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ROSY OUTLOOK

- A GLORIOUS GARDEN
 IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE
- FLOWER FARMING IN CONSTABLE COUNTRY
- A FLORIST'S GLASS-WALLED LONDON HOME

RECIPES FOR SUMMER SUMMER ENTERTAINING - PRETTY, SIMPLE AND DELICIOUS







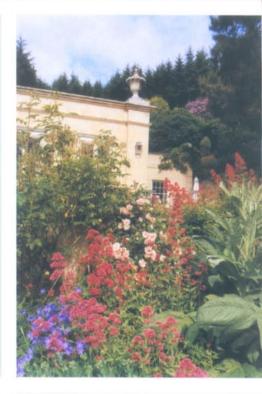




BOMBE SURPRISE

BELYING THE MELLOW
COLOUR OF ITS
STONE EXTERIOR, THE
INTERIOR OF THIS
DOMED COURTYARD
HOUSE HAS BEEN
DECORATED IN STRONG
AND DISTINCTIVELY
MODERN COLOURS

TEXT ROS BYAM SHAM PHOTOGRAPHS RORY CARNEGIE







'Thope you enjoy our paradise,' says the message from Anne, Lady Field. 'We won't be there, but our gardener, Arthur Hassler, will show you round. We call him Saint Arthur.'

Sir Malcolm and Lady Field's patch of heaven is at the very edge of the two-hours-by-train circle that Londoners draw around their town address when house-hunting for a weekend retreat. Pulled west by his love of Cornwall, Malcolm concentrated on the section of the circle that sliced through Devon. Having been ruthlessly gazumped once, he asked to see any properties in the area that his estate agent thought might come on the market in the near future. 'This was one of the first he suggested I should visit. There was a magical moment as I turned a corner in the drive and saw the church, with the sea in the distance, and thought "this is really rather good".'

Malcolm's description may be more understated than that of his wife but, as a first-time visitor, you find yourself agreeing with both. The approach to the house branches off a country road down a long drive, past sloping fields and wonderful views. At the dumpy thirteenth-century church, you climb up the hill, curving through landscaped grounds dotted with towering cedars, and more recently planted larches, rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias. There are no pearly gates but when the house appears round a final bend, raised on a terrace with a small dome at its centre, it is like that moment when a conjuror draws a beautiful white dove from a glossy top hat - magical. As for the setting, looking down from the terrace is like having the very best row of seats in a giant's amphitheatre. With a lush garden in the foreground, the sea as a backdrop, and an arc of fields and trees in between, this is about as close to an earthly paradise as a landscape gets.

For a modest, single-storey building, the architecture packs a lot of punch with its dome and lantern, its finials, its oeil-de-boeuf window and perfect symmetry. The history of the house is not entirely clear. What is certain is that it was once a central feature of the gardens designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to complement a Robert Adam house, which burnt down in the nineteenth century. Although the building has long been known as 'The Orangery', the dome room has a hollow floor and may once have housed a fashionable eighteenth-century plunge bath. There are springs in the hill behind the house and records exist of ornamental cascades.

The original dome room and its flanking wings were extended in the last century to make the building habitable, arranged round a central courtyard. Malcolm and Anne added one room, now their informal sitting room, to mirror the bedroom and bathroom extension on the opposite side of the courtyard. Now, if you look







down at the house from the hillside above, the symmetry of the façade is matched by that of the walls and roofs behind it. Inside, the kitchen, inner hall, main bedroom and the small library all open on to the courtyard, which is lime-washed in the softest pink and filled with potted palms and climbing plants. Sitting here for an alfresco meal, you have a breathtaking vista through french windows, across the dome room and down to the sea.

Since her marriage, Anne says she has 'turned with alacrity to what I have always wanted to do, which is paint and sculpt.' Her studio, in the gardens above the house, was designed by architect Charles Morris with glass walls on both sides so that she can immerse herself in the beauty of that same view. The space has proved inspiring: she has already had two successful exhibitions.

THIS PAGE The octagonal dome room, which may have incorporated a plunge bath in the eighteenth century, is now an airy dining area (top), painted dusky pink. Carefully selected furniture, such as this mirror (above left), echoes the shape of the ornate architectural details (above right). OPPOSITE The enclosed courtyard, situated in the centre of the building, contains potted palms and climbing plants, and a table and chairs for alfresco dining





Before her most recent incarnation, Lady Field was better known as decorator Annie Charlton, with a shop in Pimlico Road. In the Nineties, she and neighbouring decorator Jane Churchill presented a television programme on decorating, called Finishing Touches. While Malcolm has concentrated on the garden, which has been redesigned with the help of Georgia Langton, his wife has redecorated the house. 'Its previous owner was the decorator and textile designer Michael Szell,' she says, 'and it was swagged and draped and tented to the nines.' Her own taste is less heavy on fabric but rich in textured colour. The walls of the new sitting room are lined with royalblue felt, while the capacious sofa is raspberry red and the chimneypiece is painted glossy strawberry. An even bolder, pillar-box red warms the main bathroom, an inner room that

is lit from above, which Anne thinks would be 'drearily cold in cream'.

Although other rooms are more subdued, including the four bedrooms, and the drawing room that occupies one of the front wings, there is nothing 'dreary' or 'cold' about any of them. One bedroom has been painted with a charming chinoiserie design, while the main bedroom has hand-painted stripes in cream and blue.

Anne's message of welcome went on to say that the church, the ice house and the lake were also worth seeing, and that Arthur must not forget to show me 'the loo'. This is no ordinary house of convenience, but a composting lavatory, imported from Canada and sited in a shed near the studio. Here Anne has used colour with abandon, painting the interior in bright blocks of red, yellow, green, blue and purple.

As for the gardener's nickname, it soon becomes apparent why he deserves it. Not only is Arthur Hassler's tour all inclusive and informative, it seems that he can also mend an engine, serve at table, drive a digger, paint a wall, dredge a lake, and mount a sculpture, as well as tending Sir Malcolm and Lady Field's private Eden \square

OPPOSITE The spare bedroom has a handpainted chinoiserie pagoda on the wall behind the bed that draws the eye up to the high ceiling. THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The library is lined with watercolours and books. Sunlight spills into the inner hall from the courtyard. The walls of the bathroom echo the vibrant colour of the kilim rug. Anne paints in a glass-walled studio by architect Charles Morris that offers spectacular views down to the sea











