

THE *Italian* CONNECTION

Eleanor and Dominic Donoghue's new kitchen looks as if it could easily be in an old Tuscan farmhouse – in fact it's in deepest Hertfordshire

FEATURE: LINDA PARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY: TONY TIMMINGTON



The new kitchen has two sets of French doors leading into the garden, and is rendered on the outside to make it compatible with the rear of the house.

Eleanor Donoghue's home is ordinary enough from the outside – a red-brick, double fronted William and Mary house on the outskirts of an Hertfordshire market town. However, walk through the entrance hall, step through the dining room, negotiate the 'boot room' (which is where the dogs reside, inspecting all visitors) and you're confronted by a stunning new extension which houses the Italian country-style kitchen. The extension is an all new construction, sympathetically designed to blend in with the existing house and garden, and it works brilliantly.



The kitchen appears spacious because of the vaulted roof space – and it means there's storage space for books and baskets in the eaves. The huge table and chairs will seat the whole family, and is ideal for dinner parties as well.



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The old kitchen, now the boot room, was tiny.

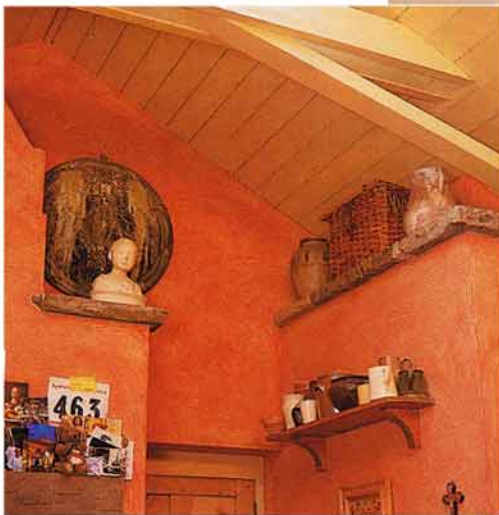
"Just about the only thing it had going for it was the Aga," explains Eleanor.

The Aga is now cosily ensconced in the new kitchen – it only had to be swung around to face the opposite direction. It now adds that all-important cosiness and warmth to its new surroundings. When Eleanor and Dominic first moved in six years ago they knew they had a lot of work ahead.

"It's a Grade II listed building, so we knew that everything had to be in keeping and comply with various rules and regulations," says Eleanor. They had to repair the roof, replace lots of plaster, and install new electrics. They managed with the small kitchen (they have six children – not all at home at the same time these days!) until a couple of years ago when they decided to extend and re-arrange the ground floor kitchen space. Their builder, Alan Hookway, was called in to discuss possibilities for the new kitchen and he suggested contacting Paul Scott.

Paul is a Chartered Surveyor and was able to draw up plans and advise them on the various planning hurdles and consents, which would be involved in extending a Grade II listed building. "We were totally aware that the extension had to be designed to reflect the character and setting of the house," says Paul. Eleanor was very confident about what she wanted the finished kitchen to look like – she wanted a cooking area and a family area, where there would be enough space for a large dining table. Once builder and surveyor were aware of their clients' wishes, it was up to them to come up with a design that reflected those needs.

"The overall concept came from Eleanor," explains Paul, "It was up to me to give them the design, space and light to work in." The space-enhancing vaulted internal roof was Paul's idea. The pitch was dictated by the materials used externally (slate), and by its appearance from the outside



