

SEASON OF GOODWILL

Christmas lasts all year round in Lucy Greaves' elegant country home because it doubles up as the headquarters for an annual charity event she organises

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Lucy's granddaughter
Cleofé and daughter-in-law
Lauren enjoy the wintry
scene in the garden



THE STORY

Who lives here? Lucy (right) and Richard Greaves. Lucy is the director of *The Christmas Fair in the Cotswolds* (cotswoldfair.com 5-7 November 2018), and Richard owns a chemical company. The couple have four grown-up sons and two grandchildren – Cleofé, two, and Finley, just two months old

Property The house, a former estate manager's home built in around 1850, is part of a country estate, near Chipping Norton. There are six bedrooms and three reception rooms

What they did The couple did mainly decorative work, painting walls, adding soft furnishings and hanging curtains to make it their own

Lucy Greaves loves Christmas; it's her favourite time of year. As soon as one year's festivities are over, she's busy planning

the next, from January right through to November. Christmas shopping is her year-round pursuit.

It's not that she's a crazy Christmas lady – far from it – but for the past 30 years Lucy has masterminded *The Christmas Fair in the Cotswolds* from her Oxfordshire home. It takes place in early November and there are over 200 stallholders selling all kinds of crafted goods including: fashion, homeware, art, crafts, foods and drinks.

'Everything I've always done has been for charity,' says Lucy, explaining the concept of the fair. 'It's a bit like buying a charity Christmas card – if you're buying gifts, why not buy them from somewhere that gives a proportion of the price you pay to charity? If you saw it on a website it would be the same price, or more, but at the fair 10 per cent goes to WellChild, which helps seriously ill children and their families.'

Lucy started the event in her previous home, inviting a few friends and a handful of makers, but the event has grown so big it now takes place in one of the fields at Daylesford Organic Farm.

As the fair was growing, so Lucy's family grew and about 20 years ago she and husband Richard found themselves looking for a home with more space for their four young boys. When the village butcher told them about this country house tied to the local estate, they couldn't believe their luck.

'I always wanted a big family and a large family home with space for lots of parties, and this was perfect. I love being out in the country,' says Lucy. The family moved from a compact cottage with just two bedrooms, to one with many more rooms to furnish, and Lucy soon became adept at trawling antiques markets, auctions and secondhand stores for the right pieces of furniture to fill the space, which she'd then have reupholstered or restored to give them a new lease of life. She became quite a regular at her local auctions. 'The dealers didn't like the competition,' she says. 'If you're bidding against a dealer, you know you've got a good buy, because they're only going to put it in their shop

and double the price, but there was no way I was going to have priceless antiques here. It had to be comfortable, and withstand family life.'

Lucy's quest for unique products and makers for the fair became an extension of her sourcing items for her own home. 'I wouldn't choose things for the fair that I wouldn't be delighted to own myself,' she says, 'and in fact I've often bought things for my house from the fair, or tried things out here to see how they appealed to friends and family before booking them as stallholders.'

How does that impact on this very traditional country estate home? With accessories from so many different makers, and furniture and furnishings from salerooms and antiques markets, there's a danger the overall look could be somewhat eclectic, even disparate. However, the impression is calm and harmonious – partly due to the neutral backdrop of warm white walls that Lucy favours, creating a blank canvas to which she can add new cushions and fabrics to refresh the look. She has an excellent eye for interior design and a particularly elegant style. She calls it 'modern classic – quite traditional but with a contemporary angle,' adding, 'I try not to have too much. I've got pictures everywhere, particularly of the boys, but that's because this is essentially a family home more than anything else.' The contemporary edge comes from her constant updates to the rooms with new accessories bought at the fair.

