

PERIOD LIVING

CELEBRATING CLASSIC HOMES AND TIMELESS STYLE

FEBRUARY 2026

House Proud

Discover the stories behind stunning home transformations

Plus

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WOOD FLOORING GUIDE & HOW
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LOFTY AMBITIONS

EXPERT ADVICE ON
CONVERTING AN ATTIC SPACE



ISLAND DREAM

Rethink this kitchen stalwart's design to offer so much more

By the book

Bring a little library magic into your home by dressing spaces with the beautiful spines and array of colours of your favourite reads



FEATURE HOLLY REANEY PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/DAVIDELOVATI; (TOP) BOZ GAGOVSKI; (TOP RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/BRENT DARBY; (RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/DOUGLAS GIBB



HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

LEFT Where one room is only accessible through another, the first can very quickly feel like a corridor. A great way to overcome this logistical challenge is to replace a standard door with a concealed bookcase design – channelling the romance of secret rooms. A skilled joiner or installation expert, such as those from Secret Door, should be able to convert most frames. They can also advise on reinforcing the frame, installing castors, and concealed catches (such as LL Company's Secret Book Pull, £260), ensuring that the bookcase is deep and heavy enough that items stay in place when the door is opened or closed.

UP AND OVER

ABOVE When space is at a premium, every inch counts. 'Victorian properties, like this one, are renowned for having high ceilings, but can have minimal floor area, so filling the dead space around the door just makes sense,' says interior designer Laura Stephens, who designed this landing. 'Building the shelving out from the door frame – only to the depth of a paperback book – not only offers plenty of practical book storage, but also adds visual interest to the landing, an area that is often overlooked.'

DINING OUT

ABOVE RIGHT Bookshelves aren't just for a living room or office: they offer a valuable addition to any space. Here, the walls of a dining room have been given an injection of character with full-height fitted shelves. 'Bespoke furniture works with the architecture to create seamless fixtures that feel like they are part of the room, rather than a piece that has been placed within it. It also helps a home feel more curated,' explains Natalie Prince from Sharps. Painted in Farrow & Ball's warm Picture Gallery Red with dark panelled backs, the bespoke shelves provide a space to display both books and decor. Wall lights added onto the frame offer illumination when finding a title and add to the atmosphere when entertaining.

ON THE LEDGE

RIGHT Top-off wall panelling with a full-depth shelf instead of a conventional picture rail. The combination of vertical panelling and horizontal shelf draws the eye upwards to the books. The shelf also has the added benefit of creating the illusion of a lower ceiling, helping to create a cosy atmosphere in this cottage living room and which would work equally well in a snug.





PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/SIMON BROWN; (TOP) JONATHAN BOND PHOTOGRAPHY; (TOP RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/BRENT DARBY; (RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/COLIN POOLE



READING NOOK

LEFT Unused alcoves are commonly converted into shelving or cabinetry; however, in rooms where the recess is deeper than that of a standard paperback, a single shelf is often not the best use of space. Instead, an L-shaped configuration of freestanding shelves can maximise storage and evoke a library feel in a living room or home office. Paint the shelves in a colour that contrasts with the walls for added interest, and opt for designs with crown moulding detailing for a more formal look.

IN THE EAVES

ABOVE Loft conversions often come with awkward gaps and low ceilings that can be challenging to overcome. In this space, created by interior designer Elizabeth Hay, a small gap between the wall and the dormer window has been fitted with shelves, converting it into an easy-to-reach bookshelf that follows the slant of the eaves. Due to the low ceiling beam, this otherwise impractical space becomes a convenient spot for books and trinkets.

FLAWLESSLY FRAMED

ABOVE RIGHT If building bespoke floor-to-ceiling bookshelves on either side of a window, take the opportunity to incorporate a window seat. Not only will this join the two units together, but it will also create a cosy reading nook. This can be achieved by using modular bookshelf systems – like the Billy series from Ikea – or you can commission a joiner to build a bespoke piece.

SHELF STACKERS

RIGHT Enhance the look of alcove shelving by finishing edges with mouldings and a decorative top piece. Ruth Mottershead, creative director at Little Greene, also recommends painting the shelving the same colour as the walls so that it blends into the scheme. 'Taking a colour-drench approach across built-in furniture, shelving, or a painted sideboard can completely transform a space. Larger pieces of furniture and shelving will instantly feel more integrated within the overall scheme. This subtle approach creates a cohesive and harmonious look, allowing cabinetry or bookcases to blend naturally into the room rather than dominate it. The effect is one of quiet sophistication; the furniture becomes an inherent part of the design rather than a separate element.' For a similar shade to that used here, try Little Greene's Etruria.





PHOTOGRAPHS (LEFT) ALEXANDER JAMES; (TOP) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/KASIA FISZER; (TOP RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/RACHEL WHITING; (RIGHT) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/DOMINIC BLACKMORE



STEP BY STEP

LEFT Turning the blank wall behind the staircase into a characterful feature, here, interior designers from Oakley Moore fitted bespoke shelving above and below the stairs to maximise book storage for their client, a voracious reader. 'We staggered the shelving to echo the sweep of the stairs, creating space for decorative objects and adding picture lights from Besselink & Jones to give the books a soft evening glow,' explains Kate Aslangul, founder and creative director of Oakley Moore. Opting for white shelving maintains the minimalist look, while still drawing the eye, and detracting attention from the stairs, which could otherwise have dominated the scheme.

ON THE RUN

ABOVE Period homes are renowned for their ledges, nooks and crannies, all of which can become a potential repository for books. Here, a small ledge in this staircase has been reimagined as an impromptu library, offering versatile storage and bringing colour and character to the otherwise understated space. Another popular contender is window ledges, but these should be avoided as varying humidity levels can cause pages to warp, and exposure to UV rays will cause the covers and spines to bleach over time. Instead, install a shelf above for the same effect without damaging your literary collection.

FORWARD FACING

ABOVE RIGHT For younger children or reluctant readers, front-facing shelves are a must. The vibrant covers can help entice children to reach for a new book or easily find their favourite. Picture ledges, like Ikea's Mosslanda design, are perfect for all sizes of books, from chunky board books to oversized picture books. Add interest by refreshing the display every few months, perhaps in relation to the season, or a specific theme. The look could be updated for an adult space, with beautiful coffee table books interspersed with framed prints and bud vases.

PICTURE PERFECT

RIGHT With older children, especially avid readers, bookshelf space can quickly be at a premium. Purpose-built designs, like Next's Bronx platform bed, combine a mix of open and closed storage. Alternatively, adapt an existing bed by fitting a shelf-depth backing board, divided by wooden struts to ensure the books won't get lost under the bed, and everything stays organised. 