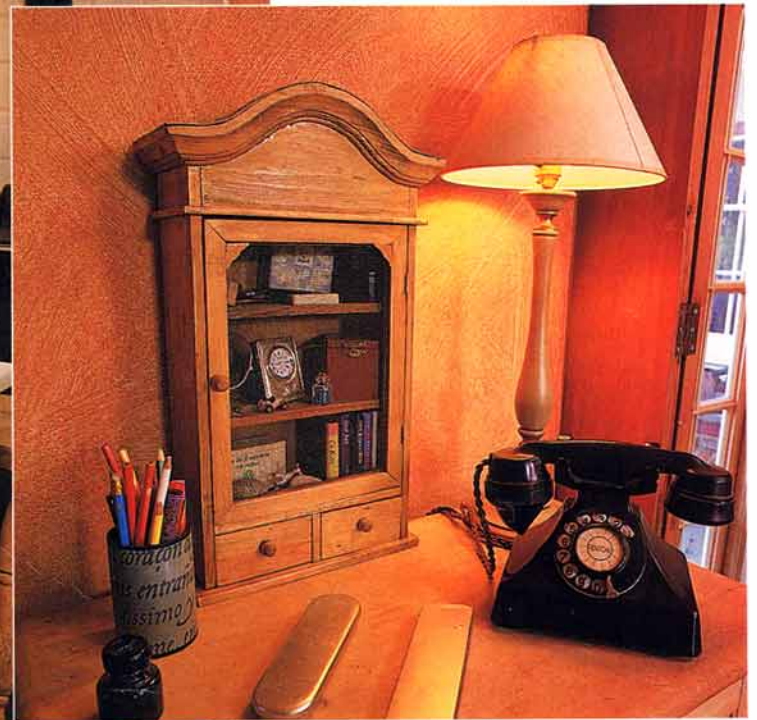
The unusual shape of the roof, allows for lots of curious shelves, and areas of interest.



The island workstation has a marble top, ideal for baking and preparation. The plate rack above the sink was made by Neil Hurrell, who also made the other cabinets.



The corner cupboard is used to display Eleanor's collection of pewter, much of it bought in France. The doorway to the right leads to the utility room.



The old-fashioned telephone is in regular use, and sits on top of a wooden cupboard, next to a little glazed 'clutter cupboard'. "It's where all the bits and pieces of toys and unidentifiable objects go," says Eleanor.

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"It was such a large space that I realised it would be a shame to lose it by installing an internal flat ceiling," says Paul. The kitchen is light and airy despite the strong colours used on the walls thanks to the two sets of French windows and the roof light along the ridge of the roof (another Paul Scott idea!).

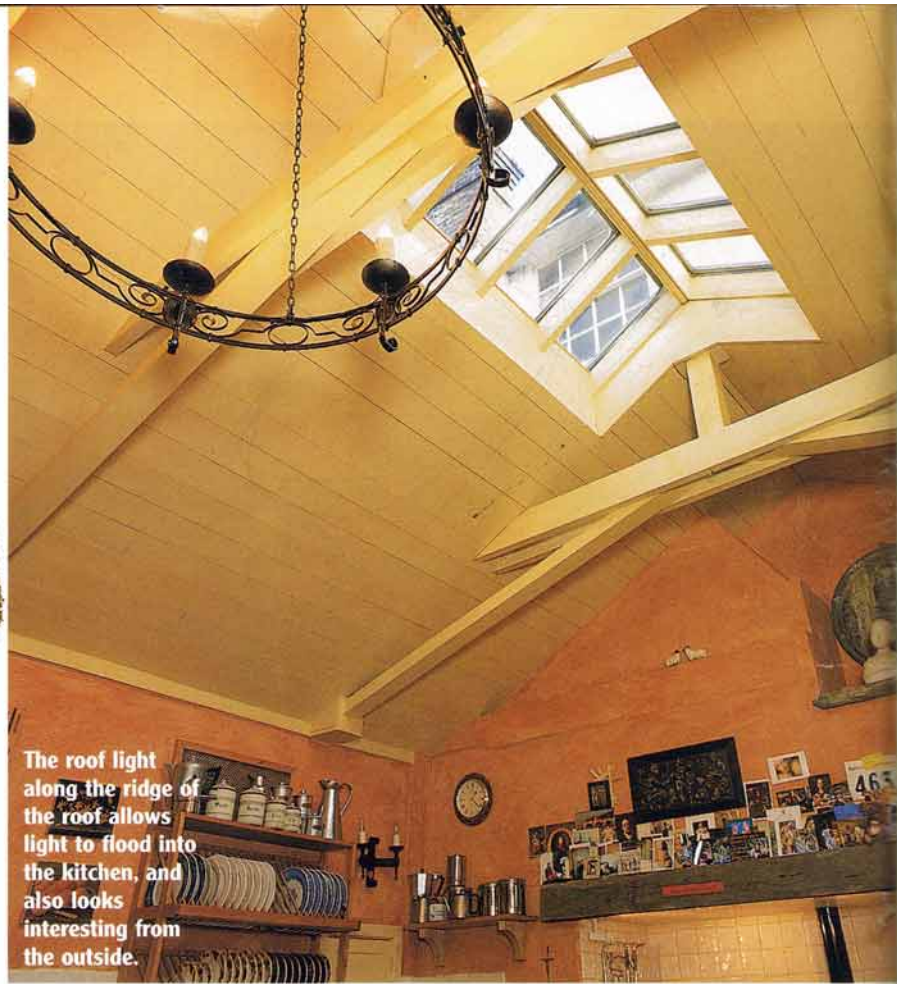
Internally, the French windows have wooden shutters which look as if they have been rescued from a salvage yard.

