



■ Ali Torkington's lounge used to serve as the house's playroom

PICTURE: Matthew Horwood ©

Quirky design helps create relaxing lounge in Ali's 17th century home

ALI Torkington fell in love with her lovely old large house at Miskin as soon as she walked in the door.

"I had always been quite sceptical of people who said things like that... until I came here!" laughed Ali.

"We had been living in a really nice old cottage in Gwaelody-Garth but as the children got older, it simply got too small for us and we sold up and moved into a rented house while we looked for our new home.

"We have always lived in old houses and one day we were looking in the window of an estate agency in Cowbridge and spotted this house which dates back to the late 1800s.

"We came for a viewing and I really did get this feeling as soon as we walked through the door that it was the house for us."

That was 10 years ago and since then Ali, 48, along with her surgeon husband Jared and their three children Amber,

ALISON YOUNG Favourite room



16, Archie, 14, and Finn, 11, couldn't have been happier in their five-bedroomed home.

Originally, the lounge was used as a playroom until three years ago when Ali decided to swap things around.

"It was the slightly bigger of the two reception rooms so I decided it was time to reclaim it as the family lounge.

"I love the way it has turned out – the fireplace has been made bigger and I was so pleased with the built-in shelves which I had installed."

The walls are painted in two tones of an unusual grey/brown colour while the grey carpet has handy black flecks – perfect for disguising the odd stray

hair from the family's pet Labrador dog, Laddie.

"All the rooms downstairs have wood or tiled flooring so I decided to carpet in here to make it feel more cosy."

In keeping with her home's traditional style, Ali replaced the modern radiators with chunky old fashioned-style ones.

"The radiators are great as they are so big that you can even sit on them! It is now such a lovely room to sit in – we will all gather in here in the evenings and at the weekend to watch television together or just sit and relax."

An old leather sofa which sits against one wall has been reupholstered while a circular mirror above the fireplace was made by a craftsman in Cardiff.

"I think the mirror is amazing – it's handmade and is so striking."

It is that eye for the quirky design detail that led to Ali setting up her funky internet camping accessory business, The Glam Camping Company, 18 months ago, after a career spent as a cardiac nurse and resuscitation training officer.

"I really liked my job but just fancied doing something different and after a friend's husband set up a watersports website the idea for a website selling quirky camping accessories just came to me one day.

"I have always loved camping but have often found it frustrating that I can't get everything I want on the same website – so the obvious thing was to set up my own. It was a bit daunting to start with as I didn't really know anything about business to begin with but it's been going really well.

"It's not just about camping accessories it's all about really great things that you can use for outdoor living."

A favourite driftwood tree placed near the fireplace was the leftover by-product of a shoot for the website.

"It was handmade in West Wales and in the winter I dress it with lights and at

Christmas with baubles," said Ali.

With a website business to run from the study of her home, Ali certainly finds the refuge of her lounge even more welcoming than ever.

"It's great running your own business

and being able to do it from home but you do have to close the door on all that instant technology sometimes and go and relax in another space – which is why my lounge is such a favourite room of mine."

Steal Ali's style



Pile up your logs in this lovely basket from Philip Morris and Son, priced £22.95. Visit www.philipmorrisdirect.co.uk

Mirror, mirror on the wall... Admire your reflection in this lovely venetian mirror from Midnight Mirrors, priced £118. Call 01709 477702.



Snuggle up among these silver cushions from notonthehighstreet.com, priced £30.



Light up your life with this signature candle from the White Company, priced £20. Call 0844 736 4222.



Relax on this lovely large brown leather sofa from John Lewis, priced £899. Visit www.johnlewis.com

Favourite object

Ali had always admired this lovely cream log burner in the cottage of a friend. When her friend moved to a new house and was unable to find the right place for it, Ali seized the opportunity to buy it from her.

"I absolutely adore it and so does my friend – she didn't want to let it go but she had no where to put it anymore and at least this way, she gets to see it when she visits me.

"It's lovely to light in the evenings and at weekends and the heat from it warms the whole house through.

"When we redid this room a few years ago we took the fire space back to its original size and it sits in that space perfectly now.

"It's probably about ten years old and there are a few marks on it now but I think they all add to its charm."



Turn to page 16 for our choice of properties to rent or buy