

Fit for a Queen

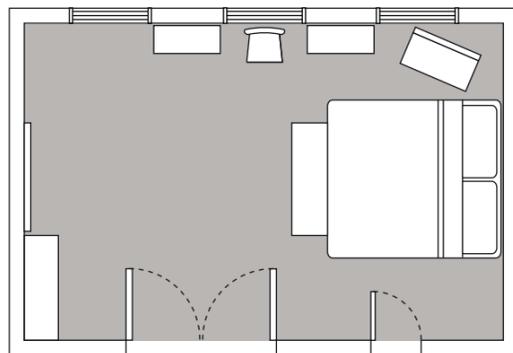
Fiona Pollard took on the important task of returning this Grade I-listed building to its original use as a family home

Words: **Alexandra Pratt** Photography: **Marc Wilson**



Previous page (p153): Both the bedrooms and the bathrooms have beautiful original fireplaces which homeowner Fiona restored as feature pieces.

Below: The original sash windows had been painted in over the years and could not be opened, so Fiona had them completely restored, re-weighted and all the window furniture renewed.



Events organiser Fiona Pollard rescued this magnificent five-storey Georgian house in central Bath from life as a commercial building. In just six months she overcame a series of major challenges – including restrictions imposed as part of its Grade I listing – to create a practical, warm and stylish home for herself, her husband Brent and their four children, India (20), Darcey (19), Morgan (16) and Antigony (12).

Situated on Queen Square (so named for George II's consort, Caroline), famed architect John Wood built the house between 1727 and 1735. He was also responsible for the iconic Circus and the North and South Parades, which have contributed to Bath being recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Living in one of these homes may be a privilege, but restoring it absorbed 18 months of Fiona's life and a £350,000 budget.

Perhaps the most significant change was the creation of a modern kitchen and dining area in the basement. "My brief to our designer, James Horsfall, at Bath Kitchen Company was to maximise the amount of light. I wanted something white and bright, which I wouldn't normally go for," says Fiona. The right materials, as well as the colours themselves, were key to this, so Fiona chose a solid

wood kitchen, painted in Farrow & Ball's Wimborne White, with high-grade stainless-steel handles and appliances. The white worktops are quartz-based Silestone. "I wanted marble, but it's not light enough. Natural stone has much more grey in it," says Fiona.

Almost 50 LED downlights illuminate the entire kitchen/dining space and are controlled in four separate zones that are designed to throw light around the reflective surfaces. The pale theme continues on the floor in a uniquely thin composite tile from Boniti. "The ceiling is so low – I was restricted to a 15mm-thick tile. Natural stone is 25mm-thick, so these are porcelain, with a stone top," she adds. Listed status restrictions on damaging the walls also meant Fiona couldn't have her longed-for AGA range, with its necessary flue and pipework, so instead she chose an Everhot model, which requires only two plugs.

Fiona's practical requirements also dictated the new kitchen's layout. "I'm a firm believer in decent refrigeration with a big family, so I have a Sub-Zero fridge-freezer. It's expensive but well worth the money." Add a central island that looks into the kitchen (and not out of a window), plus the Everhot and Fiona has her "three key pieces" that make the kitchen her ideal practical space. "Everything

is to hand," she says. "I can be cooking for a party of 18 or 20 and it can cope. It's also a very convivial space and you wouldn't necessarily expect that in a basement."

It is perhaps surprising, given the quality of the restoration, but Fiona went on to design and manage the remainder of the project herself, guided by a great deal of painstaking research. The master bedroom, which adjoins the drawing room via a set of wedding doors that were installed as a condition of planning, could easily have failed to live up to the grandeur of the space. However, Fiona focused on creating a restful feel that takes account both of the verdant trees in the nearby park in summer and the more exposed winter environment.

"My husband doesn't like floral or feminine décor, so it had to work for both of us," explains Fiona. Thus she very skillfully combined original period furniture and the traditional Farrow & Ball Slipper Satin paint on the walls, with modern, eye-catching textiles by Italian designer Fornasetti, who printed aspects of his opera-singing lover's face on everything from cushions to lamps.

