

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Handmade Shaker cupboards painted in shades of heritage blue settle Alice and Toby Broadfield's kitchen into their traditional Victorian villa

Words: Jane Crittenden Photography: James French Styling: Marisha Taylor

The FACTS

Who? Alice and Toby Broadfield with their children, Beatrice, 13, and Henry, 12

What? An open-plan kitchen in a six-bedroom 1850s villa

Where? Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

Cost? £55,000

Time? Three months

Combining a variety of door and drawer styles, painted in two different blues – Alexander Lewis' Boal Room Blue and Little Greene's James 108, the Alexander Lewis units set a traditional tone. Flooring: Quorn Stone.

A KITCHEN with a *LOVED* & LIVED-IN FEEL made *PERFECT SENSE* to Alice Broadfield and her husband, Toby after they purchased an elegant Victorian villa with beautifully preserved period features.

"I loved the layout of the house so I didn't want to change too much structurally," says Alice, who runs interior design studio Flora & Finn Interiors with her friend, Sarah Shannon. "Toby and I didn't need a kitchen extension with a sofa and TV area as there was already lots of space for that in the other rooms, but we felt the updated kitchen should echo the history of the house better and appear as though as it could have been there for years. Although we also wanted it to be modern enough to cope with the demands of a family life."

Alice already knew a little about the six-bedroom property before she came to view it since the house had been the childhood home of her sister's friend. "I remember my sister telling me it had two staircases and a huge garden with a swimming pool," she recalls. "For years I'd driven past and admired it from afar, but never imagined we'd ever live here. It's quite a rarity as there aren't many houses left in the centre of Leamington Spa that haven't been divided into flats or turned into nursing homes." Alice and Toby, who is a real estate lawyer, had already sold their Grade II Regency terraced house and were renting when Toby spotted the villa for sale. "I discovered the same owners still lived there," says Alice. "They'd carefully kept the property maintained – all the original cornicing, skirting boards and picture rails were in a brilliant condition as well as some of the shutters – we didn't hesitate to put in an offer."

The sale went through within a few months – but the couple knew they'd like to re-do the kitchen. They were aware the project would be an investment and that they'd need to save up before any work started. "For a six-bedroom house, the old kitchen felt a bit too small – but it had good-quality Smallbone cabinetry from the 1980s," Alice says. "I did a mini update by painting the walls off-white and the cupboards two different shades of blue. I love blue and it was a good way to see if the colour scheme would be right for the new kitchen."

Four years passed, and after redoing the bathrooms and redecorating the other rooms, the couple decided to make a start on the kitchen. With three large reception areas – one of which was used as a dining space – there was no need to extend, so instead, they decided to knock through to the adjacent small room, which had been the china pantry when the house was first built. "It was important we stayed as faithful to the original architecture as we could," says Alice. "Although we took the wall down so the old sitting room could become a new dining area, we kept the fireplace and doors to the garden. We also maintained the chimneybreast of the original scullery fireplace, but extended it slightly to fit in an Aga, which was at the top of my wishlist because I'd grown-up with one."

When it came to the look of the space, 'lived in' and 'traditional' were key parts of the brief. Alice wanted a Shaker-style design to create a furnished look rather than a fitted finish, and decided painting the cabinetry in two tones of blue – as in the original scheme – would enhance this impression. "I didn't want lots of wall cupboards because I'm not very tall and the Aga helps make the room feel more established," she explains. "It's a silvery grey colour, so if I decide to change the paint on the cupboards in years to come it won't clash." >

An easy-to-reach corner cupboard is more practical than shelves in the deep alcove. All the furniture, from Alexander Lewis, is handmade with oak carcasses and drawers, and door fronts in tulip wood. Knobs and cup handles, Crafts and Assinder.



Alice had bought the kitchen for her and Toby's previous home from Alexander Lewis in Market Harborough and didn't hesitate to go back for the new scheme. "I know how the company operates and designer Matthew and his team made the whole experience very easy again," she says. After falling for a grey marble-effect quartzite worktop she saw in the company's showroom, she made a decision about the blue paint. "The tones needed to be robust, otherwise we'd lose the lovely depth of pattern in the work surface," she explains. "So I settled on Little Greene's James 108 and I love their Juniper Ash shade, but it wasn't a dark enough contrast. Alexander Lewis sells its own mix, Boot Room Blue, and it was perfect. I like that together the colours don't make too much of a statement and could come across very differently if I decided to change the walls to an off-white or pale green in years to come."

