



The kitchen table and chairs were handmade for Alice's parents in the Nineties and sit below a Pooky Aphrodite pendant in rattan. The bespoke kitchen was crafted by Guild Anderson with concrete work surfaces by Fluid Stone Studio and handles by Buster & Punch.

# *Cornish* HEIRLOOM

Designer Alice Gates has given the Cornish home that has been in her family for nearly a century a new lease of life with an abundance of colour and pattern

FEATURE KATE FREUD  
PHOTOGRAPHY RACHAEL SMITH EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY BEN PHILLIPS



ABOVE In the kitchen seating area, an antique button-back armchair in Lattice Cane sits opposite another antique chair in Scallop Shell, both fabrics by Barneby Gates. The shelf is painted in Farrow & Ball's Radicchio gloss and the wall light is from Original BTC.

There is something uniquely special about a house that has remained in the same family for decades. This is certainly the case with the Cornish home of Alice Gates – one half of the wallpaper and fabric studio Barneby Gates – which was bought by her grandparents in the early 1930s and remains firmly at the heart of family life nearly a hundred years on. With each new generation, has come another layer of history, traditions and memories made, richly steeping the house with special character.

Looking for a quieter life, Alice's grandparents purchased the house – Marratons – for just £1,000.

According to the deeds of the sale, along with the house, the price included a drinks trolley and some garden tools which the family still own. It is located in the village of Morwenstow, found in the northernmost part of Cornwall near the Devon border, which remains as tranquil and beautiful a place as it was all those years ago.

Alice's mother and her mother's two brothers were raised in the house, and subsequently, when Alice was a child, she spent every school holiday there. In the early 1980s, when her grandparents died, Alice's mother took ownership, and when she then sadly died three years ago, Alice herself took over the

*'When my grandparents owned the house, amusingly, the largest room downstairs, now the kitchen, was devoted to my grandfather's model railway and drinks cabinet'*

house and continues to retreat there at every opportunity from her term-time home in Wiltshire, close to where the Barneby Gates studio is. She and her husband, Harry, a barrister, love visiting Cornwall with their three children, Cecily, 15, Walter, 13 and Nell, 11, as well as, of course, the family's pair of working cocker spaniels, Roxy and Marvin.

The house is what Alice would describe as a traditional Cornish Victorian house, complete with white-painted exterior walls and bright blue window frames. The west side of the building originally started life as a small farmhouse built in the 18th century, with later additions made at the beginning of the 19th century, when the rest of the house was built. ▶

ABOVE Alice on the antique sofa re-covered in Georgie fabric from Sofas & Stuff by Rose Unwin. Marratons is available for holiday rentals at [marratons.co.uk](http://marratons.co.uk)



*‘Cornwall is such a special place for me, and I love that my children have now inherited my love of this place’*

**ABOVE** The windows have been painted in Farrow & Ball’s St Giles Blue which together with the white walls gives the house a classic Cornish feel.

**LEFT** The view through to the entrance hall and kitchen from the sitting room. The flooring throughout the ground floor is Langore Gherome from Gateway Tile & Slate in Launceston. One of the family’s working cocker spaniels looks on.

Sitting within a five-acre plot, Marratons is accessed down a long drive through mature woodland, giving it a very private feel despite its close proximity to some of the most beautiful beaches in North Cornwall, a few of which have remained undiscovered by tourists.

These days, Alice’s father lives down the road with 60 beef cattle – he took up farming at the age of 82 – in a cottage he has been renovating for the past 10 years. This can-do approach is clearly one inherited by his daughter, who took on the extensive refurbishment of Marratons in September 2021, moving back in by July 2022, with the house finally completed by Christmas that year.

Aside from rewiring and adding new plumbing, as well as the addition of a wood-clad office at the back, the rest of the project largely involved reconfiguring the interiors. “When my grandparents owned the house, amusingly, the largest room downstairs was devoted to my grandfather’s model railway and drinks cabinet,” Alice laughs. “But in the early Eighties, when my parents took over the house, ▶



The comfortable and cosy paneled sitting room is painted in Farrow & Ball’s striking Emerald Green. The curtains are in Las Salinas, the chairs are made up in Iznik Red, and the cushions are in Pacos Red, all fabrics from Andrew Martin.



*Alice has retained the same feel the house has always had, but she has added her trademark colour and print to striking effect*

ABOVE The tongue-and-groove panelling in the bathroom has been painted in the bold shade of Blazer, from Farrow & Ball. The wallpaper is Lattice Cane in Light Olive/Red by Barneby Gates.

they transformed the room into a large kitchen and sitting room area, which was where we spent most of our time.”  
With this in mind, Alice and Harry decided to keep the large open-plan kitchen and seating area as it was for their own family, with a fireplace at one end for cooler Cornish days. This room remains an inviting space at the heart of the home, with the bespoke kitchen by Guild Anderson, painted in Little Greene’s Royal Navy, tucked around the corner from the comfortably furnished dining and seating areas.

When it came to the interiors, the couple both had pieces of furniture inherited from their parents and grandparents and these proved the starting point for

decorating each room. Though confident in her choices, Alice also asked her oldest friend and business partner Vanessa Barneby – the other half of Barneby Gates – for input to ensure all aspects of the interiors were covered. It goes without saying, that the house is now a fabulous showcase for the duo’s designs, with their wallpaper and fabrics looming large in most of the rooms.

Alice’s love of colour is writ large throughout the interiors, with deep blues, bright greens and fiery reds playing a part in most rooms. Exceptions to this are the extensive, light-filled hallway, with walls covered in Barneby Gates’ Diamond Trellis wallpaper with a cream background and woodwork painted in Farrow & Ball Slipper Satin, and the open-plan ▶



The beautiful kantha throw in the ‘Ikat Bedroom’ is from Birdie Fortescue. It contrasts with The Cloth Shop’s Southern Stripe on the headboards and the Ikat Heart wallpaper by Barneby Gates. The New England Carpet in Westville is from Unnatural Flooring.



*With each new generation, has come another layer of history, traditions and memories made, steeping the house with special character*

**ABOVE** In the 'Stripe Bedroom', the striking blue bedspread is the St David's Cross design from Melin Tregwynt. The lights are by Original BTC.

kitchen walls painted in Edward Bulmer Natural Paint's soft Lilac Pink. The neutral-hued hallway leads through to a space that packs a punch – the wood-panelled cosy sitting room painted in Farrow & Ball's eye-catching Emerald Green. This is offset with furniture and furnishings in rich red hues, including a striking Moroccan rug from Tate & Darby anchoring the space.

Upstairs the house boasts five welcoming bedrooms, each with an en-suite bathroom, providing ample space and comfort for family and friends. Each bedroom has a theme, including 'Ikat' and 'Stripe',

a nod to the Barneby Gates wallpaper designs adorning the walls.

Such care and attention has been given to each and every room in the house, and Alice is delighted with the results. She has managed to retain the same feel it has always had, but she has added her trademark colour and print to striking effect. "Cornwall is such a special place for me, and I love that my children have now inherited my love of this place, but also this home, which has always been such an integral part of my life," Alice explains. "I hope it will go on to be as precious a place for generations to come." ■