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All In The Detail

Kerrie and David Murray renovated their modernised Victorian home, renewing its original character with period features found in salvage yards and skips

BY LEE HAZEL DOLAN IN COLLABORATION WITH JEREMY PHILLIPS



ABOVE The fire surround came from a local auction. Kerrie found a 1920s 'Biedermeier' style chest of drawers in a skip. Above the table is a tablecloth from a local auction. Kerrie found a tablecloth from a local auction.

BAR LEFT A local auction found a tablecloth from a local auction. Kerrie found a tablecloth from a local auction. Kerrie found a tablecloth from a local auction.

LEFT Kerrie found a tablecloth from a local auction. Kerrie found a tablecloth from a local auction.

As Kerrie and David Murray share their love about old houses and they'll read off a list: 'Fireplaces, sash windows, period ceiling and deep skirting boards, traditional furnishings.' Unsurprisingly, all of these features and many more can be seen in the Victorian home they've lived in for over a decade.

What may come as a surprise, though, is that when they bought the house it had none of these. The former owners had given it a modern revamp, and all the original features were gone, leaving the rooms devoid of character. But the Murrys loved the house anyway, and knew how to put back its original charm.

'We'd never renovated an older house before,' admits Kerrie, 'but quite a few of our friends have, so we were sure that we could pull it off if we gave it our all.'

As a promise of things to come, one of the first things she and David did was to prep a butcher's sink, their earliest buy, in the kitchen. Kerrie says: 'Even though it wasn't plumbed in for a very long time, just placing it there gave me inspiration. It summed up the look I wanted to create, not just for the kitchen, but for the whole house.'

Self-confessed novice home renovators with the tightest of budgets, they were grateful for all the help they could get from family and friends. One such friend with a reclaimed yard solved the problem of the missing fireplaces early on. 'We paid about a hundred pounds for them all,' says Kerrie.

Her favourite fireplace is now in the sitting room, which was the first room they transformed. Kerrie decided to place the insert's deep green Art Nouveau tiles with a handsome marble surround and gilt-framed ogee-shaped mirror, and decorated the room with a dull-gold wallpaper and daisy floral fabric. For a long time, this was their hub-bub – the only room with a working fire and clean walls and floors.

'We were just as lucky financially with the windows for the front of the house,' David explains. Some friends of ours had moved out of their period home and the new owners were taking the original sashes out. I distinctly remember how long our friends had spent stripping and restoring them, so I knew they were going to be very special.'

One of the most significant changes they have made, however, is in the kitchen where two small rooms have been turned into one large open space. A local >



'We'd never renovated an older house before but we were sure we could give it our all'



TOP RIGHT AND RIGHT The new garden was commissioned to David's design. From left to right: brick, with brass dishes and a red lantern to fill the space with light. Kerrie chose to paint

the walls in Farrow & Ball's Light Blue, after which, while using the generous light, the leather sofas were torn to shreds & replaced. The above headstone was found at House of Eaves.

carpenter made bespoke units from oak-lined timber topped with beamed graining then the Marmon-style terracotta floor tiles, wicker pine furniture and a Blue Age, all giving a relaxed country look that decidedly fulfils the promise of that cherished work.

It was a case of the minute decision to take down the kitchen's dividing wall, though, as Kerrie explains: "David's father had already opened up the fireplace and spent two days skimming the chimney, then my father pointed out that it would be very warm in that small room with an Aga and we'd be wise to open the room up. The next week, we knocked the whole wall out, thankfully. David's father was relaxed about it."

As work continued in the house, Kerrie and David were busy scouring salvage yards to replace lost period features wherever. In the nearby streets, some of their neighbours were more interested in bringing a contemporary look to their homes, so the Murrys learned to look out for promising doors and heavy brickets – the oak window for Eve's bedroom was one of their best finds. David spotted it just as it was being removed and ran home for his tape measure. "I checked the window frame – and it was a perfect fit, he remembers. So I ran back and said I'd take it, we clipped away and installed it the same day."

