

July 4, 2015

# French flair

A dated farmhouse steps stylishly into the present **16**



**Shop** Snug Uggs **10** **Display** Casaview Homes' Glenbrook 25 **14**





# A French connection

Eyesores became assets as a Brady Bunch-style home was eased out of the 1970s, writes **Robyn Willis**

**W**e've all been there. You go looking at real estate with a checklist of what you want in your dream home but, somewhere along the way, you have to make compromises. While this five-bedroom house was in an idyllic position on the Manning River on the mid-north coast, it was not in the French provincial style that the owners favoured.

Indeed, it was not even built in a style that reflected its semi rural aspect.

"It was very Brady Bunch — lots of exposed brick and wood panelling," says interior designer Stewart Horton.

Along with the 1970s brick, wood panelling and red timber floorboards, most of the windows featured the yellow glass typical of the time.

A split-level home, it even included a rumpus room on the raised level with the garage underneath.

All in all it was about as far from French provincial style as you could get.

"The client's original brief was French provincial style, which I had to steer her away from," says Stewart.

"In terms of architectural style, the house did not lend itself towards being too traditional.

"We went for something in between —

contemporary with some traditional aspects, especially with the detail."

## White wash

In an effort to brush away the 1970s cobwebs, Stewart took the time honoured approach and painted everything white.

"Everything got painted," he says. "All the timber work and the ceiling in the rumpus room area, the top split-level section was all timber, mission brown in fact, and we painted it all for a country farmhouse look."

With three active boys in the house, the floorboards were stained a dark walnut colour, effectively creating a blank canvas for the house, while the parquet floor in the rumpus room was left untouched.

The exposed brick and timber panelling, initially considered eyesores, now became assets, providing texture to the otherwise monochromatic colour scheme and allowing the house to sit comfortably in the semi-rural locale.

The kitchen and bathroom were renovated, each taking up the exposed brick theme for good measure.

"The (subway tiles) in the bathroom reflect the internal walls with the exposed brick," says





Bright greens and floral fabrics make a vivid contrast to the neutral grey sofa.

Stewart. "It was just another version of that.

"The bathroom is quite monastic and I love that about those old farmhouses — the use of simple materials."

### Colour code

With a neutral backdrop in place, Stewart began to add colour and pattern into the house.

The entryway was finished with grey toile wallpaper and a black and white marble floor to indulge the owners' love of French provincial style.

While the soft grey modular sofa with button upholstery dominates the living room, Stewart chose fabrics from Orient House as the basis for introducing colour.

"That fabric was the basis for the colours like the orange in the bedroom which is off the lounge room," he says.

"You can see it coming through in the orange tones and the lime green.

"You do have to restrain yourself though so you don't overdo the colour."

He suggests a good place to start is with an artwork you can refer back to and use as



### Step by step

- ✓ Use white paint for a country farmhouse look
- ✓ Create a blank canvas by staining floorboards dark walnut
- ✓ Maintain original exposed brick and timber panelling to add texture and continue into the kitchen and bathroom
- ✓ Introduce pattern with wallpaper and floor tiles and pops of colour through fabric choices

a colour guide. In other parts of the house though, the palette is very restrained.

The open-plan kitchen and dining space deliberately sticks closely to the black and white palette with a patterned rug chosen to create interest.

Both spaces have been finished with floor-to-ceiling sheer curtains in a neutral colour for a sophisticated look.

The dining space in the rumpus room is a little more relaxed, almost giving a nod to the 70s origins of the house with the introduction of a circular Saarinen dining table — very popular at the time.

Once known as the billiards room, it includes a bar also painted all white to tone down the abundant timber panelling.

While it does not scream French provincial, the home now marries country style to contemporary sophistication thanks to the balance of colour, texture and pattern.

Importantly, it's not trying hard to be something it's not.

Even the owners are beginning to enjoy their home, just the way it is.

"The irony is now the family really enjoy that 70s look," says Stewart.

"They have learnt to appreciate it."

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Pictures Jane Kelly

## Decorate

### The brief

To take a five-bedroom home built in the 1970s and transform it into a sophisticated country farmhouse with more than a hint of French provincial style



### ARCHITECT

Stewart Horton [hortonandco.com.au](http://hortonandco.com.au)

### THE SOURCE

**Bathroom sink** Kado Aspect 330 Solid Wall Basin from Reece, [reece.com.au](http://reece.com.au)

**Cushion fabric** Chiang Mai Dragon from Orient House, [orienthouse.com.au](http://orienthouse.com.au)

**Dining chair** by Hay Furniture from Cult Design, [cultdesign.com.au](http://cultdesign.com.au)

**Rumpus room dining chairs** Serengeti Gamle chair from Globe West, [globewest.com.au](http://globewest.com.au)

**Rumpus room dining table** Saarinen dining table by Knoll Studio from De De Ce, [dedece.com](http://dedece.com)



The white circular Saarinen dining table is paired with black chairs in an eye-catching nod to the 70s.

