

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Giving Modernist styling and 21st-century additions to this Arts and Crafts house was a risk that paid off handsomely

Photography David Barbour Words Caroline Ednie

DETAILS

What Alterations to a two-storey Edwardian terraced house

Where Glasgow

Architect Ewan Cameron Architects



It's a dilemma that many owners of period properties face at some time or another: how do you modernise without losing any of the charm or beauty of the home you originally fell in love with? Carol and Drew Grieve knew there was much to admire in their traditional Edwardian terraced house in Glasgow's west end, yet after 20 years of living there, they were also well aware of its failings too, and they wanted to make it more suitable to their needs.

"The house was relatively untouched when we bought it, and as far as we could see it hadn't had any major makeovers," says Drew. "It's a great shape of house, and we loved the original features." Nevertheless, as is typical with homes from this period, the ground-floor accommodation consisted of a series of separate smallish rooms, all with little connection to the garden.

The couple had considered and rejected various improvement options over the years: "At one stage we thought of cutting through from the dining room to the lounge," says Carol. A better idea presented itself during a visit to relatives in Holland, where they came across Arts and Crafts houses that felt light and bright, something that had been achieved by opening up the garden-facing rear walls.

While doing the same back home in Glasgow would certainly bring in more light, the Grieves' ambitions went further. "We started to wonder, 'How far out can we go ►



without bothering the planners?’ and we were advised that we could do so by four metres,” says Drew. “We remembered a pavilion that we’d seen in Kent that we loved for its seamless glazing and overhanging roof. We spoke to Ewan Cameron, the architect who’d built it, and told him what we were looking for. We loved the ideas he came back to us with – in fact, there is no difference between his design and what is now built.”

The brief was essentially to create an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area with a connection between the new dining space and the existing lounge. Cameron’s elegant solution is a century-spanning sequence of spaces: the original retained Arts and Crafts rooms flowing into a mid-century Modernist

dining space and dramatically culminating in a 21st-century frameless glass garden pavilion. The latter has an oversailing white canopy and dark-coloured zinc roof (with rooflights) that creates a light-filled and elegant contemporary internal space. Bespoke sliding glass doors between the new kitchen-dining area and the Arts and Crafts lounge serve as a seamless connection and give flow to the whole ground floor.

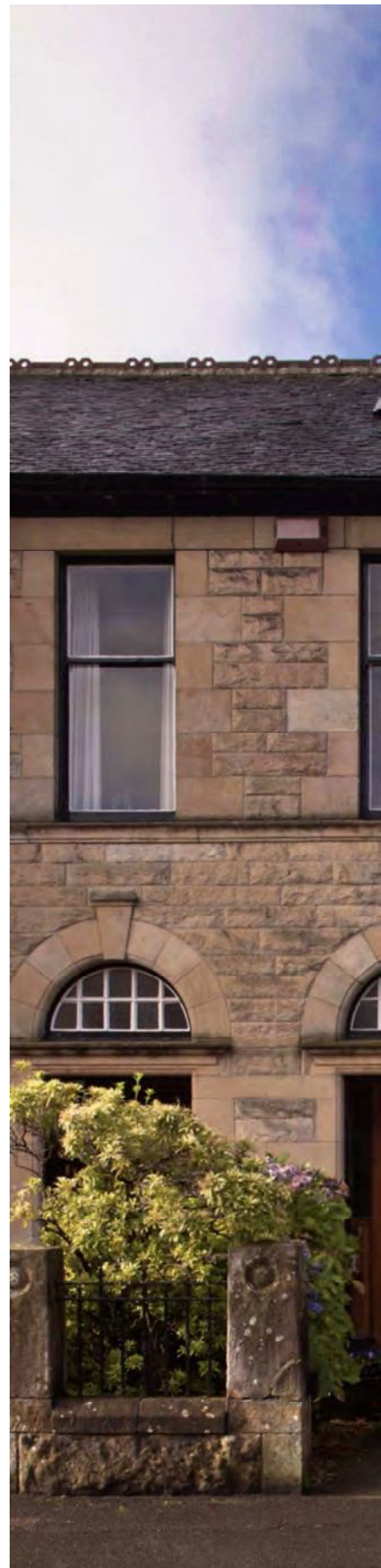
A Japanese-inspired external terrace underneath the roof overhang provides an additional living (or at least sitting) area. “I like the idea of sitting outside, even if it’s raining,” says Drew, “and this is as close to living outside as you can get.”

