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MAGAZINE

'Everyone knows where I'm going to try to score...

but they can't always stop me'

Alastair Cook, the coolest head in cricket

WHAT LIES BENEATH...



*Looking for an ingenious way to add space without going up or out?
The Hornsbys' home proves that underground rooms needn't be dark or dismal*

REPORT Vinny Lee **PHOTOGRAPHS** Darren Chung





Previous spread: David Hornsby in the open-plan kitchen/living room. This page: the main bedroom has a curved wall separating it from the staircase and cosy TV room, below

Until the Eighties, the plot where David and Antonia Hornsby's home now stands held no more than a bunch of lock-ups and sheds at the end of a row of Surrey gardens. The long, thin site was then sold to a developer, who created a split-level, one-bedroom bachelor pad. When the Hornsbys bought the place in 2009, Antonia was expecting their first child, and they were faced with the challenge of turning the limited space into a family home.

A chance meeting with a friend on holiday led David Hornsby to contact interior design and architectural consultants Shed – appropriately enough, given the original use of the site. With architect Dave Dalziel, a scheme was developed to turn the part-subterranean house into a three-bedroom home with garage, and to increase the area from 175sq m to 200sq m without extending above or beyond the original footprint.

All the rooms facing the courtyard have floor-to-ceiling glass walls, and light is reflected by the surrounding white walls

Work started in July 2009 and was completed the following May, by which time baby Tom had arrived and was ready to move, with his parents, into their new home.

The task of fitting “a quart into a pint pot” was tackled by creating a design based on a line of three cubes: one at each end for living space, separated by a central courtyard. The scheme also opened up the lower floor, creating a double bedroom with en suite bathroom at one end, and a curving inner wall marking out space for a study and cosy TV room.

On the other side of the courtyard a





Tom's bedroom looks out over the courtyard. Below: the main bedroom's en suite bathroom

similar space is divided into two bedrooms, one a guest bedroom and the other Tom's, separated by a "Jack and Jill" bathroom that can be accessed from either room.

Upstairs, above the main bedroom, the open-plan living, dining and kitchen area is simply furnished, and much of the paraphernalia of daily life is concealed. One of David Hornsby's main concerns was to keep the lines of this room clean. "While the building works were in progress, we were in rented accommodation across the road, living out of cardboard boxes and not knowing where anything was. We realised the importance of storage," he explains.

The kitchen storage in particular is both attractive and clever. Floor-to-ceiling sliding panels of veneered oak, separated by stainless-steel strips, hide shelves of crockery and glassware, while the handle-less grey lacquered units store food.

Opposite the oak panels, there are two barely visible white doors – one opens into

'While the building work was in progress, we were living out of boxes, which made us realise the importance of storage'

a utility room with washing machine and small sink, while the other leads to a compact cloakroom. The walls are free of radiators, thanks to heating fitted under the Strata Tiles porcelain floor.

Because of the location and planning constraints, there are no external windows in the building, so all the natural light comes through overhead panels or the internal courtyard. All the rooms facing the courtyard have floor-to-ceiling glass walls, and even on a dull day the light is reflected and amplified by the surrounding white walls.

The courtyard's glass walls have another ➔





'The glass walls mean Tom can kick a ball around in the courtyard and still be seen from every direction'

function: "Tom likes to kick a ball around out here," says Hornsby. "It is ideal, because he can be left on his own but we can see him from every direction and know that he is safe. We're also right next to a large park, so we can take him there to run around and ride his pedal car in the open, grassy space."

With the house being partly underground and having large areas of glass panelling, fitting high-spec cooling and ventilation was essential. The clever LG Artcool air-conditioning units have small, square-framed front panels that, at first glance, appear to be pictures. Meanwhile, an air circulation pump helps to prevent damp from occurring in the underground rooms, especially the bathrooms, which are against the outer walls.

The final part of the plan was to find space for a garage. This sits above Tom's room and the guest bedroom, but the sleek Ferrari Modena and Tom's pedal car will have to find somewhere else to park because, with the arrival of the next Hornsby due in July, the space is set to become a wet-weather playroom, another stage in the evolution of a highly unusual home.

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From top left: a small cloakroom sits just off the living area; the view from the courtyard of the living room with the main bedroom below it