In fact they are new, made to measure by Neil Hurrell, the carpenter who works with builder Alan Hookway. Neil also built the kitchen cabinets which house the sink and dishwasher, and the marble-topped food preparation island in front of the Aga which houses a fridge and freezer.

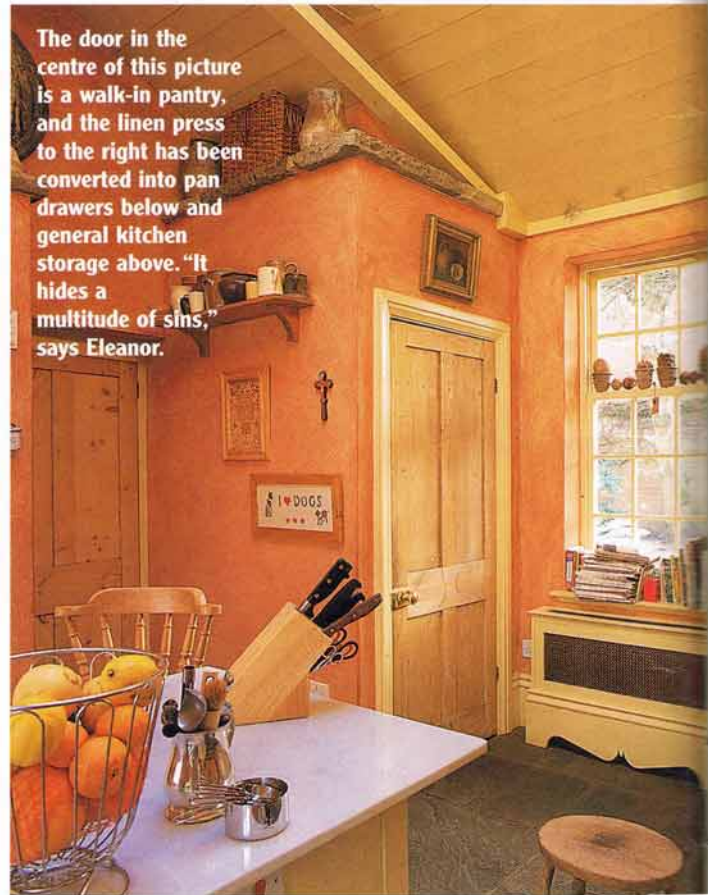
The finishing touches were the limestone flags laid throughout the kitchen, which enhance the period feel, and the bold colourwashing on the rough plastered walls.

It's a strong colourscheme, which holds together an eclectic collection of antique wooden furniture, new pieces by John Lewis of Hungerford, and an amazing amount of objets d'art and collectables gathered by Eleanor and Dominic over the years.

"I buy a lot of kitchenware and accessories in France," says Eleanor (she loves hopping over for a day's shopping with a friend!). "Dominic travels a lot with his work, and he is always bringing interesting bits and pieces home." No doubt Eleanor will soon be thinking about the next room to be redecorated, now that the "brand new kitchen that looks as if it has been there forever" is finished.



The roof light along the ridge of the roof allows light to flood into the kitchen, and also looks interesting from the outside.



The door in the centre of this picture is a walk-in pantry, and the linen press to the right has been converted into pan drawers below and general kitchen storage above. "It hides a multitude of sins," says Eleanor.

MAKING PLANS

It's a common misconception that listed buildings cannot be extended. That is not the case, but the planned extension must be designed to reflect the character of the building. The Donoghue's needed Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent and Building Regulations Approval. All were applied for and dealt with via Paul Scott (PA Scott Associates) and the local authority. PA Scott Associates, 01245 493 020; A.T. Hookway Building Contractors, 01279 466 599.