

The ENGLISH HOME

Celebrating the essence of English style

May 2017 | Issue 147 | £4.30 | UK Edition

LIGHT & SPACE

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Colours to make
rooms feel bigger

Flooring to add
a spacious look

Mirrors & sheers
for elegant effects

Kevin McCloud's
design insights

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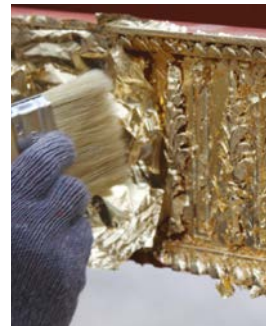


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CONTENTS

MAY 2017



32



42



62

Beautiful Buys

- 14 HOME COMFORTS** From daily tasks to downtime, pretty, practical buys to brighten work and play.
- 20 COUNTRY GREEN** Set the scene for country picnics savoured fresh from wicker baskets.
- 22 BETWEEN THE LINES** Solid or more nuanced, stripes perform a range of decorative functions.

English Homes

- 32 FAMILY AFFAIR** New life has been breathed into this idyllic Oxfordshire home.
- 42 RADIANT BEAUTY** The owners of this country manor house have been taken on a journey of discovery.
- 52 A SENSE OF PLACE** A rural home in Yorkshire is full of personal treasures with stories attached.
- 62 A HOUSE OF HAPPY MEMORIES** This quirky Cornish cottage has seen a visionary transformation.
- 70 MY ENGLISH HOME** Television presenter Kevin McCloud on the quiet pleasures of home.



Style Inspiration

- 73 INTO THE ARCHIVES** Wallpaper with a vintage feel.
- 74 BLOOMSBURY SPIRIT** Clashing fabrics, textures and colours favoured by the early 20th-century set.
- 80 DIAPHANOUS DELIGHT** Sheers add romance to classic and contemporary interiors.
- 88 STRUCTURAL INGENUITY** Create more light and space with clever architectural improvements.
- 96 MIRROR IMAGE** Considered use of mirrors throughout a home offers a new perspective.
- 102 SPACE-ENHANCING PAINT HUES** The best paint shades to create a sense of space.
- 106 SPACE-ENHANCING FLOORING** Experts advise on wise choices in wood, stone, porcelain and carpet.
- 114 HIDDEN DEPTHS** Ingenious ways to create extra space – from bespoke storage to revised layouts.
- 122 LITTLE BLACK BOOK** The founders of Salvesen Graham design studio reveal favoured resources.

Quintessentially

- 125 BUCOLIC BLISS** Create a dreamy garden retreat.
- 126 THIS IS THE YEAR TO...** Enhance a home's exterior.
- 133 UNLEASH THE POTENTIAL** Small strategic changes can add a personal touch to an inherited garden.
- 140 GARDEN NOTES** Seasonal advice from our sister title *The English Garden* magazine.
- 146 AUTHENTICALLY ENGLISH** Upholstery specialist A. T. Cronin brings age-old artisanal practice to private residences, country houses and museums.

Regulars

- 8 A LETTER FROM HOME** A welcome from our Editor.
- 25 NOTEBOOK** Our regular monthly digest of people to watch, pursuits to try and places to visit.
- 86 SUBSCRIBE TO THE ENGLISH HOME** Treat yourself or a friend to a subscription to *The English Home*.
- 124 HOME INSURANCE** A special offer for our readers.
- 142 COMING NEXT MONTH & ADDRESS BOOK**



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A letter from home



Watching a repeat of a television programme presented by Kevin McCloud the other night, I was struck by a comment he made about a home that had the power to heal. He was referring to a restoration project in which the homeowner, recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, was seeking to create a peaceful home in a former cave dwelling, with the ultimate aim of achieving a more mindful and balanced life. This resonated with my strongly held belief that a well-designed home, and the environment around it, can have a huge impact on the well-being of its occupants, and that creating that state of well-being is not simply a matter of surrounding oneself with pretty things.

As humans, we crave sanctuary, a degree of privacy, a connection with the rhythms of light and the outside world, and a sense of control over our personal space. Creative self-expression is also a governing force, be that with injections of colour, pattern or art, or all of the above.

In this issue, we touch on all these things: we look at ways to enhance light and space in interiors; we consider the playful rule-breaking decor of the Bloomsbury Group at Charleston in Sussex; and we talk to Mr McCloud about his own home and personal design preferences. I hope you find these a thought-provoking read.

With warmest regards,

Kerryn Harper-Cuss, Editor

Behind the scenes

Insights from the team diary... we've been

Enjoying insights into the newly located Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler showroom at 89-91 Pimlico Road, London.

Visiting the just-opened Fabric Room at Justin Van Breda's showroom on Lots Road, London. The Fabric Room includes textiles such as Arjumand's Italian block-printed silks and linens, Mally Skok's hand-screen-printed designs, Philip Pikus's eco-conscious linen and bamboo fabrics from Cape Town, South Africa.

Taking an exclusive tour of Independent Bath – a new initiative to spotlight the diversity of the city's independent shops ahead of the launch of a new Independent Bath market on the third Sunday of each month from 21 May. For details, visit independentbathmarket.com or follow [#independentbath](#) on Instagram or on Twitter



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Contributors



CHRISTOPHER DRAKE is the photographer who captured this issue's front cover image, as well as the beautifully colourful manor house starting on page 42. He began his career as a photographer's assistant at Vogue Studios in London's West End and during his three years there he worked with world-renowned photographers including David Bailey, Lord Snowdon, Toscani and Willie Christie – he even worked with the legendary Cecil Beaton at one stage. He went on to work freelance, setting up his own studio in London, and has since worked extensively for all the leading interiors titles – both in the UK as well as the US – as well as for book publishers and top interiors brands. Today he lives and work from Norfolk and his work continues to be published around the globe.



PAULA WOODS is an award-winning interiors writer, stylist and former magazine editor with a passion for property and gardens. We commissioned her to use her considerable expertise to compile two features this issue – the first on the clever and careful remodelling of interiors to maximise light and space (on page 88), and the second to look at some of the most impactful ways that may be used to enhance the exterior of a house, giving it what estate agents might describe as 'kerb appeal', on page 126.



NICOLA STOCKEN has photographed and written about inspirational gardens and gardening for over 20 years. She contributes regularly to *The English Home*, as well as to our sister title, *The English Garden*, and often photographs and writes about gardens for other leading home and garden titles, book publishers and newspapers worldwide. During the course of her career, she has interviewed leading garden designers including Chris Beardshaw and Andy Sturgeon, and has explored behind the scenes at family run businesses, nurseries and plant specialists. In this edition, she offers guidance as to how to refine or redefine the layout of an inherited garden (starting on page 133) to bring it into line with taste and lifestyle.

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Casually curated

Start summer early, dining al fresco with relaxed linens in crisp stripes to capture the holiday mood. The durable natural fibres of linen make it ideal for regular usage and this range is prewashed for a soft feel. Choose from navy, charcoal or raspberry colourways.

Arles runner navy stripe, £28 each, The Linen Works

HOME Comforts

From daily tasks to downtime, selecting practical and pretty buys helps brighten work and play



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Familiar friends

Tableware company Wrendale Designs has launched its first interiors collection. The range features woodland animals and household pets, and stripes in complementary colourways. Comprising fabrics, wallpapers, lampshades and cushions, the collection is all made in the UK. Fabrics, £24.99 a metre, Wrendale Designs

Think pink

Juxtapose a soft pink wall colour with furnishings in sharp berry tones and accessories in shimmering golds for a fresh contemporary twist on a classic pink room scheme. Rich Praline 5, from £28 for 2.5l, Dulux Amazing Space Paint

Dreaming of France

The bed should be the focal point in a bedroom and this French-inspired design will provide this for a gentle or dramatic scheme. Hand-carved, the smart headboard is upholstered in taupe linen and flat-piped with brass studs. Vignette Bed, £1,265, The French Bedroom Co ▶



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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Multi-tasking furnishings

This cupboard is also a window seat with a tailor-made cushion and is cleverly nestled between bookcases for a seamless border.

Chichester bookcase base, £840; blinds and seat cushion fabric, Emma, Sage, £55 a metre; scatter cushions, from £50, all Neptune

Timeless style

The Shaker Kitchen Company offers a wide spectrum of traditional and modern colourways.

Kitchen in colour code Palazzo 45 with Silestone Lagoon worktop, £8,400, The Shaker Kitchen Company

Serene bathtime

Watching water cascade from this smart tap is a relaxing sight before even dipping a toe in the bath.

Axor Massaud spout and handheld shower, £3,080; Eclipse bath, £2,999, Ripples

Natural character

Add visual and tactile interest to a neutral scheme with an eye-catching textured carpet.

Seagrass herringbone carpet, £24.50 a square metre, Alternative Flooring ▶





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Springtime display

Play with different shapes and sizes of coloured glass and ceramic vessels to create an informal, engaging nature table. Faceted glass vases, £12 for a set of three; Artichoke ceramic tea light holder, £12; Artificial Spring Bulb jar, £5; Botanic Herb jug, from £12; Green Fern tea light holder, £10.50; Green Glass tea light holder, £5, all The Contemporary Home

Call of the wild

Be adventurous and choose this exotic pastel-toned wallpaper for a fun family bathroom or try the neutral colourway for a subtle feature wall.

Zambesi wallpaper, £295 a roll, The Ardmore Collection, Cole & Son at Rockett St George

Outdoor pattern

The new Palasari fabric collection from Designers Guild offers a desirable range of patterned fabrics for outdoor use.

Sunlounger fabric, Jade Temple, cornflower, £49 a metre; cushion, Amlapura, cobalt, £49; headrest fabric, Palasari, cobalt, £35 a metre, all Designers Guild





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Time for Tea invitations, £36 for a box of 20, Smythson



Linen tea towel with bunting design, £12.50 each, Nutmeg and Sage

Meri Meri Liberty print mixed flag bunting, £12, Berry Red



COUNTRY GREEN

Whether partaking of a cream tea or partial to a Pimm's, nothing heralds the arrival of an English summer quite like participating in the village fete. Traditional print fabrics, from florals through to gingham, set the scene for countryside picnics savoured fresh from wicker baskets, whilst chintz-patterned china and antique-style glassware provide suitably elegant accessories for a pastoral setting.



Personalised oval bottle labels, from £5 for 10 labels, Honeytree Bespoke Stationers



Osby seat cushions in Poppy Red and Light Cypress Green, £19.95 each, Linum



Kilner vintage drinks dispenser, £29.99, Lakeland



Summer Cherries four-mug teapot, £59.95, Emma Bridgewater



100 Years of Royal Albert 1940 English Chintz teapot, sugar bowl and milk jug set, £130, Royal Albert



Bicycle wicker picnic basket for four, £109 for a set of two, Dibor

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Jasper Conran platinum striped mug, £23, Wedgwood



Swedish blinds, Lapland Stripe (LAP-48-52-38), £56 a metre; window seat cushion, Baltic Stripe (BALTIC-47-51), £56 a metre. All other cushions covered in fabrics from the Scandinavian Woven Collection, all Vanessa Arbutnott



Nautical striped cupboard handle, £4.95, John Lewis



Pesadilla encaustic tile, £7.68 a tile or £192 a square metre, Bert & May



Kyoto 100% wool flatweave runners in (left to right) jade, lantern, blossom and storm, £127 a linear metre, Roger Oates

BETWEEN THE LINES

From the most delicate of lines through to wide, bold swathes of colour, stripes can perform a wide range of decorative functions, whether on soft furnishings, tableware or flooring. Solid blocks of pleasingly balanced weight provide a strong focal point, whereas more nuanced designs can be an effective means of drawing key elements together.



Bistro bench cushion in clay/blue stripe, £22; bistro folding bench in Dorset blue, £100, both Garden Trading



Schiap dinnerware, from £9 for a 20cm plate, Oka



Stripe stoneware salad bowl by BlissHome, £55, Liberty



Pols Potten block stripe cups, £24 for a set of six, Amara



Folkthread chair in raspberry, £398, Anthropologie

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THE ENGLISH HOME NOTEBOOK

Our monthly digest of inside information on people, places and pursuits



PURSUITS

Bread making

Fill the home with the warm fragrance of baking bread as part of Real Bread Week (6–14 May). Expert advice from Paul Hollywood of *Great British Bake Off* fame includes warming the milk, adding salt and yeast to opposite sides of the bowl, and heating up a roasting tin in the oven to pour cold water into to create steam for a better crust.

Bread making dates back more than 8,000 years and became the

bread we know and love when the ancient Egyptians discovered that yeast left over from brewing beer made dough rise and improved it.

To hone and perfect bread-making skills, enrol on a course to learn from a master baker, such as Richard Bertinet of The Bertinet Bakery in Bath, which has a popular cookery school running a range of courses – with deliciously edible results. thebertinetkitchen.com

Diary – events worth noting

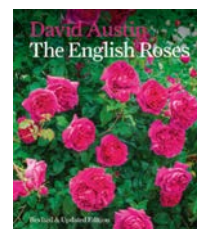
TANGIBLE TALENT Marvel at exquisite creations by some of the UK's finest contemporary furniture makers and silversmiths at the selling exhibition *Inspired*. Held at The Goldsmiths' Centre in London, this event is free of charge to attend. (Pictured right: bowl by Nan Nan Liu). 3–6 May; goldsmiths-centre.org



LONG AWAITED Turner Prize-winning artist Richard Long will unveil a major new exhibition, *Earth Sky*, at Houghton Hall in Norfolk. Shown in the grounds will be new pieces made of local stone, trees from the Estate, and slate. Mud paintings and smaller works will be in the gallery spaces. 30 April to 26 October; houghtonhall.com

EXPERTLY CRAFTED London Craft Week celebrates the very best of British and international creativity and craftsmanship with over 200 events encompassing making, design, fashion, art, luxury, food, culture and shopping. This annual event champions unknown makers alongside celebrated masters with workshops and demonstrations. 3–7 May; londoncraftweek.com

A Good Read



The English Roses
by David Austin
(Conran Octopus,
£30)

Iconic rose breeder David Austin wrote what many regard

as the definitive work on English roses, which has now been revised and updated. Sumptuously indulgent photography captures the delicate beauty and charm of different rose varieties, with fascinating details about their history, fragrances, cultivation and breeding. David Austin has been in business for more than six decades. He started breeding roses as a teenager, and went from taking orders across his kitchen table to worldwide status. ▶

PEOPLE

Deidre Dyson

Trained artist, Deidre Dyson (whose husband is the inventor Sir James Dyson) started to design carpets after struggling to find one she liked for the family home. This was to prove the catalyst to launching her own bespoke carpet business with a showroom on the Kings Road in Fulham, which, after 15 successful years, has been turned into an innovative gallery space showing her carpets as works of art. She recently opened a Paris bureau, too.

Deidre designs a themed collection each year and undertakes commissions from private clients, interior designers and architects. Her carpets can be freestanding or fitted, and clients can add their own personal touches through colour, shape, size and design elements. The carpets are hand-knotted by Tibetan experts using Chinese or Indian silk and fine Tibetan wool, or hand-tufted in Scotland or Yorkshire using New Zealand wool. She unveiled her latest range, The Vista Collection – inspired by “nature’s dramatic and transient beauty” – in Paris earlier this year. deidredyson.com



Pat Albeck

Pat Albeck’s Polish parents created a fantasy home full of bold colour and individuality, with abstract murals and eclectic fabrics inside and an inspirational garden outside. She grew up to become a celebrated artist and textile designer – as well as mother to illustrator Matthew Rice and mother-in-law to his wife, Emma Bridgewater.

Her latest exhibition, *A Cut Above*, will feature 20 new intricately crafted paper-flower collages bursting with colour. “I have always loved flowers, which is so important when creating textile images,” she says. “I began experimenting with a number of different techniques, but have discovered that cut paper is my favourite. I never use pencil to draw first – a really sharp pair of nail scissors is all I need.” She favours a restrained colour palette and Italian fine-art paper for her carefully composed botanical studies, with a trained eye on the shifting horticultural seasons.

The exhibition will be hosted at the new Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler showroom at 89-91 Pimlico Road, London, and will run from 22–27 May, 9.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 3.30pm on Saturday. pat-albeck.co.uk

A photograph of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, featuring the large glass and white structure of the Palm House in the background. To the left, a traditional Japanese pagoda stands against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a lush green lawn with a path leading towards the building, and a flowering cherry tree with pink blossoms on the left side.

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PLACES



Lympstone Manor

"The opening of Lympstone Manor is the realisation of a dream," says two-Michelin-star chef Michael Caines as he unveils his luxury country retreat. His training under Raymond Blanc and 21 award-winning years at country-house hotel Gidleigh Park on Dartmoor led him to this moment. "Everything that I have achieved in my long career has brought me to this point where I can fully express my vision of contemporary country-house hospitality for the 21st century: charming, significant, curious, beautiful, escapist, extraordinary and inspiring," he says. The Grade II listed Georgian mansion overlooking the Exe estuary and set in 28 acres has been fully restored and transformed into a 21-bedroom hotel featuring a spectacular fine-dining restaurant serving Michael's exquisite cuisine. Each of the bedrooms is inspired by a different estuary bird – from the blue jewel tones used in The Kingfisher room to the elegant soft grey textures found in The Heron suite. Decorative flourishes include nautical maps adorning the walls reflecting the area's medieval past, and the brief was to create a sense of escapism whilst reflecting the poetic beauty of the Devon countryside. lympstonemanoir.co.uk



Brassica Mercantile

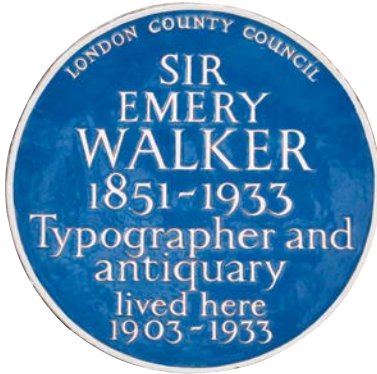
A year ago, few in England had heard of 'hygge' (pronounced 'hoo-ga'), the Danish for 'cosiness'. Then suddenly it was a decor phenomenon, leaping from obscurity to ubiquity in a single bound. But this was no surprise to Louise Chidgey, who has spent 20 years in design retail and trend forecasting and, in 2015, founded a lifestyle shop in Beaminster, Dorset, to offer the British equivalent of hygge.

Brassica Mercantile sells a carefully curated range of homewares and specialist food and wine with a focus on the art of entertaining, reflecting a relaxed way of life driven by a strong desire for colour and pattern. Set in a beautiful town square next door to her husband's restaurant Brassica, both the shop and eaterie share the same warm aesthetic. brassicamercantile.co.uk ▶





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Sir Emery Walker's House

The doors of a beautifully preserved Arts and Crafts gem are set to reopen after a glorious restoration. The former Hammersmith home of Sir Emery Walker is adorned with wallpapers and carpets by William Morris, furniture and glassware by Philip Webb and embroidery by May Morris, all of which are exactly as they were in the time of Walker's residency there from 1903 to 1933.

