

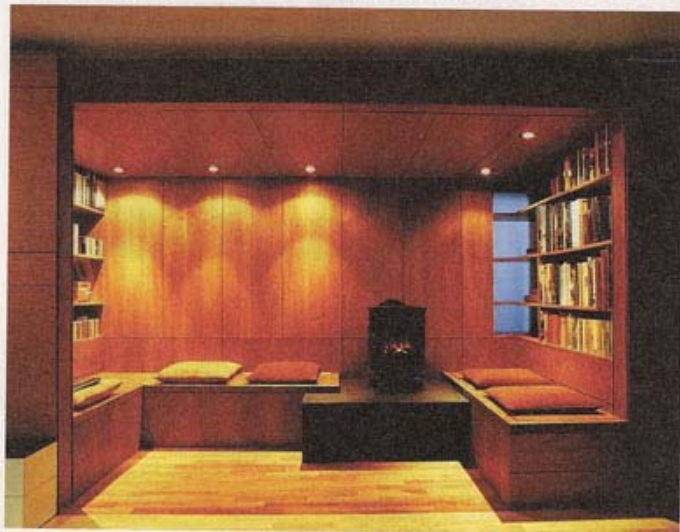
# Hearth of glass

One architect's vision for a rear terrace extension which allows light to stream in during summer, provides a warm interior space in which to withdraw from the darkness in winter

**Project:** Extension to townhouse, St Bernard's Row, Edinburgh  
**Architect:** William Tunnell Architects  
**Photographer:** Dan Weldon

**B**EFORE architect William Tunnell made his mark on this Georgian terraced house in Edinburgh, it was short on living space. The small front room faced on to the street, leaving the owners, a couple with three children, feeling like goldfish in a bowl. They craved a more private space that would offer a relaxed atmosphere.

The couple made the decision to create that space by extending their house into the long, thin but secluded back garden. The architect's brief was that the extension should contain areas for relaxing and dining and plenty of floor space where the children could play. The owners also wanted the existing kitchen and the garden to spill into the new extension, to allow easy access and a visual connection to both. To make room for the new building, an old utility room extension and some garden sheds were demolished.



Main and top: The abundant glass window opens to allow the room to become an outdoor space in summer  
 Left: The modern-day wooden inglenook

"The original house was the first one on this street, so it started off standing alone before it became part of a terrace," explains Tunnell.

"It had plenty of bedroom space, but a small kitchen and very formal dining room. The idea was not to reinvent the house, which is lovely and has some fantastic Georgian detailing, but to create a modern addition, something completely different."

The extension is slightly separated from the house, yet still connected to it, like a garden pavilion. A glazed gap between the two buildings allows light in, and marks the threshold between one structure and another, which seems appropriate as each has a very different feel. The new building is unashamedly contemporary and appears simple, in terms of both structure and

materials. The floors and walls are timber, and the elegant, curved, vaulted roof is finished in white plaster. The light pours in through glazed doors and screens. Along the main screen is a long window seat. When the screens are fully opened, to bring the outside in, this seat can be used as a garden bench. The roof cantilevers out beyond the glazed screen, creating an exterior sheltered area.

Three full-height boxes, clad in oak timber, are arranged around the main space. These are used to neatly contain a small utility room, garden and toy storage, a larder and a drinks cabinet. One of the boxes creates an intimate alcove, lined with cherry-wood and books, where the family can read and put their feet up. The alcove is in stark contrast to the larger, brighter main space, with seating on three

sides around a wood-burning stove and is a response to the Scottish climate. Tunnell, who is currently working on several extensions in Glasgow and Edinburgh and one in the Hebrides, adds: "Some days, you just want to retreat into a warm and snug place. This creates that kind of place without the need for lots of shutters or blinds, a place where you can cosy in round the fire, like an old wood-panelled inglenook."

The cherry wood finish to the walls gives a warmer feeling than the oak used for the rest of the building. The timber boxes also have another purpose – to hide the main steel structure for the building. The structure of the extension has been neatly concealed within the timber boxes and vaulted roof. "This makes the whole space seem lighter than it

would if the structure was exposed," says Tunnell.

This is a small but stylish building, where the efforts of the architect and craftspeople involved in its creation have paid off. Tunnell's intention was that the whole building felt like a well-crafted piece of furniture. "Although I'm mainly a contemporary architect, my approach is quite like the old Arts and Crafts methods, where the maker is very important."

William Tunnell will be talking about his work, along with fellow architects Oliver Chapman and Karen Cadell, at the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland on March 16. To attend, email [events@rias.org.uk](mailto:events@rias.org.uk) or call 0131 229 7545.

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