

# NATURAL TOUCH

The addition of an elegant garden room and a carefully revised layout gave this historic home in London a new lease of life, as well as a vital connection between inside and out

---

WORDS EMMA J PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS BÉNÉDICTE DRUMMOND

**W**ith its rich history, the Gothic Revival house owned by Alice and John Edwards needed careful handling to bring it into the modern world. Originally a watermill, the building and its land have been through several incarnations, including being the childhood home of Jonathan and David Dimpleby. 'Moving here was all about being close to nature,' says Alice, of the secluded plot on the edge of a large common in southwest London. 'When we saw the conservatory, we were drawn to the link between indoors and out. However, it was never a practical addition, as it was freezing in the winter and too hot in the summer. Convincing the planners to let us replace it took some doing, but fortunately,

a picture of a young Jonathan and David playing in the garden, with a conservatory very much in evidence, proved that an extension in some form or another had been around for many years.'

Alice and John, who live here with three-year-old twins Max and Eva, enlisted the help of interior designers Nicholas Spencer and Sophie von Wedekind. As plans evolved for a more structurally solid garden room, the couple assessed the layout of the rest of the ground floor, too. 'We wanted to simplify things,' says Alice. 'Part of the house's charm is that not one room is square, but at the same time, there was a disconnect between the two existing living rooms and kitchen that we wanted to address.'

As the house is Grade II listed, the family had to jump through several hoops to convince the →



**KITCHEN**  
A favourite artwork complements the colour palette of this serene room.  
Bolle ceiling **light** by Gallotti & Radice at Go Modern. Lyon Béton Hauteville concrete **bar stools**, Pad Home.

**KITCHEN**

**Bespoke fitted storage makes the most of this generous space.**

**Cabinetry** painted in Inferior Grey, Edward Bulmer. Antique mirror **splashback** (right), Saligo Design.





planners. ‘Planning permission had failed a number of times previously,’ says Nicholas. ‘So we sat down and looked at how we could unify the space, and that involved completely reworking the kitchen, turning one living room into a dining room and creating a linking doorway to produce an uninterrupted sight line from front to back.’

Once all the work was complete, Alice could set about softening the edges. ‘Pre-children, our home featured lots of glass and a stone floor,’ she says. ‘But I wanted to inject a sense of fun – I needed squishy sofas that our children and dogs could clamber on.’ Family time is precious in this home and to that end, Alice and John incorporated the original herb garden into the footprint of the house to create a

glazed playroom. At weekends, the family is often found baking at the large kitchen island or crafting at the dining table. ‘I know that society has almost lost the concept of dining rooms, but ours has made real use of what had become a transitional space.

As Max and Eva grow, it will be lovely to have proper family time round the table. Plus, we felt that this house deserved it,’ says Alice.

‘We wanted to preserve the grandeur of this place, while adding some feminine notes,’ she says. ‘At the same time, our aim was to simplify, in order to preserve the building’s heritage. Most importantly, we all relax the minute we walk through the front door. For me, that’s a perfect indication that this has finally become a home for all seasons.’ 📸

**GARDEN ROOM**

Painted in a grey-blue, the new build effortlessly links house and garden.

'We can now spend time in here whatever the season,' says Alice.

Garden room painted in Pigeon, Farrow & Ball.

Bespoke ottoman designed by Spencer & Wedekind; upholstered in Duchess Paisley by De Le Cuona. Small cushions in Cochiti by Pierre Frey.





### DINING ROOM

The family reinstated a formal dining room as a counterpoint to the relaxed dining area in the kitchen. A curved dresser and round mirror add a contemporary touch.

Emil **dresser**, Pinch. Invito extendable oak dining **table**, Artisan. Bespoke **chairs** by Spencer & Wedekind; upholstered in Colette by Pierre Frey. **Walls** painted in Pumice Brown, Dulux.

“BESPOKE TOUCHES MAKE THIS HOUSE SING - THE USE OF SMART PAINTED JOINERY THROUGHOUT TO CONCEAL CLUTTER, FOR EXAMPLE, CREATES A WONDERFUL SENSE OF SERENITY”





### MASTER BEDROOM

'I'm drawn to cool colours so a palette of soft putties seemed appropriate here,' says Alice, who introduced texture through fabrics. Burmese Fans lampshade, Pooky Lighting. Cushions in, from left, Botany, Hamble and Chiltern by Fermoie. Lambswool herringbone throw, Raft. Joséphine candle, Cire Trudon.

### CHILDREN'S BEDROOM

A bespoke cabin bed is the perfect sleeping solution for this whimsical space, built right into the eaves to maximise storage. Bespoke joinery by Spencer & Wedekind; painted in Blue Vein, Paint & Paper Library; alcove lined in Clouds by Rapture & Wright. Stars wallpaper, Cole & Son.