This atmospheric time capsule has been closed for 18 months during the painstaking restoration, which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, charitable trusts, and donations through the William Morris Society and Arts & Crafts Hammersmith. To allow vital structural repair work to be carried out, the contents of the house – around 6,000 items – were carefully removed for cataloguing and conservation and have now been meticulously put back in place. As Walker was one of the leading lights of the Arts and Crafts movement, several of the pieces were created especially for him by renowned artists of their day, many of whom were close friends and colleagues.

The house reopens from April 20 until 25 November, with pre-booked guided tours at 11am, 1pm and 3pm on Thursdays and Saturdays. emerywalker.org.uk



HURLINGHAM

The Bath Company



IMAGE COURTESY OF:
MORPETH KITCHENS AND INTERIORS COMPANY,
NORTHUMBERLAND



Reclaimed beams were used in the dining extension to provide an air of authenticity. The bespoke dining table and sideboard are by I & JL Brown and the ladder-back chairs were inherited. The Birds fabric by Galbraith & Paul used for the curtains and blinds is echoed by the two Plume wall lights from Objet Insolite. The Titan Pendant lights above the table are from Original BTC.



Family AFFAIR

New life is breathed into an
Oxfordshire house to create
perfect childhood memories

FEATURE FAITH ECKERSALL PHOTOGRAPHS COLIN POOLE





ABOVE The Atlas limestone flooring by Stone Age and the units made by Higham Kitchens – painted in Little Greene’s Tracery II – provide a light touch in the kitchen.

LEFT Antonia carrying some freshly picked artichokes from the garden.



In the 1970s, when the celebrated architectural scholar Sir Nikolaus Pevsner visited the Oxfordshire house that Antonia Stewart and her family have since moved into, he was particularly impressed by its splendid, pineapple-topped gateposts. However, what Antonia, an interior designer, and her husband Henry, who works in the City of London, were most struck by when they arrived in 2009, was the house’s potential for ‘great games of hide-and-seek’. They felt it was a place to give their children – Serena, seven, Alexander, five, and Annabel, three – an idyllic upbringing.

“Ever since I first met him, my husband talked about moving to the countryside, even before we were married,” Antonia says. “It was always the dream.” Their search started in 2007 and by 2009 they had decided to concentrate on the Cotswolds. “I went to school nearby and Henry’s mother had grown up in Elsfield, near Oxford, so we both had connections to the area,” she continues. ►



ABOVE Antonia paired the Knole sofa and green armchair she inherited from her mother with an ironwork table made by I & JL Brown. The Optic Diamond Fresco rug is from Vanderhurd.

RIGHT The classic pink-and-green colour scheme in Antonia's study evolved from her decision to use her late mother's furniture in there.

BELOW The house started off as three cottages, then became a rectory and subsequently a private home. On the right (just seen) is the new extension, with its striped brickwork, and on the left are the gateposts so admired by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner.





"We loved the fact it was all books and beams, yet still had so much potential"



ABOVE Repositioning the stairs in the entrance hall allowed daylight to flood the space and create a cosy nook to sit in. "We chose straight spindles and a polished wooden bannister as this simple design was truer to what would have been found in a cottage," says Antonia.

RIGHT Hidden behind a door on the upper landing is a secret staircase – one of the things which persuaded the Stewarts to buy the house.





Whilst the couple were keen to have a project, when they excitedly raced from London to view the house they had no real idea what was to come. Originally built as three cottages in the 1600s, and at some point converted into one residence, the house was at that time owned by an Oxford don and his wife who had enjoyed a long and happy family life there. “We loved the fact it was all books and beams, yet still had so much potential, especially for the children,” says Antonia. “There was a secret staircase to the top floor, lots of space to play and great opportunities for hide-and-seek,” she remembers. “Thanks to the previous owners it had a lovely feel, but because of its age, was very tired and in need of some attention.”

Initially, the Stewarts kept their London home and used the Oxfordshire house purely for weekends and holidays. “Because we were going to embark on a big project, we didn’t do anything at all for 18

months,” remembers Antonia. “We had no curtains and had to issue guests with eye masks in lieu of blinds and curtains.”

During this time the couple planned their restoration campaign for, amongst other things, the property needed replastering, replumbing and rewiring throughout. “It was one of those places where if you went upstairs to the loo and switched on the light the kitchen would be plunged into darkness,” Antonia laughs. They also decided to reposition the staircase in the entrance hall to allow more light in, put in extra windows throughout – including two extra dormer windows in the roof – and added an extension to enlarge the kitchen. “The original kitchen was tiny for the size of the house,” Antonia explains.

As the house was Grade II listed, they had to liaise with the local council. “The conservation officer was excellent and advised us in advance about what

ABOVE A wood-burning stove from Chesney’s creates an inviting corner to sit in the entrance hall. The sofa is from Sofa Workshop and is covered in a printed linen by Romo. The cushions on the sofa are by Carola van Dyke. The Berkeley armchair from Kingcome Sofas is covered in Colefax and Fowler’s Lanark Plaid.

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would and wouldn't be acceptable," says Antonia. After the plans were agreed, the family moved out and the builders moved in to create the five-bedroom, three-bathroom property that exists now. "We were basically doing a 200-year overhaul," says Antonia. "We sprayed the beams against potential woodworm and we stripped back the mish-mash of previous plaster repairs and replaced them with lime plaster."

In order to make the extension appear as seamless as possible and in keeping with the rest of the house, Henry searched for authentic, locally quarried bricks for the exterior and sourced a blacksmith for the new internal ironmongery, whilst Antonia scoured reclamation yards to find suitable beams and doors.

The most extraordinary task to be carried out was relining the original chimney flues with parging – a render mix. "The pargeter arrived and lit a very hot fire – more than 1,000 degrees – to burn off years of residue inside the chimney flues," says Antonia. "Then this tiny lady joined him and – if you can believe this – shimmied up inside each chimney like something out of the *Water Babies*, and hand-flailed any remaining debris before they were relined. The flues are works of art now." ►

ABOVE Knowles & Christou printed its Ikebana wallpaper in a fresh green colourway at Antonia's request as she wanted something bright and zingy for the master bedroom. The quilt and bedlinen are from Charmajesty. **LEFT** The bold Robert Stephenson rug adds verve to the airy scheme and ties in with the greens, purples and browns in the room.



ABOVE The top-floor guest bedroom is painted in Blazer by Farrow & Ball. The bedside tables are from Chelsea Textiles and the lamps – made from wooden skittles – came from Belgium.

RIGHT Antonia found the right-hand bed on eBay for £60 and the other at Winchcombe Reclamation. The blind fabric is from Bruntschwig & Fils.

When it came to the furnishing of her new home, Antonia was in no doubt about how she wanted it to look. “I wanted people to be able to come in and relax and not worry about leaving a dirty mark here and there,” she says. She also wanted the house to look “as if it had come together over time”, so she used furniture that had belonged to her late mother, including the gently faded pink sofa in the study, and sharpened the look with contemporary designs from favourite suppliers such as Vanderhurd and Galbraith & Paul.

Another major influence on the interior decoration was her acquisition of home accessories and fabric company Hollyhock Home, which she bought from a friend after falling in love with its Rabbits design. “I’ve used Hollyhock Home bedlinen in the children’s bedrooms. There is something so inspiring about it. It has that lovely, English, slightly old-fashioned feel, harking back to a simpler way of life and bringing back happy childhood memories,” she says. “This house puts that into play – trying to give our children a lovely time in a lovely home, just as we had.” ■



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Moving from a modern new-build to a ramshackle seventeenth-century manor house became a journey of discovery for Johnny and Annabel Seal

FEATURE JILL SHEARER PHOTOGRAPHS CHRISTOPHER DRAKE STYLING GILLY TURNERY



The drawing room walls are painted using Rich Praline by Dulux Trade and the curtains are in Turkish Star Stripe by Bennison. The oversized pouffe is made from a vintage Berber rug that Annabel imported from Morocco.





ABOVE Meg, the family's cocker spaniel, and her companion, Guvnor, a flat-coated retriever, on the beautifully tended lawn in front of the house. The 40-year-old 'Madame Alfred Carriere' climbing rose around the porch was almost dead when the Seals moved here, but Annabel managed to rescue it with the help of a severe pruning. It now flowers all summer long.

When property-search agent Annabel Seal came across the details of a handsome manor house in a desirable part of Sussex, she made a decision not to tell her husband. She knew that it was just the sort of house Johnny had always wanted, but this one looked as though it just needed too much work.

Having renovated a number of properties in the early years of their marriage, and more recently built the house where they had lived happily for 10 years and brought up three daughters, Annabel had no intention of taking on another large building project so she hid the brochure somewhere she thought Johnny, who is a property developer, wasn't likely to find it. "He did find it, though," she admits ruefully, "and he was furious!" It was then that the pressure began and Annabel realised that she wasn't going to hear the last of it until she had arranged a viewing.

An elderly couple had been living in the house for 35 years and the upkeep of the large, historic property

had just become too much for them. "They had done a little building work during their first five years there," Annabel explains, "but basically, it hadn't been touched for about 30 years. 'I will do all the work,' I remember hearing from Johnny," she adds with a wry laugh. Annabel reluctantly agreed to view the house, where the owners were so taken with Johnny's enthusiasm that they decided the Seals were the perfect people to entrust with their much-loved home. "So I had pressure from that side, too," Annabel exclaims.

Having eventually realised that resistance was futile, and with Johnny's promise that he would refurbish the derelict tennis court for her, the deal was clinched. "We did the work in three phases over the course of about four years," remembers Annabel. "I got quite ill after the first year of building – it was cold and dusty and I was project-managing the builders, who had to plumb and rewire the house throughout. All the walls had to be stripped carefully because the plaster came away with the lining paper. In one bedroom there was ►



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT

The tapestry-covered chair was originally from Cowdray Park; Annabel bought it at a Christie's auction.

Whilst the garden was well established, Annabel enlisted Fiona Godman-Dorington to add new flower beds.

Annabel and Johnny's middle daughter Chica, an artist, designed and painted the flower design on the cloakroom floor.

Cushions in the drawing room are covered in a selection of colourful fabrics by William Yeoward, Beth Jordan and Kate Forman.



ABOVE The dining table is originally from Kenya, but was bought from a friend. The long benches either side are made from Welsh oak and came from Pembroke Antiques. A colourful abstract painting by George Lloyd Jones – one of the emerging young artists whose work Annabel promotes as part

of the Young Artists Partnership – hangs above the blue-painted sideboard. The tapestry-covered chairs are originally from Cowdray Park.

LEFT The walls of the back lobby are painted in Red Thai Magic by Dulux Trade – a surprisingly practical choice for this well-used part of the house.



RIGHT Zinc worktops provide a practical surface above the painted cabinetry. Assorted Mexican tiles by Caoba create a burst of vivid colour above the pillar-box red Aga, which is 40 years old. "Unfortunately, they don't do this colour now."





a huge dip in the ceiling and when the builders touched it to see what was going on, the whole thing collapsed, exposing an ancient timber roof." The exposed roof beams revealed purlins dating back to around 1660. "England was at war with the Dutch during this period," Annabel explains, "and because all the largest oaks were needed to build warships, there was a shortage of them for house building, so craftsmen developed a method of 'staggering' shorter lengths to create the length required for roof purlins. The historical aspect is what refurbishing an old house is about and made us fall in love with it all the more."

The final phase was the kitchen refurbishment and, after tortuous negotiations with English Heritage – the house is Grade II listed – Annabel and Johnny were finally permitted to open up original entrances between the kitchen and a new dining room, and move the drawing room to the opposite side of the

house. "It was a frustrating, long-winded and expensive process, but at last we were able to achieve some form of open-plan living without upsetting the seventeenth-century fabric of the building," she adds.

Once the building work was complete, Johnny and Annabel set about breathing life and colour into the characterful period interior. Their house is filled with dramatic artworks and pieces collected from their travels around the world. "I grew up in a farmhouse with a father who was a blacksmith creating art from wrought iron in the form of fireguards and gates whilst my mother ran a nursery school when they were first married. When my parents moved to a farm in Sussex, which they renovated, my mother always mixed her own colours for the walls." One of the couple's daughters is an artist, and Johnny paints when he can, too. "When we bought our first house in London we had no money so we used to make big canvases ►

ABOVE Kitchen cabinetry was designed and made by local company Tim Jasper and painted in two different shades of blue/green to add to the eclectic feel. The floor was made using reclaimed bricks for a practical, rustic look. Artwork above the worktop is by Jessica Gale.

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“The family shares a love of colour and of the style of nearby Charleston Farmhouse”

ABOVE The walls in daughter Millie’s bedroom are painted in bright Sudbury Yellow by Farrow & Ball and the Roman blind was specially made using vintage Colefax and Fowler fabric to create a deep border.

RIGHT Annabel’s mother-in-law made wonderfully detailed patchwork quilts for all three of her granddaughters when they were younger.

ideas and suggestions for unusual wallpapers and fabrics. “She’s incredibly organised and was brilliant at suggesting things I wouldn’t have thought of or was too exhausted to think of at the time,” adds Annabel.

The garden, too, is an ongoing project. “We have a stunning Indian Bean tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*) and a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and we have started to cloud-prune a box hedge,” Annabel enthuses. “It is the kitchen garden that gives us most pleasure, though – and now the house is finished we are enjoying trying out lots of different herbs and produce.”

The exuberance and creativity that the Seals have brought to both house and garden is a joy to behold. “Whilst I still occasionally miss the warmth and the freedom from dust of the house we built ourselves, the ancient sash windows with their wonky glass, the low doorways and passages hold such inspiration for me,” Annabel concludes. ■



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A sense of PLACE

Sophie and Charlie Kirk's country home in Yorkshire
is full of personal treasures and happy memories

WORDS HEATHER DIXON PHOTOGRAPHY COLIN POOLE





The kitchen in the new extension was designed by Sophie and built by The Main Company. Limestone flooring from Prices Paving in Snape is particularly practical for a family living in the country with four dogs.



ABOVE Some of Sophie's favourite platters create a colourful display on a shelf above the door to the boot room.

ABOVE RIGHT An eclectic assortment of china in the butler's pantry includes bowls from The Present House Company and mugs by Emma Bridgewater.



Sophie Kirk loves to surround herself with beautiful things. "It's a real passion," she says. "I love being creative, making a home and surrounding myself with things that have special significance. Almost everything in our house has a story behind it."

This is one of the reasons why Sophie – who trained as an interior designer at The New York School of Interior Design before making a name for herself here in the UK at Nina Campbell and Colefax and Fowler – swapped a high-flying lifestyle in London for an altogether more peaceful existence in a rural Yorkshire valley, whilst still keeping a foot in the world of interiors.

Sophie runs The Present House Company from the warmth of a converted potting shed, with dogs at her feet and chickens occasionally – and cheekily – perched on her desk. Her company epitomises everything she loves in her own home, so much so that many of the items delivered to her door often

find their way into her kitchen, where the glass-fronted butler's pantry is bursting with colourful ceramics, glassware and crockery.

"I love living here," she says. "We have antiques and family pieces that go back generations: lovely old photographs and portraits from both sides of the family that create a sense of history and belonging, and then things we have accumulated as a modern family which add to the layers that make up our home."

When Sophie and her husband, Charlie, bought the house, it looked nothing like it does now. "It seemed quite a sad place, with security bars at the windows and very dark rooms," recalls Sophie. "There wasn't a lot of natural light in many areas – but as a designer I knew it could be transformed. The essence was there, but it would need a lot of work to make it homely again."

So they sold their farmhouse close to the picturesque Fountains Abbey and moved a few miles to their new home, where they spent years planning the way they could change it to make it a more cohesive and ►

The portrait in the dining room is of Sophie's great-grandfather and most of the furniture is inherited, apart from the Oka dining table. The decorative artichokes are from The Present House Company.



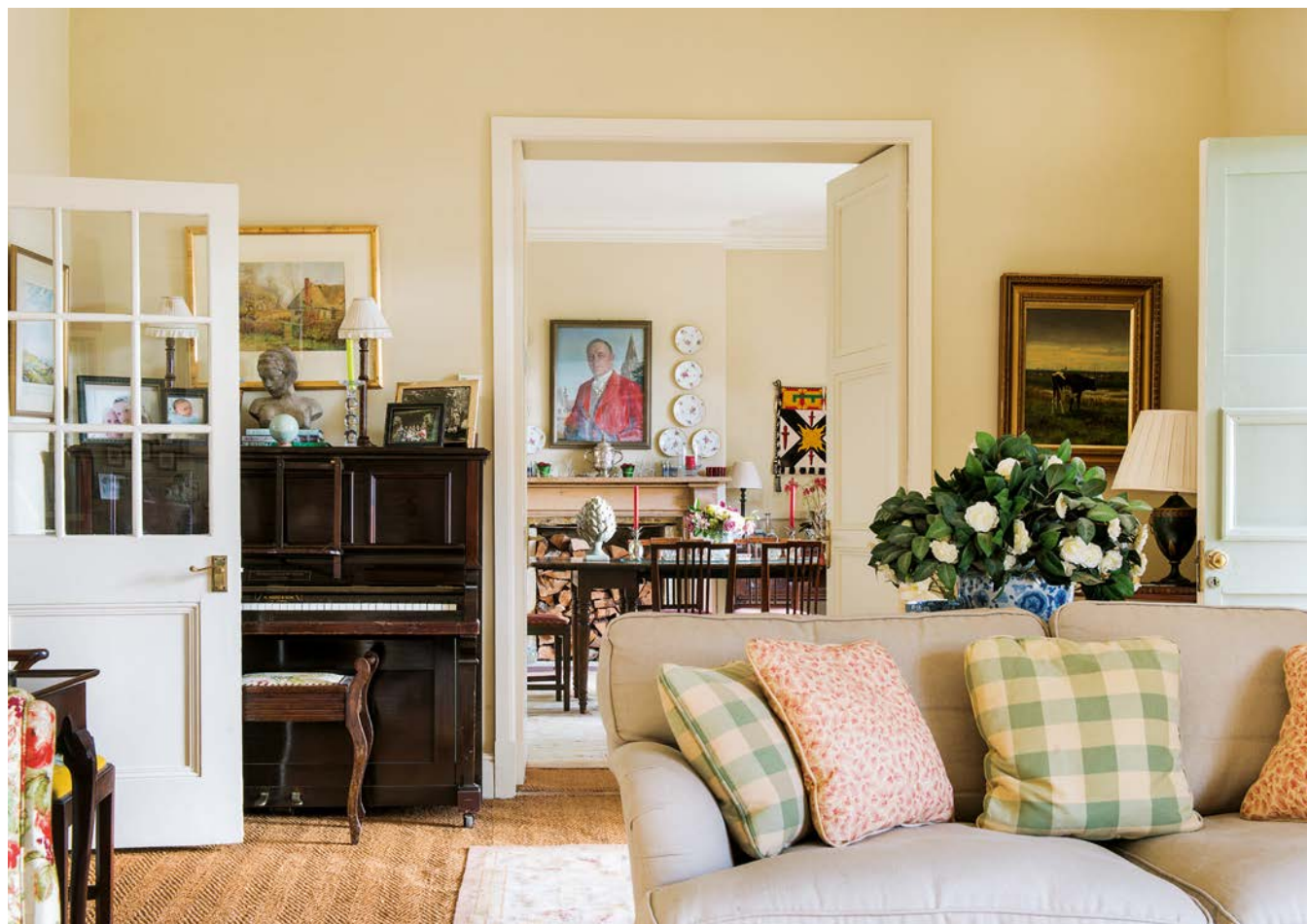


A portrait of Sophie's mother takes pride of place over the Mouseman hand-carved fireplace in the drawing room. The sofa and armchairs are covered in Colefax and Fowler fabric.

