSTAIRS LOUNGE AREA IS A REALLY LOVELY COSY SPOT" ~ KRISTIE**



An eight-burner cooker ensures cooking with ease when feeding a family of six.



The outdoor dining space on the upper level captures the afternoon light when entertaining.



The renovated pool features travertine tiles and glass mosaics from Amber Tiles.

ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION