

The
ENGLISH HOME

Celebrating the essence of English style

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LIGHT & SPACE

Clever decor and architectural remodelling to enhance interiors

Colours to make rooms feel bigger

Flooring to add a spacious look

Mirrors & sheers for elegant effects

Kevin McClou
design insight

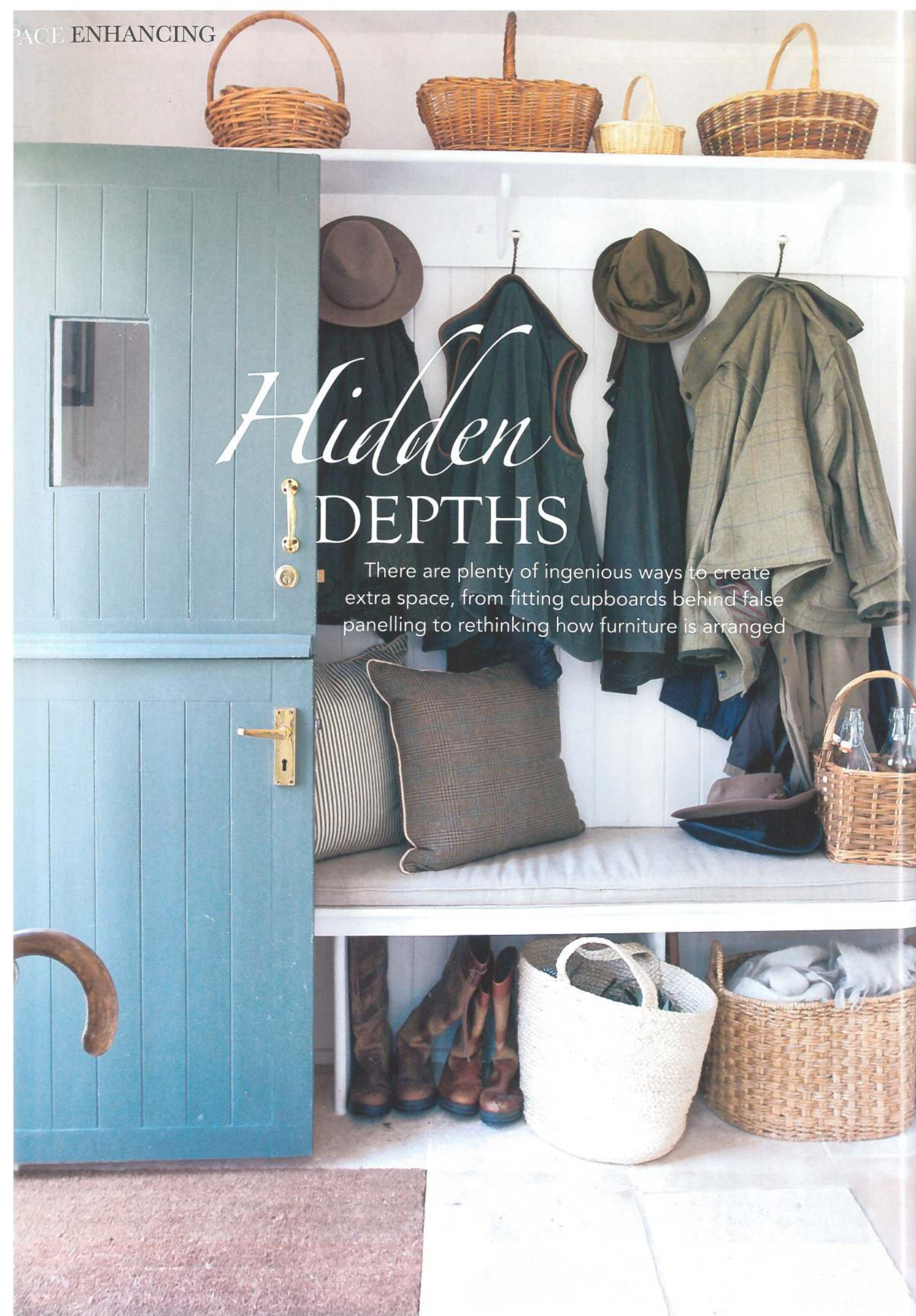
Inviting retreats

Beautiful rural homes from romantic manor to coastal hideaway



Hidden DEPTHS

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



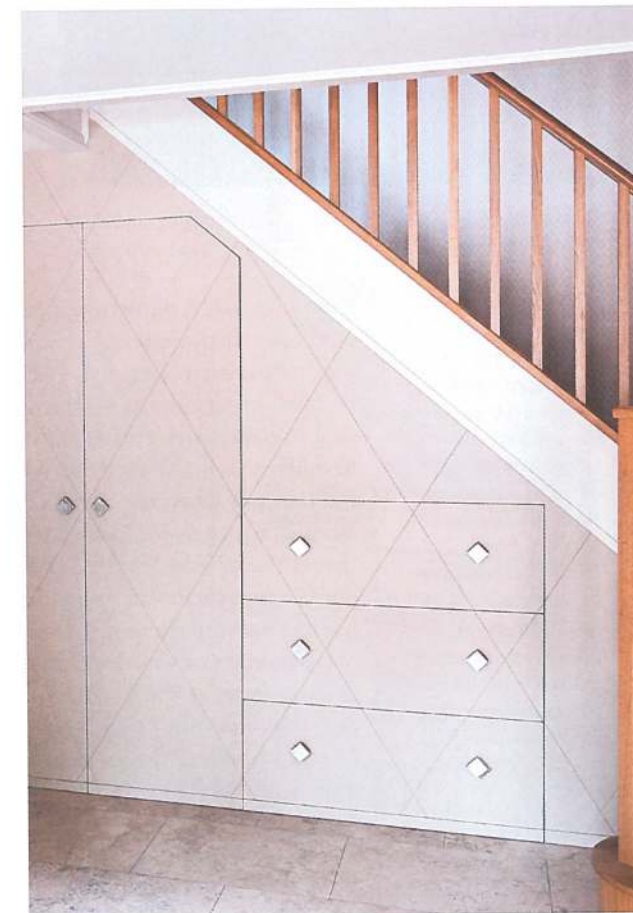
Specifying bespoke bookshelves and seating to wrap around a window, and replacing a bedside table with a capacious chest of drawers are both inventive space-enhancing solutions from design studio Salvensen Graham for a client's bedroom

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 metre. 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.



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, LPOA.



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*



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 rafted 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

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

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



In this coach house dining area by Samantha Johnson Design, almost half the floor area of the kitchen has been left free by virtue of having a bench seat right along one wall.



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. ■

