



GOING PUBLIC

AUTHENTIC ENGLISH PUB
REVEALED IN ANDERSON TOWNSHIP

By Karen Bradner | Photos by Greg Grupenhof



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IN REGIONS OF BRITISH INFLUENCE, A PUBLIC HOUSE, INFORMALLY KNOWN AS A PUB, is a drinking establishment licensed to serve alcoholic drinks. Apparently, that influence has jumped the pond and landed stateside in the basement of one expatriate and the self-proclaimed Anglophile he married. | Anderson residents, Michelle and Kevin Bevan, have painstakingly transformed their standard, new construction style basement—concrete floors, steel support beams, unfinished walls and ceilings—into an unbelievably authentic and charming English style pub reminiscent of a cozy refuge found in a country inn in the Cotswolds.

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Wooden cutouts from a fox hunt scene and a collection of horse brasses are displayed on the mantel in the hearth room. LEFT: The British experience begins as soon as feet hit the stairs leading to the lower level. OPENING SPREAD: The bar was purchased locally, but the decorative reverse cut glass adorning it came from England.



“ENGLISH NEVER LOOKS NEW IN MY EYE. IT’S ALWAYS WARM, COMFORTABLE, AND WELL MADE—ALMOST LIKE YOUR FAVORITE PAIR OF SHOES. SOMETHING YOU’LL HAVE FOREVER.”

—ANDRA GYOR



TOP: “Forty Winks” by English artist Mick Cawston hangs over the sofa and was a birthday gift for Michelle from Kevin. RIGHT: A workout space is discreetly hidden behind a cleverly concealed door in the bookcase. ABOVE: Decorative pillows add to the quintessentially English fox and hound theme. OPPOSITE: The beams on the ceiling and the Flagstone on the floor were all imported from England. INSET: The couple’s toy poodle “Buttons” sports a Union Jack collar and tag and plays with his toy Christmas pudding from Harrod’s of London.





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WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND DONE, THE FLOOR PLAN WAS DRAWN TO HOUSE AN ENTRY/DRAWING ROOM; A PUB AREA; A WINE TASTING ROOM; LADIES AND GENTS ROOMS; A HEARTH ROOM; AND A HIDDEN ROOM WHICH CONCEALS A WORKOUT AREA.



Ties to the Union Jack

After spending his childhood in England, where his father, David Gilroy-Bevan, was a member of Parliament, Kevin moved to this country in 1976, but thirty-plus years later, his heart still has strong emotional and family ties to his homeland.

The couple travels to England twice a year, typically spending three weeks in June and the month of October there. Often, during past visits, the two would frequent their favorite pub, the Red Lion, built in 1752 and tucked away in the Mayfair section of London. It was this pub which would inspire the transformation of the lower level of their current home.

Beginning with the bar

Knowing the direction they were headed, Kevin and Michelle started things off by purchasing an elaborate mahogany bar from the Wooden Nickel that was built using antique pieces—some over 100 years old. That was five years ago, before the couple had any plans finalized for transforming the concrete floors and walls into a British getaway.

“I’m glad we didn’t start on the basement immediately after we moved in,” says Kevin. “It gave us time to plan things properly.”

And plan things they did. Both husband and wife, who describe themselves as “anal-retentive idiots,” knew this transformation would be a monumental task.

Once they were comfortable moving forward, the couple contacted the team at Neal’s Design-Remodel, a firm which Kevin’s research discovered to be quite capable of doing the calibre of work he needed. “This was not going to be just your everyday finished basement,” Kevin says. “We knew we wanted something out of the ordinary. We didn’t want the standard pool table or big screen TV.”

Instead of a singular unisex bathroom, Kevin wanted both a ladies’ room, and a gents’ room with a urinal “like a proper pub.” The floor of this man-space is adorned with a Union Jack inspired rug, and the walls provide reading material in the form of bawdy cartoons by Mark Huskinson, an artist whose humorous work, some say, has done as much for the loos of Britain, as Michelangelo has done for the Sistine Chapel.

Another authentic detail the couple required concerned the lighting. “The electrician wanted canned lights in the space,” Michelle says. “I said, ‘not one single canned light. It would all be sconces and lamps.’”

When all was said and done, the floor plan was drawn to house an entry/drawing room; a pub area; a wine tasting room; ladies and gents rooms; a hearth room; and a hidden room which conceals a workout area. Dimensions for this space were supplied to The Hidden Door Company, a northern-California based business, whose craftsmen built a secret doorway which swings out



from a wall of handsome bookshelves to reveal a well-equipped home gym. “All the old manor houses have hidden rooms,” says Kevin.

A likely pair

“Even before meeting Kevin,” Michelle says, “I knew that I liked a certain look. I called it ‘the heavy look’ where there are a lot of things going on. Fringe. Tassels. Opulence. I couldn’t stick a label on it until I went to England for the first time.”

So when it came time to furnish the space, Michelle knew precisely what she wanted. She remembers admiring the contents of Janice’s at The Saltbox in Lexington while she was attending the University of Kentucky. The 30-year-old business, which deals primarily with furniture that is made in England, is owned by Andra Gyor and her parents.