Once the building work was completed, the underfloor heating was installed – but a problem arose when the screed didn't dry out in time for the limestone flooring to be laid. The delay had the potential to mean missing their kitchen installation slot and Aga installation. Alice put in a call to Matthew, who arranged for the fit-out team to lay blocks of wood onto the concrete floor and tweak the adjuster feet on the carcasses to mimic the height of the tiles. "Once the limestone was laid, the plinths went on as usual and concealed the legs," remembers Alice. "The team were meticulous and did all the final painting when the cupboards were in place and it looks brilliant. I really love the arched detail on the freezer and fridge cupboard, and the stem-hung fittings for our wine glasses in the drinks unit. These small touches helped make our kitchen feel unique to us."

To complete the look, the walls were painted a dusky lilac shade, a vibrant floral blind was hung and the couple bought an antique dining table and chapel chairs at an auction for the dining area. During the winter months the Aga makes the room cosy, and in summer the doors are thrown open to the garden, so it works all year round and feels very homely. "I must have achieved what I set out to do, because the kitchen already fits right in and I can't really remember what the house was like without it," says Alice. "Toby, the kids and I all gravitate in here; it's a great space to gather, talk and eat without the distractions of TV or homework – we love it." >



Projecting the sink further into the room breaks the heavy-filled look. To the right Alice has two Miele dishwashers. On the island, a Miele hob and oven have been installed for the summer when the Aga range cooker is switched off.



Alice chose the shades of blue so they wouldn't draw out the veining in the quartzite worktop, from Alexander Lewis.



The handmade mantel by Alexander Lewis is a larger version of the old scullery fireplace design, which was removed as part of the renovation.



KBB loves

design edit

1 Dacie pendant light in brushed brass, £30, B&Q, diy.com 2 Highgate painted wardrobe, £549.99, Oak Furnitureland, oakfurnitureland.co.uk 3 Greek Blue chalk paint, £21.95 for 1 litre, Annie Sloan, anniesloan.com 4 Scullery kitchen table in Heritage Blue, £1295, Loaf, Loaf.com 5 Brixton Alabaster tiles, £10.95 per sq m, Walls and Floors, wallsandfloors.co.uk



Alice wanted plenty of space to prepare food but was nervous a large island would swamp the room – but the team at Alexander Lewis made it work. The side closest to the Aga is for crockery, cutlery and cooking equipment; the other side holds glasses and occasional-use crockery. **Pendants:** Jim Lawrence.

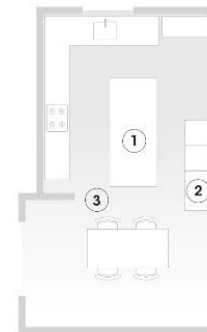


The Victorian dining table and chapel chairs were a bargain auction find from Chiswick Auctions. Alice painted the table legs in Little Greene's Pea Green. The pink velvet chair is from Vanessa Arbutnot and is a favourite spot to sit with a coffee and enjoy the garden.

The PLANS

A wall between the kitchen and small sitting room was removed so the space could extend across the full width of the house. The back door between them was blocked up and a modern window in the kitchen facing the garden replaced with double doors.

- 1 Island The large unit has been carefully proportioned to fit the space.
- 2 Storage Blocking up the old back door made space for a large freezer and fridge cupboard.
- 3 Entry point The door into the kitchen from the hallway was blocked up to extend the run for the units. Double doors connect it to the eating area.



SOURCEBOOK

Design Flora & Finn Interiors 07502 222722, florainfininteriors.com
Kitchen design and installation Alexander Lewis 01858 434444, alexanderlewis.com
Worktop Alexander Lewis, as before
Sink and tap Alexander Lewis, as before
Appliances Alexander Lewis, as before
Pendant lights Jim Lawrence 01473 826665, jimlawrence.co.uk
Flooring Quorn Stone 01509 4 6657, mystonstone.com
 For full stockist information, see page 142 KBB