When the gates close on this year's fair, Lucy will take a deep breath and start planning her own family's Christmas. 'We'll have my daughter-in-law Lauren's family here from Canada, with her three siblings and their families, her parents, our four boys and their partners, and our two grandchildren,' she says. 'But I love having the family around me, I adore entertaining and I love Christmas. This house is perfect for all those things.' And, of course, it won't be long before Lucy is back in Christmas mode and starting to make choices about the stalls for 2019's fair. 🎄



Right: A fresh wreath from Foscot Wreaths and a lantern from Hector Finch adorn the canopied front door. Valspar's Open Skies is a similar shade to that used for the woodwork *Far right:* Lucy's granddaughter Cleofé watches mum Lauren put the finishing touches to Frosty *Below:* Symmetry in the living room with twin sofa tables and sofas from Lucy's grandparents. Lucy had the sofas reupholstered in velvet from Mulberry Home. The cushions are by Chelsea Textiles and Josephine Rossi, the mirror is from Stable Antiques, and the garland is from Foscot Wreaths. The coffee table belonged to Lucy's parents. The table-leg lamp bases are from Stable Antiques. Mince pies and cake from Daylesford

THE CHRISTMAS FAIR IN THE COTSWOLDS

The fair opens with a preview evening on Monday 5 November from 6-9.30pm, when Prue Leith will be signing copies of her latest cookery book. Reserve VIP tickets and enjoy canapés and Champagne in the VIP lounge, plus a goody bag. VIP tickets allow re-entry to the fair on Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 November, from 9am-5pm. Ten per cent of all sales made at the fair will be donated to WellChild, the national charity for seriously ill children and their families. Tickets are available at cotswoldfair.com.





The kitchen is exactly as it was when Richard and Lucy moved into the house, with its huge Aga set into the inglenook. The old table came from Stable Antiques, with chairs from Lucy's parents, and the stool from Richard's family. Seasonal treats supplied by Daylesford



Simple cabinetry in teal provides a good contrast with the rustic floor; for similar units, try Thomas & Thomas. Fired Earth's Turkish Blue paint is a similar shade and the company's Lubelska brick flooring would give a similar look. For granite worktops and splashbacks, try Gerald Culliford. Many of the accessories here were bought at The Christmas Fair, including the tall jug, from Made by Hands



As soon as the festive settings are cleared away, Lucy covers the long table with applications from would-be stallholders for the next Christmas Fair. She received 700 applications from would-be stallholders for 200 places last year, but always leaves a few empty slots to accommodate original products that crop up at the last minute. Lucy added two D-ends to the antique drop-leaf table to fill the generous dining room. Both the table and sideboard are from Stable Antiques, and the two lamps are from India Jane. The painting on the right is of Richard's great-grandfather, on the left is one of Lucy's ancestors



Above: Lucy and grandson Finley enjoy the fairy lights in the hall. The curtains were made by Josephine Rossi with a chenille heading from V V Rouleaux, and hung on a waxed banister pole. The rug came from Istanbul; Above right: A roaring fire transforms the hall into a cosy extra room. The faux-fur throw is from Cotswold Grey, and the wreath from Foscot Wreaths; Top: Winter colours with a throw from Cotswold Grey, and cushion (just seen) from Josephine Rossi, one of the original stallholders. The child's prayer book is from Richard's antique book collection





Above: The bedside tables in the master bedroom are from India Jane, with two china lamp bases from Tingewick Pottery, topped with shades from John Lewis. On the bed is a striped throw with pompoms by Maud Interiors; the bedlinen is from The White Company. The armchair is a family piece, with a cushion from Oka and a throw from Bernice and Camilla Cashmere. The chaise longue was an auction buy and the Sumak rug came from Istanbul. Josephine Rossi made the silk dupion curtains with fan edging from V V Rouleaux

Right: The tallboy was an auction buy – on top are two vintage leather suitcases. The dressing table is from Stable Antiques, its seat an antique piano stool covered with ticking stripe fabric from Ian Mankin

Below: The bath side is painted to match the marble tiles. The one-sided stool was an auction find, the toile cushion is from Josephine Rossi, and for similar floor tiles try Gerald Culliford