“Michelle came to the shop with floor plans,” Gyor says. “She wanted to create the English look.”

When asked to describe the English look, Gyor says, “English never looks new in my eye. It’s always warm, comfortable, and well made—almost like your favorite pair of shoes. Something you’ll have forever.”

“We saw eye to eye immediately,” Michelle says. “And if I have any advice to give it’s that: ‘Find a decorator who is on the same page as you.’”

During that first meeting, Michelle bought most of the furniture and selected all of the fabric. “It was overwhelming, but really fun,” she says. The English fabric, which sets the rich color palette for the space, was discontinued, so the two decided to buy every inch of it.

More is better

“In England, it’s very fussy,” says Gyor. “It’s everything that you love put together in a balanced way. More is better.”

Fortunately, the Bevans already had more than enough when it came to decorative accessories. Both like to scour the shops and had fun pulling together the props which would help produce a proper pub.

“My dad used to drag me with him to antique shops,” Kevin says. “This whole process rekindled childhood memories.”

Kevin and Michelle had collected hundreds of wonderful English pieces including original artwork, Toby mugs, Staffordshire dogs, and small statues of famous Brits like Winston Churchill.

“We had Toby mugs under the bed, and in closets and cabinets all over the house,” says Michelle.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A hallway leads to the gents’ room on the right, and the ladies’ room on the left. Separate but equal: a wine room provides a cozy retreat for those who prefer the grape. A fully-equipped kitchen is accessed from a doorway behind the bar.

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CASK ALE

A FOCUS ON THE FIRKIN



Since the Bevans' basement focuses on the pub, it is only fitting that their pub focuses on the beer. In true British style, Kevin decided to equip his bar with a cask conditioned hand pump. Though they are common in pubs across England, they're a bit of a novelty in the States. ■ When it came time to install the apparatus, Kevin enlisted the help of Tony Shaw, bar manager at Nicholson's Tavern & Pub. Nicholson's has this type of pump installed at their bar, and the crew there was more than happy to assist their loyal customer. ■ "Kevin brought us on board to help keep things as authentic as possible," Shaw says.

Here are the basics Shaw shares about the cask conditioning method:

- Traditionally, beer in the U.S. is pasteurized, keeping it sustainable for longer periods of time. Think of milk after Louis Pasteur.
- Cask ale is the most traditional method for dispensing beer. It uses active yeasts that have not been pasteurized therefore have a short shelf life.
- The ale is served from the cask at a temperature of 45 to 50 degrees—a bit warmer than most beers are served here.
- Beer casks come in a number of sizes, but by far the most common in the pub trade are those of 9 gallons (72 pints or roughly 41 liters) which is known as a Firkin.
- The length of time the beer can last in the cask will depend on the nature of the beer itself: unopened, stronger beers can last for months; light, delicate beers need to be tapped and consumed in as quickly as two weeks.

Just in case this is making you thirsty for a pint of your own cask ale, Kevin's favorite brews include Brew Dog from Scotland and Hard Core IPA.

Moving day

The Neal's construction crew began their work in March of 2008 and finished that September. "The quality and finish of what Neal's was able to deliver to us is incredible," Kevin says. "They took our vision and transferred it to reality."

Just before leaving to spend their customary month of October in England, the Bevans placed their prizes and purchases so that the space would be completely outfitted before they returned home in time to celebrate the uniquely American tradition, Thanksgiving.

One obvious placement was hanging a memento, from the pub that started it all, in the restroom wing. "The Red Lion is closed now," Kevin says. "When Michelle and I found out, we paid a bloke to get inside the building, before it was gutted, and take the Ladies' and Gents' signs."

By the look of things today, that investment, along with the couple's considerable attention to detail paid off. When they come down the stairs of their traditional, but newly built home, Michelle says, "We literally feel like we are in England."

Looking from the flagstone on the floor, to the aged beams on the ceiling, to the plate rail that runs the perimeter chock-full of collectibles, it's easy to see why Kevin and Michelle feel this way. It's also easy to understand why, when she comes for a visit, Michelle's mom says, "I wouldn't want to clean this place."

But luckily, she doesn't have to. All she needs to do is kick off her shoes, pull up a chair and ask her son-in-law to pour her a pint. 🍷

Editor's note: Neal's Design-Remodel earned a 2010 National Contractor of the Year award from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) for their work with the Bevans' renovation.

RESOURCES: **Design:** Homeowners and Neal's Design-Remodel; **Construction:** Neal's Design-Remodel; **Interior design and furnishings:** Andra Gyor from Janice's at The Saltbox, Lexington; **Woodwork:** Oakmasters, England; **Flooring:** Classical Flagstone, England, installed by Kuhl Tile & Marble; **Cabinetry:** Wood-Mode Fine Custom Cabinetry; **Stonework in wine room:** Cotswold Stone, Farmington Natural Stone, England, Installed by Hoeh Masonry; **Hidden Door:** Supplied by Callie Cambridge, The Hidden Door Company; **Firkin and bar accessories:** Nicholson's Tavern & Pub; **Bar:** The Wooden Nickel

web bonus

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ABOVE: Michelle picks up these Toby mug collectibles during visits to England and on E-bay.