



REPLANNED

HOME TRUTHS

**THE PROPERTY**  
Detached former mill worker's house, built around 1912  
**LOCATION** Hampshire  
**ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, family room, utility room, cloakroom, four bedrooms (three en suite), bathroom  
**PURCHASED 2015**  
**PREVIOUS PROPERTY**  
'Before moving here, I lived in a flat in London during the week and a terraced house in Cheshire at weekends,' says Steve.

# SHIP SHAPE

*When keen sailor Steve Bird sent out a distress call, help arrived to salvage his lacklustre home and transform it with a stylish, nautical twist*

FEATURE JANET MCMEEKIN | PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL

Having totally remodelled a hidden gem of a property in an idyllic coastal location, instead of falling in love with his new-look home, Steve Bird began toying with the idea of putting it back on the market. 'It was very frustrating,' says Steve. 'I had invested an incredible amount of effort into sensitively renovating my waterside find. However, it seemed that with every lick of pale-grey paint, the cottage became an increasingly soulless series of bland rectangles.'

Steve first stumbled upon a picturesque harbour town in Hampshire several years ago when he kept a yacht at a local boyard. 'I've spent a lot of time in this beautiful area, so when I decided to relocate, it was a natural place to start house-hunting.'

As luck would have it, while out for a stroll along the banks of the town's historic mill pond, Steve noticed a For Sale sign on an attractive period house he had often admired.

After contacting the estate agent to set up a viewing, Steve, who is a seasoned renovator, realised that the property, with its large corner plot and captivating views of the pond, offered vast potential. 'It is a little off the beaten track, but still easily accessible to the harbour and to a bustling town that's full of independent shops, good restaurants and pubs,' says Steve.

'The house was originally built as a two-up, two-down for the mill manager and his family. Those links with the past really appealed to me and, from the moment I walked in, I knew that

SITTING AREA

A rich, blue colour scheme with warm accents, combined with comfortable seating and a woodburning stove, make this space feel cosy and inviting.  
Line Design Acazia blue rug, £459; Vltra Noguchi coffee table, £1,490; try the Richmond two-seater sofa, £1,799, all Heal's



HALL

'I wanted this space to be a proper entrance with a welcoming feel, rather than a confusing jumble of doors,' says interior designer Emma. 'Wall drawer unit with key drawer in cherry wood, designed by Emma Painter Interiors and made by Arundel Bespoke, price on request; Pyza leather lounge chair, £459.90, PrivateFloor

KITCHEN

A panel of striking geometric wallpaper was used to add depth and a touch of colour.  
Lucya fibre wallpaper, £39.78lin m, Arte. Walls painted in Soft Chiselilla Aura Matte, £25 for 1L, Benjamin Moore. For alternative bar stools, try the Teora, £109 each, Danetti



I needed to take a sensitive approach to the work and ensure that any changes I made would honour the integrity of the property.'

Soon after buying the house, planning permission was granted to reconfigure the layout to create a more streamlined home with a contemporary porch and an open-plan kitchen-diner and sitting area on the ground floor. On the first floor, a jumble of five bedrooms with Jack-and-Jill bathrooms, were rejigged into three bedrooms, one bathroom and two en-suite shower rooms.

With Steve's trusted team of builders on board, the house was stripped back to brick, before a major six-month transformation

project commenced. 'Although the builders and architect did a fantastic job, the end result was a house that felt a little sparse,' says Steve. 'Every room felt indistinguishable. I knew that I needed to bring it to life but was struggling to find inspiration.'

Eventually, Steve hit upon the idea of contacting an interior designer to help with the house's decor. 'My online research proved invaluable,' says Steve. 'As soon as I read Emma Painter's mission statement, I made my SOS call.' Having met Steve for an initial consultation, the interior designer leapt into action in a bid to save the day. 'From our first meeting, I realised that having channelled

so much energy into redesigning the house, Steve could no longer see the wood for the trees,' says Emma. 'He explained that many of the rooms felt uninviting and lacked character.'

Fired up by her brief to create a simple yet stylish contemporary home full of personality, and to make more sense of the spaces, Emma began designing mood boards. 'The house needed to be a sanctuary where Steve could totally relax,' Emma says. 'I wanted to introduce light and shade. I knew that layering each space with colour, texture and pattern would work really well.' Since Steve frequently sails in and around Corfu, Emma was keen to introduce

an evocative palette of coastal colours, inspired by the pale pinks and oranges of stunning sunsets and myriad blue hues of the crystal-clear Ionian Sea. 'I was really impressed with the way she interpreted my passion for sailing and love of mid-century modern design,' says Steve. 'Nothing was ever too much trouble. In the midst of everything, I decided to buy a Vizsla puppy; but Emma took that curve ball in her stride and deftly tweaked the design to accommodate Ruby's arrival. I couldn't be more delighted with the finished house – it is unrecognisable from the property I bought. It's finally somewhere I feel very proud to call home.' 🐾

**LESSON LEARNT** *'If you have lost your way, consider asking for help from an*

*experienced interior designer that you click with, and don't be afraid to be brave'*

**SITTING ROOM**

'This rarely used space has come into its own since Emma suggested using open shelves to create separate zones for relaxing and reading,' says Steve.

Trifid wallpaper, £76 a roll, Osborne & Little; Try French Connection's parquet coffee table, £385



**MAIN BEDROOM**

Soft furnishings in blush pink and coral hues help to soften the grey tones in this scheme. Cushions in Fiamma red fabric, £136m, Marvic. Textiles: Silk bedspread, from £220, Soak & Sleep



**CLOAKROOM**

A quirky mirror adds a nautical feel.

Melody Maison's silver metal porthole mirror, £44.95, is similar. Wall painted in Province Blue Aura Matte, £25 for 1L, Benjamin Moore



**LANDING**

Pictures hung in a gallery style make a bold feature wall. Photographs framed by Harbour Framing. Osborne & Little Mojito cushion in Mandarin & Ivory, £165, Indian Ocean



**BATHROOM**

Wallpaper in a foliage design gives this space a sense of bringing the outside in. Deco Palm wallpaper, £85 a roll, Cole & Son. Try the Kate freestanding bath, £399.99, Soak.com. The Cruze freestanding bath tap with shower mixer, £199.95, Victorian Plumbing, would work