RIGHT Cushions on the sofa are in classic fabrics by Bennison and Colefax and Fowler. The antique hand-painted Limoges plates on the dining room wall beyond were inherited from Sophie's grandmother.

BELOW The mellow stone of the house blends in with the countryside in the heart of the North York Moors National Park.

BOTTOM The hallway used to be dark and uninviting until Sophie and Charlie opened it up and brought lots of natural light into the room. The drum table, console table and desk were all inherited.



welcoming place to be. "It helps to live in a house for a while before you do anything drastic," says Sophie. "That way you get to understand the way the light moves around the property and how you want it to work on a day-to-day basis."

At first, the couple focused on the exterior. As Charlie runs a drainage company, his primary focus was to channel the hill water that ran beneath the house away from the property. Sophie and Charlie also had the walls repointed and the garden landscaped before turning their attention to the interior, where they decorated throughout in light, neutral colours as a stop-gap to greater ambitions.

In time, Sophie and Charlie employed Galvin Builders of Malton to add an extension and transform the original galley kitchen into a large, open-plan kitchen, dining and living area that opens onto the garden and makes the most of the glorious views across the neighbouring national parkland. As the house is not listed, they were also able to remodel the interior layout, particularly upstairs where they wanted to create spacious en-suite bedrooms and a better flow to the rooms. "There was a lot of rejigging and moving of walls and doors, but it was worth it to create a more usable home," says Sophie. "We also opened up the entrance hall and added glazed doors in order to bring light into the centre of the house."

With the structural work complete, Sophie could turn her attention to the decor. Although the house ►



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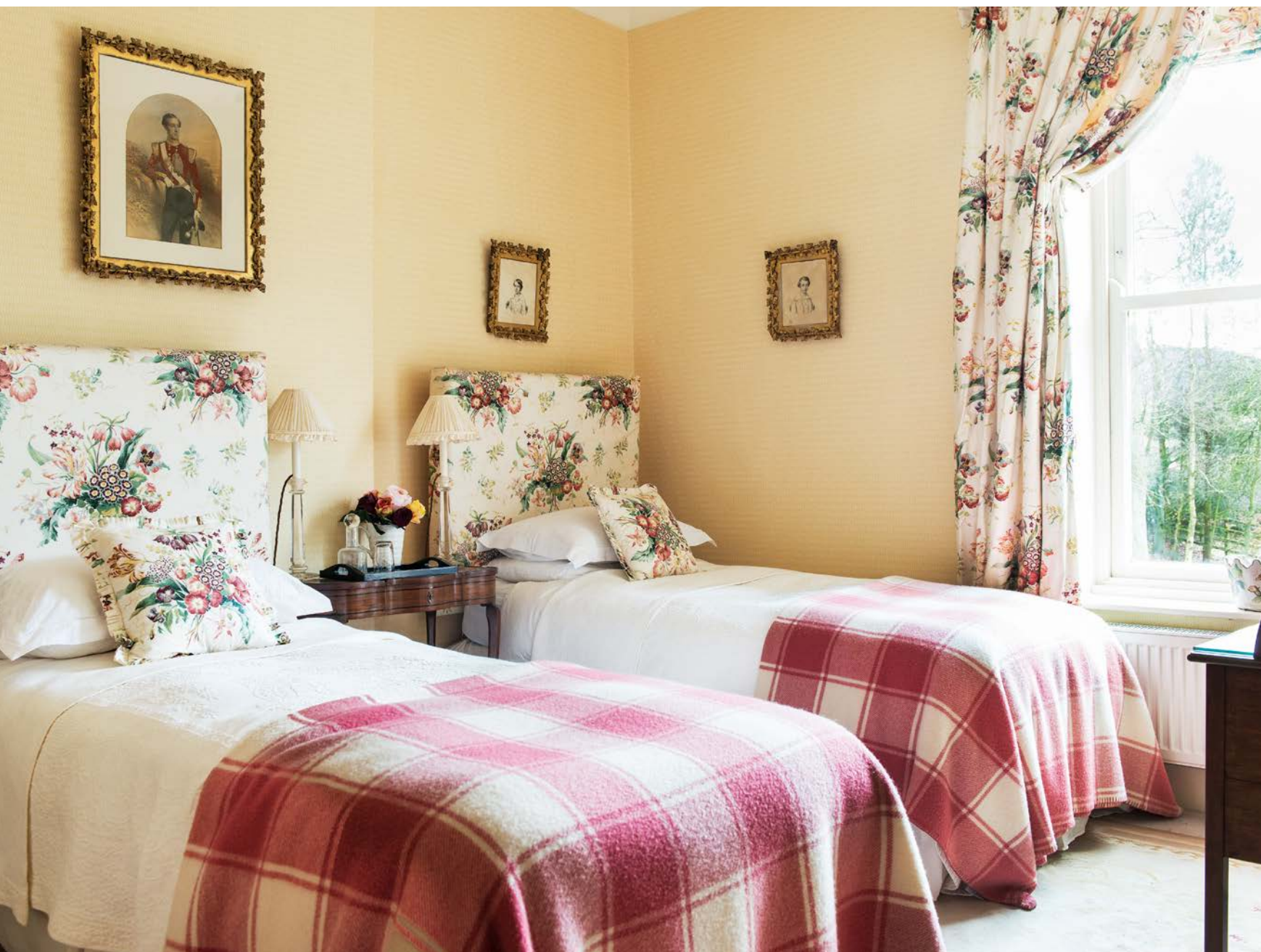
is constantly evolving, she wanted to use neutral backdrop colours in most rooms and build up comfortable layers with fabrics, rugs, cushions and accessories. She was also keen to balance the generous spaces and high ceilings with well-proportioned furniture and good use of wall space. "I fill the walls with paintings, photographs and book shelves because I think it's just as important to think vertically as it is horizontally if a room is to look cosy and lived in," she says. "I have always been a nester. I love styling – I think it comes from my mother who does exactly the same. She used to come and stay and rearrange the house while she was here! I change furniture around regularly and I'm always adding bits and pieces so that it's constantly evolving. It gives me great comfort to be surrounded by everything I love."

Sophie enjoys collecting all sorts of things, from 'gluggle' jugs and beautiful bowls to fabulous fabrics and original oil paintings, and arranges them into striking wall features, cameo corners and focal points in a room so that everything has its place and purpose. ►

ABOVE The rustic sleigh bed, bought years ago, is offset nicely by the classic chintz curtain fabric and the dainty Colefax and Fowler wallpaper. Sophie recently bought and painted the washstand at the end of the bed.

RIGHT Sophie with three of the family's four dogs.





The house used to feel shut off from the countryside and now it embraces it

ABOVE Colefax and Fowler fabric headboards and curtains give the sunny twin guest bedroom a colourful country twist.

RIGHT All the bathroom fittings were in the house when the Kirks bought it. Sophie has painted the tongue-and-groove panel to match the tiles.

The result is a house which feels light, open and spacious without losing its sense of comfort and homeliness; a home created to be sociable and welcoming without sacrificing its period character.

"The house used to feel as though it was shutting itself off from the countryside that surrounds us," says Sophie. "Now I think it embraces it. It's like all the things we have inside: there is no point in having lovely things if they are all stuck away in a cupboard, never to see the light of day. They are there to be enjoyed. I love the visual aspect of it all and the fact that it's all about accumulating and creating memories. This is very much a home which tells a story about our families. It gives us a sense of place." ■

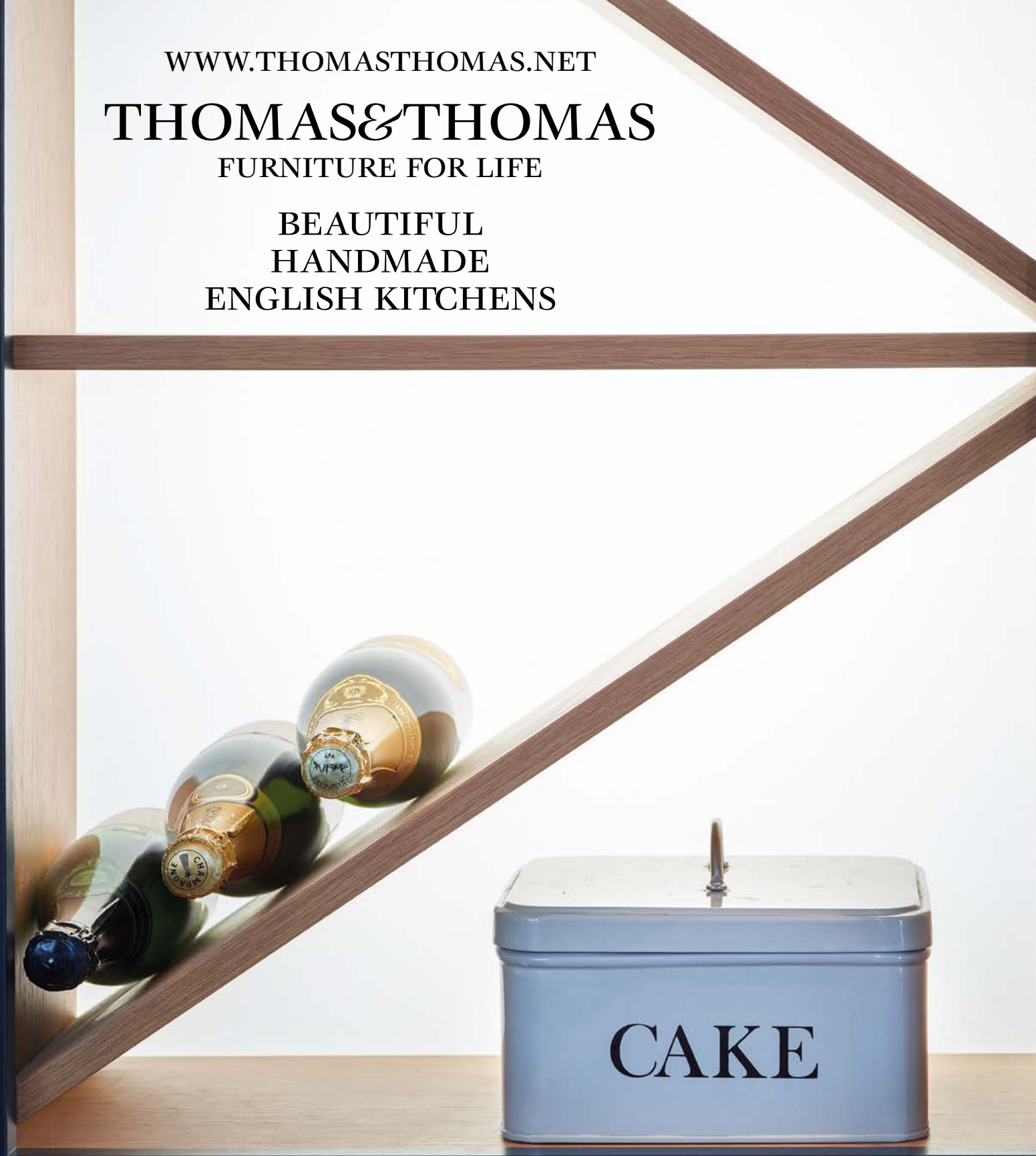


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The simple colour scheme in the sitting room creates a perfect coastal-inspired setting. The distinctive bowls on the coffee table are made by local potter Charlotte Jones and the paintings above the fireplace and on the adjacent wall are by local artist Ben Taffinder.



A house of HAPPY MEMORIES

After more than three decades of family life
in their seventeenth-century home in Cornwall,
Maggie and Mike Black still love every aspect of it

WORDS KATHERINE SORRELL PHOTOGRAPHS ANYA RICE





ABOVE The white-painted kitchen was made by local company Out of Wood. Kitchen textiles, including a tea cosy by Poppy Treffry, hang from quirky hooks made from bent cutlery that came from The Sea Garden in Portscatho.

RIGHT Maggie and Mike at the entrance of their home.

When people say “as soon as I walked through the door I fell in love with the house” it may sound like a cliché, but it is usually heartfelt and true. It certainly was for Maggie and Mike Black when over 30 years ago they saw the house in the Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall that was to prove to be the *coup de foudre* for them both.

Love does, of course, overlook many faults and whilst the 300-year-old granite-and-slate house was in a perfect location, set just minutes from the coastal path, it was by no means perfect when they bought it. Whatever character there had been, had either been removed or covered over, resulting in a somewhat bland and featureless property, in spite of its grand age.

After the couple moved in, Maggie gradually and painstakingly – and on a minimal budget – undertook much of the work herself, uncovering fireplaces,

exposing beams and stripping back layer upon layer of paint on doors and built-in cupboards. “I did a lot of the destruction, then called in a builder to build things up again,” she says. “I remember peeling off textured paint with my fingernails, square inch by square inch.” However, there was one thing that did not need building up again – and which was Maggie’s greatest discovery – a beautiful wattle-and-daub wall concealed below modern plasterwork. “I exposed a little bit of it, and realised there was something lovely going on,” she says. “I took the plaster off with a tiny pickaxe and there it was.” The couple also fitted a new kitchen – handmade by a local company – and a new bathroom.

Over the years, Maggie and Mike have come to an amicable arrangement for home life: Mike does the gardening whilst Maggie, who has recently retired from a career in nursing, is in charge of the decorating. “It works for us,” she laughs. “I’m ▶



RIGHT Maggie discovered the wonderful wattle-and-daub wall upon chipping away some plaster during renovations to the house. The blue sofa came from Loaf and is upholstered in Arran Blue by Ian Mankin.

MIDDLE LEFT Enamelled tea, coffee and sugar canisters, make smart alternative vases and create a symmetrical display on the kitchen windowsill.

MIDDLE RIGHT Mike bought Maggie the large bowl by Charlotte Jones as a retirement present.

BOTTOM RIGHT The decorative chair in the corner of the dining area of the kitchen was made by Rick Hancock, a local wood-and-willow craftsman.





ABOVE Maggie rescued the pews in the dining room from the local village hall when it was being renovated. The rise-and-fall pendant is from Original BTC and the impressive grandfather clock was inherited from Mike's great aunt.

FAR RIGHT The summerhouse makes a base for Maggie and Mike's granddaughters to play in and doubles as a spare bedroom when large numbers of guests come to stay. The floral wigwam is from Ella James.





LEFT The lights on the tongue-and-groove panelling headboard in the master bedroom are from Original BTC. The bedlinen is from The White Company.

LEFT BELOW Set on the Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall, the property is over 300 years old and has been extended several times over the years. More recently, Maggie and Mike have installed a swimming pool, and converted a stable and a barn in the grounds into holiday cottages – Phoebe’s and Folly’s, available through Classic Cottages.

BELOW In Lilly and Isla’s charming bedroom, the bedlinen is from Cabbages & Roses and The White Company. The bag hanging above the bed was made by Maggie’s daughter, Amy, with fabric remnants from Cabbages & Roses.

never bored. The house is very versatile and we have repainted it several times as our tastes have changed over the years. My style is mainly vintage – things I’ve collected over the years and pieces that have been passed around the family.” What has remained constant, however, is Maggie’s appreciation of the colour blue and – whether it is spools of blue thread, a cushion or a book jacket – blue is a unifying aspect of this understated interior with its laid-back, simple Scandinavian feel.

A talented seamstress, Maggie enjoys making things for her granddaughters, Lilly, 11, and Isla, 7, and creates small rabbit people that she calls ‘bunnylugs’, all with adorable clothing and accessories, as well as dolls’ clothes and handbags. One room of the house is devoted to her sewing machines and piles of fabrics, and examples of her work are dotted all around the house. She adores textiles, especially vintage linens and faded florals – The White Company and Cabbages & Roses are particular favourites – and is a huge fan of a shop in Portscatho called ▶





*“If I tire of the house, I’ll be tired of life.
Hopefully that will never happen.”*

The Sea Garden, which sells vintage and antique textiles, homeware and small pieces of furniture. “Christine, who owns it, is such a gorgeous person and does everything so beautifully,” Maggie says. “Lots of my vintage items have come from her shop. Most people go to the supermarket once a week; I go to The Sea Garden. It’s my treat.”

The house has been a constant backdrop to three decades of family life, and has given the couple many happy memories. “We brought up our children, Amy and Tom, here. Amy lives nearby and brings her daughters, Lilly and Isla, over regularly,” says Maggie. “We put in a swimming pool a few years ago, which is a big draw for them and their friends. We love the fact that they use our house so much and keep it alive. We also love having family down to stay – the more the merrier. Even after all these years, I don’t think I’ll ever be bored with this house. I’m constantly tweaking it here and there – and long may it continue. I always say to Mike that if I tire of the house, I’ll be tired of life. Hopefully that will never happen.” ■

ABOVE The bedlinen in this light and tranquil guest bedroom is from Cabbages & Roses and the heart-shaped cardholder is from Cox & Cox.

LEFT White-painted tongue-and-groove panelling provides a coastal feel in the bathroom.





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AT HOME WITH
Kevin McCloud

Good craftsmanship, solitude and tinkering about repairing things are what make a contented home for the *Grand Designs* presenter

After studying history of art and architecture at Cambridge University – where he was a member of the Footlights drama club, along with Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry – Kevin McCloud trained as a theatre designer, then set up a lighting design and manufacturing business. Following a stint on BBC Two's *Homefront* in the late 1990s, he started presenting Channel 4's *Grand Designs* in 1999, and, starting in 2008, he took the show on the road with *Grand Designs Live*. He is also the author of several books on interior design and was awarded an MBE in 2014.

Where do you live and why?

I live in Frome, in the West Country, because it's rural and I love it. I'm not from here – my family are from the East Riding of Yorkshire, but my parents moved south when we were little. It's quiet, which is reason enough to live here.

Is there anywhere else in the world you've ever wanted to live?

I'm quite slow. I like being in one place and don't like rushing around because that's what I do for a living. Consequently, I'm happy up a mountain and am quite happy in isolation. I don't crave cities at all, although I enjoy their energy when I visit them. The South Island in New Zealand would be an obvious destination for me – I'd be very happy to go there.

