

pride and joy



Creating somewhere to display a much-loved motorbike was the driving force behind the design of Christine and Jonathan Stevenson's new kitchen

Words: **Ysanne Brooks** Photography: **Paul Craig**

Previous page (p113): While most people might put barstools around an island, this under-counter space was designed specifically for the couple's dogs. Haggis (shown) loves to sit beneath it to watch the world go by.

Right: At the centre of the bank of units sits a tall wine cabinet. "We entertain a lot, so this was a must-have," reveals Christine. "Now we have one, we do wonder how we ever managed without it!"



The stunning extension to Christine and Jonathan Stevenson's dormer bungalow recently won the Combined Greater West Midlands Local Authorities' Prize for Best Domestic Extension, but it is not what they initially had planned. "We weren't able to get planning permission for our original design of a two-storey extension and, in retrospect, I'm delighted," reveals Christine, who has lived in the three-bedroom house for more than 20 years. "Raising the gable has given us a ceiling height of 12 feet as opposed to the more usual 8 feet 6 inches," she continues. "At the far end, we have full-height glass up into the gable with two sets of bi-folding doors, each with four panes, so it brings in tons of light. If we'd gone for a two-storey design, this gorgeous living space would have been compromised."

Before we go any further, there is, of course, clearly an elephant – or rather a motorbike – in the room. This rather unusual kitchen addition, a Ducati 966, is the same model on which three-time World Superbike Champion Carl Fogarty rode to victory. It's also Jonathan's pride and joy. Was Christine not a little perturbed by having a racing bike in the kitchen? "Well, I did obviously insist it couldn't be anywhere near the cooker," she chuckles. "To be honest, though, if it's in the kitchen, then at least Jonathan isn't riding around on it."

When the couple approached Gareth Davies and his team at Classic Interiors about designing a kitchen to fit this huge space, they were not at all fazed. "They were great when we went to chat to them," reveals Christine. "They took our request for the motorbike to be incorporated into the kitchen completely in their stride."

Of course, it wasn't just the motorbike that was to be a huge influence on the design. As well as being keen entertainers and cooks,

Christine and Jonathan have two energetic Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen dogs – Belle and Haggis – so a space in which they could comfortably sit and relax with their owners was equally important.

The brief to Classic Interiors was for a modern, clean-lined kitchen that segued seamlessly into dining and seating areas. Glossy, handleless Futura units in a Pergamon colourway from Mereway have been combined with a selection of appliances, including a large Lacanche range cooker to give the contemporary-meets-classic look the couple were after. The 'L' shape of the room immediately lent itself to a design where the kitchen effectively took up one whole corner. This also meant there was a natural space – a 12ft run of wall painted in Farrow & Ball's Blackened – that acts as a canvas for the bright red bike, creating a real feature.

It also needed to be a room where the couple could happily relax with their dogs without having to worry about them trashing the place, so porcelain Carrara-marble-lookalike tiles with underfloor heating were chosen as a durable solution.

The wall-hung display cabinet that holds Christine's glass collection was a favourite suggestion from Classic Interiors. "It really frames the glass and adds a nice dash of

colour, too," smiles Christine.

In contrast to the clean-lined kitchen, the rest of the room is decorated with Christine and Jonathan's other passion, antiques, and it's here that textures abound. From a huge zinc-topped refectory table that once graced the hall of an Oxford college, to a 17th-century cassone (the Italian chest beside the sofa), the dining and seating areas are given over to several finds from Battersea Decorative Fair.

Despite the couple's array of collector's pieces, the end result is not a stuffy museum – it's a comfortable and relaxed entertaining space that works well for all. "We spend so much time in here now," reveals Christine. "If the dogs go into the other living room, we have to stop them getting on the sofas, but here we can all chill out, which is exactly what we wanted." From an evening with friends to a quiet night in with the dogs, the multifunctional room is big enough to adapt to whatever is going on, while at the same time feeling relaxed and comfortable. "In fact, it is so big, Jonathan's talking about getting another bike to go with the Ducati," admits Christine. "While we've definitely got the space, and I wouldn't object, I think for the moment one motorbike in the kitchen is enough of a talking point!" **[KBB]**



Above: The couple saw the Lacanche range cooker a couple of years before the project started. "We loved it so much that it was firmly in our minds when we began the kitchen design," reveals Christine. The pale blue adds a welcome touch of colour.

Left: The frosty blue trim on the glass of the floating cabinet echoes the colour of the range cooker and frames Christine's collection of glass artworks. The couple bought the antique East German factory lights from Battersea Decorative Fair.