As with much of the house, both the bedrooms and the bathrooms benefit from very high ceilings. The main bathroom has an extraordinary

16ft-high ceiling, in a 20ft by 15ft room. "This could be cold, both physically and visually, so I tried to soften it," says Fiona, who used electric blinds, underfloor heating and chequered floor tiles to make the room more useable without detracting from the period feel.

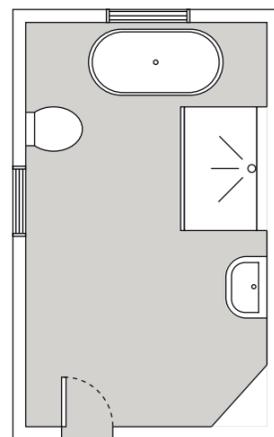
It was scale, though, that Fiona realised was critical when designing the bathrooms. "Elements of the bathroom had to fit the space," she explains. "For example, the distance from the showerhead must look reasonable, while ensuring the water is still warm when it reaches you." Not only were the layout dimensions important, but the actual fittings had to be as oversized as the room itself. "The showerheads had to be the biggest I could find, or it would have looked ridiculous," says Fiona. "They are each 65cm across – the size of a dustbin lid!"

Throughout the restoration of her amazing home, which also incorporates living areas, a formal dining room and four other bedrooms, Fiona's goal was to be very sympathetic to the bones of the original building, with just the occasional contemporary twist on traditional style. "I wanted to celebrate it, but I also had to accommodate the practicalities of warmth and function," she says. And there's little doubt she has succeeded magnificently – it's now a home fit for Queen Caroline herself. **[KBB]**

Above: Fiona used heritage paints from Farrow & Ball throughout the house. "It's easy to get depth when you have plenty of beading, coving and panelling," she says.

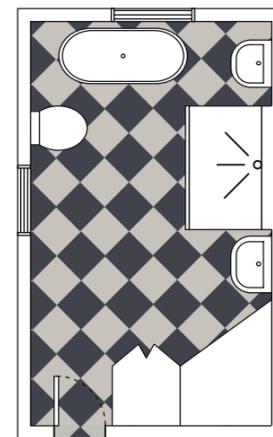


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Above: The high ceilings in the main bathroom allowed for some impressive lighting from Brissi.

Opposite page, top: Getting a water supply into a house that had never been designed for it was a real headache. As a result, all the bathrooms now have freestanding basins and baths, with the pipework going down into the floor, rather than via the walls.



Q&A

Homeowner Fiona Pollard says...

Were there any major budget surprises?
No. I knew what I had to spend and I used my purchasing power to get deals - like six baths! I built up a relationship with the supplier - that was far easier than getting lots of individual deals.

What was the biggest challenge with the project?
The fact that the house is located on a main road. Everything had to come in, out, up and down five storeys by hand.

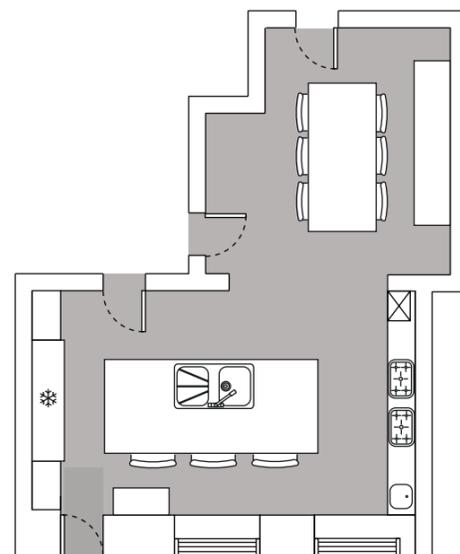
Do you have any tips for people embarking on a similar project?
Do your research and learn from others' mistakes. Look at lots of photos, but remember you can't work off a piece of paper. Go into the room and pace it out relative to the space. I cut shapes out in newspaper first and moved them around the rooms.