Is your upbringing reflected anywhere in your interior taste?

I think to a large extent it is. I was brought up in the sixties, which was a relatively material age, but my parents didn't have much money. They were also both Methodists, so my life as a kid revolved around lots of stuff at the chapel, like Methodist Sunday school and Methodist kids' club. As a result, I'm pretty non-conformist, particularly in my material taste and scepticism about consumerism. I guess I've got simple values – stemming from making and doing – that I feel very strongly about. I don't think of myself as a big shopper, but as a repairer of things.

My father was an engineer and immensely practical, so when I was growing up it was completely normal to pick a boiler apart on the kitchen table and have it fixed by the end of the day.

My mother made all of her own and our clothes. She had a tailor's dummy, a sewing machine and a knitting machine. The other day I found a photograph of my brothers and I in our school uniforms,

and the only things we were wearing that weren't made by our mother were the school ties. And maybe our underpants.

Who is a favoured interior designer?

As I trained as a building historian, questions like this always make me think about who I would invite to my dream dinner party. I'd have Inigo Jones, who was a theatre designer and architect who travelled to Italy and was enormously influential in bringing Palladio's ideas to England. Then I'd have John Fowler from Colefax and Fowler. His contribution to interiors has been enormously overlooked; he was a supremely creative man. I'd also have the interwar artist Rex Whistler. The twenties and thirties were a great time to witness changes in art and architecture, so the foremost stage designer and artist of that era, Oliver Messel, would also be at the table. All of these people brought something that was cross-fertilised from another discipline, which I admire a lot.

Should interiors reflect the style or period of a property?

I'm not sure about that. I think it's very important to respect the historical fabric of a building and not to trash craftsmanship. What's required is sensitivity. For instance, I've done that thing where I've put a very contemporary sofa in an old room, with old doors and windows, and it looks great. It's completely reversible and sets up a wonderful dialogue with the old part of the building. Interiors should be theatrical and expose the soft underbelly of our personal taste. There are very few rules and autobiography is really important, along with flair and imagination.

Do you like the memories that furniture gives you?

That's hugely important. If you walk into someone's house and see their books, their furnishings and their paintings, it's so exciting. Memories and attachment are very special, and that's why I'm always a bit nervous about interior design as a radical discipline, because it implies you haven't got the time, wherewithal or interest to do it yourself. Great homes should always reflect where they are, when they were made and who they are for.

Where do you like to shop for your home?

I don't shop. It's exhausting and expensive. It produces a chemical in our brain called dopamine and the clue is in the name. I tend to repair and repurpose. I often find myself going into charity shops, which is

about the extent of my shopping habits. I repaired a hammer yesterday and I'm also repairing an old car from the fifties. I'm very happy doing all of that stuff.

Have you discovered artisan makers whose products you particularly admire?

Loads! We have this thing at *Grand Designs Live* called *Kevin's Green Heroes* where I choose a number of new businesses that nobody knows about. It's a wonderful privilege to find people and put their stuff out there. Tom Raffield springs to mind. He makes steam bent wooden lighting and furniture that's now stocked in Heal's. He's completely brilliant.

When travelling with work, how do you make a hotel homely?

I immediately unpack my washbag and then I de-brand the place by putting all of the promotional rubbish lying around away in a drawer. It reflects my slightly OCD nature.

What would we never find in a home belonging to you?

A leaf blower. What's the point in them? They just move the leaves around, they don't put them away. And they make the most dreadful racket. When we're filming, we can have planes, helicopters and sirens in the distance and it doesn't stop us, but leaf blowers bring everything to a standstill. There's nothing wrong with a good old-fashioned brush.

How should one make a home original?

It's about coming to terms with the material world. I wrote a book called *Kevin McCloud's Principles of Home: Making a Place to Live*, in which I campaigned for a new materialism, that is, to value objects and the human energy and natural resources that go into them. So stop shopping and start mending. Repurposing is a great way to make a home unique.

Finally, what should no English home be without?

A barometer. The one thing that defines an English home – perhaps more than anywhere else in the world – is the weather. A barometer helps you decide how many logs to put on the fire or whether you should get wellies out or sandals. ■

To see *Kevin's Green Heroes* head to *Grand Designs Live*, 29 April to 7 May at ExCel London. Visit granddesignslive.co.uk for more information and tickets.



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STYLE INSPIRATION

Our special section dedicated to design and decorating inspiration begins here ➤

INTO THE ARCHIVES

Those seeking quality prints will be eager to learn of new brand 1838 Wallcoverings launched last autumn. An offshoot of family-owned business Surface Print, the brand delves deep into archives curated by four generations and printed in Lancashire. We particularly admire this pretty Hampton design, which comes in five charming colourways with a 'vintage' flavour.

Hampton wallpaper, £72 a roll, Rosemore collection, 1838 Wallcoverings







Bloomsbury SPIRIT

Capture the joyful celebration of life with clashing fabrics, textures and colourways as favoured by the early twentieth-century set

Those familiar with the works of Virginia Woolf or her sister Vanessa Bell, or perhaps EM Forster or Duncan Grant, and other members of the Bloomsbury Group, will know of the unbridled passion with which they trailblazed their way through the creative world. This same artistic sensibility has long been reflected in a distinctive interior style, itself as colourful as the design aesthetic from which it takes its name. Exploring new possibilities and pushing the boundaries characterises the transgressive feel of this most liberated of decor approaches, where the only rule to follow is to embrace the glorious discordance. ▶

LEFT Painted frescoes

The colourful forms of this painted fireplace in textile designer Molly Mahon's home were directly inspired by the interiors of Charleston, home to Bloomsbury artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

Chair upholstered in Leaf, Moss; fabrics on chair (top to bottom): Mini Burchetts, Petrol; Lani, Mud; Leaf, Turmeric; Coffee Bean, Lichen; Leaf, Moss; Bunty, Rose; Mini Burchetts, Blush; Love Doves, Mud; Ive Doves, Cornflower; Leaf, Indigo, all £142 a metre, Molly Mahon

ABOVE Creative ceramics

Draw together exotic influences with bold colour combinations to create pleasingly harmonious mismatches. Temera tableware, from £12 for a mug, Anthropologie



ABOVE Creative expression

Sunlight floods this bohemian workspace, brought to life by the haphazard vibrancy of Emma Bridgewater's wallpaper design, whilst red accents and clusters of brushes in desktop jars echo the artistic flair of the paint-flecked print.

Wallpaper, *Splatter, Ink*, £51 a roll; cushions on chair: *Polka Dot, Black/Red*, £40 a metre, *backed in Love, Grey*, £40 a metre; *Coral in Lion Yellow*, £50 a metre, all Emma Bridgewater for Sanderson; cushion on seat of chair, *Saxon, Red/Chocolate*, £35 a metre, *backed in Deben, Red*, £40 a metre, both Sanderson.

RIGHT Unleash wild combinations

Add a touch of free-spirited thinking with the use of clashing colours in fabric trims. Here, bright fuchsia sits alongside vivid turquoise and royal purple in angular geometric swirls, whilst stripes, spots and triangles run the gamut with forays into tones of burnt orange, scarlet and gold.

D'Oyly Carte braid (T801-05), £77 a metre; *Operetta braid* (T803-02), £77 a metre; *Ida braid* (T800-06), £47 a metre; *Sullivan braid* (T802-05), £47 a metre, all Savoy Braids collection, Osborne & Little

FAR RIGHT Natural forms

The Bloomsbury Group's aesthetic mores were defined in large part by their reaction to modernism – overthrowing long-held notions of tradition and form were paramount to creating a playful sense of irony that drew inspiration from multiple sources, including the natural world. Here, organic motifs laid out in an idiosyncratic pattern take inspiration from the Bloomsbury era and lend an alternative feel to the restrained form of this Roman blind, whilst the *éventail* bouquet lampshade draws both prints together with a colourful touch.

Blind, Bloomsbury, Denim/Spice, £19 a metre; *lampshade, Fitzroy, Spice*, £19 a metre, both Bloomsbury collection, Clarke & Clarke ▶



*“The forms of art are inexhaustible;
but all lead by the same road of
aesthetic emotion to the same
world of aesthetic ecstasy.”*

Clive Bell, art critic, (1881–1964)





ABOVE Overthrowing tradition

Varied textures and myriad tones add to the sense of playful discord. Choose textiles to reflect this non-conformist approach, with abstract shapes and naive forms sitting in comfortable proximity under a kaleidoscopic rainbow of colour.

Hillerod throw, £140, Culture Vulture

ABOVE RIGHT Colour and pattern

Virginia and Leonard Woolf's seventeenth-century cottage, Monk's House, has long welcomed visitors inside its mint-green interior, said to be a favourite hue of the Virginia's. The Escher-esque pattern of Fired Earth's encaustic tiles provides a fitting counterpoint to a similarly pleasing palette of calm cream, sage green and fresh mint.

Estremoz encaustic tiles, £224.70

a square metre, Fired Earth

RIGHT Botanical beauty

Democratising art forms was a key tenet of the Bloomsbury movement. The floral design in this delicate Japanese print is charmingly offset by vintage china in classic shades of blue and white.

Wallpaper, Kyoto, Summer, £75 a roll, Fired Earth ■



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sheers introduce a fluid sense of
ever-shifting pattern and movement.
*Rosa fabric from the Renoir
collection, £53 a metre, Kai*

Diaphanous DELIGHT

Soft, subtle and translucent – sheers add privacy
and romance to classic and contemporary interiors



Muslin, lace, voile and contemporary sheers share the tantalising allure of textiles that reveal as well as conceal. Allowing light through by degrees is a role sheer fabric can play better than any other. Back in 1948, HG Hayes Marshall – then head of interior decoration at Fortnum & Mason – summed it up bluntly when he wrote that most people use these fabrics to prevent people peering into their parlours or confronting an ugly outlook. And JC Loudon almost exactly a century earlier, in his *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, pointed to the exclusion of insects as the main purpose of muslin curtains, together with softening light coming into a room. We still use sheer fabrics for all these purposes, but today sheers have widened their design brief and extended their function.

Sheer fabrics have come into our homes by several routes. Handmade lace first gained currency in Italy in the fifteenth century. True lace is not woven; needle lace creates patterns using buttonhole stitch; bobbin lace, by carrying thread on bobbins around pins set into a pillow. Variations on these techniques spread through Europe in the sixteenth century with Honiton, Venice, Genoa, Lyon and Bruges amongst areas known for their distinctive styles. Linen was the usual thread for early lacemaking and, as the work was slow and expensive to buy, lace was used sparingly for precious items such as altar cloths and for trimming garments and fine linens.

Early in the nineteenth century, machines began to take over from handwork, making lace more generally available. Nottingham became the leading centre for machine-made lace which was also exported worldwide.



ABOVE LEFT

Dip-dyeing achieves a pretty graduated ombré effect which has been enhanced here with an embellished tracery of feathery stems. Curtain in *Hortelano* (131893) £96 a metre, Harlequin

ABOVE RIGHT

A gently scalloped edge and damask pattern gives the delicate gauzy lace of this pretty tablecover an heirloom feel.

Arran 4303 cotton lace tablecover, from £201.42 for 170 x 170 cm size, MYB Textiles

MYB Textiles in Ayrshire is the only company still weaving some of its lace on nineteenth-century looms, as design director Margo Graham explains: “As lace mills closed from the 1930s, the company purchased old looms and spare parts. We are still using 20 of them and on three we are working with the original pattern cards, including *Lucynda* in the Fraser collection, one of our most popular designs.”

This company is also the only weaver of Madras, a cut-face lace in premium cotton where threads cross from one element of the design to another and are then trimmed. This lace gained its name from the quantity exported to India when it was part of the British Empire. As well as selling lace and Madras by the metre, MYB supplies lace curtain panels, bedcovers ▶

LEFT Layered window treatments in fabrics of different weights add an elegantly contemporary note.

Curtains in *Ronda*, £66 a metre; Roman blind in *Marbella Circle Embroidery*, £84 a metre, both from the *Natural Glimmer Collection* by Anna French





OPPOSITE The relaxed, open weave of this softly draping sheer fabric works beautifully for a chic Scandinavian-style room setting.

Cellini pure linen wide-width semi-sheer, £56.50, Romo

LEFT The delicate pattern of Morris's iconic Willow Bough design is translated here onto semi-sheer lightweight fabric used to create a graceful screen.

Pure Willow Bough Embroidery Fabric, £110 a metre, Morris & Co

BELOW LEFT An artfully sketched design of meadow flowers in powdery pastels suggests a softly ethereal mood.

Campanella sheer fabric, £100 a metre, Création Baumann



in standard sizes, tablecloths and made-to-measure roller blinds – the perfect solution for screening bedroom windows.

Interior designer Joanna Wood has observed lace making a comeback for interiors. “I have had a number of requests for lace recently and it is particularly pretty in bathrooms or in bedrooms beneath thick wool curtains,” she says.

Some machine-woven lace, including Madras, is worked over a muslin base, and muslin in finest spun cotton first came to Britain from India in the seventeenth century, imported by the East India company. Until the spinning mule, invented in 1779, was able to provide yarn fine enough to weave muslin in England, it continued to be imported from India. But by the end of the century, and particularly during the Regency period, embroidered, sprigged or spotted muslin was the fashionable choice for ladies' clothing, as well as for curtaining windows and beds. Spotted muslin, such as Muslin 233 by Hesse & Company, is a particular favourite of Joanna Wood's for children's rooms. “The spot gives the fabric more body and it is a fabric that washes well too,” she adds.

Muslin has a more open weave than voile or batiste, its soft, drapeable first cousin. Switzerland has been famous since the eighteenth century for these finest of textiles and from the early nineteenth century for embroidered voiles, some imitating lace. Simon Playle discovered them in 1989 and his collection – one of interior designers' best kept secrets – now includes many traditional patterns, some derived from antique handkerchiefs. “The quality of weaving in these Swiss cotton batistes is second to none,” he says. “At the time I first encountered them they were a revelation as the alternatives were poor-quality synthetics.” Andrew Ginger at four-poster bed specialist Beaudesert, uses voiles to dress beds, recently an early nineteenth-century Empire bed, using a Simon Playle voile embroidered with laurel wreaths. “These fine voiles appear deceptively simple but the fineness of the weave is sensational, and its whiteness and lightness has always lent itself to window drapery and bedhangings.”

The Swiss tradition also takes in contemporary sheers, such as those found at Création Baumann's London showroom. Plain, printed and with innovative weave structures, these are chosen for both domestic and commercial situations. Like many sheer fabrics, most are 300cm wide



LEFT Diaphanous sheers printed with painterly floral print add romantic allure. *Curtains in Acantha* 322598, £125 a metre, Zoffany

BELOW Subtle texture amplifies the gently light-filtering effect of these modern full-length sheers. *Curtains in Raindrop linen semi-sheer*, £93 a metre, and *Nara pure linen wide-width sheer*, £123 a metre, both Mark Alexander for Romo

and railroaded, meaning the fabric width becomes the drop, to avoid joins across a wide window. “Our sheers are woven in Trevira,” says Gareth Williams for the company. “This yarn is inherently flame-retardant, colours don’t fade and the technology is now so advanced that most people can’t tell the difference between one of our slightly irregular weaves and a sheer woven in a natural yarn.” Sinfonia is one of the company’s semi-transparent sheers that replicates a linen weave. In 42 colours, it has been in the collection for 30 years and can even be ordered with a weighted hem.

At Harlequin and Zoffany many new techniques are applied to their wide-width sheers, as Claire Vallis, design director, reveals. “We can appliqué onto dissolvable fabric so that the finished sheer ends up as just the structure, or use a burn-out effect on printed sheers where a dissolving process leaves the design as a fine gauze. Yarns with a particular character, such as shrink yarns, are washed and then shrunk for a puckered surface effect. And we introduce lots of dyeing techniques, including spraying fine jets of dye onto the fabric, or folding, pleating or tying fabric to create different dye effects for an artisan look and handle.”

These contemporary transparent and semi-transparent sheers are popular for large windows, bi-fold doors and glazed extensions where heavy curtains are not needed. The optimum choice is sheer panels fitted on one track with panels in a solid colour running on a separate track, giving the option of different configurations to filter sunlight. Sheers are also hung as informal dividers instead of a solid screen.

Sheer fabrics in the Pure collection at Morris & Co have forged a new path, rediscovering the extraordinary quality of William Morris’s designs by delivering them in white and off-white. This shock tactic has been met with acclaim. One challenge for Alison Gee, head



designer at Morris & Co, was developing a stitched pattern on an invisible woven ground for Pure Ceiling Embroidery, taken from a Morris design for ceiling wallpaper. “The look appears both like lace and hand-stitching,” she says, “and the transparent ground makes the pattern appear to float when light streams through.” Another ceiling wallpaper design, Pure Net Ceiling Appliqué, embroidered on fine linen with appliquéd flower heads, is a semi sheer that gives privacy to windows when hung unlined but also works perfectly as bedhangings, lined curtains, bedcovers and for covering cushions. These Pure textiles are not quite lace, muslin, or voile, and not contemporary sheer either. The collection illustrates why fashion for interiors is clever when it looks back as it moves forward. ■

Next month A look at digital printing



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A Sense of Space

For many, maximising light and space in a home is the holy grail of decorating. Our 29-page space-enhancing special provides structural and decorative guidance to help fulfil this aim

As personal sanctuaries, our homes need to offer us space to relax and breathe, as well as space to live the lives we lead. Far more nuanced than simply painting rooms in off-whites and clearing clutter – which can result in a kind of soulless interior – the judicious choice of colour and flooring, and clever use of optical illusion and remodelling, can transform poorly configured layouts and achieve space-enhancing miracles in almost any home. ►



Structural INGENUITY

Enhance interiors by creating more light and space with some carefully considered architectural improvements





LEFT Adding a fully glazed garden room and embracing open-plan living creates a feeling of space and allows light to flood in.

Orford kitchen, from £35,000, Davonport

ABOVE The combination of an open apex roof, glazed external doors and roof lights makes for a light and airy interior in this oak frame home by Border Oak.

The desire to create more natural light in interior spaces is a key motivator for homeowners to make improvements or renovations. Whilst accentuating and capitalising on available light and space to create an airy, spacious interior can often require serious structural consideration, there are also less invasive architectural devices that can be employed to achieve the desired effect.

HARMONIOUS ADDITION

According to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 66 per cent of us dream of adding a spacious, light-enhancing glass extension to our homes. Whilst a traditional conservatory is certainly one of the most popular ways of doing this, contemporary glazed extensions have become increasingly desirable in recent years as their negligible framing offers maximum light penetration and creates minimal impact – something which is particularly relevant to listed buildings. “Such an addition is often preferred over a sympathetic or in-keeping extension as it can successfully blur the lines between original and new,” says designer Cherie Lee of Cherie Lee Interiors. ▶

SPACE ENHANCING



ABOVE Introducing glazed doors can help combat the 10 per cent reduction in daylight caused by covered terraces. *Woodwork in Whiting eggshell, £26 for 750ml, Edward Bulmer Natural Paints*

LEFT In addition to creating an inviting, light-filled space, a glass extension, such as this one by Alitex, should improve and complement the original building, both inside and out.

