



WINNING DESIGN

This Victorian mews house has been brought right up to date in a painstaking renovation that won the Home Transformed category of our 2015 competition

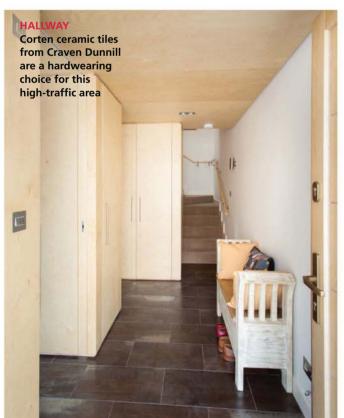
WORDS ALICE WESTGATE PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID GILES

CONTINUED OVER PAGE









enovating this London mews house was such a drastic affair that the only part of the building to escape untouched was the gas meter. 'The floors were sloping and there was a rickety spiral staircase leading up to a bedroom without a window,' recalls Eleri Wilkins, who embarked on the project with her husband Julian in 2012. 'It was dark and damp, we had washing-up bowls catching the drips from leaking rooflights and there were mushrooms growing out of the walls. It was all pretty disgusting.'

However, what the building lacked in charm it made up for in potential. 'When Eleri showed me the estate agent details I could see it was a good buy because of the location and the floor space,' says Julian. Perhaps the biggest stumbling block, though, was the spiral staircase that stood in the middle of the living area, limiting the layout of the ground floor. 'We thought it would make sense to move it to the rear right-hand corner of the building, which would open up the whole house,' says Eleri, 'enabling us to add a series of dormers and roof-lights in the loft to flood this newly created space with light.'

The first architect Eleri and Julian consulted said that this change was impossible but, undeterred, they booked a consultation with another architect, this time at the Grand Designs Live exhibition at London's Excel. 'By luck we were given an appointment with George Bradley,' says Eleri. 'He said it would be perfectly possible to relocate the staircase and we were immediately excited.' George had recently established an architectural practice with innovative Belgian architect Ewald Van Der Straeten and they were, at the time, doing up a similar mews property. 'This provided many of the design cues for our home,' adds Julian.

Buoyed up by confidence in their new design team, the couple completed the property purchase in 2012. It then took a year to get planning permission and go through the tendering process, followed by another year to complete the building work. 'Everything went smoothly and there were no nasty moments along the way,' says Eleri.

The new design includes a generous hallway and an open-plan living space on the ground floor. A bespoke staircase then rises to the next two levels, with two bedrooms on the first floor and a studio room in the attic. The staircase doubles as storage space because the voids beneath the treads are cupboards, housing everything from the fridge-freezer and boiler to the washing machine and water tank.

Central to the style of the house is the quality and finish of the carpentry, as birch-faced ply features throughout – in the kitchen, bathrooms and bedrooms, and on the staircase. 'We wanted lots of wood, but decided that oak would be too expensive as well as not appropriate from an aesthetic point of view,' says Julian.

'We discovered there are various types of ply and each one has different qualities. We specified that we wanted one that was plain, pale and had no dark knots because we were after a streamlined look.'

The couple moved in during June 2014, bringing with them the furniture from their previous home. With its mid-century feel it slots in well with the simple colour scheme. 'Life here is very good,' says Eleri. 'There's a lovely buzz to the area and the house is extremely easy to live in. Though it's small, it never feels confined. When you look at it from the road, you'd never guess how light and spacious it is inside.'

• Eleri and Julian won £2,500 of DFS prizes. The judging panel was made up of House Beautiful Editor Julia Goodwin, FMB Chief Executive Brian Berry, designer Lisa Stickley, and Kellie Wyles from DFS. Turn the page to enter this year's competition.

STORAGE solutions

*Rather than filling your home with a diverse collection of freestanding wardrobes, chests of drawers and cupboards – which can look messy – incorporate plenty of built-in storage to create a more streamlined finish *For an uninterrupted clutter-free look, choose minimal door furniture or opt for handleless units so that your built-in cupboards will resemble a blank wall *Create storage space by building under-stair cupboards, making full use of all the voids by fitting doors that lead directly into the entire space *Box in areas with restricted headroom under the eaves in loft rooms to create cupboard space *Build recessed box shelving into stud walls to make little nooks that are perfect for displaying treasured possessions *Remember to include a tall, shallow cupboard where you can easily stow the ironing board, mop and vacuum cleaner

WHAT IT COST

TOTAL	£108,500
Staircase and woodwork	£30,000
Roof and structure	£40,000
Flooring (not carpets)	£2,500
Bathrooms	£15,000
Kitchen, including white goods	£21,000



FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE

70 housebeautiful.co.uk