



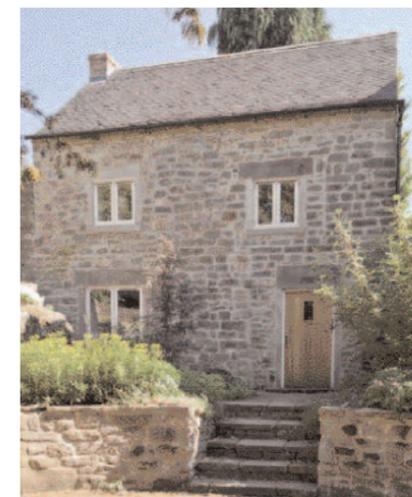
The light, open kitchen with high ceiling and exposed beams was one of the many aspects of the house which led Charlotte and David to fall in love with it. They particularly like the folding patio doors that link the kitchen to the walled garden

# Creative thinking gave us a home with a twist

Charlotte and David Collis found clever ways of creating extra storage in their converted Derbyshire barn

The old saying, 'Good things come to those who wait' certainly rang true for Charlotte and David Collis when they fell hook, line and sinker for their converted barn in Derbyshire. It was the first property they viewed once they decided to sell their terraced mill cottage, where they had lived for 10 years, to buy a bigger house with a garden. 'At this point we had Arthur and our two-bedroom house was starting to feel very small,' recalls Charlotte. 'We wanted another baby, but we needed more space.'

Upon viewing, we loved everything about this house but it was out of our price range. We looked elsewhere but nothing lived up to this one – then we heard that the price had been reduced, so we came to take a second



◀ The bespoke shelf and cupboard unit takes centre stage, the colours of which are picked up by the chairs, which were £49 each from Vertigo Interiors, and a John Lewis table runner. The John Lewis dining table is perfect for family get-togethers



look.' It seemed even better second time around, with its unusual layout, exposed beams, light open kitchen and folding doors onto a two-tier garden. 'Our last house was quite dark, even in summer, so to find somewhere so light and open was wonderful,' says Charlotte. 'We sold our old home very quickly and moved in at the same time that David started a new job and I became pregnant with Elodie. Talk about three stressful life changes all at once!' she laughs.

Fortunately, the house had been recently and tastefully decorated in neutral colours, so their main aim was to create more storage,

### Good idea!

Use the height of a room when planning extra storage. The Peter Cousins shelf and cupboard unit uses the full height of the dining room to great effect.

which was in short supply, particularly in the dining room. 'It's a big space with a high ceiling and a large expanse of wall at one end,' explains Charlotte. 'It was the only place we could ▷



## INSIDER INFO

### THE HOME

A four-bedroom converted barn in Derbyshire.

### WHO LIVES HERE?

Charlotte Collis, 34, a dentist, and her husband David, 38, a physiotherapist. They have a son, Arthur, three, and a daughter, Elodie, seven months.

### WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR HOUSE?

'The light and lovely atmosphere, and that the house and garden are linked together.'

### WHAT IS YOUR BEST DECORATING TIP?

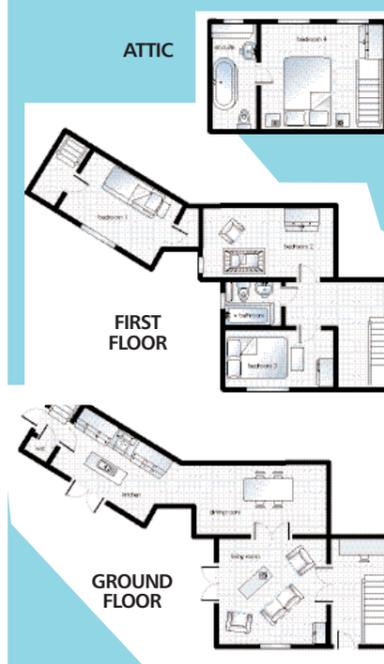
'Don't be afraid to use bold colour in your soft furnishings, especially if the walls and floors are generally neutral.'

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM?

'The dining room, because we love the bespoke Peter Cousins shelf and cupboard unit so much.'

### WHAT WAS YOUR BEST BUY?

'The dining room chairs at £49 each – they cheer me up every time I look at them.'



For stockists see page 122



By angling the sofas Charlotte and David have cleverly overcome the problem of limited wall space. The large sofa is from Indigo Furniture and the smaller one from Habitat. The cushions from John Lewis help add a splash of colour in the otherwise neutral room, while a wooden storage box doubles as a coffee table

‘Use apple crates or stacking trays for keeping toys tidy. They tuck under a bed or stack in a corner while adding a vintage touch to the room.’

◀ really fit our piano, so we commissioned a local furniture maker and artist, Peter Cousins, to design and make a sculptural shelf unit that would frame the piano and turn the wall into a major feature of the house.’ The eight heavy sections were assembled on site like a jigsaw, one ‘nail-biting’ afternoon and the unit now provides Charlotte and David with lots of storage space for Arthur’s toys and open shelves for displaying their favourite possessions.

Although the family were ‘up-sizing’ they only had to buy the dining table and chairs, a bunk bed for Arthur, and furniture for the main bedroom as their previous bed was too big to carry into the attic room.

‘I shuffle furniture around until everything looks right. There was no grand plan when we moved in – the furniture seemed to find its own place and then we established what else was needed. As a rule, I find a room tends to look right if it has balance and proportion,’ she says.

