

Home truths

THIS MONTH IN OUR SERIES ABOUT WHAT REALLY GOES ON INSIDE A HOME, WE CURL UP UNDER A THROW AND **KEEP NICE AND WARM**

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AT THE END OF THE DAY, little beats shutting the door, drawing the curtains, putting a log on the fire and settling in for the night. The best thing about the colder days is returning home and feeling cosseted by enveloping warmth. Happily, timed thermostats and clever gadgets like the Hive Heating Control (hivehome.com), which enables you to control the temperature from your phone, ensure that your entrance into warmth is guaranteed.

These days most of us take central heating and double glazing for granted but a whippy draught under the door can still

freeze the ankles, and an open door still brings in a blast of chilled air. Which is where extra layers of warmth come in. An evening spent on the sofa is one hundred times better when snuggled under a throw, and a bed heaped with extra layers and with a hot water bottle tucked inside is the most inviting place to burrow.

Wood-burning stoves and open fires, although not always strictly necessary, also boost the heat and provide a place to huddle around as the rain patters on the window and the wind whistles down the chimney.



KEEP THINGS TOASTY

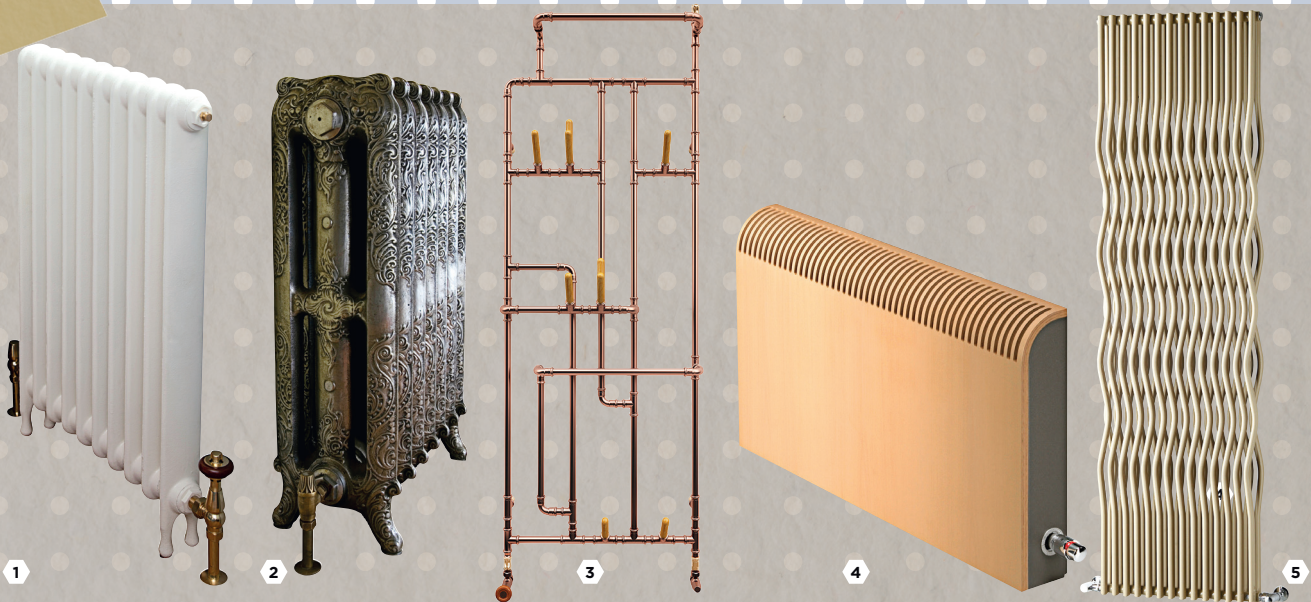
Every home should have plenty of places to hang things on to warm them through. Radiators, above, are the obvious choice, of course, and a useful place to drape socks, smaller items of laundry and sheepskin cat radiator beds (see petplanet.co.uk for a range of inviting options). Towel radiators turn your exit from the bath into a sublime moment of wrap-around cosiness. Lakeland's popular heated airers (lakeland.co.uk, from £80) make laundry crisp and toasty in no time and provide an impromptu wigwam or den for small children and pets. Draw the line at hanging soggy clothes on a wooden airer in front of the fire, though, unless you want to recreate the damp and steamy mood of a 1960s kitchen sink drama.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY; PLAIN PICTURE/STOCKSY

RELIGHT MY FIRE

Whenever a fire needs to be lit, there will always be debate about the best method to do it. This is especially true, of course, when staying in a holiday cottage or similar, when a tussle over whether to use firelighters or not, or how to layer kindling is almost inevitable. With these instructions under your belt, though, you will be the one to shine.