BELOW LEFT Glazed floors are a highly effective way of transferring light between levels, especially in restricted areas. Bisca offers bespoke sandblasted designs if privacy is a consideration.

Whilst permission for an extension is more likely to be granted if it is at the rear of a property, do also consider extending into the often restricted and redundant region created by a side return. This is a popular solution for space-starved interiors, especially when creating a generous kitchen-diner or family room. Alternatively, inset glass structures, which connect and unify disjointed areas or outbuildings, can instantly improve flow, space and light around the home. On a more ambitious note, atrium-style glasshouses, and double-height or glazed basement extensions drench the home in light and bring cohesion to all levels.

OVERHEAD ILLUMINATION

If seeking additional sources of light without needing or wanting to build an extension, light wells or roof lanterns allow large amounts of light to flood into the home. "Overhead lightwells can offer up to 75 per cent more daylight saturation than traditional windows," explains Hugo Tugman, architect and founder of Architect Your Home.

A roof lantern is often regarded as the definitive device when looking to enhance a space and illuminate dark or claustrophobic interiors, as it instantly floods the area below with daylight whilst simultaneously retaining privacy. "Set within a flat roof, lanterns will usually be constructed in square, rectangular or octagonal shapes, as these designs offer the most efficient use of space and natural light," explains Jonathan Hey, managing director of Westbury





ABOVE A light-enhancing entirely glazed, frameless extension is less likely to impact on historic buildings.
Structural glazing by Trombe

LEFT Transom windows above internal doors allow soft light to flow between rooms.
Cushion fabrics from a selection at Clarke & Clarke



Garden Rooms. “However, oval, circular and domed styles can also be achieved and are often specified for stairwells or imposing entrances,” Hey continues. In recent years, roof lanterns have proved most popular when utilising space down the side of a house or between adjoining structures. Not only does this create a light-filled room below, but it also sheds light into the areas beyond.

Alternatively, consider opening up flat or pitched roof sections with sleek structural expanses of glazed panels. For the budget conscious, sun tunnels can provide an effective means of bringing daylight to windowless areas, such as landings and ensuite.

Roof lights offer 40 per cent more daylight than standard windows, which makes them ideal when supplementing existing arrangements or illuminating conversions and extensions. Try Clement or Lumen for conservation and heritage designs.

FLEXIBLE FENESTRATION

Investing in additional exterior glazing will prove fruitful when endeavouring to open up dark, cramped interiors and will dramatically improve light sources. It is important though to be aware that permission may be required for more ambitious projects.

“French, bi-fold or sliding patio doors are always a popular solution,” states Tugman, “and I would recommend the bigger the better, whilst still adhering to the scale and proportion of the property.” Bi-fold doors allow for extensive glazed openings, with Neil Ginger, CEO at Origin, championing “corner or bay-window-style configurations that allow the whole corner of a home to be opened up.” However, for the traditionalist, banks of full-height timber windows and patio doors may prove a more palatable option. It is worth noting that sympathetically applied modernist expanses ▶

ABOVE In addition to creating an inviting, light-filled space, a glass extension should improve and complement the original building, both inside and out.
Bespoke Shaker-style kitchen, from £35,000, Tom Howley



The glazed apex above the external doors and windows in this kitchen allows more light to flood in.
Bespoke kitchen, from £35,000, Martin Moore

SPACE ENHANCING



Roof lanterns are a highly effective way of transferring light into inner rooms and have the added bonus of raising ceiling heights. *Bespoke roof lantern with decorative moulded upstand by Vale Garden Houses*



ABOVE For added versatility, orangery-style extensions provide the benefit of a solid extension with the bonus of plenty of space-enhancing glazing. *Bespoke orangery, £105,000, David Salisbury*

RIGHT Glazed internal screens make the most of natural light throughout the day. Here, metal framing has been used to ensure a slim, unobtrusive profile. *Interior design by Cherie Lee Interiors*



of single- or double-height frameless glazing can add valid architectural interest, as well as fill gloomy interiors with light.

Daylight entering from a number of directions will prove more effective than a single source, so do also consider introducing dual-aspect windows to maximise daylight. Alternatively, simply replace solid external doors with glazing or modify them with glass panelling for an instant secondary source of light. Installing classical rows of clerestory windows at higher levels can also ensure valuable light gain, and allow for cross ventilation.

PRACTICAL APPROACH

Of course, any significant expanse of glazing brings forth issues of energy-efficiency. Opting for double, or even triple glazing – complete with low-emissivity coatings and argon-filled units – should ensure adherence to regulations and protect against both heat loss and overheating. If considering having south-facing glazing perhaps look into having specialist tints, along with automated ventilation systems, to ensure a comfortable living environment.

For inaccessible or larger expanses of glazing, the experts at Bartholomew Glass recommend self-cleaning glass to make maintenance easier. Privacy may be an issue that needs to be addressed, too.

Whilst traditional timber framing can be used for an array of glazed structures and apertures, Nick Bashford, sales director of Alitex and Marston & Langinger, advocates the use of aluminium frames. “The sheer strength and durability of aluminium makes it the sensible, sustainable material of choice for glass structures. The frame and glazing bars can be made thinner, allowing more light to flood the space.” This is also true of steel and bronze. For truly frameless structures, look to glazed panels secured with supportive glass beams, silicones or adhesives.

INTERNAL ENHANCEMENT

Opening up existing internal layouts will also significantly enhance light-starved or cramped spaces and allow for the integration of under-utilised areas, such as unloved corridors, transforming once poky rooms into visually appealing and useable spaces. However, if vast open-plan layouts are not for you, ►



ABOVE Available for flat or pitched roofs, sun tunnels funnel light into rooms devoid of light. *Flexible and rigid sun tunnels, from £318, Velux*

SPACE ENHANCING



ABOVE This two-storey oak extension by Welsh Oak Frame employs glazing within the traditional framework to gain light and a feeling of space.

RIGHT Glass balustrading brings a light touch to dark or compact hallways. Bespoke balustrades and staircases by Bisca

glazed walls or screening, and even glass floors, will boost light levels and offer both separation and space-enhancing visual connections between rooms or levels. Steel window manufacturer Crittal recommends “beautifully crafted walls of slim-profile steel glazing to reflect the timeless style of a period house”. Bisca and Cantifix offer bespoke structural flooring specifically tailored to requirements.

Glass staircases and balustrades, too, can transform dark, cramped areas into light, bright, open spaces. However, as with all structural works, strict regulation is required, along with the use of specialist toughened safety glass. Acoustic glass can also prove highly effective at reducing sound transmission when partitioning or screening rooms. For adding a degree of privacy to doors or screening, look to Pilkington’s Oriel and Texture patterned and etched decorative glass collections.

On a less grandiose scale, repositioning or enlarging doorways can also significantly benefit dark or compact rooms. Alternatively, look to transom windows or, as Tugman suggests: “Simply opt for glazed doors to amplify daylight and spatial awareness.” Borrowing space and light from adjoining rooms, in the true tradition of a classic enfilade, allows for an unhindered vista through the home, making it instantly appear more spacious. ■



ABOVE Roof lights allow more light penetration than vertical windows and can be used as a sole or supplementary source.

Chichester undermount double-door washstand, from £1,770, Neptune

LEFT Double-height glazing instantly opens up internal layouts. However, do consider heat absorption – especially on south-facing facades. Bronze glazed panels and doors within an oak frame, Architectural Bronze Casements



FEATURE PAULA WOODS PHOTOGRAPHS P90 (BISCA) © JAKE FITZJONES; P91 (CLARKE & CLARKE) © D BLACKMORE; (TROMBE) © JAKE FITZJONES; P92 (MARTIN MOORE KITCHENS) © NICHOLAS VARSLEY; P93 (CHERIE LEE INTERIORS) © RAY MAIN; P94 (BISCA) © JAKE FITZJONES

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A mirror positioned opposite windows will reflect maximum daylight around the room and if the aim is to create a feature rather than a looking glass, employ antiqued glass or else more abstract decorative treatments, such as this chic four-pane mirror with cross-hatch detail.

Mirror IMAGE

Using mirrors throughout the home can offer a whole new perspective on both traditional and modern tastes



From Narcissus and beyond, the magical relationship between light, form and reflection has long exerted a subliminal pull on the human psyche. Though notable historical psychoanalysts may have argued the mirror's role is key to the definition of self, on a lighter note this most classic of reflective surfaces serves an equally important purpose inside the home when used to create different moods. Whether showcased as a large-scale feature or carefully placed as delicate detailing, the many and varied facets of mirrored surfaces can lend an altogether different air unique to each interior.

Harnessing the allure of mirrors in the home plays on their role as a natural focal point in any room. Where once their long-established function lent itself primarily to discreet wall-mounted positioning on hallway walls, as overmantels above fireplaces, or above bathroom basins, today's more contemporary approach sees mirrors and mirrored finishes being used in ways which gently nudge tradition into new territory.

Oversized panels can be used to great effect across large areas. Living areas offer the perfect opportunity to line alcoves, for example, or even entire walls, to

create an intrigue of reflections which highlight judiciously curated accessories. Using the same technique in a private space, such as a bedroom, requires a more subtle diffusion of light. Here, muted *verre églomisé* finishes – whereby a design and gold or silver leaf are applied to the back of glass to emulate a mirrored finish – can create a softer refraction in keeping with the intimate setting. When applied to tinted glass, this technique offers a multitude of beautiful tonal effects. Rupert Bevan, Dominic Schuster, Rough Old Glass and Clare Mosley are just a few who offer beautiful *églomisé* panels or other specialist finishes such as foxed glass. Sterling Studios is notable for its wide range of hand-painted designs – from chinoiserie to cherry blossom and more abstract cloud, chain and crinkle effects.

Happily, creating a modern twist on tradition does not necessarily mean forsaking one for the other. Whilst capturing the human gaze is a defining element of the ubiquitous bathroom mirror, widening the focal point with a large-scale design can cast a new and illuminating aspect on the room. For instance, Rupert Bevan's antiqued mirror bathroom cabinet (above) captures the light streaming in through

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT

The *verre églomisé* finish of this overmantel panel is brought into relief with clean black lines. Crosby mirror, £5,040, Ochre RV Astley antique mirror three-drawer chest in brass, £1,422, Houseology Antiqued mirror bathroom cabinet, £5,040, Rupert Bevan Lene Bjerre Felia mirror in gold, £399, Houseology

Always take into account the allure of the reflection in any mirror. Here a chandelier is elegantly echoed and framed. No60 Large Adam Panel Mirror in Antique Dutch gold-leaf finish, £2,380, Overmantels





LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM

Bold block-colour can work well on contemporary-style mirror frames.

Flora eight petals mirror, £800, Balineum

A panelled wall with antiqued mirror in Old Bronze by Dominic Schuster makes for a chic dining room.

Mirrored wall tiles create an illusion of additional space in a bathroom.

Antique mirrored bevelled wall tiles, £28.99, My Furniture

RIGHT *Gubi Adnet mirror, from £519.50, Houseology*

BELOW Smooth surfaces and simple shapes keep this mirrored Hollywood-style dressing table in keeping with its classic heritage. *Linea oval dressing table, £13,989, Simpsons London*



SPACE ENHANCING



traditional sash windows, offsetting twin art deco wall lamps and classic marble twin basins. Bevan notes that employing larger swathes of mirrored glass serves as “a fabulous wall decoration”, adding that it also “creates the illusion of increased light and space”.

For a similar effect on a smaller scale, opting for bevelled-edge rectangular mirrored wall tiles can provide an equally original take on the use of light in a traditional bathroom space; whereas in kitchen areas, mirrored splashbacks provide both a practical and aesthetic function. Both Humphrey Munson and Smallbone of Devizes practice this to great effect in kitchen design.

Mirror finishes and detailing need not be restricted to wall surfaces and can make an elegant cladding for furniture. Consider the use of slimline panelling, such as on the sleek oval

dressing table from Simpsons Mirrors (*above*), to capture a feminine old-Hollywood glamour, or an antiqued-mirror finish, such as on the chest of drawers by RV Astley (*previous page*) for a more defined line.

Whilst mirrors and mirror finishes maximise natural light by reflecting it around a room, they also sparkle wondrously in candlelight or firelight and are an invaluable feature for imbuing night-time settings with a magical ambience. Interior designer Nicholas Haslam has notably used mirrors to transformative effect on table tops, enhancing the glamour and atmosphere of candlelight during evening entertaining and showing guests in the most flattering light. In every setting and every use, what a mirror reflects is still therefore the most important consideration of all. ►



ABOVE *Pier glass water gilded and toned frame with verre églomisé panel, £550, Clare Mosley*

SPACE ENHANCING

INSPIRATIONAL INTERIORS

Particularly prevalent in restaurants and hotels, mirrored elements add a playful ambivalence to spaces dedicated to leisure and relaxation. Here, we consider a few spaces to visit for inspiration.

- *The Ritz*

Set a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace, beyond the majestic space of Green Park, The Ritz hotel's restaurant features an ornate mirror-panel wall set in regal splendour amid plush velvet upholstery underneath a frescoed ceiling.

- *The Connaught Bar*

Shelves lined with *verre églomisé* at the Connaught Bar in The Connaught hotel twinkle at night and magnify the impact of sparkling silver barware.

- *Waddesdon Manor*

Created to impress by Baron de Rothschild in the nineteenth century, Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire has an abundance of ornate mirrors, such as this one in the Blue Dining Room, in its French-inspired interiors.

- *Rosewood London*

The Mirror Room restaurant at the Rosewood hotel in Covent Garden features a modern mosaic of floor-to-ceiling decorative mirrors, each positioned at an angle to create a surprising yet charming perspective.

- *Bob Bob Ricard*

This iconic Soho eatery boasts inlaid mirror panels in both the gilt-trim fitted furniture and the recessed ceilings to chime with the elegant Orient Express-inspired design. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

The restaurant at
The Ritz in London.
The Connaught Bar at The
Connaught hotel in London.
The Blue Dining Room at
Waddesdon Manor in
Buckinghamshire.
The French Dining Room at
Cliveden House in Berkshire.
Le Salon Vert at L'Escargot,
London's oldest
French restaurant.

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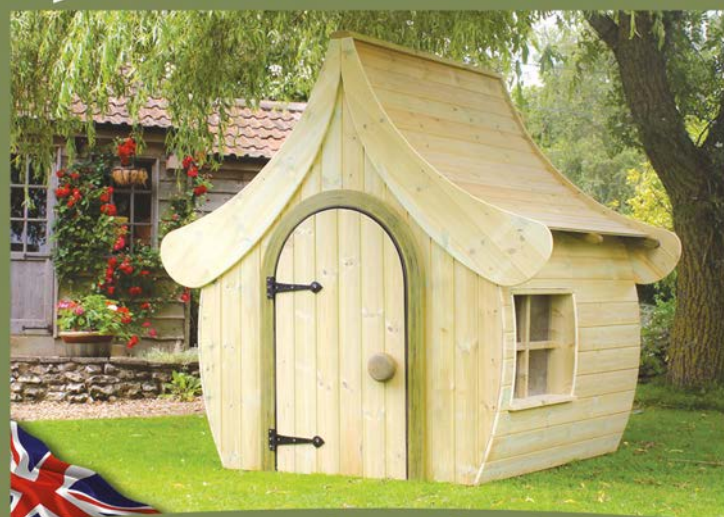
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COLOUR CHOICES

PAINT

Experts recommend the best paint colours to make rooms feel open and airy, yet still inviting, without any hint of blandness

Colour saturation, hue and paint finish all have a significant impact on the feeling of light and space in any interior. Colours with a cool undercurrent are widely regarded as 'recessive', whilst rich hues tend to 'advance' for a cossetting mood. Warm pastels can offer both benefits. Here, experts explain why their favourite space-enhancing colours work.

1&2 Edward Bulmer of Edward Bulmer Natural Paints

"Aerial Tint (1), a powdery grey-blue, is a fantastic complement to good architectural bones, helping to give a sense of scale and proportion. Big-up the architecture and you will big-up the space. Eau de Nile (2), as we call it, is definite but not assertive. It does this well as it is a greyish tone with enough green to respond to natural light and give a warm hue."

£41.50 for 2.5l Emulsion, Edward Bulmer Natural Paints

3 Ruth Mottershead, Paint & Paper Library

"Leather, a collection of five shades of the same colour, works well to reflect light into a room. For darker rooms that crave light, paint all the walls of the room the same shade for the greatest effect. My personal favourite is Leather III (3), for its versatility."

£46.50 for 2.5l Pure Flat Emulsion, Paper & Paint Library

4 Judy Smith, colour consultant, Crown Paints

"Watery greys are airy and dreamy, and will give that feeling of spaciousness. For a gentle grey, I particularly like Crown Paints' English Manor (4) from the Period Collection. It is the perfect shade for avoiding that clinical feel when decorating with off-whites. It comes in Flat Matt Emulsion and Eggshell, so walls, panelling, skirting and radiators can be painted in the same tone for an unbroken, open look."