One of the most difficult areas to furnish was the living room, with two internal doors, a window, folding patio doors onto the garden and a wood burning stove all limiting the amount of wall space available for sofas and storage. However, Charlotte and David got round the problem by angling their two sofas around the fire, which in turn created better access between the house and garden when the doors are folded back.

The couple are keen to make the house as flexible as possible, so although the main en suite bedroom is at the top of the house, with the guest room and two children’s rooms on the bottom level, Charlotte is planning to swap things round eventually and turn the attic rooms into a guest suite. ‘It’s a luxury to have our own space at the top of the house, but it makes practical sense for us to be on the same level as the children while they’re still young,’ says Charlotte. ‘There is a family bathroom on the ground floor, along with a Jack-and-Jill en suite between the



▲ Already fitted and tiled, the en suite bathroom needed little more than a coat of Chemise wall paint from Little Greene to create a lovely warm space. The window ledge is decorated with a fish sculpture bought on their travels

▶ A trunk bought years ago from a car boot sale creates the ideal amount of storage for bed linen and toys. The painting above the bed inspired the room’s colour scheme, with an M&S duvet and throw teamed with Next cushions and one made by Charlotte’s mum, all helping to tie the room together. The desk top on the window ledge was originally her grandmother’s

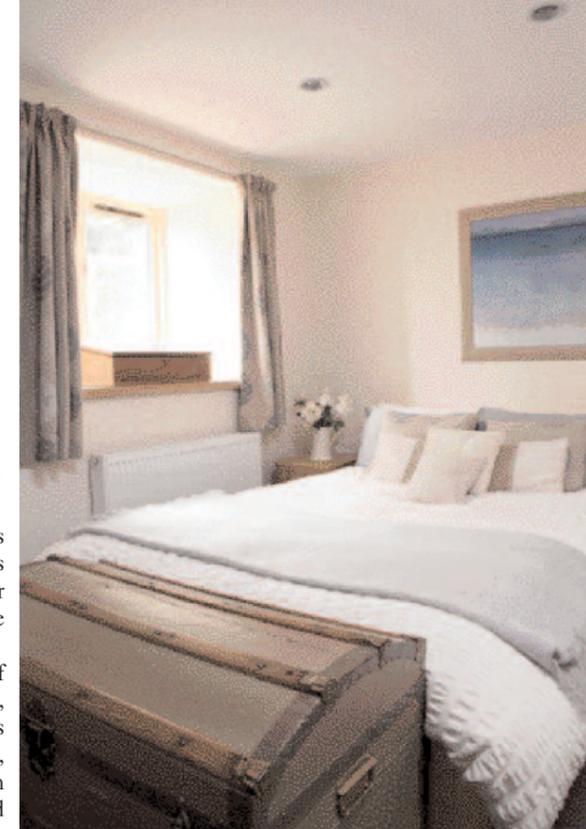
children’s bedrooms, so it’s a very versatile space. And as the children grow older they’ll be able to have the ground floor to themselves.’

Another big attraction of the house was its garden, which is on different levels and in three sections, including a walled garden overlooked by the L-shaped kitchen and living room. ‘We are here for the long term so we have lots of plans. David is going to build a tree house and dens for the children in the summer and we are constantly looking at ways of making the house more cosy in winter, especially through the use of colourful accessories which can be easily changed according to the season,’ says Charlotte.

▼ The stylish en suite bedroom is tucked under the eaves to create a cosy hideaway. Charlotte’s mum, made the cushions to match the duvet set from Next and the floor mirror is from Habitat

Good idea!

Cubby holes set into a wall either side of the bed are a space-saving alternative to bedside tables in a smaller bedroom.



Charlotte and David loved the existing kitchen units and bathroom fittings, so they simply added their own personal touches with bright accessories. ‘The kitchen is a great family space. I like the fact that I can be working in the kitchen and face into the garden so I can keep an eye on the children when they are playing outside. It’s a very easy kitchen to use – everything is close to hand, yet there is plenty of space to move around,’ she explains.

The family are now looking forward to seeing their home evolve. ‘One of the best things about the house is its flexibility and the way it is used will inevitably change along with the needs of our family,’ she says. **YH**

## 5 IDEAS TO STEAL



### CUSTOM CABINETS

If you love the idea of a bespoke cabinet but can’t stretch to hiring a carpenter, use a modular system to create your own design.

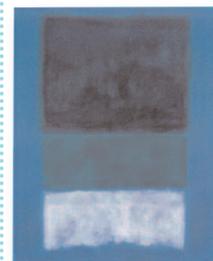
Bestå storage system, from £35 for TV bench, Ikea

### TIMELESS CLASSIC

A wooden trunk is an extremely versatile piece of furniture that works brilliantly as a coffee table and storage, plus if you buy the best you can afford it’s likely to last a lifetime.



Maharani storage chest, £299, John Lewis



### PICTURE PERFECT

Like Charlotte and David, find a piece of art that you love and use this as the inspiration for that room’s colour scheme.

No 14. white and greens in blue Rothko print, £34.99, Art.co.uk

### ON THE RUN

Give your dining table an instant lift with a colourful table runner.

Roxie runner, £20, Habitat



### THE NEW BENCH MARK

More and more families are using benches as they offer flexible seating, can be tucked out of the way and look great too.



Julian Bowen Coxmoor oak bench, £60.89, Wayfair