

MAOLÍOSA

COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

MARCH 4, 2026

What type
of wedding
guest are
you?

Plus:
Maastricht
preview



Flying high: the birds doing brilliantly
Horse sense: how Stubbs changed landscape art
Paddington Bear and British chances at Cheltenham



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Knapp's sweet spot

WHEN the former BBC and ITV television journalist Michele Romaine and her husband bought Knapp House at East Anstey near Exmoor in Devon, they were looking for somewhere that offered space, character and a change of pace. The Arts-and-Crafts house needed some work, so the couple began an extensive renovation programme that revealed several stories. Believed to have been built as a weekend retreat for a shipping magnate who supplied coal and water to ships going through Suez, it was converted into a prep school during the Second World War when Hillsbrow School in Surrey was evacuated. The names of the school houses are still written in the attic cupboards and several documents from that period

surfaced during the works. One references that Andrew Lyle, of the Tate & Lyle dynasty, was a pupil at the school. 'He had a sugar cube next to his name in the school register so that the headmaster could remember who he was,' explains Ms Romaine. 'The boys hunted, rode ponies and swam in the River Barle—a real Exmoor childhood.'

Recognising that the time has come to downsize, the couple have put the house up for sale for £2.45m through Jackson-Stops in Taunton (01823 325144). It has nine bedrooms, a large kitchen/breakfast room with an Aga and several reception rooms boasting far-reaching views across Exmoor. Downstairs is a cinema room, wine cellar, gym and garden room. In the nine-acre grounds are four holiday lodges.

Harrods of Bayswater is reborn

WHITELEYS, which was founded in 1863 by William Whiteley as a small drapery shop in Westbourne Grove, evolved into London's first department store.



After a fire in 1887, it relocated to a new emporium on Queensway, which was said to be the largest in the world. The turreted and domed silhouette established itself as a prime landmark, celebrated in the novels of P. G. Wodehouse and George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. The so-called 'Harrods of Bayswater' suffered in the post-war years and closed in 1981. Despite re-emerging as a shopping centre in 1989, the retail future for the Grade II-listed building looked bleak and it closed for a major redevelopment in 2018.

Following a £3bn makeover by Foster + Partners, the building is now home to 139 apartments and has been renamed The Whiteley. To date, 76% of residences have sold. The latest two-bedroom duplex apartment to be launched was designed by Maoliosa Murray with Art Deco influences and is on the market for \$8.95m with Knight Frank (020-3640 7026) and Savills (020-7075 2874). On-site amenities include a 20m (65½ft) swimming pool, a gym, a padel court and a Six Senses spa. In a nod to the history of the building, there will be 19 retail tenants installed once work is completed.

Cotswolds calling

A two-bedroom apartment in Sherborne House, the Grade II-listed mansion near Northleach in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, has come to the market for £350,000. Residents have access to a tennis court, indoor pool and gym. Butler Sherborn (01993 822325)

My first house in the country Emma Burns

Where was your first house in the country?

I inherited a house from my parents in Oxfordshire

A quick description

It's a two-up, two-down, late-18th-century dovecote and stables, once part of a small estate

How did you find it?

My parents found it 50 years ago. They were having lunch with friends—I was with them—and my mother spotted it. By coincidence, the friend was selling it in her role as executor of the estate

What made them buy it?

My mother had been looking for a project in the area and this

caught her imagination. It was derelict and had never been inhabited. There was a lot of guano from the pigeons, which took a long time to shovel out, but it was endlessly romantic

Favourite aspect of the house

The approach. When I took it over, I planted a few yew trees in the front, which are now as tall as I am. It means the house is revealed only when you come through the gate

Best memory of living there

A happy memory was hosting my aunt's 80th birthday. We'd just finished

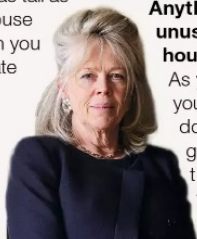
converting what was a haybarn and pigsty into a library. Since then, we've had endless parties both there and in the house

Biggest mistake

A few years ago, I added a greenhouse without really knowing much about looking after plants. Still, it's a lovely space

Anything particularly unusual about the house?

As you climb the stairs, you can see the old doves' holes that go all the way up into the roof. We've filled them with plastic decoy pigeons



Biggest indulgence

The Aga. Arriving when I was young, the house was freezing and my mother would warm up the kitchen by leaving the oven door ajar. It was only by the time we left to go back to London that we'd all stopped shivering. The Aga makes it instantly welcoming

Would you ever sell?

I couldn't. It's too much a part of me

Emma Burns is managing director of Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler. The firm has just relaunched its Gothic Hanging Lantern as part of the lighting range in its Pimlico Road showroom (020-7493 2231; www.sibylcofax.com)