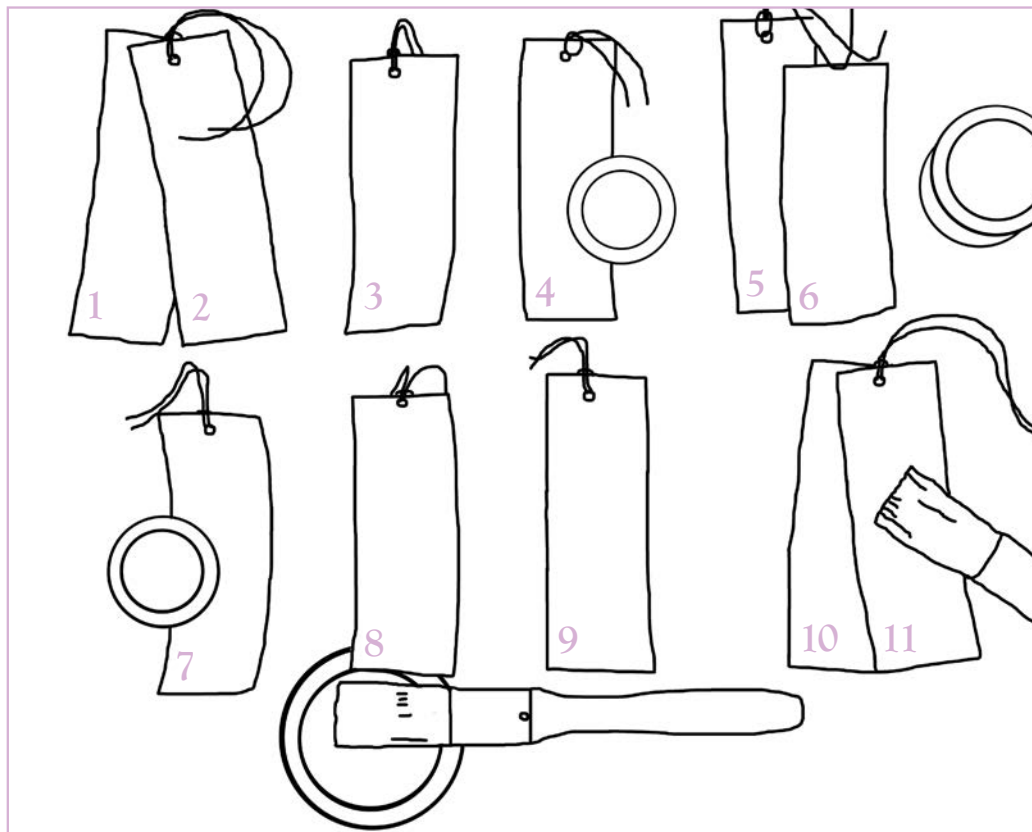
£24.99 for 2.5l Matt Emulsion, Crown Paints

5&6 Alyce Taylor, senior stylist, Sanderson

"Thanks to their intrinsically fresh feel, pastels are a great way to lighten a room. Cooler tones, such as Dusty Lilac (5), are particularly suited to south-facing rooms as they balance warmth and define the space. Kingly Grey (6) mixes the masculine hues of grey with the feminine tones of lilac, keeping this colour from being sugary sweet, yet retaining its ability to inspire an airy aesthetic."

£43 for 2.5l Matt Emulsion, Sanderson Paints ▶

SPACE ENHANCING

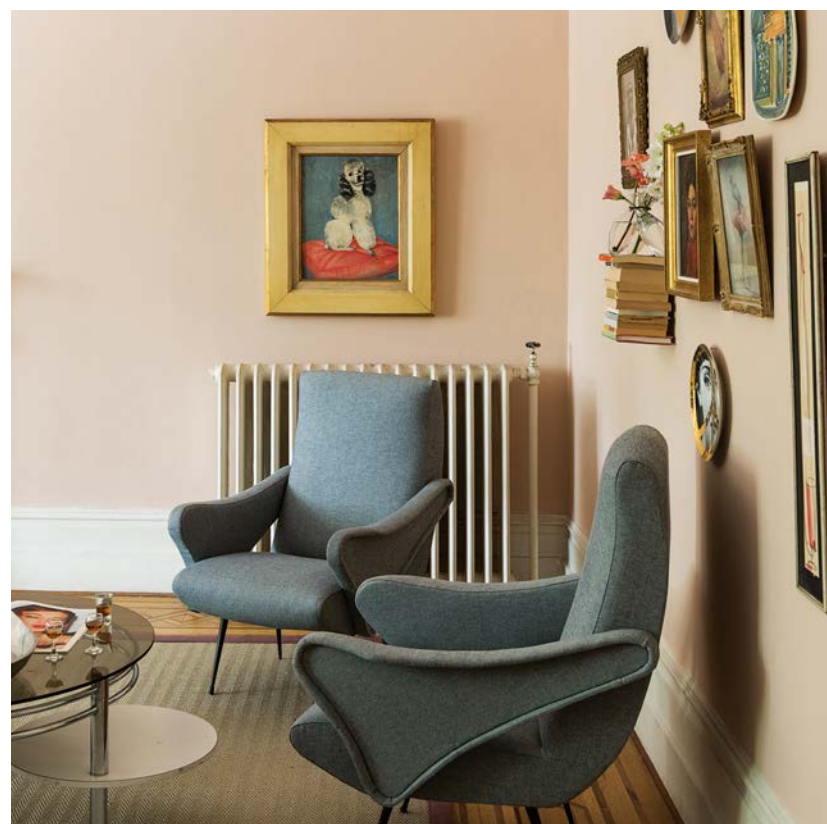


7 Cathryn Helsby, head of marketing and design, Earthborn
 “For rooms with warm, natural light, opt for something from the cooler end of our palette. Bugle (7) has a slightly cooler feel as it contains a hint of blue and grey. This is a colour which works particularly well for rooms which are south facing. It absorbs light in a lovely way, so helps control light levels in a room naturally.”
 £38 for 2.5l Claypaint finish, Earthborn

8 Andy Greenall, head of design, Little Greene
 “A barely-there pink is perfect for creating light airiness but with a touch of warmth. Opt for Dorchester PinkMid (8), which was inspired by a colour used in the Dorchester Hotel in London during the 1960s.”
 £42 for 2.5l Absolute Matt Emulsion, Little Greene

9 Peter Gomez, head of design, Zoffany
 “Natural shades of pink have a stony base, which, when placed on the walls, creates a stripped-back look with a sense of simplicity that augments the feeling of space. Our Tuscan Pink (9), in Flat Emulsion, has an exquisite chalky finish with a putty hue that enhances the natural, uncovered feel.”
 £45 for 2.5l Flat Emulsion, Zoffany

10&11 Ian West, managing director, Lakeland Paints
 “Bengt (10) is a cool green, with a hint of blue and grey, and is quite distinctive, yet easy to accessorise with contrasting or complementary colours that can make it appear either warmer or cooler. Perfect for rooms of any aspect. Dawn Mist (11) – the softest of our grey tones – is less stark than brilliant white. When used in rooms with plenty of natural light, it takes on a subtly different appearance – depending on the time of day – making a room feel more dynamic.”
 £47.30 for 5l Matt, Lakeland Paints ■



TOP RIGHT Cool hues are seen as ‘recessive’ and can help to open out a room. To stop a cool blue room looking cold, add accessories in tones of azure and turquoise to inject warmer blue/green details. Iceberg 2122-5, from £19.50 for 0.94l, Regal Select Flat range, Benjamin Moore

ABOVE Although rich dark colours are seen to be ‘advancing’ and can create a cossetting mood in schemes, warm pale hues, such as this pink, can imbue warmth to a room yet still retain light and enhance a sense of spaciousness. Setting Plaster, £43.50 for 2.5l Estate Emulsion, Farrow & Ball

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FLOORING CHOICES

STONE

Neutral tones and subtle patination in stone and porcelain enhance a spacious mood

The floor is the second largest expanse in any room after the walls, and so, if looking to ensure a home feels light and bright, the right choice of flooring is of paramount importance. Depending on the type of flooring and the material it is made from, there are various ways that the floor can enhance the available light. The colour of the material can make a space feel light and airy; the format and layout of a stone or wood floor can encourage long sight lines across the room; and carpets with elongating patterns create a sense of space.

Natural stone will not be uniform in patina, so it is important to select stones with neutral-coloured variations or less densely varied marbling to ensure a light overall effect. Anna Bilton, design director at Helen Green Design, explains, "Light stone is always key to brightening a room, and mollisol is a great uniform limestone with very few fossils. The reflective characteristics of marble make it a popular option as it allows light from all surfaces to reflect off one another; marble slabs with the fewest veins ensure a space looks as big as possible because the busier the stone, the smaller the space will appear. Slab as opposed to tile in all types of stone allows a space to look bigger and lighter."

Fired Earth's creative director, Colin Roby-Welford, agrees stone flooring with a lustrous finish brightens interiors. "Beautifully honed white marbles and creamy limestones have a subtle sheen that's ideal for introducing gentle, natural-looking light into traditional interiors. These stones have a timeless appeal and there's an endless variety of shades and formats to choose from."

Mid-tone coloured stone will have an open feel but also adds contrast without being too dark. Try shades of oatmeal, sand, biscuit, ivory and cloud. Joss Thomas, founder and managing director of Indigenous, says, "Creamy tones with soft speckling and honey hues are warm, bright and very forgiving, without being stark." Louisa Morgan from Mandarin Stone says, "Avoid dark greys and blacks and choose pale neutrals such as greys and taupes that will bounce light around a room."

Alternatively, Jane Addis, designer at Original Style, advocates porcelain. "Not only does porcelain flooring in light tones add glamour to the room, it's very easy to maintain and clean. Also, reflective surfaces tend to make smaller spaces appear larger."

- Select stones with gently nuanced changes in colouration
- Utilise the light-enhancing reflective quality of glossy finishes
- Use marble with fewer veins and wide gaps between the veins
- If selecting limestone, choose creamy limestone with a subtle sheen
- Mid-tone coloured stone is warm yet not enclosing
- Minimise grout lines which impede visual flow ▶

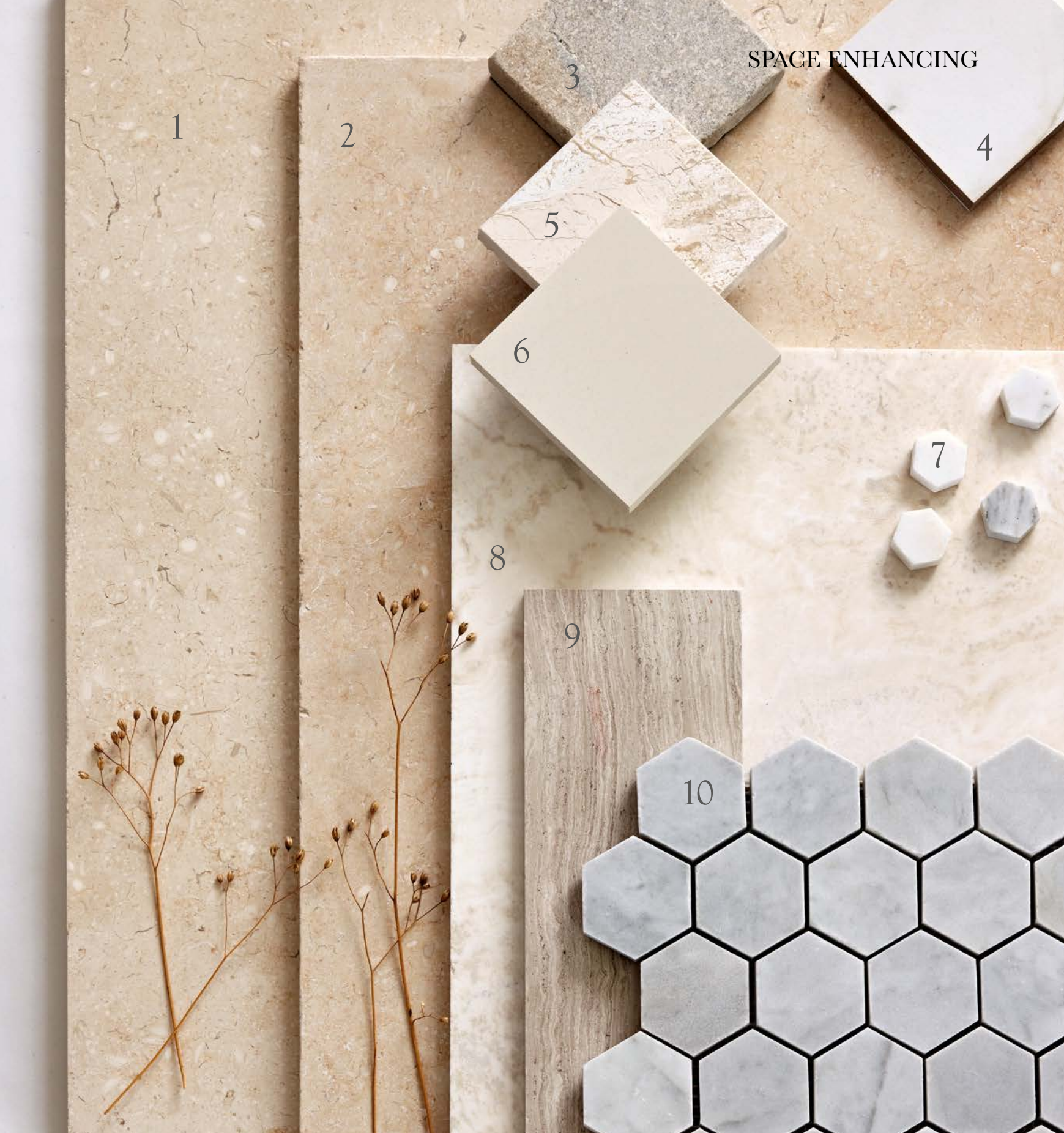


ABOVE Large porcelain tiles have a format that reduces the inclusion of grout lines. *Devon Bone tiles in beige, available in various finishes, £37.50 a metre squared, Topps Tiles*

LEFT To create a spacious, luxurious mood in the bathroom choose white marble. *Calacatta Oro honed marble, £744 a metre squared, Lapidica*

BELOW Glossy tiles bounce light upwards. *Buscot limestone in a honed finish, £67.20 a square metre, Artisans of Devizes*





1 Abbey honed-limestone slab, £47 a square metre, Indigenous 2 Abbey tumbled flagstone, £47 a square metre, Indigenous 3 Gris Mix Tumbled, £85 a square metre, Limestone Gallery 4 Bianco Paonazzetto glazed porcelain, £39.95 a square metre, Original Style 5 Crema Bella Polished Marble, £30 a square metre, Floors of Stone 6 Town White Pulido porcelain tile, £133.50 a square metre, Porcelanosa 7 East Hampton hexagon mosaic, £164.88 a square metre, Fired Earth 8 Alabastrino honed filled travertine, available in two sizes, from £49.93 a square metre, Mandarin Stone 9 Waldorf Limestone Papyrus Brick, £59.95 a square metre, Artisans of Devides 10 Bridgehampton marble, £164.88 a square metre, Fired Earth



FLOORING CHOICES

WOOD

Using optical illusions and light-reflective finishes helps create airy, open interiors

Wood flooring furnishes a room with a tactile sense of depth. Moreover, certain formats and colours actively enhance space, too. It is also worth considering engineered wood for rooms where temperature or moisture levels alter regularly.

Camilla Thorp, interior architect at Thorp, reveals, “To bring light into our designs we tend to choose pale-coloured timber to reflect the light up into the room. We use wide boards, around 280-300mm, to maximise the sense of scale and make the room feel larger. To avoid lots of irregularities and knots we choose good-quality prime-oak boards and opt for a tight tongue-and-groove joint to avoid dark lines where dirt could collect and make the floor appear darker. We typically lay the boards running away from windows as this has the effect of drawing light into the room.”

Jago Anderson, creative director of Element7, also highlights shape. “Wider and longer planks can make small rooms appear less fussy and therefore larger. If you choose a patterned floor, run it right out to the walls rather than boxing it in with a border.”

Using heavy, characterful grain and small wood blocks both seem counterintuitive to creating a sense of space, but Peter Keane, director of The Natural Wood Floor Company, explains that this is not necessarily the case. “The lighter a floor is, the more it will reflect natural daylight, but if you go for something too white and flat, you could end up with a room that feels more clinical than comfortable. A white oak that is wire brushed, so that the grain shows through, will brighten a room in addition to adding texture and pattern. Wide boards create a sense of space, but smaller blocks, such as chevrons and parquet, have light-reflecting qualities that will add texture and interest.”

To select engineered wood which will lighten a room, consider the finish. “Nowadays you can buy engineered-wood boards that look as if they have been painted, but they don’t chip or blister and will show off the natural grain of the wood to maximum effect,” reveals Keane. “Choose one that is off-white, cream or pale grey and your room will be instantly brighter. Even a dark floor can work,” he continues. “Pair it with pale paintwork and furniture several shades lighter for a contrast that adds a sense of luxury and grandeur. If there aren’t many bright colours competing with it, dark wood can be striking and vibrant.”

- Pale-coloured timber reflects light around a room
- Long and wide boards give an impression of greater space
- Tight joints help minimise distracting dark dirt lines
- Run patterned floor to the wall to maximise the feeling of space
- Chevrons and parquet can encourage sight lines across the room
- Selected engineered wood in neutral tones with natural character ▶



ABOVE Diamond shapes make this floor appear more expansive. Charlotte antique oak parquet de Versailles panel, £441, Woodworks by Ted Todd

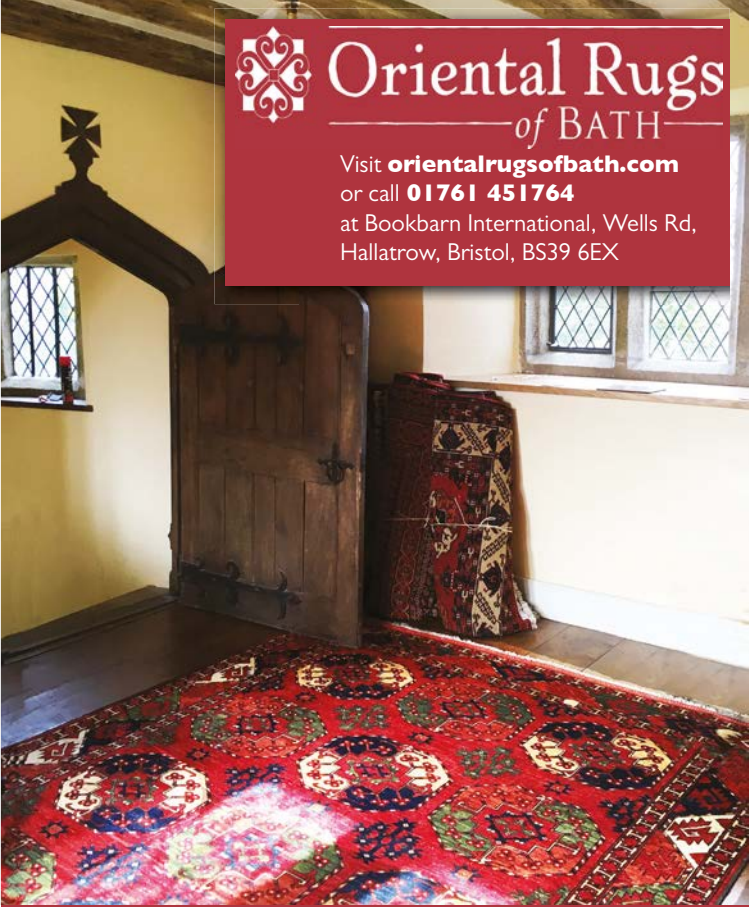
LEFT This antique-style floor has a sleek finish. Oak Antique pre-oiled grey, from £63 a square metre, The Natural Wood Floor Company

BELOW Chevrons direct the view across the floor. Landmark Tatton, herringbone, from £99 a square metre, Solid Floor





1 Polar oak satin planks, £66.99 a square metre, Quick-Step **2** Oak geometric pattern parquet, £139.85, Ecora **3** Bleached Oak, matt satin, £70.44 a square metre, Broadleaf **4** Engineered oak, white, pre-oiled, £67.92 a square metre, The Natural Wood Floor Company **5** Single Stave Blocks Parquet floor in solid oak, from £69 a square metre, Junckers **6** Wide-plank Raw Oak, £320 a square metre, Element7 **7** Wide-plank Pure oak, £320 a square metre, Element7 **8** Modern light oak floor, £73 The West Sussex Antique Timber Company



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FLOORING CHOICES

CARPET

Subtle stripes, shimmering yarns and textured weaves maximise light and space

Textured or shimmering weaves employed on neutral carpets help light to reflect around the room. It is also worth trying patterned carpets with tessellating shapes to augment the sense of space. For those drawn to the idea of a pale neutral carpet but fearful of keeping it clean, developments in manufacturing techniques may inspire confidence. David Cormack, marketing director for Cormar Carpets, reveals, "Practicality is one of the main reasons white or cream isn't always the first choice; people worry it will show up the dirt or stain easily. However, these days it's possible for pale carpet to keep its good looks, even in heavy traffic areas like lounges or hallways. For instance, Cormar's Primo Plus is breathtaking in nearly-white Snowdrift or its Sensation Supreme in Shimmering Sand – yet both are made from a heavyweight, stain-resistant polypropylene, and are even bleach cleanable."

