

ONE room



When Gail and Tim Pilkington decided to remodel the kitchen of their Little Shelford home, their aim was to create a functional, sociable and beautiful space. Gail tells Alice Ryan how that dream kitchen became reality.

Pictures by David Johnson



“A friend of my son’s walked in here the other day and said straight away ‘I love your kitchen’. You know your kitchen’s pretty cool when even a 14-year-old boy has that reaction.

beautifully functional

My husband actually grew up in Cambridge and both our jobs ended up bringing us to the area. Our house was built in the 1970s. It’s what they called a ‘kit house’. We bought it in 1995, lived in it for eight years, then spent eight years in Holland. We’d added an extension in 2000, but it was when we moved back from Holland two years ago that we decided it was time for a full renovation.

It was originally very open-plan. When you’ve got small children, that’s brilliant: you know where they are all the time. But when you’ve got teenagers – our daughter Ella is 16, and her brother Jamie is 14 – it becomes less practical. When one of them needs to work and the other wants to play loud music, you need to be able to close some doors.

So the first thing we did was rethink the layout: we segmented it a bit more, and closed off a mezzanine. We’ve also re-rendered the exterior and installed all new doors and windows. Altogether, the renovation took 18

months – but it was absolutely worth it. Dutch kitchens are tiny, so we extended the house we bought in Holland to create a large central kitchen. We felt that worked very well for our family, so when we came back to the UK we thought ‘How do we do that in this house?’; originally, this property had a very narrow galley kitchen.

We knew, on paper, exactly what we wanted: a space that was beautiful, functional and sociable. But we didn’t know how to turn it into a reality.

I looked at lots of kitchens and talked to lots of designers, but as soon as I discovered David Hall I was completely hooked. The ideas David brought to the table were inspirational: to him, kitchens aren’t just a series of boxes on walls; he composes them in such a way that they flow. . .

Our kitchen is predominantly white and natural wood, with a sheer glass splashback. Because the palette is pale, it really sets the wood off. And there are no handles on the cabinets, which makes the whole thing very streamlined.

feeling special

One of the loveliest things was – because David Hall kitchens are totally bespoke – I was able to go to the warehouse and choose the wood myself. I also got to visit the kitchen in the

workshop, prior to it being fitted. That made the process feel quite special. There are lots of clever uses of space. In our old kitchen, the island was a gathering place but nothing more. David said ‘I can create cupboard space in there, just right for things like your turkey dish’ – you can never find anywhere big enough to store the turkey dish! So now our island is multi-purpose. It even incorporates our extractor fan, which stops it intruding.

My favourite feature probably sounds like a really boring one: the bins. There’s one for black bag rubbish, one for recyclables, one for paper, plus a food caddy. I love the fact it’s so orderly. And they’re beautifully hidden away behind a cupboard door.

I also love the double oven. I’m an events manager by profession – I work for the Faraday Institute – but in my spare time I’m a keen cook. The double oven is wonderful for entertaining. The kids love the big American fridge. I’m always trying to get them to drink more water, and the prospect of having it really cold with ice seems to encourage them.

The attention to detail is what makes the kitchen so special, I think. We’ve got three unusually-sized cabinets at one end of the room and, instead of being plain, they’ve got green glass boxes in them. It’s not obtrusive; it

just adds that little bit of interest. We’ve added a metre and a half on to the kitchen, which doesn’t sound a lot, but it makes a huge difference. We’ve also had four-panel bi-fold doors fitted on the exterior wall, so the kitchen opens right up on to the garden; they’re from Kloeber, in Somersham, and they’re brilliant. The light pours in and the room feels so much more spacious.

family living

The best thing about the kitchen is that it really does bring the family together. You’d expect

teenagers to shut themselves away in their bedrooms, but the kids come and sit at the island while I’m cooking. Sometimes they bring work down with them; mostly they see it as a break from work, I think.

We sit round the island and eat together, chat together, play cards together. That’s exactly what we wanted our kitchen to be – the real heart of the home.

THE BRAINS BEHIND THE BEAUTY

Frances Hall, of David Hall Kitchens and Furniture Makers, explains why the company offers something special. . .

“David left Cambridge to study Interior Design at Chelsea School of Art and pursue a career in cabinet making. His contemporary kitchen and furniture designs compose detail, proportion, style and materials with high-end hand finishes to create beautiful, timeless interiors. Every kitchen David designs is unique to its

owner, has its own story and personality and is true to an aesthetic that demands the very best of everything. “All David Hall furniture is hand-made by our team of highly-skilled craftsmen at our Cambridgeshire workshop. We offer a full design to installation service, working with our trusted tradesmen to ensure every aspect of the project is completed to our high standards. Prices start at around £25,000 for a kitchen, £3,000 for wardrobes, and around

£5,000 for living room AV units, depending on specification and materials.

“To contact David Hall Kitchen and Furniture Makers, please call (01763) 261010, email info@davidhallfurniture.co.uk, or visit davidhallfurniture.co.uk. Our workshop – at Unit 5 Saxon Way Business Centre, Melbourn, Cambridgeshire SG8 6DN – is open Monday to Friday from 10am–3pm, or Saturday by appointment. Please call ahead to let us know you are coming.”