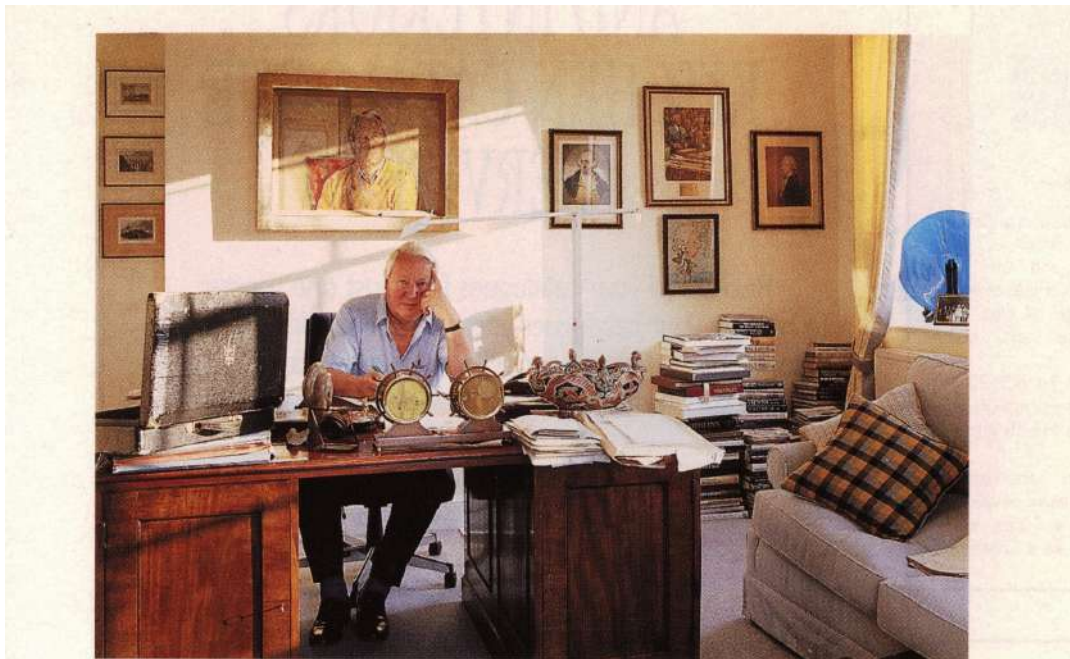


UK HOUSE & GARDEN MAGAZINE - ARUNDELLS - 1991

Client: The Rt. Hon Edward R G Heath MP MBE

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Close to home

Edward Heath's house in Salisbury is
the still centre of an active life

Set in the green and tranquil haven of the Close in Salisbury, Edward Heath's handsome Queen Anne home, Arundells, is quintessentially English. From every vantage point, the cathedral spire overshadows the house – but its prospect from the former Prime Minister's bedroom window is unrivalled. 'Wherever you are it's possible to see the cathedral,' he says, 'which gives you a feeling of continuity.'

After his father and stepmother's death, Mr Heath decided that he no longer had a special relationship with Broadstairs, and started to search for

a house elsewhere. Predictably, he hankered after living by the sea. 'For a long time I wanted to live on the Isle of Wight,' he says. 'As a boy I stayed there with my aunt and uncle – and I love it. And, of course, I've spent a lot of time racing round it.'

However, when Mr Heath's former parliamentary private secretary, Robert Key, who is MP for Salisbury, told him that the Dean and Chapter were looking for a suitable tenant for number 59, Mr Heath was overcome by the beauty and potential of the house. It was also conveniently near the river Hamble, where his boat ▷

Above: working in the upstairs study at the fine mahogany pedestal desk. From this position, both the portrait (by Derek Hill) and occupant have a fine view out of the window down the length of the garden to the river.

Main picture: in the drawing room, the original panelling and fireplace are painted in four toning shades, from cream to peach. The sofa is covered in a wool fabric designed by Derek Frost (071-828 6270) and woven in India. The tables either side are of cherry wood with granite tops and were also commissioned from Derek Frost. Dotted around are pieces of oriental porcelain





'The Close is a village within a city, very quiet and peaceful'

Above and left: in the Tory blue kitchen, a painted dresser designed by John Lewis of Hungerford (02357) 68868 (above) houses a collection of brightly coloured oriental china. The Corian counter tops with maple edging and the maple table are also from John Lewis of Hungerford. Overhead, old oak beams (left) were put in to suggest the thirteenth century origins of the house

◁ was moored. 'Arundells is in a heavenly position,' he says. 'The Close is really a village inside a city, very quiet and peaceful. I moved in just before Christmas in 1985.'

Wary of Mr Heath's abrasive reputation, I arrived on time for the interview and was met at the graceful wrought iron gates by an armed policeman (an ever present reminder that the incumbent was once the nation's leader), who solemnly checked my credentials.

But once inside the gleaming white front door, Mr Heath took evident delight in showing me his house and garden; his eyes twinkling with good humour when something amused or pleased him – such as the pictures and models of his five boats, all named *Morning Cloud*.