Where there any major U-turns during the project?
No. I spent a year planning this and the build took just six months, although we moved in just before it was ready.



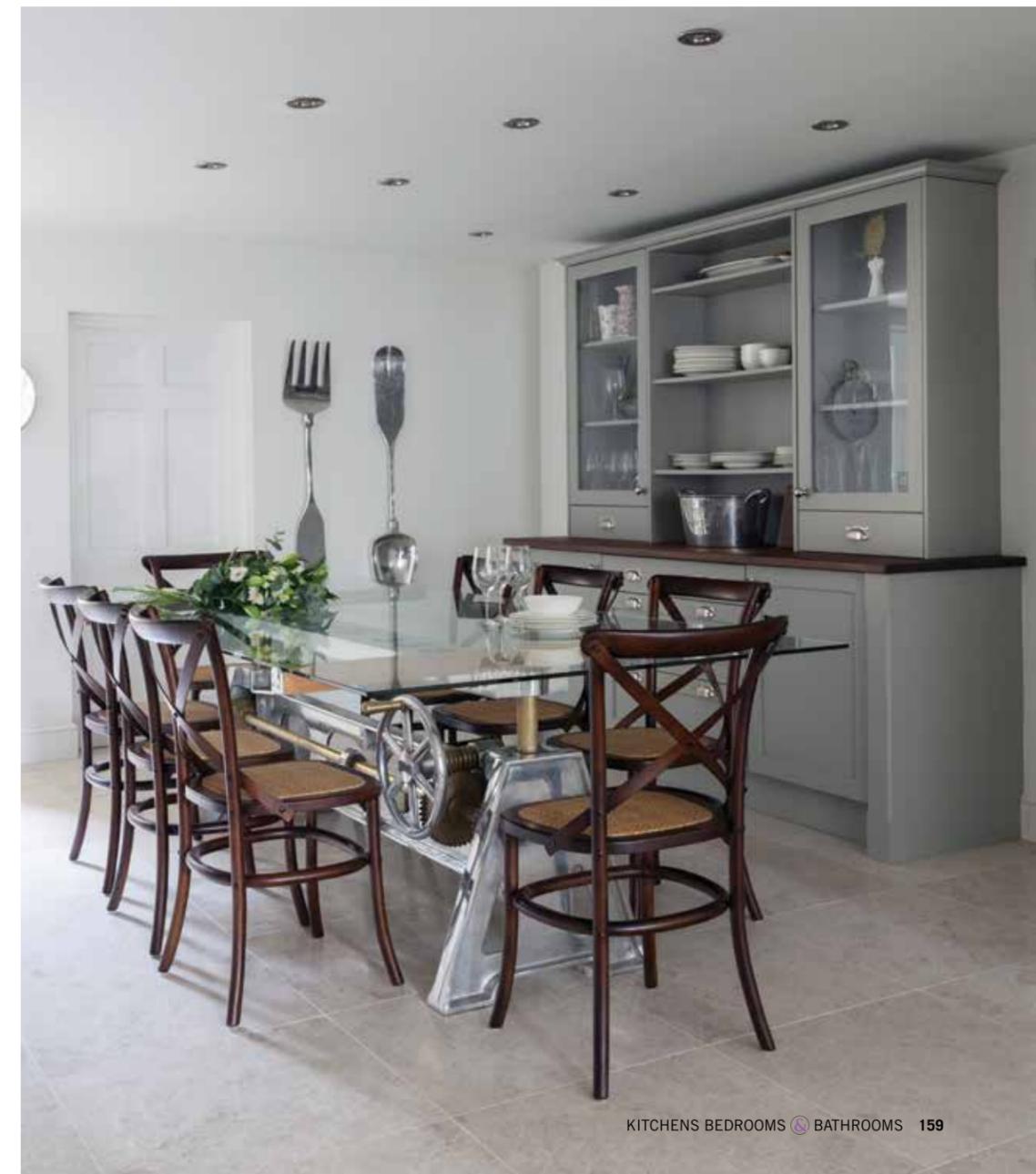


Right: One of the challenges in the kitchen was a dip in the ceiling so Bath Kitchen Company made a new cornice to fit underneath it.



