



Above The property's picturesque location overlooking the beach is what initially attracted Katrina



Above Old wind breakers were used to fill the spaces left by knocking down a wall inside the house

Below Bespoke French doors made by a local carpenter link the indoor and outside spaces

Below The decked area enables Katrina (below) to enjoy views of the beach from many angles



The property, known as the Beacon House, benefits from its raised location with fantastic views of Whitstable beach and the Kent coastline

Renovated Arts and Crafts home

Katrina Brown has transformed a dilapidated period property with sea

views into a unique house which is full of character, colour and style

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New decking and a fresh coat of paint have restored the exterior to its former glory. The Habitat sofa adds an extra splash of colour

FACT FILE

THE OWNER

Katrina Brown, a theatre director

THE PROPERTY

A two-storey, three-bedroom wood framed detached house dating from 1906

THE LOCATION

Whitstable, Kent

WHAT SHE SPENT

The renovation project cost around £40,000 to complete

Katrina Brown's labour of love began when she first set eyes on her Arts and Crafts house on the east Kent coast. She thought the empty property would make a perfect seaside home with plenty of character.

'I was attending a wedding in the area when I came across it and decided to take a look around inside,' says Katrina, 'even though I could see the place was in serious need of attention and TLC.'

It soon became clear that its location along a single sandy track, running parallel

to the sea and almost on the beach, had been the cause of some of its damage. It needed to be renovated – but Katrina could see the potential of the property, with its cream-coloured clapboard façade and old-fashioned wrap-around veranda painted in duck egg blue.

'The house had been empty for around two years, and I think prospective buyers felt that it was too exposed to the elements to take it on as a project,' says Katrina.

Inside, the décor was in a state of disrepair. However, its charming features outweighed the work required. The house boasted a wealth of Arts and Crafts details,

from the built-in oak seats next to the open tiled fireplace to the wooden staircase and balustraded gallery and old panelled doors with their original handles.

The first job was to repair and repaint the exterior, refitting the damaged glazing and balustrade. The salty sea air and wind had eroded some of the uprights in the balustrade, which had to be replaced. The house also needed new window panes as some were badly cracked. Katrina employed a local carpenter to do the job.

When the exterior work was finished, Katrina turned her attention to four small rooms at the back of the property on the



Above An original oak staircase leads to a balcony. Katrina has painted the floorboards a lavender blue colour – try Cook’s Blue floor paint from Farrow & Ball for a similar wood stain

Below The focal point in the sitting room is the fireplace with its Arts and Crafts built-in oak seats. The walls are painted in New White by Farrow & Ball to enhance the timber beams



Katrina has teamed a Habitat sofa with Au Maison cushions to complement the armchair covered in a Liberty fabric by Osborne & Little

DESIGN TIP
The best way to see the potential for **remodelling** an **old property** and opening up the space is to draw up a **floor plan**. It’s so much easier to see how **different** rooms **relate** to each other and which **walls** need to be removed



ground floor. They incorporated the former scullery, a downstairs cloakroom, laundry room and a pine kitchen, which had been stained dark brown. Katrina decided to open up the space in order to create one large kitchen-diner.

‘I envisaged a big open-plan room with the dining table placed nearest to the window overlooking the sea,’ says Katrina, ‘but I needed the right builder for the job. A neighbour put me in touch with Nigel Goodwin, a carpenter from New Zealand, who had built his own house before he came over to the UK.’

Nigel used a chainsaw to knock the four small rooms into the larger space, which left gaping holes in the old oak floorboards.

‘Although that may sound drastic, Nigel said a chainsaw was the best way to tackle

‘When the sun casts a blaze of light over the floor of the house, it actually takes on a Mediterranean feel’

the job, especially as the walls are made of plaster infill that’s supported by wood frames,’ says Katrina.

Nigel then removed the wall dividing the dining room from the kitchen before installing a new RSJ. As it was a supporting wall, he had to take extra care and used acro props as temporary supports.

‘The timing couldn’t have been more perfect,’ Katrina recalls. ‘Canterbury County Council was replacing some of the groins on the seafront – old wind/wave breakers – and they gave me the go ahead to take the wood from the beach. Nigel lightly sanded

the sea groins, treated them with a matt sealant and cut them to fill the gaps in the floor where the wall had once stood.’

Nigel also built the kitchen units, which Katrina designed herself, drawing on her background in design.

‘I wanted an island unit incorporated into the kitchen so that I could see the sea while I prepared food,’ she says. ‘I was also looking for a communal feel here, with my friends chatting and children playing with their toys while I stirred the cooking pot.’

She took her ideas for the design from a range of kitchen manufacturers, with one in

particular. ‘Nigel followed my design ideas to perfection,’ she smiles. ‘I then started searching for chrome handles for the cream and yellow units, which I eventually found in a hardware shop in London’s Euston Road. It was important to me to get the look right.’

While the renovation work was under way – with all its accompanying mess and noise – Katrina took the opportunity to stay up in London. It turned out to be a good decision as Nigel had to take out one of the existing windows and cut out space for new double doors leading outside, which



A large island unit breaks up the space between the kitchen and dining room – the elegant cabinetry was hand-made by the builder. For a similar style, look at the Edwardian by Magnet



PRACTICAL TIP
 Make sure you don't overpay on VAT when renovating an old house like this one that has been empty for two years or more. The labour and materials are eligible for the reduced rate of 5%. Visit Hmrc.gov.uk for details



Above The previous owner left behind the dining room furniture, including these Edwardian chairs with brown leather seats. The French doors lead to the decking which surrounds the front and sides of the house

Left A light, sociable space has been created with Dorset Cream wall paint by Farrow & Ball and the coastal theme is reflected with fabric and accessory choices

'Old wave/sea breakers were cut to fill the floor where the original wall divided the kitchen and dining room'

exposed the house to the elements, making it impossible to live in for a while.

