



Pictures: Julie Oswin



**case study**  
**2**

*Pretty in*

# pink

**When Catherine Brady designed her bespoke, free-standing kitchen she knew exactly what she wanted – contemporary glamour in her favourite colours of purple and pink.**



**P**opping out to buy a paper one Saturday morning Catherine Brady ended up purchasing a dilapidated eight bedroom Victorian house instead. “The house is only six doors away from our previous 1930s home, where we had lived for eighteen years, and so I knew it well and had always admired its Romeo and Juliet balcony overlooking the Charnwood Forest,” says Catherine, who saw the owner in the garden and enquired whether the property was for sale.


“I rushed back and told Stewart to come with me and have a look,” she continues. “The house had been owned by Loughborough University and was lived in by students – although it had been empty for several years. As soon as I walked into the grand hall I started planning where we would put the Christmas tree. Stewart felt that this was a bit premature, considering the amount of work which needed to be done!”

The house was in a terrible state and everyone thought the Bradys were mad to consider such a huge renovation project. “It was a dark, creepy old building daubed with graffiti – on the second floor someone had



scrawled ‘HELP’, above the fireplace. Our daughters were horrified when we returned home later that day and broke the news,” says Stewart. “They called it the house of horrors and did not want to live there.”

Catherine could see past the debris, however, and envisaged the house as a luxurious modern home. She and Stewart hoped to restore and reinstate the original features whilst introducing an element of glamour which would give the building a real wow factor.

The couple asked around to find local building companies, and approached a small builder who went on to manage the various subcontractors. “One of my friends is married to an architect, who we employed to draw up plans for us,” says Catherine. 

**A wall was taken down and a steel joist inserted to make the large kitchen/breakfast room on the ground floor, with new French doors leading out into the garden. The bespoke DeVOL kitchen consists of a huge purple island unit and a large storage cupboard in vibrant pink.**



**The spacious drawing room was designed as a restful space and has two fireplaces and ornate chandeliers.**

“We needed help restoring the original grandeur of the house whilst introducing a contemporary feel, and did not want to damage the resale value.”

Work started in August 2002 and took one year to complete. Initially, the Bradys remained in their old house, moving in while the renovation was still being completed and living with the builders working around them for three months. “Sometimes there would be over twenty people in the house,” laughs Stewart. “There was no privacy, and we managed without a proper kitchen for six weeks.”

Building work began at the top of the house, with re-roofing proving the most expensive single element of the project. New hardwood windows were fitted, a damp-proof course installed and the property was rewired and replumbed. The couple used local companies and small family businesses wherever possible for materials and fittings, including replacement oak flooring and furniture.



The second floor has been converted into a modern teenage flat for two of Stewart and Catherine's daughters, and has its own kitchen, a luxurious Victorian bathroom with a Jacuzzi bath and a sitting room, which leads out onto the balcony.

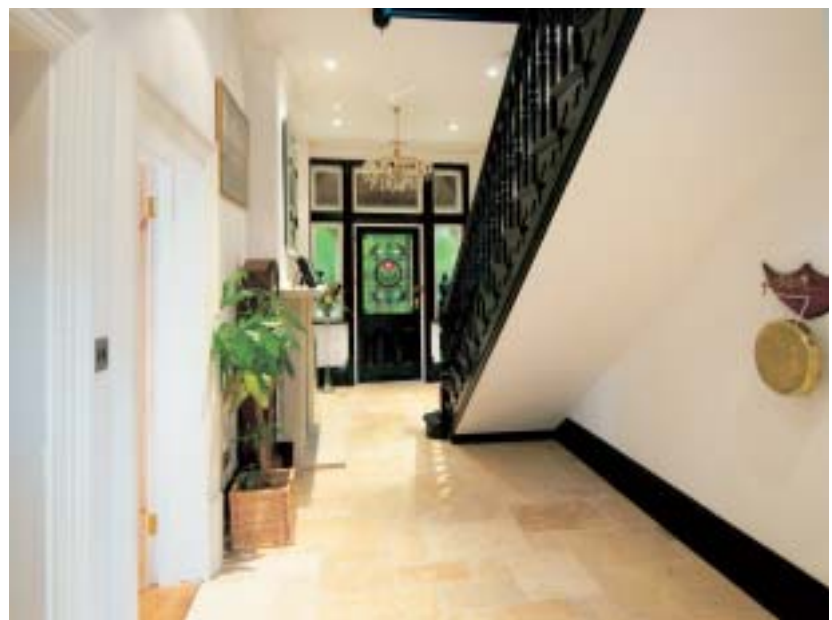
"The girls are 15 and 17 and wanted a modern, unfussy kitchen," says Catherine. "They chose hand-made DeVOL units, painted white, with grey worktops. We decided against fitting an oven, but there is a slim Creda hob and a microwave, which meant that this room was extremely useful when we first moved in, and we used it while the main kitchen was finished."

The Bradys' training publications company is based in a home office on the first floor, which still has the original stained glass windows. The master bedroom has a dressing room – formerly a student bedroom – whilst a black painted slipper bath takes pride of place in the main bathroom. Here the window has been dressed with three colours of pink voile and a dramatic chandelier hangs overhead.

"My favourite colours are fuchsia pink and purple," says Catherine, "and these shades feature throughout the house. When I was younger I toned down my ideas so that other people would approve, but now that I'm in my fifties I know my own mind and don't really care what others think!"

When it came to the main kitchen, however, Catherine found it hard to find anyone who would listen to her ideas. Two small ground floor rooms have been knocked together to create a large kitchen/breakfast room, with a former larder acting as a utility.