Above and opposite page, bottom: Fiona introduced bright pops of colour into the otherwise neutral scheme of the kitchen through a selection of modern art and a Wurlitzer jukebox.

Right: A New York design house made the glass table bespoke for this space and Bath Kitchen Company made the dresser.





Above: The stylish Domino metro tiles in the splashback are from Fired Earth, laid in grey grout.

SourceBook

DESIGN

Kitchen designer James Horsfall, Bath Kitchen Company (01225 312003 or www.bathkitchencompany.co.uk)

Structural work and installation Kennick Building Contractors (www.kennickbuilders.com)

Electrical work Michelle Arnold Electrical (01580 292262)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Solid wood, Bath Kitchen Company, as before, painted in Wimborne White by Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or www.farrow-ball.com) with handles from SDS, London (020 7228 1185 or www.sdslondon.co.uk)

Worktops Silestone, Bath Kitchen Company, as before

Taps Quooker (0345 833 3555 or www.quooker.com)

Sink Belfast sink, Villeroy & Boch (020 8875 6006 or www.villeroy-boch.com)

Barstools Kartell (www.kartell.it)

Dining chairs India Jane (020 8799 7166 or www.indiajane.co.uk)

Dresser Bespoke design by Bath Kitchen Company, as before

Flooring Stone tiles, Boniti (01225 892200 or www.boniti.com)

Radiators Castrads (0161 439 9350 or www.castrads.com)

Appliances Range cooker, Everhot (www.everhot.co.uk) from Boniti, as before; Fridge-freezer, Sub-Zero (0845 250 0010 or www.subzero-wolf.co.uk); Microwave, Gaggenau (0844 892 8988 or www.gaggenau.com/gb)

Lighting and dining table Felix Lighting Specialists (01225 315110 or www.felixlightingspecialists.co.uk)

BEDROOM

Joinery Hawker Joinery Limited (01225 858233 or www.hawker-joinery.co.uk)

Carpet For similar try Brintons (0800 505055 or www.brintons.co.uk)

Bed and chests of drawers For similar try Oak Furniture Land (0800 440 2254 or www.oakfurnitureland.co.uk)

Bed linen For similar try The White Company (020 3758 9222 or www.thewhitecompany.com)

Cushions For similar try Shop Style (www.shopstyle.co.uk)

Ottoman For similar try Loaf (0845 468 0698 or www.loaf.com)

Bench For similar try Wayfair (www.wayfair.co.uk)

Mirrors Floor-standing mirror, for similar try the freestanding coat stand and mirror from Dwell (0845 675 9090 or www.dwell.co.uk); Wall mirror, for similar try 1st Dibs (www.1stdibs.com)

Chair For similar try 1st dibs, as before

MAIN BATHROOM

Sanitaryware Tipadel (01373 451600 or www.tipadel.co.uk)

Bath Victoria + Albert Baths (01952 221100 or www.vandabaths.com)

Basins Heritage Bathrooms (0330 026 8503 or www.heritagebathrooms.com) from Tipadel, as before

Flooring and shower enclosures Boniti, as before

Brassware Vado (01934 744466 or www.vado.com)

Mirrors and shelves Fired Earth, as before

SECOND BEDROOM ENSUITE

Sanitaryware Tipadel Limited, as before

Bath Victoria + Albert Baths, as before

Basins Heritage Bathrooms, as before, from Tipadel, as before

Flooring and shower enclosures Boniti, as before

Brassware Vado, as before

Mirrors and shelves Fired Earth, as before

Lighting Brissi (01225 319058 or www.brissi.com)

COST

Kitchens from Bath Kitchen Company start at £30,000, while Hobsons Choice could create a similar bathroom and prices start from £25,000 (01793 490685 or www.hobsonschoice.uk.com)