To ensure that the French doors would be safe to use, Nigel built a balcony entirely from wood, which continued the style of the existing veranda.

'We had to have a balcony, because there was a drop between the indoor floor level and an old raised concrete step,' says Katrina. 'Once, my mum almost fell into the garden while carrying a tray out there.'

Some of Katrina's designer friends thought she should choose on-trend dark-planked floors throughout the ground floor, but she decided to go for the shades of the sea and beach instead to introduce colour to her room schemes.

'There's a painting in my kitchen by the American artist Edward Hopper, which was the inspiration for the colour palette I've used throughout the house,' she explains. 'I echoed the yellow in the picture in my

kitchen units and mixed its lavender blue and grey shades for the floorboards.'

In the sitting room, a contemporary blue sofa and chair opposite the fireplace have created a comfortable coastal style. Katrina had wanted a white sofa but opted instead for a mid-blue shade as it would be a more practical choice.

The built-in Arts and Crafts oak seats around the fireplace are original features of the house, but their new seating cushions

A painting in the master bedroom was the starting point for the decorating scheme. An IKEA throw co-ordinates with the Au Maison cushions and the bedside table adds retro style

DESIGN TIP
Casement windows with small panes are a classic feature of **Arts and Crafts-style** houses, as are windows that span across the **corner** of a room – these details are all worth **preserving** when renovating a property



A new bathroom suite from Ideal Standard incorporates stylish two-tone mosaic tiles by Fired Earth and a mosaic artwork by artist Andrew Higgins. The compact room has a built-in storage cupboard plus a combined bath and shower

White walls provide a muted backdrop to the colourful design scheme of the house and make a focal point of its Arts and Crafts features



‘I took my inspiration from paintings and chose a modern design scheme using seaside themes and bright colour’



The guest bedroom is bright yet restful with a blue and green colour palette. For a similar striped duvet cover, try the Conran at John Lewis

in a blue-and-white striped design add colour to match the rest of the house. ‘When the sun casts a blaze of light over the floor, the house actually starts to take on a Mediterranean feel,’ says Katrina. The work on the first floor focussed mainly on redecoration, as the house didn’t require many structural changes upstairs. Katrina did replace the bath suite, though, as it needed to be updated and chose a simple contemporary white design, which works perfectly with the house’s Arts and Crafts character. ‘There was nothing wrong with the bathroom layout, it was simply a question of replacing the fittings,’ Katrina explains, ‘but I wanted a design scheme that would incorporate nautical themes and colours.’ She called on artist and friend Andrew Higgins to produce some charming images of mermaids which he made from

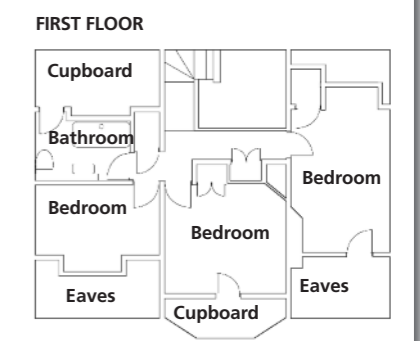
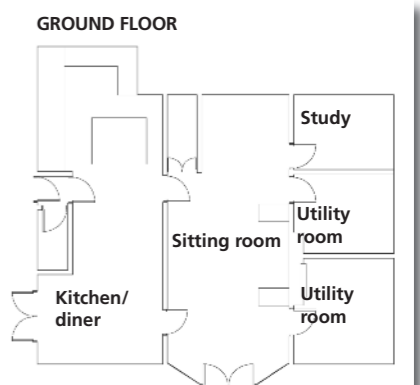
marine-coloured mosaics to complement the blue-themed space. On this floor there are three double bedrooms. Katrina took inspiration for the master bedroom from a painting by local artist John Butterworth, choosing a scheme of orange and pink shades for her throw and cushions as a bold backdrop to the restful white décor of the room. The two pretty guest bedrooms are also mainly white but have been lifted with different shades of lime green and turquoise, which again are designed to reflect the colours of the sea. Katrina is thrilled with the results. The renovation project went smoothly – it took just six months and remained within budget. Now, though, she has decided to let out her seaside retreat because she travels frequently for her theatre work and has her own London base. ‘This house is too lovely to lie empty – it needs to be shared with others,’ she explains. ‘I love the idea of other people staying down here and enjoying this picturesque part of the area, which is famed

for its annual Oyster Festival and local art galleries,’ she says. Katrina calls her house a ‘living work of art’ because guests often leave paintings and other artworks as gifts after their stay. ‘Art is integral to this house,’ she says. ‘I love collecting artwork, especially by local artists. My own paintings have inspired the design scheme. The house itself has many creative original features – it’s a joy to have restored such a beautiful home.’

COSTS

General repairs	£15,000
Kitchen, including labour, RSJ and appliances	£12,800
Bathroom	£5,000
Flooring	£4,700
French doors	£3,000
TOTAL	£40,500

PLANS



The former scullery, downstairs cloakroom, laundry room and kitchen were knocked through to become a large open-plan kitchen-diner. The existing veranda was extended with a wooden balcony and French doors