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A Warm Welcome

Get your home ready in time for winter with our expert advice

When thinking about heating a period property, there are special points to consider. Firstly, your choices should reflect the

architectural details of your interior - you could give a salvaged original piece a new home or choose from the many good traditional-looking designs available. Of course, there are now also ways of warming dwellings which are all but invisible to the naked eye.

Secondly, some older buildings are quite inefficient to begin with. Many have limited insulation and can be draughty - the effect of which is multiplied in some cases by the sheer size of the property. However these are issues which can often be resolved relatively simply, allowing you to feel the full benefits of any new means of heating. In fact, the start of a renovation project is the ideal time to consult the professionals working on your home on just this sort of issue.



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“Choosing an antique radiator or a reproduction design can enhance your home’s charm”

Flame Academy

Once the centre of family life, a fireplace is still the traditional focal point in many a sitting room. Of course in older houses you are just as likely to find one in the kitchen, bedroom or even bathroom. Sadly many were removed when period properties were 'modernised' in the 1970s but thankfully there are many different designs available in stone, marble, wood and cast iron to suit the age and style of your home. "You may want to opt for a made-to-measure fireplace to suit your space exactly," says Neil Gray of Finesse Fireplaces. "Another option is a fully bespoke design which echoes some of your property's attractive architectural features."

Classic Black

If you have a fireplace in your Victorian property, it may well have originally featured a cast-iron surround and basket.



Whether these remain or you have found suitable reclaimed replacements, restoring them to their former glory is quite straightforward, as Elaine Edmondson of Liberon explains. "To get rid of rust, use a wire brush and specialist remover rather than water which may cause further oxidation," she says. "Then apply a coat of iron polish, making sure it is suited to handle heat. Allow it to dry and then buff up the surface with lots of elbow grease."

Light My Fire

Stoves can be a practical choice for period homes. They can be installed without the need for a fireplace, which is especially convenient for conversions and extensions. The wide choice available also gives you the option of many different fuel types. To get the most out of your purchase, choose the right-sized model. Stuart Broadbent of Dunsley Heat explains "to produce a comfortable temperature you will need approximately 1kw of heat for every 14 cubic metres of space. A small increase may be required depending on the number of doors and windows and the level of insulation, but simply using a little more fuel can compensate for this."



Hot Spot

Central heating may not be original to the majority of old properties, but it is certainly a welcome modern addition. Choosing an antique radiator or a reproduction design can also enhance your home's period charm. If you opt for the former, it is a good idea to deal with the experts. Old units require testing to ensure they can cope with today's pressurised systems. You will also need to make sure that the correct sized valves are in the right position. Then the installation can be carried out by your usual plumber. New and original models are available in many heights and widths – from around 30cm and 20cm respectively – so they can be considered for most spaces.

Style Icon

If you are installing a new range cooker, you might want one which combines traditional charm with modern technology in the form of a built-in boiler. Each function can be independently controlled with its own thermostat, so the ovens can be turned off without affecting the hot water supply. The built-in boilers are also programmable in the same way as

their free-standing counterparts. It is advisable to discuss your requirements with a professional before you buy as your best option will depend on factors such as your hot water needs and the number and size of radiators you intend to run.

Heat Wave

Where room for radiators is limited, underfloor heating can provide a space-saving solution. It is also an environmentally friendly option and can be added relatively straightforwardly to existing properties when a new floor is being laid, as Karyl Taylor of Thermoboard by Wavin explains. "Underfloor heating can be used with any type of floor construction," she says. "You can also have your choice of finishes, such as ceramic and stone. Wood is another option, however, heat output will be slightly reduced. If you are using the latter, you need to be sure that the moisture content of the boards and building is nominal and stable."

Roll Up

The importance of old windows to the special character of a period property cannot be overstated, however they can allow warmth to escape. Hanging blinds is a simple, effective and inexpensive way of improving their thermal efficiency. They can be combined with curtains to further enhance their insulating effect. There are many different styles of blind to choose from, some of which may be better suited to the task than others, as Sarah Quilliam of Hillarys explains. "Lined Roman blinds in soft furnishing fabric have particularly good heat-saving properties," she says. "Their traditional design also makes them a very appropriate choice for period homes."

That's a Wrap

According to the Energy Saving Trust, a quarter of heat loss in the typical house is through the attic. This waste can be significantly reduced by installing the right insulation or topping up what already exists. Loft insulation is suitable for most properties as long as the area is accessible and free from damp. Installing 'insulation quilts' is a straightforward job for a competent home-improver but if you're unsure, you may want call in the professions in order to avoid waste and ensure the best possible result. The good news is that it can take as little as two years to recoup your investment in bill savings and in many cases loft insulation remains effective for over 40 years.



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Useful Contacts

- **Dunsley Heat** 01484 682 635, dunsleyheat.co.uk
- **Finesse Fireplaces** 01225 783 558, finessefireplaces.co.uk
- **Hillarys** 0800 916 6524 hillarys.co.uk
- **Liberon** 01797 367 555, liberon.co.uk
- **Thermoboard by Wavin** 01249 766 600, wavin.co.uk