Less of an immediate success was the trailer-load of bricks David bought from a crew at work on a villa nearby. He asked for it to be chopped off at Kerrie's parents' home, but hadn't realised plenty of unusable rubble would accompany it too.

"By the time I turned up to help, there was just this hill of rubbish that completely blocked their drive," he says. "It was full of dust and rubble, ruining their "



'Kerrie and David were busy scouring salvage yards for lost period features'



ABOVE A glass door is now open to the new oak entrance hall. Kerrie chose a yellow and blue tiled floor to suit the kitchen and dining hall.

BAR LEFT The buffet dining unit was one of the Murrys' finds, and was a wonderful source of inspiration for them as they decorated the house.

LEFT Kerrie cut out of deal and decorated bookshelves throughout the house.



TOP We prefer flea-fair finds such as the Ecoparis Suite 1414, a fabulous iron bedstead we spotted at a garage. **ABOVE:** The roll-top bathtub had been the bedstead and then a kitchen's gas range. She and David built it now to speed and re-assembly. The bath and WC are from Wickes, the floor tiles came from Co. Cork. The Dab suite is

beautiful too. Kerrie's father was working away, but her mother saw everything – and was very understanding.

The beds, carefully sorted, eventually came in handy for the garden room extension, built to David's design by a veteran builder over 75, whose skill and speed was a source of inspiration to them. The extra reception room grew from mere space, without detracting from the character of the original house.

Another striking transformation has taken place in the bathroom, where the ugly brown 1970s suite has been replaced with a roll-top bath and a traditionally styled basin and WC. 'The bath had been in my father's garage for about six years,' says Kerrie, 'and it was in a



KERRIE SHARES HER RENOVATING TIPS

'Always try to reclaim items where possible. It's nice to know that you've rescued odd pieces that have some history; they can give you so much back.'

'There's more, though, to be said for my new. We spent hours renovating a second-hand Aga stove we bought from a friend for £100 – and my father convinced it to be sold to us. Then one night we just decided to get a new one instead, so were spared the sweat and instead of having a more expensive one, we put the money towards the Aga.'

'When you're renovating, be prepared for the dirt and the chaos. It's a mess but we were always in comfy work clothes.'

ABOVE: The massive bedstead has been the family's most recent project. The traditional iron bedstead, sold to The Ecoparis, will be given and built for Kerrie's own. Kerrie and David painted the walls above the picture of Kerrie's father, John, in 2006.

'The brown 1970s bathroom suite was replaced with a salvaged roll-top bath'

terrible state because I'd been keeping old bricks in it, so we had it shut-bledged and re-encased.'

The classic bathroom suite, painted, panelled and chequered floor are teamed with some contemporary touches, such as the silver-framed mirror and dramatic Designers Guild print boards the bed is now fresh and functional, but attractive too.

After their efforts, Kerrie is understandably proud of what they have achieved. 'David and I have done a lot of the renovation work ourselves,' she says. 'We're not skilled craftsmen, but we appreciate our house very much; we've had great fun renovating the period features and putting our own stamp on it.' —



ABOVE Family-based oak from Apsis is local to the kitchen. A red pin holds the apron and the oven mitts from redwood pine doors. The recipe books and gift certificates are all from Pin and Blossom.

FAR LEFT The exterior of the restored 16th-century, with its stonework and original front door and side windows.

LEFT Pine is up as large as from a local shop. The stove is an historic part of the farmhouse's original fit. The gas stove is on a floor made of stone tiles. The dog is on the

KEY FACTS

Location North Wales, UK
Period Late Victorian / circa 1890
Size Three bedrooms, one bathroom
Owners Fern & Mummy, a home educator and her husband David, a human resources manager. They have two daughters, Cole and Rex, and own two rescue dogs, Belle and Tigger

