

STARTING OVER

Lucy and Chris Wright's 19th-century cottage was ingeniously reconfigured to make it ready for modern-day life



Hallway

A long table bought at a French brocante creates a focal point between the kitchen and utility and study. **Curtains** in Hatley, Cabbages & Roses. **Lamps**, Pooky



Kitchen
Exposed ceiling beams give the space a cosy feel. **Walls** painted in Slate II by Paint & Paper Library. **Range cooker**, Aga

Kitchen
The windows were kept treatment-free to let in light. Blue units add a modern touch. **Cabinets** painted in Stiffkey Blue by Farrow & Ball

Quirky proportions, nooks and crannies may give a cottage quaint appeal, but they don't always cut it for modern life - as Lucy and Chris Wright discovered when they bought this Hampshire hideaway. They loved the property and its position, but the layout was a different matter. After three years of making do, it was time for a change...

The couple moved to the village from London 15 years ago, looking for a better way of life for their children. 'We had friends in the area, and it was perfect because there were good schools nearby and it was commutable for Chris's job,' says Lucy. 'We rented until we found this cottage, which belonged to friends of my sister. The appeal was instant because it's so pretty. The cottage had been extended over the years - it's like a Tardis as it's bigger inside than it looks from the outside. We adored the original features such as the windows and beams, and the kitchen had a lovely cosy feel. The proportions of the rooms were good, too. We also liked that it was situated in a lovely village with a nice pub, a tennis club and lots of families around. It was in a conservation area, but it wasn't listed. It ticked all our boxes.'

Lucy and Chris decided to live in the house for a while until they figured out what they needed to do. Three years later, in search of inspiration, Lucy decided to do a one-day interior design course with Stephanie Dunning of Dunning >



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Lucy Wright and her husband Chris, a lawyer, live here with their son Jack, 21, and daughter Imogen, 19, who are both at university.

House A five-bedroom Victorian cottage. They moved in 12 years ago.



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Living room

With its welcoming fire, this room is the perfect place to relax. **Walls** painted in Slate V by Paint & Paper Library. **Sisal flooring**, Alternative Flooring. **Coffee table**, Oka



Dining room
The neutral colour palette is enlivened with red accents. **Curtains** in Natural Linen, Nicole Fabre. **Chandelier**, Vaughan Designs



TV room
Stephanie cleverly created this space by moving the staircase. A modular sofa layered with cushions and sheepskins is a comfy spot to unwind. **Sofa**, Sofa.com

HAMPSHIRE COTTAGE

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ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... 'Mottisfont Abbey (nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont), a country house and estate set in beautiful gardens by the River Test. Visit in late May/early June when the world-famous historic walled rose gardens are in full bloom.'

Shop at... 'Garden Inn (01264 811661) in Stockbridge. This small town is full of independent shops and, with gorgeous unusual flowers and fabulous vintage-style arrangements, this is one of my favourites. It's the perfect place if you are looking for inspiration for present shopping as it's always full of goodies for both the garden and home.'

Go for a meal at... 'The White Hart Inn (whitehartpentonmewsey.co.uk/) in Penton Mewsey, a family-run country pub serving fabulous food, particularly the Sunday roasts and the superb Friday evening fish and chips. It's dog friendly, too!'

& Everard. It helped her realise that there was too much work for her to do to the cottage on her own and she enlisted Stephanie's help to rework the ground floor.

Stephanie was brought on board to make the most of the space and instantly came up with some clever ideas, including moving the staircase. 'You had to walk through an unused area to get to the stairs,' says Stephanie. 'By turning the staircase around, we gave the family another room, so they now use it as a TV room.'

Stephanie also created a new link that connected the main cottage to the utility, wine store and study, and redesigned these rooms, knocking down walls and incorporating lots of cupboard space. She then redecorated all the ground floor, basing the choice of fabrics around Lucy's love of old French linens, faded florals and muted colours. Floor-length curtains add a soft elegance to the French doors in the hallway linking the main cottage to the utility and study, while the soothing neutral shades of the living room are warmed up with cosy-hued patterned fabrics. 'I was delighted with the end result downstairs,' says Lucy.

In 2018, Lucy decided she wanted to complete the renovations for the rest of the house. 'The children were now grown up, so it was a good opportunity to redo upstairs,' she says. 'It was a confined space and we wanted to make better use of it.' Stephanie was called in again to >



Bedroom

The checked headboard is a nod towards country style. **Headboard** in Bossington Check Duck Egg B02, Teasel England, made by Dunning & Everard



Main bedroom

Florals, checks and an Indian-inspired throw evoke an eclectic look. **Walls** painted in Hardwick White by Farrow & Ball. For similar antique **chairs**, try Vinterior



En suite
Tongue-and-groove panelling and shutters add to the rustic feel. **Sanitaryware and taps**, Harlequin Bathrooms. **Wall tiles**, Grestec. **Mirror**, Maisons du Monde



Bedroom
Mossy greens and check patterns inject a classic country touch. **Wallpaper** in Mira Leaf; **curtains** in Constance, both Colefax and Fowler. **Velvet headboards**, made by Dunning & Everard. **Lamps**, Pooky



LIVING THE DREAM

Reconfiguring the rooms improved storage in Lucy and Chris's house.

How was more storage introduced?

'When we discussed the lack of storage in the bathroom, Stephanie suggested vanity units with drawers and a long shelf where space was tight, plus a line of cupboards on the landing.'

How did you create more space upstairs?

'Stephanie redesigned the rear of the first floor. She removed all the walls and created two shower rooms, a bathroom, a double bedroom and a landing/dressing room. The design gave us more space by not wasting an inch.'

What was the cleverest space-saving tactic?

'The shared space of shower and bath in the main bathroom and the en suite shower.'

FEATURE: VIVIANNE AYERS. PHOTOGRAPHS: DOLLY ELLIOTT

reorganise the first and second floors. 'Stephanie has fantastic spatial awareness,' says Lucy.

'The house hadn't been divided up intelligently,' says Stephanie. 'There were five bedrooms and two inadequate bathrooms with little storage. We redesigned the whole of the rear first floor, knocking down all the walls at the back.'

One of the bedrooms was enlarged, making a single into a double; an extra shower room was created and the two bathrooms became one larger one; and another shower en suite was added.

Inspiration for the decor was taken from Pinterest and magazines, and Stephanie created an eclectic English cottage look. 'We interpret what the client likes and push the boundaries just that little bit more,' says Stephanie. Existing Colefax linen curtains in the guest room were the starting point for this scheme. Complementary moss green velvet headboards inject a sumptuous feel, while reframed samplers and floral prints add a period touch. Multi-hued Shetland wool throws pull the colour scheme together. Another guest room features a smoky green-blue palette, with a checked tweed headboard creating a cosy focal point.

'We were delighted with the end result,' says Lucy. 'The changes absolutely transformed the upstairs of the house. We couldn't believe how Stephanie managed to get so much into such a small space - the cottage feels so much bigger.'

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