



Striking colour combinations and inspired design have created a welcoming family kitchen, totally befitting the Cunningham's 17th century home.

FEATURE TRACEY WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPHY NICK WHITTON



Coming from a smaller house four years earlier, the first thing Carol Cunningham did in her new home was to buy a large pine dining table so that the kitchen would become the family-orientated room she desired. However, the 1980s white melamine kitchen, with its rickety island, didn't match up with her ideas of a cosy farmhouse kitchen. In fact, the only area of the kitchen that remotely reflected the house's charm was the vibrant blue Aga, which was perched desolately against a wall. Even the original wood beam, that exudes so much of the period character, had been covered over.

With an idea to create a kitchen that would bring the house's history to the forefront and being the first to admit that she is not one for trawling around the shops, Carol was delighted when she found an advert for Hill Farm Furniture which specialises in bespoke design for character and period properties.

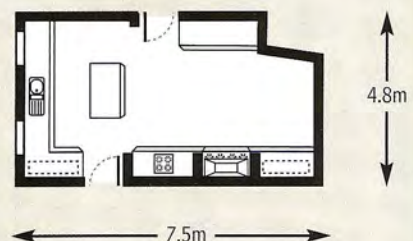
INSIDE INFO:

Who lives here? Carol and Andrew Cunningham, a company director with their three children Chloe, 10, Dani, 21 and James, 18.

How long have the family lived here? The family moved into their 400-year-old home four years ago. Originally built as two farm cottages, generations of changes have created a welcoming family home.

Description of kitchen: The traditionally styled design is perfect to link the kitchen to the house's modest past. Three different colours and clever design give the cabinetry a freestanding rustic look, enhanced by the antiqued limestone flooring and traditional fittings. Kitchen starting prices are around £27,000, including installation.

KITCHEN FLOOR PLAN:



Visiting the company's workshops convinced the couple that they were making the right choice as designers Mike and Carolyn Ashwin launched forth with a wealth of ideas that were perfect for a busy family kitchen.

All that remains from the kitchen's previous incarnation is the Aga; now looking at home as it nestles into the chimney breast surround with an array of cabinets either side. Although fitted, the traditionally styled kitchen oozes the character of a freestanding design from the substantial island to the large dresser unit which cunningly hides an integrated fridge and freezer as well as an abundance of storage. A mix of hand-painted units and antiqued pine add to freestanding appeal, accentuated by the combination of worktops including the Uba Tuba granite whose green tinge echoes the cabinetry. "And, the colour of the pine was created specially for me," adds Carol proudly, as she explains Mike created a stain to her own specifications that would imitate the character and warmth of reclaimed wood. Each shade of paint was carefully chosen; the rich cream adding a contrast to the green and grey shades, which were inspired by a cross between the deep blue of the Aga and the intense green of Carol's Denby china. >>



'The sight of the character-filled kitchen took Carol's breath away as she walked through the door.'



Above left Having had the wall empty previously, Carol was worried that the larder unit would close the room in but the recessed sides and grilled doors give the large piece of furniture character and also gives the room shape.

Top and left The chunky island topped with three inch maple is designed to resemble a traditional butcher's block. Carol reasons that if it's going to get distressed, it might as well look the part.

Above Carol chose the Classic double butler sink from Shaws for its chunky proportions. The Athena tap in nickel by Perrin and Rowe are a perfect match for the traditional scheme.





FOCUS ON: *choosing a hand-painted kitchen*

- Using more than one colour gives a kitchen definition and is a good way to highlight key areas as Carol has done.
- Carolyn from Hill Farm Furniture advises that contrasting colours can help achieve the look of 'pieces of furniture' as opposed to the 'fitted kitchen' look; a good option in a period property.
- With painted cabinetry, the look of the entire room can be completely changed just by repainting. It also gives an easy surface to touch up knocks and scuffs or leave them to create a more distressed look.
- Before embarking on choosing a colour, evaluate how much natural light flows into the room – a lighter room will often allow you to be more adventurous with your choice of colour.
- Be inspired by each colour's properties such as green for tranquillity, or red to encourage appetite or take inspiration from a collection of your favourite china.

With all of the important decisions having been made, Carol decamped to Canada, leaving the project in the Ashwin's capable hands. "Having had such a bad experience in the past, I couldn't face being here amidst all of the upheaval. I wanted to go on holiday and come back to a pristine new kitchen!" she says.

The colour of the walls, the stone on the floor and everything inbetween has been designed to reflect the bygone days of the lovingly kept farmhouse and do it the justice it deserves rather than create a pastiche. The sight of the character-filled kitchen took Carol's breath away as she walked through the door a fortnight later; the finished result emanating an overwhelming feel of warmth and life, perfect for her family inspired kitchen. "It was lovely," she enthuses, "absolutely everything I imagined it to be." PH



Above Carol was insistent that work surfaces should be either side of the Aga. This was important to her because she wanted to be able to take things from the Aga and have somewhere to put them rather than having to walk across the kitchen.

Left The Aga is a must-have addition to any self-respecting traditional kitchen, according to Carol. Oil fuelled, this one is plumbed in to heat the water for the household too making it a very versatile option.

Below left Avoiding wall units enhances the freestanding period feel, but has also allowed the original beam to remain exposed. The extra hob has been mounted into the granite to give an extra cooking centre if entertaining, but also an alternative if the Aga is switched off during the summer months.

Address book

Aga Rayburn (cooker), tel: 0845 712 5207

or visit www.aga-rayburn.co.uk

Denby (crockery), tel: 01773 740899

or visit www.denby.co.uk

Farrow and Ball (paint), tel: 01202 876141

or visit www.farrow-ball.com

Hill Farm Furniture (cabinetry), tel: 01636 626063

or visit www.hillfarmfurniture.co.uk

John Lewis (clock), tel: 08456 049049

or visit www.johnlewis.com

Neff (hob and ovens), tel: 01908 328300

or visit www.neff.co.uk

Perrin and Rowe (taps), tel: 01708 526361

or visit www.perrinandrowe.co.uk

Pinewood Studios (table and chairs), tel: 01949

838883 or visit www.auradesignerfurniture.co.uk

Shaws of Darwin (sink), tel: 01254 775111

or visit www.shawsofdarwen.com

Stonell (flooring), tel: 01283 501098

or visit www.stonell.com

Stoneworld (granite), tel: 01844 279274

or visit www.stoneworld.co.uk