Planning, as predicted, proved painless, and, to ►



[Left] The kitchen is a design from Kitchens International, teamed with Silestone worktops. "KI invited us to cooking demos, which gave us ideas for our appliances," says Carol. "We also got a deal on the oven and fridge as they were last year's models." The bar stools were a bargain internet find. Dulux's Bowler Hat grey breaks up the otherwise white walls. [Below] Looking through the dining area to the original living room, with the sliding glass doors open. Jieldé pendants and a Galletly & Tubbs lamp on the 1950s sideboard, bought from Glasgow's Vintage & Retro Furniture, add bright notes of colour. The Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs were collected over the years from a variety of sources

“GOOD ARCHITECTURE DOESN'T COST ANY MORE THAN BAD ARCHITECTURE, BUT IT'S A LOT BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY”



[Left and below] The house's first impression is of a traditional Edwardian home. The original stained glass, carved balustrade and gentle curves of the style have all been retained



make things even easier, Drew and Carol decided to move out during the 14-week construction period. First, though, they managed to sell their relatively new kitchen on eBay, and used the funds to top up their budget. They also admit to “camping” at the house most weekends, to keep an eye on how things were progressing.

The main part of the project was opening up the back part of the house. Three steel beams run across the house supporting the rear elevation and the specialist frameless glazing, which was engineered and detailed by local experts Gray & Dick. The zinc oversailing canopy roof keeps the rain off and provides some sun screening. The solar glass also prevents the interior from overheating.

The architect has shown a deft touch inside too. “The dining area is the interface between the Arts and Crafts lounge and the new extension,” says Cameron. “The Arts and Crafts-style facing around the lounge door lends authenticity, and on the opposite (dining) side we created a simple Modern facing. The astragals on the panes of the internal glazed doors also line up exactly with the bookcase. The idea is that you’re moving through the early-20th-century lounge, through the Modernist era – via the doors and facings as well as the owners’ mid-century modern furniture – to the 21st-century glass extension. It’s a subtle transition, where nothing jars.”

Drew and Carol already owned some of the key furniture, such as the Breuer Wassily chairs, but during the build they bought other vintage pieces, including the dining table, chairs and sideboard, and sourced many of the key interior features such as the kitchen and lighting.

“We got the kitchen from the Glasgow branch of Kitchens International. They were super,” says Drew. “We told their designer what kind of furniture we had and she worked up a 3D design on the computer and got it absolutely right. The kitchen island steps up to a higher level, forming a slight bridge between the kitchen and the dining room, which works very well.”

The couple also decided to paint part of the kitchen ►

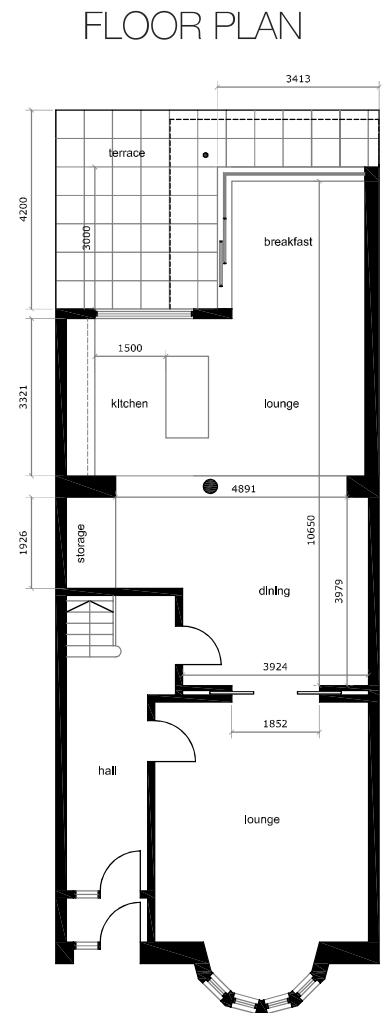
grey to contrast with the brilliant white walls and the Kährs oak floors. “The grey wall sharpens up the kitchen and delineates the edges,” says Carol. “The grey pillar also echoes the exterior pillar.”

The new arrangement works well. “It has changed the way we live,” acknowledges Carol. “We use the lounge a lot more now, as the back opening brightens up the whole house. Even with the connecting doors closed, you can see out to the garden wherever you are on the ground floor. It is a great social space now.”

They even enjoyed the building process, despite working with a very tight budget. “One of the main lessons we learned is to ‘value engineer’ as you go along,” says Drew. “For example,

the architect had carried out a detailed lighting spec, but for top-of-the-range lights. In order to make savings, we set about finding more affordable alternatives. Initially, we were quoted well over £100 for each light (and there are 24 of them!) but we managed to get it down to £38 each just by shopping around. Local company Starlighting provided us with lots of help and support.”

Getting it right from the start is perhaps the key lesson learned, though: “The most important thing in a project like this is getting the architect’s brief absolutely right and having as much discussion as possible early on,” says Carol. “We’ve realised that good architecture doesn’t cost any more than bad architecture, but it’s a lot better value for money.” ■



[Above] “The frameless glazing is the big ticket item of the build, but savings have been made in other areas,” says architect Ewan Cameron. “For example, the window above the kitchen sink is a black UPVC. The eye isn’t drawn to that, it’s just part of the back wall. The rooflight is also a simple and cost-effective solution – around £1,000. It’s more important to spec up on the focal points.” Frameless rooflight supplied by GMB builders