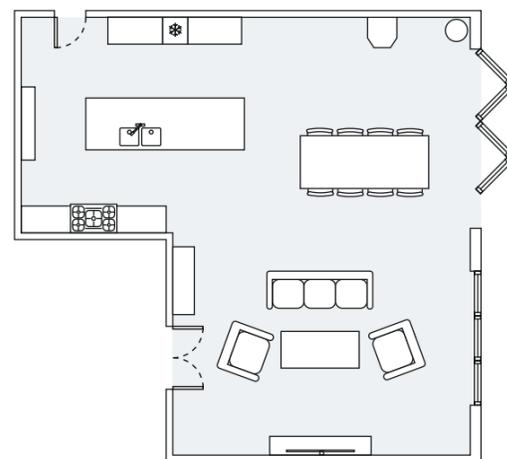
Q&A

Gareth Davies of Classic Interiors says...

Which element took up the majority of the budget?
Without a doubt, it was the furniture – we always advise our customers to prioritise the cabinetry, as its quality is of paramount importance and ensures a kitchen will last a lifetime.

What was the biggest challenge with the project?
This was the first time we'd been asked to incorporate a motorbike in a kitchen! In the past we've had requests to make space for a family of cats, a budgerigar, talking parrots and, of course, dog baskets. The Stevensons wanted to achieve a timeless, simple elegance in the space and were keen for the kitchen to effortlessly flow from the existing part of the house to the new extension, to create a truly open-plan kitchen-dining area. This was achieved by designing a beautiful surround for the bank of tall housings, which created a focal point and balance between the two spaces and the different ceiling heights.

Any tips for people embarking on a similar project?
Start with defining a style first – it can be as broad as 'classic' or 'contemporary' – as this will often determine the layout of the space. If it's sleek, minimal and modern it will work best with a bank of tall housings and long runs of pan drawers, whereas a more classic style, such as Shaker, works best with a mantel and dresser units. Obviously, you can incorporate a mixture of styles, but having a bit of direction from the outset is a great start to getting the design exactly as you want it.



Left: The marble-look porcelain floor was chosen specifically because it is low-maintenance, although muddy paws can be taken care of in the well-equipped adjoining utility room before the dogs reach the kitchen.



Above: The Farrow & Ball Hague Blue framing around the cabinetry adds focus, but at the same time it contains its bulk. At the end of the room, two sets of bi-fold doors give access to the couple's large garden.

Left: Flanked by the tall cabinetry bank and the multi-fuel stove are the couple's Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen, Belle, and Jonathan's prized Ducati 966, a key component of the kitchen design.



Left: The new extension has created a huge multifunctional room with double-height ceilings. Such a big space could have been difficult to design, but bold individual pieces in both the kitchen and the seating area stop it feeling cavernous.

Below: Bigger rooms can be difficult to design well. Here, Classic Interiors has created an efficient kitchen and living area using large-scale, full-height cabinetry that neither appears too overwhelming nor too small for the space.



SourceBook

DESIGN

Kitchen Classic Interiors (01527 66740 or www.classicinteriors.co.uk)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Mereway Futura Pergamon gloss-painted cabinetry (www.merewaykitchens.co.uk), Classic Interiors, as before

Worktops and splashback Polished Blanco Stellar composite, Silestone (01256 761229 or www.silestone.co.uk)

Appliances Citeaux Classic 150cm range cooker, Lacanche (01202 733011 or www.lacanche.co.uk); Built-in chimney hood, Elica (01252 351111 or www.elica.co.uk); Integrated dishwasher, integrated fridge-freezer and built-in wine storage unit, all Siemens (0844 892 8999 or www.siemens-home.co.uk)

Sinks Stainless-steel undermount, Franke (0161 436 6280 or www.franke.com)

Tap PRO3 Fusion Square combined mixer and boiling water in brushed chrome, Quooker (020 7923 3355 or www.quooker.com)

Pendant lights East German factory pendants, No Shrinking Violet (01992

800867 or www.noshrinkingviolet.com)

Flooring Marble-effect porcelain floor tiles, Alistair Mackintosh (0121 784 6800 or www.alistairmackintosh.co.uk)

Wood-burning stove Multi-fuel Charwood stove, Sparkes (01926 842545 or www.sparkesstoves.co.uk)

Dining table and chairs Zinc-topped table, Martin D Johnson and leather upholstered chairs (01323 897777 or www.martindjohnsonantiques.co.uk)

Cassone Antique 17th-century cassone from Lucy Johnson (07974 149912 or www.lucy-johnson.com)

Coffee table 1930s French trunk, Smith & Robinson (020 7371 0552 or www.smithandrobinson.com)

Sofas Antique brown Spanish leather (circa 1920), Magus Antiques (020 7724 1278 or www.magusantiques.com); Red Cloud Art Deco sofa, Jeroen Markies (01342 824980 or www.jeroenmarkies.co.uk)

COST

A similar kitchen from Classic Interiors would cost around £38,000



Above: Much of Jonathan and Christine's furniture in the seating area has a traditional feel and was bought at antique shops and fairs. "I like the fact that we've been so successful in mixing the modern kitchen with the more traditional interiors elsewhere," says Christine.

Left: A three-in-one boiling-water tap from Quooker serves both the undermounted sinks and creates an unfussy line to the work surface.