

THE INDEPENDENT

# Property

WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY 2005



## Restoration queen

How an architect transformed a wreck, page 5

**INSIDE** 2-3: Park life  
Kilburn's wild side for sale

7: Size matters  
Floorplans are the future

12: The daily grind  
Buy your own country mill

TEQUILA WHARF:  
Limehouse E14

LAUNCH VENUE:  
Sunborn Yacht Hotel  
Royal Victoria Dock

**TELFORD HOMES**

**E14 OPEN WEEKEND**

PRESENTING TEQUILA WHARF AND EQUINOX DEVELOPMENTS  
5 & 6 FEBRUARY 2005

ON THE SUNBORN YACHT HOTEL, EXCEL EAST, ROYAL VICTORIA DOCK, E16

To register to attend please call **087 087 209 87**



telfordhomes  
www.telfordhomes.plc.uk

EQUINOX, Island Gardens E14

## ME AND MY HOME

## A staircase to heaven

Architect Carolyn Trevor has turned an *Addams Family* wreck into a stunning family home. By **Joey Canessa**

Carolyn Trevor runs her architectural practice, Trevor Lohoff Architects (also TLA), with her husband, Pat Lohoff. They have five children and live in a seven-bedroom house in the Mpsiff's Field conservation area in south London.

Four years ago, we were living in a Victorian terraced house in Clapham. It always felt very tall and narrow, and it became increasingly cramped as our family grew. One day, I drove through an area called Mpsiff's Fields, which I never knew existed, and saw a "for sale" sign outside this fantastic old house which could have come straight out of *The Addams Family*. It was perfect for us, though, and although it was way over our budget, we managed to buy it.

It was occupied at the time by an elderly couple and several lodgers, who were struggling with its upkeep. The house needed our help: the roof was leaking, the wiring was deadly, and the basement kitchen was mucky and damp. The whole of the stair hall - which runs all the way up the house - had red-glass walls and black woodwork, and the windows were all painted green on the outside. The joints in the floors downstairs were also collapsing and they all needed replacing.

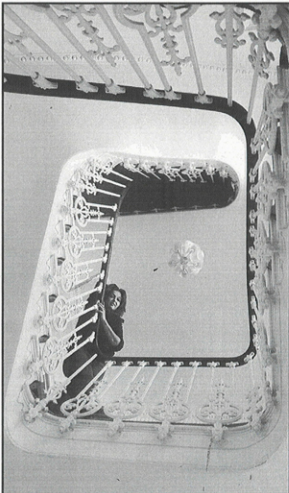
Mpsiff's Fields is a great area, sandwiched between Stockwell, Camberwell and Brixton. There are lots of huge houses around a lovely park, all of them magnificent. It only takes 15 minutes to get to Soho, and now we have lots of friends who live nearby - but when we moved south of the river nine years ago, all our friends in west London thought we were mad.

Most of the original features were almost intact, the best of which were the amazing staircase and corning. Both were in desperate need of attention and aching to be restored: we could barely make out the three cherubs playing music, painting, and sculpting on the ceiling. The staircase, with its cast iron and mahogany balustrade, is fabulous too, leading its way to the top of the house. The biggest attraction for us was the space; the house was big enough for us to be able to work downstairs in the basement, which would mean we could be much more in touch with the kids.

After some debate, we relocated the kitchen on the ground floor at the back, overlooking the garden. We have linked the two main rooms so that we have a big kitchen leading on to the sitting room, which gives us a space where we can relax. We often have friends to dinner during the week and at weekends, so there are usually eight or ten children at a time in the house. And now, at last, we have a table that sits 14 - it's by Monica Armani, made of steel and glass, and it's even got wheels so you can drive it around the house.

In our work as architects, Pat and I design and build both new and refurbished homes for private clients - which is quite exciting. You have to develop a relationship of trust with them and learn how they live, in order to interpret their needs successfully. Often a client will take you to an old house and tell you what they want to keep, or they might want a complete change and just give you a collection of tear sheets. It's great if you've got a huge budget and a blank canvas, but that's rarely the case.

No vision for this house was to produce a home that was modern in the context of



of an old house. Naturally, there was a certain amount of practicality involved in the decisions we made. We had to restore the existing fabric of the building, which then became a support for a new outer "layer". Once we had replaced the joints in the sitting room, we re-floored it with wide boards of Sapelle, which we stained to match the mahogany banister rail. This floor continues into the kitchen and it looks great - though it isn't actually the best solution for a kitchen floor, as it's fairly high-maintenance. We spent a fortune restoring the plaster corning and used London Fine Art Plaster, which did an incredibly brilliant job. I love the lights we chose for these two rooms - they're Achille Castiglioni "Trazz" "acum" lights, and real design classics. They're not very economical, each one has 40 25-watt bulbs. We think they look quite like Daleks.

Our huge Gaggenau pizza oven was given to us by a client when they upgraded theirs. We've also got a huge American

fridge with an ice and water dispenser that the kids love, although they constantly drop ice on to the floor. Matilda drove her bike into the fridge when it was new and scratched it with the brake handle. Then she finished the job off by scribbling over the door in Bira. I'm really pleased with my pull-out X-trend tap which we bought from alternative plans, too - it's slick as well as practical.

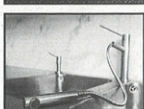
The white-glass kitchen cupboards were supplied by Anthony Downes. We've used stacked cabinets but customised them with stainless-steel trims to suit our needs. The cupboards are probably 12ft high and almost reach the ceiling. We need the storage because we aren't very good at throwing things away and we have accumulated a huge amount of stuff.

The kitchen opens out into the garden via the original double doors. We have added a large glass bridge spanning the small courtyard below, leading to a decked area of the garden that is actually the roof of the garage.



**High points:** Carolyn Trevor (left) on her cast iron and mahogany staircase. Other features include a glass bridge leading to the garden area (above); musical cherubs on the corning; and pull-out taps (right)

Timothy Allen



The bridge was a long time in the making; we wanted glass so that the light would reach the rooms below. There are more glass steps down to the rest of the garden.

Pat and I are keen collectors of furniture, and love filling the house with beautiful designer finds. We bought four Norman Cherner plywood chairs recently from a shop at Camden Market. They were originally bought for a client, but we ended up keeping them for ourselves. At the moment, my favourite place to shop is Aram in Drury Lane, where we buy a lot of furniture for our clients, as well as eBay, of course.

Although I'm really pleased with what we've done to the house so far, there are still two floors to go - the children have loads of space now, but are waiting patiently for their rooms to be finished. Still, at least, the creaky floorboards and unreliable heating system have been replaced, and the feeling of quiet efficiency is very reassuring. Carolyn Trevor, TLA 020-7377 6181; www.tlaro.com