Numerous windows made positioning the kitchen units awkward, but Catherine explained her require-



ments to the architect and asked him to come up with a suitable design. As an avid reader of interior design magazines she was able to cut out pictures to express her preferences.

"This is my fourth kitchen, so I knew exactly what I wanted: a large room where we could eat, to avoid the cook being isolated from the rest of the family. I used a book called Contemporary Glamour to inspire me, and I wanted the kitchen to reflect this theme and to be exciting as well as practical, but the two kitchen companies we approached had their own ideas and just would not listen," she recalls. "I lost heart, but eventually we found DeVOL, who made the kitchen to order."

DeVOL designs and fits classic bespoke free-standing kitchens, and is regularly acknowledged in the media – featuring on television programmes such as Grand Designs and Britain's Best Home. "Discussions on practicalities and aesthetics are always very involved," explains the proprietor and designer, Paul O'Leary. "What is right for one client is not necessarily right for another. Catherine is quite tall, and asked for the kitchen to be designed with this in mind. The beauty of a bespoke kitchen is that it is a one-off, created for individual needs and tastes." 

**Victorian style fireplaces have been restored and stained glass windows retained in the house, which give it a period grandeur. Walls are predominantly white, with black woodwork and skirtings creating a dramatic outline. The dramatic staircase has been illuminated with glamorous floor lights.**



For painted cabinets DeVol makes the fascias, doors and drawer fronts from tulipwood and cheeks from alder, both solid hardwoods which are stable, durable and knot free. This ensures a smooth surface, crisp edges, and the paint finish does not suffer from resinous knot stains. The interior carcassing is made from cabinetry grade red deal.

Each piece of furniture is built by a qualified experienced cabinet maker using time-honoured carpentry techniques: the fascias are mortice and tenoned, doors hang on rebated brass butt hinges, are flush fitting within the fascia and have a consistently even gap all round. The drawers are of solid box construction with traditional widely spaced dovetails.

“The brightest paint colour that DeVol offered was pale blue,” Catherine recalls. “I was impressed with the quality of the workmanship, but I’m most definitely not a pale blue person, and I knew I could always change the colours later if they really didn’t work.”

A huge purple central island, measuring 10 x 12 feet, overcomes the lack of wall units by incorporating a double butler sink, storage – including space for cookery books – and an integral hob, set into the work surface, which virtually disappears from sight when not in use. Stewart and Catherine felt that this island was rather large, but trusted their architect’s professional judgement and are extremely happy with the result.

“The stainless steel extractor canopy above the island unit is enormous,” says Stewart. “It was designed by our architect and produced by a steel company, who had never made one that size before, and wondered why we needed something more suited to a restaurant. The ducting passes above the door of the utility room,



and resembles Richard Rogers, Pompidou Centre in Paris. It’s all very oversized but works well in such a large room.”

Two ovens have been fitted into the pink free-standing unit, which has been designed with an integral wine rack, cupboards for plates, a pull-out larder and deep drawers intended to accommodate pans. Catherine was keen to incorporate a warming drawer, to ensure that plates are always pre-warmed when required without taking up valuable oven space. A glamorous, glossy black worktop was also high on her list of priorities.

A contemporary steel and glass table was designed for the dining area and has been coupled with bright pink designer chairs. “One of the things I’ve done in this house, which I had never done before, was to specially commission items,” says Catherine. “I always felt that was for very wealthy people, but I realised that you can get beautiful objects and not necessarily pay a lot more. It is the only way to get exactly what you want. The same company made the table and the cooker hood, as well as a coffee table in the sitting room – which runs off the kitchen. I described what I wanted and my daughter’s husband drew it.”

Lighting was an important consideration throughout the house, which appeared dark when the Bradys had first viewed it. Hundreds of low voltage recessed



**Above:**The Victorian bathroom features a black painted slipper bath and voile window dressings in Catherine’s trademark pink.



**Left and top:** The elegant period exterior features a Romeo and Juliet balcony from which to enjoy the views.



The original stained glass windows in the front door (top right), and servants' bells (above) in the kitchen, contrast with the contemporary decor of some of the other rooms such as the bedroom and music room in the attic.

spotlights have been fitted, the staircase is illuminated at foot level and elaborate chandeliers feature in several rooms, including the kitchen. "I used to teach French and would take school trips to Paris and Versailles," says Catherine. "Bringing ornate chandeliers home became a bit of a habit!"

Underfloor heating has been fitted throughout the ground floor, with limestone flagstones laid in the

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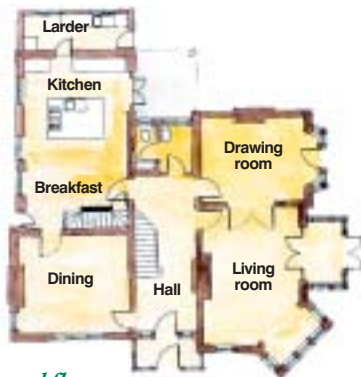
**The Chair Company, London** (Kitchen chairs):

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kitchen and hallway. "Our budget for the kitchen was not astronomical – around £20,000," Stewart explains. "By designing the units ourselves and introducing luxury items such as the pale limestone flooring, the effect is opulent. Everyone is stunned when they see it for the first time and reactions have been positive – although I'm sure no-one would dare to tell us that they hated it!"

Catherine admits that such bright colours are not to everyone's taste, but hopes that visitors will appreciate the novelty of such a glamorous house. "The kitchen has turned out exactly as I had hoped and, although I'm not a cordon bleu cook, I enjoy spending time there," she says. "Having such oversized units makes cooking for large numbers far easier, and I can happily produce a roast dinner for 25 people and hide the dirty pans out of sight in the utility room. Joan Collins would be proud!"



Ground floor



First floor



Attic