



COUNTRY · HOUSE
OF · THE · MONTH

SPEYE PARK

The Jacobean mansion was demolished; the Victorian stately home burnt down. Now the stable block has been converted into the Spicers' unusual family home

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A house of contrasts: four posters in the hayloft and fine antique chairs on the brick floors'

vertical timber of the old stabling, which gives a warm glow, heightened by dark furniture and drapes in golds and yellows. By contrast the atmosphere in the dining room is rich and splendid, with a claret coloured carpet, burgundy wall hangings and plum covered chairs, embroidered with the family crest ('A hand throwing a petrol bomb,' says Mr Spicer). Embroidered Victorian hangings are covered with horse pictures. Mrs Spicer explains, 'When we came to the house, every picture had a horse in it.'

After this, the kitchen, romantic and rustic, comes as a complete surprise. It is the converted blacksmith's forge, complete with original stacked furnace (though an Aga has been added). 'When we first saw it, the room was black,' recalls Mrs Spicer. 'We put in skylights and exposed all the original surfaces.'

There are five bedrooms. In the main bedroom, a massive canopied bed, made by Mr Spicer's grandfather, has been built in. 'And the drapes are old curtains that came from the house—next winter I might actually get round to finishing them,' adds Mrs Spicer. The magnificent ochre canopy perfectly complements the heavy beams, and the room is prettified with delicate furniture and floral curtains. All the bedrooms are attractive and rural, and each has a canopied or four poster bed. In Edward's room Mrs Spicer confides, 'The insurance people say this bed is Tudor so I've hammered it securely to the wall to hold it up.'

Like so many of the other intriguing features in the house, that is just the sort of down-to-earth touch one might expect, when people move from a stately home to a stable. □



Above: The wide gallery ('We didn't want it to look like the upper deck of a bus') around the drawing room is hung with priceless Victorian tapestry fabric, and serves as an extra sitting room. The panelling is from the old house, and is decorated with Spicer family crests. Left: In the guest room, sky blue watered taffeta puts colour into a creamy room. Right: Daughter Louisa has a Victorian bed, and although the trappings look authentic, Mrs Spicer made up the drapes from some old curtains. The scalloped basin is new and was bought from Harrods

