

HOME INSPIRATION

# Coastguard RESCUE



On the Kent coast, Jane and Martin Will have transformed an empty coastguard's house into a welcoming home with quirky nods to its nautical heritage

WORDS BY CLARE GOGERTY PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDRE REUTER  
STYLING BY MIRIAM HANNEMANN



When Jane Will throws open the bedroom shutters on a cloudless summer's day, all she can see is sea and sky. It's just one of the many joys that come with living in this handsome brick house on the Kent seafront for Jane and husband Martin – like walking their West Highland terrier Baxter along the beach, browsing the nearby bric-a-brac shops, sailing along the coast or simply enjoying the ever-shifting scenery. “What we love about living here is the light and the constantly changing skies,” Jane says. “I’m amazed by the view every day, especially seeing the sunrise from my bed. On a clear day, you can even see France.”

Jane and Martin had always planned to move from London to the coast, so, once their children left for university, they seized the day. Friends had moved to Deal and, on frequent visits, the couple fell in love with the little seaside town. “We considered Cornwall and Devon,” Jane says, “but I wanted somewhere within two

hours of London so I could commute easily [Jane works in a school in the capital] and friends and family could visit at the weekend.”

Deal, with its quaint rows of Georgian houses and lively town centre, immediately appealed. “We lost out on a Georgian property first,” Jane says, “but when we walked past the coastguard’s house with friends, they told us it was for sale. It was bigger and cheaper than the first property, detached and on the seafront, so we made an offer straightaway.”

The house had been left empty for a couple of years and it felt cold and unwelcoming when the couple first looked around. Rented out as holiday accommodation, it was decorated in a somewhat lacklustre style. Structurally, though, it was sound. Built in 1860 as one of a collection of buildings that comprised the coastguard centre, the property was where the head coastguard and his family had lived. “It was built from brick to a thorough MOD ▶



THIS PAGE  
The dining room windows overlook the front garden  
OPPOSITE The coastal location and heritage of the property has greatly influenced Martin and Jane in their choice of colour and design for the interior

*The couple removed a wall, creating a large, light and airy living space*

specification, so it has thick walls and feels very substantial," Martin says. "It can take whatever the weather throws at it."

Jane couldn't wait to get decorating but first there were other, more pressing, priorities - they pulled down a wall between the kitchen and dining room to create a large open space, and Jane's brother, a carpenter, built and fitted the kitchen cabinets: "The boiler and washing machine were in the kitchen, but we moved them into a utility room so that the space looked streamlined."

The muted colour scheme, with its nod to the building's nautical heritage, was conceived by Jane after some initial experimentation. "Poor Martin had to repaint the kitchen cabinets four times because I couldn't get the colour right," she says. "At first, we tried pale grey, but it clashed with the light-blue cooker. After a few more attempts, I thought, what the heck, let's go really dark. And it worked - I really love it, and the room is big and bright enough to take it."

Jane used to work for The Shaker Shop in London (now sadly gone) and there are references to that simple, distinctive style throughout the house: carefully chosen curios, many with a maritime association, hang from peg rails; Shaker boxes are piled high here and there; and an original Shaker wooden rocking chair sits in a corner of Martin's office. Jane's design influences stretch much wider, ▶





though. "I'm drawn to French painted furniture and rustic styling," she says, "but, really, I just buy things I like." Many of the items in the house were found at local markets and antiques shops in the area. "We love living in Deal and have just opened our own shop, Will & Yates, selling all the things we discover and love."

The result of Jane's smart and subtle styling is a light and airy home that reflects the breezy openness of its

seaside setting. "I am definitely influenced by my surroundings," she says. "I get quite claustrophobic in small, dark rooms and need to be around natural light and open space. I like to keep all the windows open to bring fresh air into the house - even in winter!"

Come summertime, Jane and Martin spend most of their time outdoors in the walled courtyard at the back of the house, entertaining or simply enjoying the ▶



*"I'm drawn to rustic styling, but really I just buy what I like"*

OPPOSITE The shades of the painting by Jane's friend and business partner Caroline Yates complement the colours chosen for the living room  
THIS PAGE An attractive grey and navy runner by Roger Oates is on the stairs - vintage accessories sit in the hallway



OPPOSITE,  
CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT  
A gifted sculpture  
sits in the corner  
of the dining  
room; sewing  
bobbins from an  
antiques market;  
ceramic houses  
by Rowena Brown  
THIS PAGE The  
guest room's  
aspect, facing  
the sea, brings a  
wonderful light



*The house reflects  
the breeziness of  
its seaside setting*

sun. Martin laid the paving and decking, and built all the raised beds, too. "We were having a party for my birthday, so he worked very hard to finish everything in time for that," Jane says. "The spot is sheltered from the wind and is such a sun trap – I could sit out there all day long."

Knowing Jane's constantly evolving style, however, that seems unlikely. "I'm one of those people who never stops. I'm always changing things and moving things around. The house is getting better all the time; it will never be finished!"

**THE OLD COASTGUARD HOUSE** in Deal, Kent, can be rented through [airbnb.co.uk](https://www.airbnb.co.uk). Jane has recently opened a homestore in the town called Will & Yates with her friend and artist Caroline Yates. Visit [willandyates.com](https://willandyates.com) for more information on upcoming art exhibitions.