

FAT TALKER

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the more informal
part of the house



G

olly, the Famous Five would be envious. For Marina, Oliver, Chloë and Oscar Ayton (10, nine, six and two), life is a series of signs on the front door: 'Gone sailing' in the family dinghy; 'Gone riding' through the garden gate leading on to the South Downs; 'Gone racing' down the road at Goodwood (Charlie March is Ollie's best friend); 'Gone stick-and-balling' on a neighbour's polo field. Chris, the housekeeper, confides that the Norfolks popped over from Arundel Castle for dinner the previous week. As Annoushka Ayton says: 'There's an awful lot going on here.'

At the eye of this storm sits a solid, comfortable house, part Jacobean, part Georgian. Imposing from the outside, with its creeper-clad façade and crunchy drive, it is mind-bogglingly confusing on the inside (I needed a ball of string to find my way back from the loo). It doubles as the creative HQ for Links London, the cufflinks and jewellery empire started 12 years ago by Annoushka and her husband, John. Brisk in that good-at-everything, headgirl way (her first question on meeting me is 'Are you a Links customer?'), Annoushka does the designing in a pretty blue and white office beside the children's playroom. John, a former lawyer, manages the business side from a small red study under the eaves. Marina and siblings inspired Links's new children's range, which includes a cherrywood Noah's Ark – they named all its sterling silver animals. 'It took up three hours of a car journey through France,' explains Annoushka. 'They were very pleased with "Uliesses" [sic] for the unicorn. That came just south of Lyon.'

It started with a fish. Annoushka inherited a fish wholesale business from her mother, supplying fresh piscine produce to the Connaught, Annabel's and Harry's Bar, among others. Carrying on the company ▷



*It's Habitat meets
Hamptons – pine
floors, wood ceilings
and suede sofas*