In plain schemes that would benefit from a textured floor, or rooms which require a tough surface to cope with high traffic and dirt, sisal and wool carpets are ideal as they provide a hard-working textured surface. Nicole Salvesen, co-founder of interior design and decoration practice Salvesen Graham, advocates both types of carpet. "To ensure maximum light in a scheme we opt for natural flooring such as sisal from the Crucial Trading ranges, or maybe a plain herringbone wool carpet. By keeping the base flooring simple in texture and pattern, the eye is automatically drawn up rather than down, and gives the impression of more light."

The pay-off for being adventurous and selecting a patterned carpet is well worth considering. Lorna Haigh, head of creative at Alternative Flooring, says, "Light-coloured carpet does keep a space open, however, having a pattern on the floor gives a focus to the floor and can frame the room, which can give the illusion of a grander space." A smart stripe – either in wide or thin stripes – is a classic pattern that will visually elongate and widen a room, as floorboards do. For a more contemporary scheme, try geometric shapes and chevrons in muted colourways for a smart mood. Hilary Clements from Axminster Carpets recommends, "When selecting your new carpet, consider a wool carpet with a light pattern. Soft and subtle patterns will give the illusion of more space, as lighter colours reflect more sunlight or artificial light."

- Carpets with shimmering finishes help bounce light around
- Modern manufacturing techniques make pale carpets easy to clean
- Neutral sisal and wool carpet are ideal for high-footfall areas
- Subtle patterns on a pale ground can make a space feel grander
- Stripes create optical illusions and can elongate areas
- Herringbone and chevrons act like arrows directing eyes onward ►



ABOVE This light-toned graphic carpet emphasises the sense of space in a contemporary manner. *Carabello carpet, £170, Stark Carpet*

LEFT Subtle patterns can be space-enhancing in the right design. *Leapfrog, Coconut Milk, £86 a metre squared, Axminster Carpets*

BELOW Blend neutral walls with a textured loop-pile carpet in a muted tone. *Malabar Two Fold range, approx £29 a square metre, Cormar Carpets*



SPACE ENHANCING



1 Herringbone Napery, £15.32 a square metre, Rustic Jewels collection, Victoria Carpets 2 Pangbourne wool carpet, £165 a square metre, Tim Page Carpets 3 Sikkim in snow, £176 a square metre, Jacaranda 4 Sisal backed with natural latex, £69 a square metre, Crucial Trading 5 Pampas Herringbone wool carpet, £41.99 a square metre, Kersaint Cobb & Company 6 Seasilk carpet, £99 a square metre, Kersaint Cobb & Company 7 Timorous Beasties Parchment Grain du Bois, £89.99 a square metre, Brintons 8 Wool Blocstripe Bone Olive Bloc carpet, £56.05 a metre squared, Alternative Flooring

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Hidden DEPTHS

There are plenty of ingenious ways to create extra space, from fitting cupboards behind false panelling to rethinking how furniture is arranged





Specifying bespoke bookshelves and seating to wrap around a window, and replacing a bedside table with a capacious chest of drawers are both inventive space-enhancing solutions from design studio Salvensen Graham for a client's bedroom

Space. We all want more of it. 'Stuff' just seems to build up around us, an inevitable – essential, even – part of our 21st-century lives, with the result that kitchens and bathrooms, living spaces and bedrooms all seem to be bursting at the seams, leading us to constantly seek ways in which either to cut down on clutter or expand our homes so that we can contain it all.

However, when extending a house is not an option or has already been carried out upwards, downwards and sideways to its maximum extent, what remains is to tackle – with ingenuity and style – any areas in which it is possible to eke out a little extra square metreage. We are not, incidentally, talking about the fine art of giving the illusion of more space with the use of lighting, reflective surfaces and sparse furniture on legs. No, we mean real, actual, measurable space, often – but not always – in the form of increased storage so that items can be tidied away to provide more room for comfortable living.

Perhaps the most obvious place to start is with furniture. If it is bulky, consider scaling it down just enough to gain a few extra inches of floor space, but not so much that its functionality is

OPPOSITE Interior design studio Wickenden Hutley utilised every inch of space in this back hall of a Hampshire home project, creating seating, boot storage as well as hooks for outdoor clothing.

RIGHT By creating double doors and a set of three drawers under the stairs, all faced with a subtle diamond pattern, Samantha Johnson Design has made the utmost use of what is often a poorly used space.





TOP Hidden within the joinery of the cooker surround, this slender pull-out cupboard is perfect for storing oils, spices and other cooking essentials. *Bespoke Pilaster kitchen, from £45,000, Smallbone of Devizes*

ABOVE A shoe drawer has been crafted into the plinth of a wardrobe. The ingenious design is by KSR Architects.

compromised. For instance, shelves need not be deeper than whatever is displayed on them; wardrobes barely deeper than a coat hanger; sofas no larger than enough to provide a cosy place to sink into. Perhaps replace one or two pieces with items that are more versatile, whether by virtue of folding away when not in use or doing more than one job at a time, for instance, a chest of drawers that is also a bedside table, a kitchen step that doubles as a small seat or a P-shaped bath that has an overhead shower.

Lightweight or wheeled furniture also has its uses, as do items that can be hidden away, such as stools or nesting tables, and anything that can be whisked out of the way by being hung on a wall or from a ceiling. Another favourite in this department is furniture that has built-in storage, whether it be a trunk used as a coffee table, a hallway bench that holds shoes or a divan



A hanging rack provides plenty of storage in the kitchen, freeing up cupboards for other uses. Some examples even incorporate lighting. *Brasserie Kitchen, from £45,000, Smallbone of Devizes*

bed that lifts up to reveal a huge area beneath for keeping linens or out-of-season clothes.

Next, look at how best to arrange furniture, as conventional layouts are not always the most space-efficient and it may be possible to rethink what goes where in order to effect a great improvement. In a kitchen-diner, for instance, fitting a neat bench along one side of the room removes the need for several chairs and allows space to push the dining table across, freeing up some much-needed floor space. To create a home office, perhaps a small bureau and chair might be squeezed onto a landing or else a deep shelf fixed across a wide alcove. Making such changes may practically create an extra room; even more so if a screen, curtain or sliding door can be added.

One of the most effective ways of finding additional space is with specific joinery solutions. Shelves and cupboards either side of all available

Middleton Bespoke created this 'secret door' to a boot room and utility area of this house. It operates as a normal door, but incorporates purpose-made bookshelves. £POA.





Here fitted storage has been cleverly designed to incorporate a playhouse – ideal for a home without space for a separate family snug or playroom.

Origin range shown in Partridge Grey with natural oak handles; prices start from around £2,500 for small bedrooms, Kindred



chimneybreasts is one of the more obvious ways to create useful storage – but consider whether all the possibilities for designing in a little extra storage or display space have been exhausted. Be sure to assess every inch of the house from top to bottom, because it is the quirky corners, especially in older properties, which often hold the most promise for adding some bespoke storage solutions. Consider, too, whether it might be beneficial to employ the services of an architect or interior designer, who may well be able to propose a host of impressive, unexpected ideas to improve storage and enhance space. If there is an available niche, pop shelves across it or add cupboard doors – there will always be a use for that extra storage.

The same goes for where there is a corner or return – examine the floor plan and see whether a shallow cupboard or some shelving might be built to make use of the ‘dead’ space, always tailored to the size and shape of items that need storing.

If carrying out any minor renovations in a bathroom or utility room, bear in mind that when concealing pipework behind false walls it will often be possible to create niches for shelving and cupboards, too – ideal for storing toiletries or cleaning supplies.

Lester Bennett, design consultant for award-winning interior design studio Folio Design, sister company of KSR Interiors, points out that doors and detailing can be matched with adjoining walls and even create a ‘secret’ cupboard. “In a traditional home you have the advantage of being able to utilise mouldings and panelling to disguise the joins so that they disappear,” he says. “Something else that we have done in a variety of locations is to fill the space under the stairs with three or four units – the tallest for hanging coats – that pull out on rollers so that it is possible to reach the back of each unit easily. You can face the fronts of the units with panelling, and it is most efficient and effective.” ▶

TOP Towels are warmed by hot-water pipes in these cubby holes at either end of a bath.

Bathroom design by KSR Interiors

ABOVE In this large hallway, a desk and plenty of storage have been fitted under the stairs, and shelving and cupboards on the staircase wall.

Bespoke Cotswold understairs study and library, Neville Johnson

SPACE ENHANCING



ABOVE Narrow shelving can hold a wide range of items whilst taking up very little floor space.

Copollo round bookshelf in bronze-finished steel with a matt-lacquered frame, £2,995, The Sofa and Chair Company

BELOW Maximum storage has been achieved in this dressing room by taking advantage of its exceptional height and fitting the joinery into the apex of the ceiling. *Interior design by Roselind Wilson Design*

Tackle, with ingenuity and style, anywhere it is possible to eke out some extra space

ABOVE LEFT Here, a useful window seat has been created, without the need for specialist joinery. *Arthur Stool, from £405, Neptune*
ABOVE RIGHT Keeping narrow hallways free of clutter is often a problem. In this design by Amelia Carter Interiors the radiator cover was extended and shoe storage added within the additional space.

Taking inspiration from people who have designed interiors for the most bijoux of spaces – such as studios, beach huts, caravans and boats – will provide plenty more ideas. Experts know to search high – extending shelving right to the ceiling, for example, adding a library ladder for access – and low – fitting shallow drawers in plinths – and everywhere else in between. Interior designer Gabi da Rocha says, “My favourite idea is to pinch space around a doorway. If you’re doing this you can add a cupboard above an architrave in a hall for suitcases, open shelving for china in a kitchen, or a bookshelf in the sitting room. Elsewhere, a solid banister on a landing could be turned into a bookcase, and it is even possible to create a drawer in a step or two on a staircase – so handy for storing shoes, and if you give your children their own step there is no excuse for not tidying away.”

Being open to any and all solutions, whether straightforward and classic or cutting edge, will show that it really is possible to halt the overwhelming tide of ‘stuff’ and – whatever its size or style – make the most out of every inch of a home. ■



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LITTLE BLACK BOOK

SALVESEN GRAHAM

Nicole Salvesen (left) and Mary Graham (right), founders of the Salvesen Graham interior design and decoration practice, reveal their favourite resources

FABRIC & WALLPAPER

We love Howe on Bourne Street in Pimlico for its small-scale wallpapers with matching fabrics, and Bernard Thorp in Chelsea and Soane Britain on Pimlico Road.

FLOORING

We can't get enough of Stark's waterproof bathroom carpet – it looks and feels just like sisal. Roger Oates Design is always a pleasure to work with, with its interesting stair runners and bespoke service.

FAVOURITE SHOPS

You really can't beat a trip to the Pimlico Road area. Soane Britain, Howe, Jamb and Robert Kime are probably our favourites for furniture, and Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler have just moved there from Mayfair. For accessories, we're inspired by Irving & Morrison, and by Brownrigg in Tetbury.

RISING STARS

Sarah Watson at Balineum has such a good eye and is brave in her design choices. And Luke Edward Hall – everything he touches turns to gold.

LOCATIONS

A lot of our work sees the juxtaposition of antiques with contemporary pieces, so National Trust treasures such as Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire and beautiful Newby Hall in Yorkshire bring a smile to our faces.

FURNITURE

Favourite suppliers are Soane, Howe and Lorfords, who are now in London as well as Tetbury. For more contemporary pieces we love Pinch or Benchmark.

LIGHTING

For antique hanging lanterns and reproduction antique lighting, we love Jamb on Pimlico Road. Alternatively, Hector Finch in Chelsea has some wonderful designs and bespoke finishes that we use in a lot of our work. ■



1 Howe on Pimlico Road is home to stylish furniture, whilst Howe at 36 Bourne Street boasts fabrics and wallpaper (wallpaper, left to right: Pondicherry, Maize; Little F, Tutti; Folies Bergère, Blue Ribbon, all £120 a roll) **2** Classic options abound at Jamb **3** Joyce cabinet, £6,575, Pinch **4** The new Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler showroom on Pimlico Road **5** Stark's waterproof bathroom carpet, from top: Coral; Beach; Sapphire; Greencove, all £69 a square metre **6** The new Robert Kime store in Pimlico **7** Bespoke Swanson stair runner created for Salvesen Graham, £165 a metre, Roger Oates Design

FEATURE EVE MIDDLETON PHOTOGRAPHS 3 © JAMES MERRELL 4 © JOHN HAMMOND PORTRAIT © SARAH-JANE FIELD

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QUINTESSENTIALLY

Inspiration for seasonal pastimes and making the most of life at home starts here ➤

BUCOLIC BLISS

Creating a garden retreat is a joyful pursuit when drawing inspiration from nature's bounty. The pleasing sage-green panels and rustic wooden flooring of this shepherd's hut marry with the organic form of Molly Mahon's cotton-linen Leaf print, used here to adorn a traditional cast-iron bed painted milky cream to complement its surroundings. Looking out across an orchard view beneath the bough of an apple tree only adds to the delight of bringing indoor living to the great outdoors. *Leaf print (Moss), £142 a metre, mollymahon.com*



If local authorities allow, give dull exteriors a vibrant facelift. Take inspiration from the colourful Georgian port of Aberaeron in Wales or Tobermory on the Isle of Mull, or channel the pared-back palette of London townhouses. Smooth masonry paint in Terracotta, £29 for 5l, Sandtex

THIS IS THE YEAR TO...

ENHANCE EXTERIORS

A house's exterior requires the same dedicated approach as its interior and spring provides the perfect opportunity to execute the touches that ensure a well-presented visage



ABOVE Bespoke window designs not only allow for period authenticity, as in the case of these Arts and Crafts inspired eyebrow and clerestory windows, but also exceptional energy efficiency.

Performance triple-glazed windows featuring interstitial glazing bars, made to order using FSC redwood or oak, Green Building Store

RIGHT For a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century home, consider traditional planked doors and select appropriate detailing. Double-skinned planked oak door with hand-forged strap hinges and rosehead nails on moulded ribs, by Stuart Interiors

BELOW RIGHT Hand-painted signs and numerals add a welcoming, personal touch. Vintage-style wooden house numbers, £22 each, Notonthehighstreet.com

BELOW A practical bristle mat will prove a boon to gardeners or dog walkers. Slatted wooden doormat with bristles, £20.95, The Farthing



Whilst many of us dream of an immaculately presented home, it is all too easy to neglect the exterior. Yet, it is worth bearing in mind that a well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing property not only sits well within its landscape but also adds value to the home. So, to ensure a house stands out for all the right reasons, it is important to address both style and practicalities.

PAINTED PERFECTION

The most popular option when thinking about revitalising a house's exterior is undoubtedly a fresh coat of paint. Tired facades will always benefit from a touch of characterful colour, however, it pays to take into consideration the period of the property and the style and colour of neighbouring buildings. "It's also important to remember that colours can appear up to two shades lighter outside – therefore be sure to test and view at different times of the day before covering the whole house," advises Charlotte Cosby, head of creative at Farrow & Ball.

Whilst soft heritage hues and low-sheen finishes tend to impart a more relaxed finish that works well for both windows and doors, when it comes to bolder, formal classics, such as black, navy blue, racing green or red, it is advisable to limit usage to doors alone. "Use traditional gloss on townhouses or when using stronger colours, and matt finishes for paler shades or in the countryside," Cosby suggests. "Red brick usually calls for stronger colours, while softer shades work well with stone," she adds.

When it comes to render, weatherboarding or stucco, Jonathan Hey, managing director of Westbury Windows & Joinery, cautions against "using the same shade for house, windows and door, as you can lose the impact of features". The experts at Dulux point to "pastel, chalky tones for traditional or country-style homes, and textured paint to create a more weathered look."

MAINTAINING STANDARDS

Success is dependent on practical as well as aesthetic considerations, so enquire after permeable finishes that allow older homes to breathe and also deter decay. Limewash is ideal for traditional render, brick or stone, with pigments inherently suited to period properties. For timber, interior designer and architectural historian Edward Bulmer of Edward Bulmer Natural Paint advises using paints based on natural plant oils as these are more flexible and able to withstand thermal expansion and contraction. Alternatively, for exposed timbers look to linseed oil or wax to maintain doors or windows, and anti-fungal washes for cleaning cladding.

Restoring beautifully crafted, original features will also instil a quality that positively impacts on property value. Although if the house is listed or



ABOVE Matching original fenestration and detailing both to the rear and front of a house will ensure a cohesive and immaculately presented finish.

Bespoke EB24 steel leaded-light windows, Clement

ABOVE, RIGHT Source replacement windows that maintain the historic integrity of your home. The simplicity of crisp white always works well with traditional exposed red brickwork, as do bolder door colours.

Bespoke replacement timber casements by Montpelier

RIGHT Lead the eye to an immaculately presented door with perfectly pruned topiary presented in smart planters.

Circular steel planters, from £279, Garden Requisites

FAR RIGHT Adding sentinels in the form of architectural antiquities will help focus attention on doors and porches.

Antique and replica statuary, Architectural Heritage

in a conservation area, the Georgian Group (georgiangroup.org.uk) advises consulting a local conservation officer, as even minor alterations may require consent or planning permission. Ventrolla offers timber door, sash and casement repair services, whilst The Cotswold Casement Company refurbishes metal windows.

Long-lost decorative glazing, including etched or stained-glass insets and fanlights, can be reinstated by specialists such as Recclesia, or, for an instant solution – to provide privacy – replaced with easy-fit film by Brume or Purlfrost.

NEW FOR OLD

For those requiring replacement doors or windows, substituting like-for-like is always the best course of action if the originals are still in situ. To guarantee historical integrity, consult Salvo (salvo.co.uk) for details of reputable salvage yards or dealers that specialise in originals and offer design advice. Alternatively, go bespoke with tailored designs that take their cue from the age and style of the property to ensure both a practical and pleasing aesthetic.

