



# CURRENT THINKING

A former electrical shop has been turned into a switched-on home where the old world meets modern design. **Caroline Donald** reports

Carolyn Sainsot's move from a large Georgian rectory in the Somerset countryside to a former electrical shop in the town of Bruton might seem a lifestyle decision taken in reverse. But Lake House is full of surprises: behind a double shop front lies a Tardis-like space, spread over three floors, with a private, south-facing courtyard beyond.

"When I bought it, everyone thought I was mad," Sainsot says. But there was a method in her madness, as the cottage is perfect for the reiki practice she is setting up, and her children, aged 11, 13 and 16, can now walk to school.

Sainsot entrusted the renovation and decoration of Lake House to Julia Barnard, an old friend who is an interior and garden designer. "Part of the reason I bought a

town house is that it's neat and I can shut it up to go to London. Julia knew exactly what I wanted," Sainsot says.

To achieve the desired neatness, the walls were painted white, and the floors either flagged or painted dove grey. The jumble of rooms, added to the house over the years, has been unified by bringing all the ceilings to the same height to create "a clear, calm, easy living space", Barnard says. Rather than deny the house's former existence, Sainsot has kept the large shop windows. They now have frosted glass, which prevents stares from nosy passers-by but lets a huge amount of light into the drawing room and dining room beyond.

To counter the tasteful neutrals, Barnard used splashes of colour and swirling patterns. In the upstairs loo, for instance, you are struck by the Neisha Crosland

wallpaper, which echoes the hues of the world map that hangs on the upper landing. "We had a feng-shui lady round, who said the map should be in the middle of the house," says Sainsot, who has hung her father's collection of historic travel posters throughout the house.

Barnard was keen to use local craftsmen wherever possible. The log baskets by the drawing-room fireplace, for instance, were made by Rebecca Board, who grows the willow on her allotment near Frome; and all the cabinet work was designed by Barnard, together with the Devon-based carpenter Rex Helston.

Employing talented workmen to renovate the house came with a bonus. "They were all really good-looking," Sainsot says. "It was 8am-to-5pm eye candy." □

Julia Barnard; 01749 813506



"The large shop windows have frosted glass that prevents stares from nosy passers-by"



**Main picture** The drawing-room sofas are designed by Terence Woodgate for SCP (020 7739 1869). The rugs are by Kate Blee for Christopher Farr (020 7349 0888).

**Left** The bath panelling is made from a walnut tree from Sainsot's former home.

**Above** The view over the rooftops of Bruton. **Below left** The old shop front remains intact. **Below** To avoid blocking out the light, curtain poles that swing to the sides were commissioned from Somerset Smithy (01373 462609)

Photographs by Ray Main

