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Room to Grow

Kate and Chris Allen have transformed their boxed-in Victorian kitchen – it's now a light-filled space all the family can enjoy

Kate and Chris Allen left London seven years ago, and with their two children moved to a mid-Victorian farmhouse in a beautiful hamlet in Hampshire. With the help of designer Tim Higham, the founder and owner of Higham Furniture, they have succeeded in creating their dream kitchen, with elegantly painted free-standing units and plenty of space for all of the family to eat and entertain.

'We were always keen to improve the kitchen,' says Kate of the rather haphazardly laid out space they had inherited from the previous owners. The kitchen

had been moved to a large, south facing outhouse, originally a cattle-shed. Due to planning complications, the result was two extremely cramped rooms, with no natural light and no garden views.

Kate was able to work closely with the architect Nigel Humphries, of MAS Architectural Consultants, which is renowned for energy efficient, sustainable buildings, to achieve her vision of a room full of natural light.

To make this happen, a wall dividing the two rooms was knocked down, allowing for a run of windows and doors opening on to the garden. Plenty of space for relaxed seating also gives the kitchen a decidedly ►

ABOVE With two separate seating areas, and access to the garden beyond, the room has a relaxed feel. Light floods in throughout the day



'I like the run of cream units with the Aga – they have such simple lines'

'living room' feel. 'We wanted a bespoke free-standing country style kitchen, with a cold larder and plenty of storage,' says Kate. Impressed by the craftsmanship of Higham Furniture, a small team making all their joinery from scratch, she decided to approach Tim Higham directly with her ideas.

Together they were able to create the desired space. 'Having listened to Kate's brief, I realised that what she wanted was a hybrid – a free-standing kitchen with built-in appliances,' explains Tim. 'So we set about producing exactly that.'

The kitchen cabinetry has been made using thick frames with structural legs, which gives it a much more substantial look. 'Instead of wrapping the kitchen around the wall, we actually have two runs of units,' says Kate. With the gap between the runs, Tim has introduced a real sense of openness that is hard to find in a fitted kitchen. The complementary shades

of creamy yellow and stony green on the units, rather than a uniform shade throughout, further emphasise the sense of individual areas.

'I like the run of cream units with the Aga very much. They have such simple lines and work well in the room,' says Kate. 'We didn't go for anything overly fussy, and chose a free-standing dishwasher at the end of the units.' She also wanted a secondary cooking source for the summer months when the Aga is switched off, so a hob and small range cooker have been installed.

Aware of Kate's specification for a cold larder with access to one of the kitchen's windows, Tim designed and crafted a storage space that is a cross between a cabinet larder and a walk-in larder.

'We think that it has worked out really well,' he says. 'It is vented, which keeps everything inside it nice and cold, and we've also put a special lining around the doors, so it is somewhat insulated from draughts.' >

ABOVE Kate and Chris Allen's new kitchen, built in a converted cattle-shed, now has plenty of space for dining and entertaining. The painted cabinets were handmade by Higham Furniture

ABOVE LEFT Kate enjoyed collaborating with Higham Furniture on the design of the spacious new kitchen
ABOVE RIGHT AND RIGHT Tim Higham designed this ingenious mixture between a cabinet and a walk-in larder, with plenty of well-ventilated storage space, and including Kate's request for a window to be incorporated. This and the larder adjoining it are painted in Farrow & Ball's Lamp Room Gray





'Our kitchen has become a relaxing room that isn't just practical but attractive too'

ABOVE The Aga and the free-standing dishwasher, with cabinets painted in Farrow & Ball's Clunch, benefit from plenty of space around them. The runs of units have been kept separate by design
LEFT Granite worktops in Ginger, from the Caesar Stone range of composite stones, frame the deep double sink

With its painted wooden units, flagstone floor and inviting seating areas the kitchen's distinctive appeal lies in its simplicity and airiness. 'It looks instinctively right in the space,' says Tim. 'The key to it is simple lines and solid furniture.'

Kate is more than happy with the outcome. 'We tend to spend a lot of time in the kitchen together as a family, with our two children and an ever constant stream of friends, family, visitors and dogs,' she says. 'It has become a relaxing room that isn't just practical, but attractive in its own right too.' ⇐

Higham Furniture kitchens cost from £13,000 for a medium sized kitchen. If you would like more information call 0800 047 0235, or visit the website at higham.co.uk. MAS Architectural Consultants can be contacted on 01373 300403 or email info@mas.eu.com