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The kitchen was completely renovated when the family moved in. Four 1960s Eames chairs now provide a colourful focal point against the fresh, white scheme. 'The oak table was bought from an antiques shop in Bath. It was meant to be one of the first pieces of stock for my own shop,' laughs Ben.



Drawn to the sea

So impressed were Ben and Anna Southgate by the coastal town of Hastings when they visited in 2000, they vowed one day to live there. They eventually made the move seven years ago and haven't looked back since...

FEATURE JULIE HAILEY PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLINE ARBER



This page, clockwise from top left: Elegant double doors lead into the kitchen; Ben and Anna pottering in their courtyard garden; a collection of Victorian poison bottles makes an unlikely eye-catching display; the couple's children, Ellen and Thomas love living by the sea; summer fruits add a seasonal touch. Facing page: The couple had the kitchen custom made. The French lights are a regular feature in Ben's shop, B Southgate.

It was only going to be a matter of time before Ben and Anna Southgate gave into their love of the seaside and moved to the coast. As students the couple spent most weekends visiting Britain's coastal towns – from Scarborough to St Ives. 'It was something of an addiction,' laughs Anna. 'We've both always been drawn to the sea and there's just something about the faded grandeur of these places.' During 2004, when the couple were living in London they finally decided to bite the bullet. 'We'd visited Hastings during one of our jaunts and it quickly





The couple bought the 1960s rug in the living room from Start Gallery in Columbia Road near Ben's shop and had it professionally cleaned

‘We've both always been drawn to the sea. There's just something about the faded grandeur of British coastal towns’



Among Anna and Ben's favourite pieces are the four 1930s cantilevered chairs in the living room, which the couple bought from a dealer in Holland



A CLOSER LOOK: VINTAGE LIGHTING

'We have quite a collection of vintage lights, from art deco uplighters and an old barge lamp to a light in the shape of a lighthouse,' says Anna. 'When we rewired the house, we put in a circuit that allowed us to have these controlled by one dimmable switch in each room. It means we can adjust the mood with the touch of a button.' As you'd expect, Ben comes across plenty of lights when sourcing pieces for his shop but Fritz Fryer in Herefordshire (01989 567416; fritzfryer.co.uk) and The Old Cinema in Chiswick (020 8995 4166; theoldcinema.co.uk) are also worth a browse.

Before plugging in a vintage light make sure that it has been checked by a professional electrician.

became our favourite place by the sea. We loved the juxtaposition of historic fishing town with an early Victorian seaside resort. There's great access to stunning clifftop walks, too.'

A fresh start

After moving into this 1830s whitewashed townhouse Ben and Anna set straight to work transforming it into a light-filled family home for them and their two children Ellen, now nine and Thomas, now four, where every corner boasts a curious object such as a Victorian rocking horse or collection of green poison bottles. It's]



Facing page, from top Ben and Anna spent years admiring the poster in the living room. Similar can be bought from Dodo Posters in London's Alfies Antique Market; storage in the dining room is provided by a 1960s Stagg sideboard, metal cabinet and 20th-century office drawers This page Inspired by the floors of the American Museum near Bath, the couple painted their bedroom floor purple. Anna's mum made the beautiful quilt.





GET THE LOOK



- 1 Metal factory cabinet, £1,295, Idyll Home. 01630 695779; idyllhome.co.uk 2 French ceiling lamp, £95, Lassco. 020 7394 2100; lassco.co.uk 3 Patchwork quilt, £130, A Space. 0845 872 2400; aspace.co.uk 4 Eames plastic chair, £445, Heal's. 08700 240780; heals.co.uk 5 Vintage green bottle, £12.50, Bottle Green Homes. 020 7684 1987; bottlegreenhomes.co.uk 6 Hang it All Eames coat rack, £182, Twenty Twenty One. 020 7837 1900; twentytwentyone.com 7 Teak sideboard, £649, Danish Homestore. 0115 948 4428; danish-homestore.com



an eclectic selection, which hints towards Ben's background and to his current profession. Having spent a decade working in furniture restoration he now works as an antiques dealer and owns 'B Southgate' in London's Columbia Road, which specialises in English and European furniture from the late 19th century to the 1950s. Anna and I both grew up with antiques in our homes so have always been interested in furniture and design,' he says. 'I studied architecture at university and architects are famously obsessed with chairs. I'm no exception.'

Designs for life

To ensure that the furniture does the talking, Anna and Ben removed the carpets in every room to reveal floorboards – which were sanded and painted – and painted the walls white. The kitchen required extra TLC. 'It was just a jumble of freestanding units,' says Anna. 'We installed fitted units and integrated appliances for a

uniform look and fitted a mirror above the sinks.' Now the room perfectly showcases the family's antique breakfast table – bought for Ben's shop though he could never bear to part with it – and four 1960s Eames fibreglass shell chairs. Indeed the house reads as a who's who of mid-century design: in the dining room a Poul Henningsen table lamp sits upon a teak Stagg sideboard while in Ellen's bedroom accessories hang from an Eames 'Zig Zag' coat rack.

The couple's favourite room though, is the grand living room with its generous proportions and original fireplace. 'This room sold the house to us,' says Anna. 'The enormous bay window makes you feel as though you're very high up and gives breathtaking views over Hastings, out to sea and to Beachy Head. It's a great place to watch the weather, dramatic sunsets and fireworks. We viewed the house in the early evening and the sunset was amazing – we were hooked.'

B Southgate, 07905 960792; bsouthgate.co.uk

Facing page, from top The Michelin man on Ellen's shelves is a family favourite. 'We always ask the children to spot the Michelin man on long drives while camping in France. We were thrilled to find this colourful version,' says Anna; Ellen's desk dates from the 1940s or 1950s and, due to its small size, would have been designed for a child or clerk. This page, clockwise from top left Shells are displayed in the bathroom; a simple but effective display; the Glazo nail polish advert in the bathroom dates from the early 20th century and was bought from Ardingly International Antiques & Collectors Fair; simple black and white metro tiles and decorative wooden boats create a vintage, nautical feel.