Traditional timber sash and casement windows tend to work well on homes dating from the eighteenth century upwards, whilst metal frames can prove ideal for older properties, and Arts and Crafts and 1930s-era homes. Bear in mind that timber casements traditionally sit flush within their frames, so opting for in-frame designs should guarantee an authentic finish. Any new windows should also “match existing frames to ensure correct proportion,” says Hey. This advice is echoed by window specialists Mumford & Wood, who recommend “selecting bar configurations to suit architectural style”. Small Georgian-style or simple split casements are ideal for a cottage or smaller home, whilst quintessential Georgian sliding sashes favour rows of uniform panes and Victorian sashes, single or double panes.

When selecting doors, English-vernacular designs take inspiration from basic planked structures or variants of the more formal six-panel Georgian



or four-panel Victorian door. And whilst there has been a move to juxtapose contemporary variations, Hey says, “Traditional designs still work best in most settings.” Simple painted planked doors tend to suit relaxed rural settings, whilst more arresting oak designs cover both ancient and modern aesthetics. Archetypal stable doors also remain a bucolic staple and a practical rear addition. Classically proportioned panels set the tone for a townhouse or country dwelling. Fanlights and surrounds can also add gravitas to Georgian houses, whereas decorative glazed panels and sidelights are synonymous with the Victorian or Edwardian era.

Preserving or sourcing original fittings should ensure a pleasing result and help new additions take on authenticity. WMC Antiques and Lassco both stock period ironmongery. Quality reproductions are also



LEFT Lion heads have long been favoured emblems for door furniture. Large brass lion's head door knocker, £125, Grace & Glory

FAR LEFT Brightly coloured shutters and artfully trained climbers will frame a classic country window perfectly. Bahama Blue exterior gloss, £17.99 for 750ml, Sandtex

ABOVE RIGHT A porch can be an important and integral architectural feature that adds interest to the home. Porch canopy kit with wall posts, braces, wall plates, open gable truss and oak rafters (roofing not included), from £995, Border Oak

RIGHT Elegant steel and wirework porch canopies offer support for climbing plants. Porch with straight sides, made to order, from £1,595, Garden Requisites

available from companies such as Drummonds and can be used to complement and match latches and door furniture throughout. Whilst traditional-style doors often suit brass finishes, it is worth noting that lacquered rather than antique brass may be easier to keep clean. Alternatively, chrome offers a more urban update, and wrought-iron imbues rustic charm. Do take care to ensure house numbers, doorbells and letterboxes are clearly visible, and consider customised signs to inject that personal touch.

LIGHT AND SHADE

Lighting is a must, and whilst inviting wall and overhead lanterns or soft wall-washers that highlight architectural features will frame front doors to perfection, more focused lighting may be required ►





ABOVE Fine-quality door furniture will help create a good first impression. Ring door knocker, from £164; door knob, from £245.86; letter plate, from £241, shown here in polished nickel, all Samuel Heath



RIGHT For some archetypal country-cottage styling, add a rustic bell. Cast-iron bell with ornate bracket, £12.50, Willow & Stone

for hard-working rear entrances. Exposed-bulb designs often shed more light on patios or stores, and illuminated pathways guarantee garden safety, as well as a welcoming guide to visitors. “Remember a little light goes a long way in the dark,” cautions lighting expert Jim Lawrence, “so avoid overtly bright, brash bulbs.” Lighting designer Charles Edwards says, “It is also worth noting that small lanterns or wall lights tend to look rather mean, so if in doubt, go for a larger size.” Try verdigris, painted or galvanised finishes for casual or garden settings and classic metals for a more formal welcome.

For those keen to go under cover, porches, canopies and rear verandas provide a key architectural feature, as well as a welcoming shelter or valuable protected garden link and storage area. “Additions should be sensitive to the original build as it’s vital it looks like an original part of the property, rather than an afterthought,” says Carol Parry of oak frame specialist Arboreta. So prioritise a sympathetic use of materials and scale, and blend details such as joinery, tiling and glazing.



LEFT Keep mud outside by investing in a smart exterior shoe and wellington rack. Wooden welly store, £180, Garden Trading
BELOW Black weatherboarding is commonplace on traditional barns and effortlessly translates to the home for an impactful exterior. Timber cladding, Iron Mountain; window, Secret, both Aura exterior low lustre paint, from £25 for 0.94l, Benjamin Moore



FINISHING TOUCHES

Last but not least, look to window boxes or climbers, such as wisteria and clematis, to soften lines in more casual or country settings, and scented shrubs, such as lavender, to exude an aromatic welcome by a front door. Alternatively, for more formal year-round structure, introduce potted topiary, such as hebe and box or standard bay, set proudly either side of a door. Alex Puddy of Architectural Heritage suggests adding, “well-placed ornamental pieces to provide effortless framing, and original garden antiques whose intrinsic age, patina, quality and provenance are hard to replicate.”

Whilst at the back of the home, where busy transitional areas need to be practical, as well as visually appealing, keep things organised with storage units or racks, and invest in a generous log store. A bench for pulling on wellies should also prove a handy addition, as will a boot scraper and jack – and don’t forget a timber store or screen to rid the garden of unsightly bins. ■

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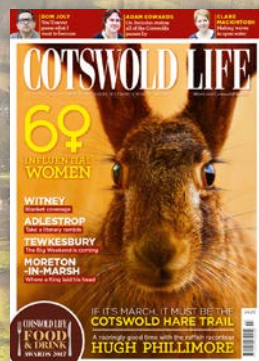
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This view of an established garden shows how the use of circular design features adds interest and defines areas for specific use.

Unleash the **POTENTIAL**

Discover how to transform an inherited garden with a few strategic changes, practical touches and individual flair

Moving house offers great potential for making changes and stamping one's personality on a home. Whilst this is also true of a garden, revamping the interior tends to take priority, leaving the previous owners' taste etched in the garden's design.

Simply contemplating transforming a garden can feel intimidating, especially combined with the effort and expense involved in buying and decorating a new home. Many people live for years with an inherited garden, unsure of how to reimagine the space. When fearful of upheaval, it can be tricky to know where to begin in order to achieve the desired results. Yet with a few simple changes, it is possible to greatly improve a garden's layout and unlock its full potential. The secret lies in identifying amendments which will create maximum impact for minimal effort. ►



ABOVE Add a focal point, such as this Lutyens-style bench, to punctuate an existing layout. This is flanked by roses and borders planted with perennials including bearded irises.

RIGHT A walled garden with a parterre of four square beds, each filled with a pink standard rose, cosmos, argyranthemum and verbena, and edged in *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote', is both beautiful and functional throughout the year.

These days, a garden is seen as an extension of the home – an outdoor room designed to suit its owners' lifestyle and needs. Changes should reflect how a garden will be used, balanced against the amount of time available for its upkeep. For many busy people, a low-maintenance garden is of paramount importance, but homeowners may still want some space – if only a couple of raised beds – to experiment with plants. For most, an open-air living space geared towards entertaining is essential, but, increasingly, people also want a peaceful area to unwind, soothed by the sounds of water and calming colours.

Identifying the different purposes that a garden needs to fulfil and listing the priorities helps pinpoint specific elements in the existing layout that are not working. Before finalising a wishlist of possible improvements, survey the space – noting where sun or shade falls, ideally in all four seasons. Notice prevailing winds and exposed spots, looking beyond the garden's boundaries to see how protected or overlooked the site is. Most importantly, analyse the soil type to ensure new plants are compatible.

Measure the garden and sketch out a scale plan, either on paper or using garden-design software – free versions are available online – before making any changes. This is a fun way of trying out different schemes. If your garden is too small to create a series of self-contained 'rooms', consider how best to adapt existing elements, creating an unbroken flow from one area to another. Paths, lawns, planting and flower beds can double as natural divisions, delineating different areas without the need for barriers.

Layout changes can affect existing hard landscaping, structural features and furnishings. This is easily remedied. Paving can be transformed with jet-washing and freshly pointed joints, and a layer of pristine gravel can enliven a worn path. Wooden sheds, trellis and arches can be refreshed with a coat of paint – Cuprinol Garden Shades come in a wide range of colours. ▶





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At this stage, it is essential to consider style and colour schemes. Applying a single paint colour to pergolas, tired-looking furniture and fences unifies these different elements, avoiding a hotchpotch of hues. Similarly, ensure paving or brickwork matches the house. Choosing a specific style, whether English cottage garden, formal or Provençale, provides a narrative and direction to follow, as well as a sense of cohesion, especially within a small garden.

Raising or sinking a terrace creates a feeling of intimacy. Laying stone or brick provides a surface that is at once attractive and durable. The material should match existing hard landscaping to blend with the rest of the garden, and be aware that the shape of slabs or stones affects the impression of space. For example, a terrace laid with large-scale paving slabs will appear more spacious than one laid with bricks or granite setts. It is important to prevent people from inadvertently tumbling over the edge, so ensure the sides are clearly indicated with brick edging, pots, posts and rope, or plants. A curtain of fragrant lavender and airy grasses

creates a lovely effect, and a hedge of fast-growing photinia offers greater privacy.

Shapes within a garden also create an illusion of space. Straight-sided borders can make the plot seem smaller, whereas circles used within a rectangular plot maximise the planting depth at the corners, making the garden seem more spacious. If the existing layout is rectangular, the corners of lawns or borders can be rounded off, thereby introducing oval or circular shapes and curving lines. Sweeping curves are more elegant than undulating lines, but check proposed changes first by marking out the outlines on the ground. Cut new shapes into lawns and borders using a turfing iron to create sharp edges. If, as a result, areas need reseeding with grass, this is best done in spring.

Redesigning a pathway can affect the character of a garden. Add a touch of romance by replacing a dull runway-style walkway with a pretty path winding through flowers. The most appealing paths – laid with gravel, paving or brick – meander in and out of edging plants and evergreen herbs, such as rosemary and lavender, that release their aromas when brushed ▶

ABOVE Consider introducing circular features to provide interest and a feeling of space. Shaped box provides structure and frames the planting year round.

TOP RIGHT Strategically placed statement pots with bold planting offer instant structure to a garden whilst slow-growing plants, such as box hedging, become established.

BOTTOM RIGHT Raised beds enclose a secluded dining area that is shaded by an established apple tree.



ABOVE A sweeping grass path leading to a wooden summer house from Amdega delights the eye. Borders planted with *Aster frikartii* 'Mönch', *Verbena bonariensis*, *Calamagrostis* grass, *Cleome* 'Violet Queen', *Dahlia* 'Hillcrest Royal', *Rosa* Marjorie Fair and *Rosa* Bonica.

RIGHT A combination of *Rosa* 'Wedding Day' and *Clematis* 'Jackmanii' growing over an arch adds height and softens a path of paving set in gravel. An attractively bold gate provides a focal point. Planting includes *Rosa* 'Ballerina', catmint, box spirals, *Stipa gigantea* and agapanthus.



against, as do thyme or chamomile underfoot. Individual slabs can be reused in a path, sunk into a dense layer of gravel laid over a weed-proof membrane.

A focal point creates a hub around which lesser elements of the setting revolve. Less is more, and several well-placed points of interest create more impact than a motley collection of smaller ones. Think in terms of marking the end of a winding path with a large pot with topiary, for example, or partly veiling a handsome bench with a flowering shrub, creating an element of surprise.

An al fresco dining area is a lovely addition to any garden. Often, this is created near the kitchen, where nearby house walls provide support for a pergola or sun shade. Alternatively, a seating area can be established in a corner of the garden. If there is an area beneath trees this is ideal – lifting the lower branches of a mature tree creates a natural canopy that filters light and sun.

Outdoor lighting adds a touch of magic, changing the mood by creating an interplay between shadow and light. As electrical installation can be costly, an immediate, dramatic effect can be created from



ABOVE The delicate forms of *Verbena bonariensis*, *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant', *Salvia* 'Bethellii', *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' and *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Dazzler' soften a bold straight path.

BELOW RIGHT Lifting and pruning the branches of a mature tree creates a natural canopy over a table and chairs, and a rope swag is a simple design addition that can add interest, definition and demarcate specific areas of a garden.



collections of candles shared between the table, wall-mounted holders and lanterns hanging from stakes in borders. Looking from indoors onto an illuminated terrace makes the interior feel more spacious, as the eye is drawn beyond the walls.

Vertical surfaces, such as walls, fences or the sides of sheds, offer another area for improvement, as they are ideal for displaying wall art and outdoor mirrors. Alternatively, create a living wall by training fast-growing climbers such as potato vine, honeysuckle or *Clematis montana*. Simply support with wires running between 'vine eyes', ensuring a clear space of at least 5cm to create an air flow behind the plant.

Once the layout of a garden is improved, attention can turn to plants, but do not rush if the beds and borders are weed-infested – in the long run, it saves time and money to clear the area first. Dig out perennial weeds such as dandelions, then cover the soil with weed-suppressant fabric for a few months so that remaining weeds die back. Thereafter, remove the fabric, enrich with compost, plant and watch the garden grow into a beautiful space in which to while away the hours. ■

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Garden inspiration from the team on our sister title, *The English Garden*



Celebrating May Day

The delicate pixie-like flowers of *convallaria majalis* – better known as lily of the valley – have long been associated with the advent of May, thanks to their symbolic role as a goodwill offering on France's 1 May Labour Day holiday, when sprigs of the perfumed white bloom signal the change in seasons.

A staple of English cottage gardens, the flower is popular with brides, too. The Duchess of Cambridge chose lily of the

valley as a feature of her bridal bouquet at her and Prince William's wedding, and Grace Kelly carried the bloom when she married Prince Rainier of Monaco.

Lily of the valley is a perennial flowering woodland plant that prefers shaded spots best found in an English garden. Choose a low spot for planting and enjoy watching this bell-like flower sprawling carefree from amidst lush green foliage.

Garden tasks

Now that the weather has turned to the sunnier months, take advantage of time spent outdoors in May to undertake pleasurable tasks in the garden.

- Avoid spring flowers, including daffodils, becoming overcrowded by lifting and dividing where appropriate.
- Plant out summer bedding at the end of the month. Choice perennial blooms, such as lavender or phlox, flower from May to October, adding colour and fragrance to the garden.
- Sow the first round of salad leaves – their speedy growing rate allows for consistently fresh produce over summer.
- Clip evergreen hedges. If not too woody, clippings can be added to the compost heap.
- Keep on top of regular lawn mowing. Now that the grass is growing, keeping it trim means easy maintenance in the coming summer months.



Recommended reading



Billed as 'a guide for gardeners who can't garden yet', self-taught gardener Hollie Newton's

inspiring writing and accessible instructions are an illuminating entry point for those with the barest of gardening knowledge. Offering tips and hints gleaned from hard-won experience, this book provides guidance on how to grow everything from vegetables through to flowers and herbs.

How to Grow by Hollie Newton (photography by Ria Osborne), £20, Orion Books



Landscape and garden designer Jinny Blom's *The Thoughtful Gardener: An*

Intelligent Approach To Garden Design shares her insights into the design process in this beautifully photographed book. Her expert knowledge and informative prose make this practical guide a delight to read. *The Thoughtful Gardener: An Intelligent Approach To Garden Design* by Jinny Blom, £35, Jacqui Small

Diary dates

• 19–21 May: **The National Flower Show** BBC2's *Gardeners' World* presenter Monty Don officially opens this annual floral event at Chelmsford's Hylands House Estate in leafy Essex.

nationalflowershow.co.uk

• 23–27 May: **RHS Chelsea Flower Show** The stalwart of the



gardening calendar returns for another year of prestigious offerings. Highlights for 2017 include a celebration of 500 years of Covent Garden and a National Youth Orchestra

project for the Morgan Stanley garden. rhs.org.uk

• 27–29 May: **National Garden Scheme 90th anniversary weekend** Some 400 gardens in England and Wales – including the first 12 to open their doors to the public in 1927 – welcome visitors to celebrate 90 years of raising money for charity. ngs.org.uk

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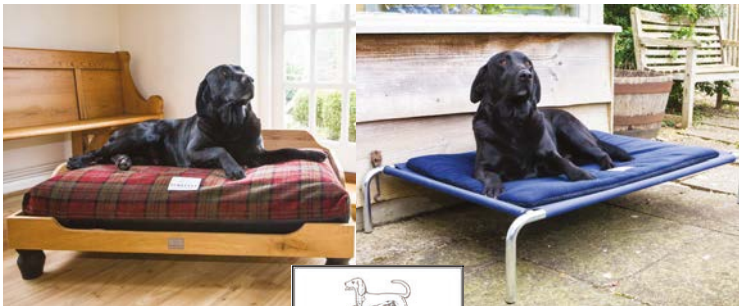


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Interiors specialist A. T. Cronin brings age-old artisanal practice to private residences, country houses and museums

When restoring a prized sofa for the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, artisans at the A. T. Cronin workshop in west London found a very special inscription hidden beneath layers of Victorian upholstery: *Chippendale, 1765*. This discovery caused great excitement in the workshop, yet it is for this calibre of work that the company is renowned.

Established in 1988 by Ian Block, A. T. Cronin specialises in using traditional skills to produce and restore a diversity of interiors items, from sofas and curtains to leather work and gilding. "After I left school, I took a summer job at Charles Hammond, one of the great interior design firms on Sloane Street in the days when it was full of interior designers working on big country houses," explains Block. "At the end of the work experience I decided to stay on and they put me through all the machinations of traditional interior design."

Having always appreciated the hands-on element of the work, Block set up A. T. Cronin in the same mould as his erstwhile employer, working at first from a one-bedroom flat in south London. "We're 29 years old now, with a big factory, but we're all artisans – curtain makers, upholsterers, cabinet makers. There is a joinery shop now, too. But we carry on the same tradition, which is handcrafted and bespoke."

Whilst restoration work for clients – including private collectors, English Heritage and the National Trust – provides a particular thrill, the company's primary business comes from architects and interior designers. "Mainly country houses or very smart apartments in central London. Owners want items made in the UK, using the traditional skills set and the gravitas that goes with that," says Block. The firm's secondary stream of business lies in commercial work, for instance, new curtains and upholstery at Annabel's private members' club in London.

Interiors styles vary widely across these operations but the company applies its standards equally. "When we build a sofa, for example, we have a recipe of what goes in. The sofas have hand-tied springs and they're stuffed and stitched with horse hair in the same way as if we had a Chippendale," says Block. "We know that if we build it properly, the piece will last, even if you get fed up with the fabric five times in a generation." ■



TOP Furniture made for an apartment in Knightsbridge, London. **MIDDLE LEFT** Owner, Ian Block. **MIDDLE RIGHT** The restored Queen Anne State Bed in the Crimson Room at Temple Newsam House, Leeds. **MIDDLE BELOW** Seat pads being hand-finished by one of the company's artisan upholsterers. **BOTTOM** Klismos daybed, £3,300, Virginia White Collection created in collaboration with AT Cronin.



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