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'It's my little piece of heaven!'

With creativity and a few clever design tricks, Sophie Taylor has transformed the tiny chapel at the bottom of her garden into a light-filled home with lots of character

✦ For stockist details, turn to page 195



When Sophie Taylor bought her house in 2001, the chapel in the garden was included in the sale. After restoring the main house and selling it to friends, she turned her attention to the chapel. The building has retained its existing windows, but the internal walls were stripped out to create an open-plan living area on the ground floor, and a glass extension was added to the rear to be used as a kitchen. Upstairs, glass internal walls allow natural light to flow into the bedroom, bathroom and dressing area. 'The builders started with a hollow shell, but as the design took shape, the chapel came back to life,' says Sophie. Architect, JCCJ Architects. Builders, Bybridge Construction



The big change

Adding a glass extension to house the kitchen and converting the first floor into an open-plan area





The new extension houses a modern kitchen. An internal window lets natural light into the old part of the building, and Sophie was careful to make the most of the small space. 'I have underfloor heating, so there's no need for bulky radiators,' she says. *Kitchen, Bulthaup, Limestone flooring, Hard Rock Flooring*

All about me

Who I am Sophie Taylor, an educational doctor.

My house A one-bedroom converted chapel near Oxford, which stood in the grounds of a cottage I bought in 2001.

The look Despite the quaint exterior, the inside

is modern and minimalist, with a clean, spacious feel.

Lessons I learned Mixing old and new materials like original stone and glass can look great.

I bought for.....£750,000
I spent.....£72,000

What the makeover cost

Joinery.....£10,000	Kitchen.....£19,000
Glass panels.....£5,000	Other.....£26,500
Building work.....£9,000	
Bathroom.....£2,500	TOTAL.....£72,000

FIRST FLOOR
Upstairs glass internal walls divide the bedroom, dressing room and bathroom



GROUND FLOOR
Sophie divided the ground floor into a living room, hall and utility and added a kitchen extension



LEFT A contemporary glass-fronted wood burner provides a focal point in the neutral living room. Sophie painted the walls white and used light white oak flooring throughout to enhance the feeling of space
Wood burner, Jotul

BELOW Built-in storage means clutter is kept to a minimum. 'The stone walls are so uneven the carpenter had to make the panelling and bookcases to curve round them,' says Sophie



When Sophie Taylor decided to convert the chapel at the end of her garden she knew she'd have her work cut out getting light into the building. Keen to create a spectacular look with a budget of £72,000, Sophie set about designing a home with glass walls and windows – inside and out.

How did you come to own a disused chapel?

When I moved here in 2001 it was the tumbledown cottage and large garden that I fell in love with – the stone chapel was a bonus. It was built in the 1800s, but hadn't been used since 1928. At one stage it had deteriorated badly, but the previous owner re-roofed it and patched up the interior. After I sold the cottage to friends, I decided to move into the chapel and transform it into the bright, modern home I wanted.

How did you go about renovating the chapel?

I hired an architect, Juliet Colman from JCCH, who specialises in working with glass. We decided to add a single-storey glass extension for the kitchen and dining area, freeing up the rest of the space for a living room, hallway and utility room. The first floor was divided into a bedroom, dressing room and bathroom. It's all open plan, but the house is intended for a single person or a couple, so privacy isn't really an issue. →



RIGHT The new staircase was hand-made from white oak with a glass balustrade and floor-level lighting to make the whole area look brighter
Joinery, Bybridge Construction

RIGHT Sophie didn't want walls and doors breaking up the limited space on the first floor, so the bedroom, dressing room and bathroom are open plan. Bath and tap, Victoria & Albert. Oak units, Kidlington Joinery

BELOW The beams were painted white to make the space feel light. Sophie added a traditional rug for a cosier look. Rug, find similar at WovenGround



Get Sophie's look
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So how did you overcome the light issue inside the house?

I live in a conservation area, so I wasn't allowed to alter much of the exterior of the old building. I had to work with just the existing small windows and door openings, so out came the old staircase and all the partition walls, and in went masses of glass. It took six men to manoeuvre each of the huge glass panels into place, and as they went up, the poky interior was transformed into a light and open space.

What look were you after for the interior?

I used quality materials and traditional techniques, such as lime mortaring. As the chapel is small, I kept everything simple and contemporary, using brushed stainless steel, mirrors and bright white paint to reflect and enhance the light. I chose light white oak for the flooring, staircase, wall panelling and furniture, while the floor lighting in the glass extension continues onto the terrace, down the steps and underwater in the pond, linking inside and out.

Where did you get all your interesting accessories?

From Africa – I provide medical training for women there. Many of the sculptures and pots were hand-made by traditional craftsmen.

Did you have to make any compromises due to lack of space?

Not at all! I was determined to have a high-quality kitchen, and worked with a designer to come up with a minimalist design, using taupe and grey cabinets. It's small, but has everything I need. It takes a lot more imagination to create a good design in a small building, but for me it's been more fulfilling and rewarding, too. ✽

LEFT The non-electric chandelier is a striking feature. 'I had it made in South Africa from pieces of sand-washed glass from the beach,' says Sophie

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FEATURE: SUEBIL JEFFERY PHOTOGRAPHS: BRENT DABRY PLAN: FERGUSON LTD

The glass wall on the landing allows light from the existing window to flow through the open-plan bathroom, bedroom and dressing room. 'Some people think it's strange, but it feels very decadent living in a glass house,' says Sophie Chest of drawers, find similar at [New Heights](#)