With pride he showed me two oil paintings given to him by Sir Winston Churchill, one of which is uniquely initialled twice. His pictures by John Piper, Sickert, Sargent,

Augustus and Gwen John, reveal a keen and shrewd eye. A great believer in enlisting experts, Mr Heath asked the late Sir Geoffrey Agnew, an old friend, to hang his pictures; Agnew said the shell pink wallpaper was the best background he had ever seen.

The cosiest, most idiosyncratic room in the house is the library, which holds Mr Heath's passions: a catholic choice of books, classical compact discs, a pretty little clavier ('for which Bach wrote his 48 Preludes and Fugues'), some treasured Japanese vases and woodcuts, exotic orchids from his greenhouse and an oriental carpet.

Upstairs, with an equally lived in feel to it, is his study: a room crammed with old newspapers and erudite tomes. Working at a solid mahogany desk, he can look up from his work and through the French windows to admire the two acre garden – which meets the Nadder ▷





Left: in the library, an oriental rug partly covers the oak floor and heavy tartan wool curtains hang at the windows.

Centre: the library's English nineteenth century fireplace, installed during the restoration of the house, becomes a Japanese corner, with Mr Heath's collection of porcelain and woodcuts.

Below: serried ranks of dignitaries' photographs on the Steinway piano in the drawing room. The English wing armchair is covered in a tapestry to complement the blue and white porcelain.

Opposite: panelled doors open to the dining room where all is red – fabric covered walls, painted cornice and dado and magnificent silk damask blinds. The gilded wood chandelier is eighteenth century and hangs over a table of amboyna and satinwood, which is surrounded by mahogany 'racing chairs' covered in red linen. Both table and chairs were designed for the room by Derek Frost

'I wanted to make the house as up to date as possible, yet maintain its character'



◁ as it gushes into the River Avon. Beyond lie the romantic water meadows, often painted by Constable.

Edward Heath's house is immaculately spick and span. In his bedroom, with its sharply tailored Viyella curtains, and the drawing room with its Steinway piano and silk festooned blinds, creams, browns and blues abound; only the red dining room adds warmth.

Built in the thirteenth century, the original house (whose name is derived from a later inhabitant, the Hon James Everard Arundel, sixth son of Lord Arundel of Wardour) was a canonical residence. In the seventeenth century it received a facelift, but was rescued from serious disrepair in 1964 by Robert Hawking, a former chairman of auctioneers Phillips; a Victorian wing was demolished and the garden replanned and stocked. However, Mr Heath's predecessor, a widow who died in her nineties, allowed everything to run down.

'When I came here the entire house needed restoring,' says Mr Heath. 'What I wanted was to make it as up to date as possible while maintaining its character. I also wanted light, colour and life.' As a result, cornices and mouldings have been painstakingly restored and classical bookshelves built. In the dining room a bold, modern table and chairs were commissioned and ceilings throughout were peppered with low voltage halogen spots – the kind to make a purist blench.

'He was interested in every little detail,' says Derek Frost, Edward Heath's forward thinking restorer and decorator. 'He sees himself as an enlightened contemporary and, although the subject was new to him, absorbed it fast, intelligently and with humour. In fact, his involvement was most engaging. He would come to my studio and get down on all fours to choose fabrics or whatever.'

The garden is one of Mr Heath's greatest pleasures and he often breakfasts in the summerhouse or lunches on the patio. As we strolled down the lawn he reeled off the names of roses, trees and shrubs with the aplomb of a seasoned horticulturist and explained how he brought in a task force of ▷





*'Wherever you are you can see the cathedral
– it gives you a feeling of continuity'*

Above: the entrance hall has a floor of polished terracotta tiles and striped wallpaper much admired by Sir Geoffrey Agnew as a background for paintings. It houses a maritime collection including portraits and models of Mr Heath's five yachts, all called 'Morning Cloud'. The late seventeenth century marble fireplace was installed during restoration.

Below: the garden and rear view of Arundells, in the shadow of the cathedral spire.

Right: the bronze head of a Benin chieftain gazes across the master bedroom towards a pair of Biedermeier armchairs



◁ specialists to vivify the grounds. 'I wanted to see the individual trees, tidy up the shrubs and ensure I had colour throughout the year,' he says.

Edward Heath loves to entertain and is a most congenial host. Sunday lunches are a legend in the Close. His private secretary is briefed to find 'interesting achievers' to join him at his table. You may sit next to a cabinet minister, the pianist Moura Lympany, Bob Geldof, David Rockefeller or Egon Ronay.

The food and wine are invariably excellent; game, fish or a traditional roast, then cheese, with a sweet, Armagnac, liqueurs and delicious Belgian chocolates, are served. On his own territory, Mr Heath is renowned for his jocular bantering, a steady stream of anecdotes and, of course, for holding forth on international relations.

At nearly 75, having remained in the House of Commons, worked for the Brandt Commission on the developing world, and recently secured the release of hostages in Baghdad, Mr Heath's life remains a ceaseless bustle of activity. □

For more ideas inspired by this feature, please turn to pages 136 and 137