- Make sure the grate is clean. Sweep away any ash from the hearth if it is an open fire, or clean the tray if it's a wood-burner. The key to getting any fire going is to ensure there is a good air flow to combust the fuel.
- Scrunch up several balls of newspaper and lay them in the grate. Some folk recommend rolling the newspaper into a tube, then loosely knotting, but this is not essential.
- Lay pieces of very dry kindling (small, dry pieces of wood or twigs) on top of the newspaper. A couple of interwoven layers should do it.
- Pile two or three well seasoned (dry) logs on top.
- Light the paper with a match (push the door to, if you're using a wood burner), stand back and watch the fire ignite. (If all that fails, then is the time to use a firelighter.)



WHICH RADIATOR?

Remember when all radiators were cumbersome blocks of metal sitting awkwardly along the wall behind the sofa? Those days are over. Designers have turned their attention to these essential dispensers of warmth, treating them as pieces of furniture in their own right. Some hang on the wall, some look like art, and some are just plain show-offy. Other, more conventional styles, are also available.

1. CLASSIC APOLLO CAST-IRON RADIATOR, £91-£2,000

Slim, understated and with a rounded top to fit in most interiors.

2. TRADITIONAL CENTURION CAST-IRON RADIATOR, £109

This free-standing Victorian style radiator suits period properties. Can be painted to match your decorative scheme.

3. MODERNIST PAJAK COPPER RADIATOR, £1,063

Made from copper pipes, this would suit a loft-style space. Has knobs to hang coats and towels and keep them toasty.

4. WOODEN KNOCKONWOOD, £409

Comes in a variety of wood veneers including beech, maple and walnut. Also has low-energy consumption.

5. SCULPTURAL OSLO RADIATOR, £1,500

Radiators can be more than mere heat dispensers, they can be features! This one with its wavy vertical tubes hangs on a wall and creates pleasing shadows.

All radiators from The Radiator Centre theradiatorcentre.com

ADD ANOTHER LAYER

You may think that since Sir Terence Conran blessed us with the “continental quilt” aka the duvet, in 1974, the need for an eiderdown is over. This feather-stuffed, satin item spent decades on top of scratchy blankets and stiff sheets in chilly, pre-centrally-heated homes. But

there has been a revival in its fortunes as more of us covet an extra layer of warmth and a decorative flourish. Now, lighter bedspreads, like the Winchester wool quilt, £249 from urbanara.co.uk (below) eliminate draughts, nipping in around the edges of the duvet.



WOOD-BURNERS OR OPEN FIRES? DISCUSS...

On wintry days, little is as inviting as a blazing fire, and nothing is as bleak as an empty grate. If you are lucky enough to have a fireplace, you know all about its rewards – crackling flames, flickering light, calf-roasting heat. If you don’t, you have probably considered a wood-burning stove. These cast-iron cupboards full of fire can be installed anywhere a flue can be fitted, and are a neat and tidy way to blast out heat. They look good, too (see the new Bay BX from Charnwood, £1,620, above) and can match your style of furnishings. Naysayers claim that they are a tame option when compared to an open fire, but they most probably have chilly backs and grubby, coal-smeared hands. Find one at aradastoves.com; charnwood.com; clearviewstoves.com; morsoe.com; stovax.com.

THE HOT WATER BOTTLE

One of the loveliest phrases in the English language is, “I’ve put a hot water bottle in your bed.” The successor to the bed warmer (made of brass, filled with coals, cumbersome), the hot water bottle was once essential to take the chill off cotton sheets.

These days it is an affordable luxury and gives a boost of localised warmth that is hard to resist. Knowing that one awaits you, heating up the bed in readiness for your entry, makes clambering in far more inviting.



EXTRA SOMETHINGS

Heaps of throws and blankets to curl up under with a cuppa and a good book



Duck egg blue mohair throw, £89
atlanticblankets.com



Pumpnickel blanket, £266
eleanorpritchard.com



Shetland herringbone throw, £75
brontebymoon.co.uk



Etto orange and grey throw, £60
habitat.co.uk



Ysbryd tonnau throw, £122
melintregwynt.co.uk



Charcoal weave throw, £350
frombrightonwithlove.com



Cley navy stripe throw, £150
neptune.com



Peat Earley throw, £55.30
sheridanaustralia.co.uk



Woodstock lambswool throw, £120
margoselby.com