



Blue sky thinking

Two new extensions, including an atrium-style kitchen, and remodeling of the return, transformed a dark, cramped interior into a light-filled, streamlined space that brings the outdoors in.

WORDS: CAROLINE ALLEN





FACT PANEL

Type of house: A protected 19th century Victorian terraced dwelling. Its front elevation is two-storey red brick with simple contrasting brick decorations, horizontal blue/black brick bands at the window heads, blue/black brick forming alternate decorations at window arches and toothed red brick decoration under the granite parapet.

Location: Moyne Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6. The area was developed in the late 19th century and was typical of suburban development at the time, providing family homes for the middle class working in the city centre. The terrace of which this house forms part, to the east of Moyne Road, was built circa 1894.

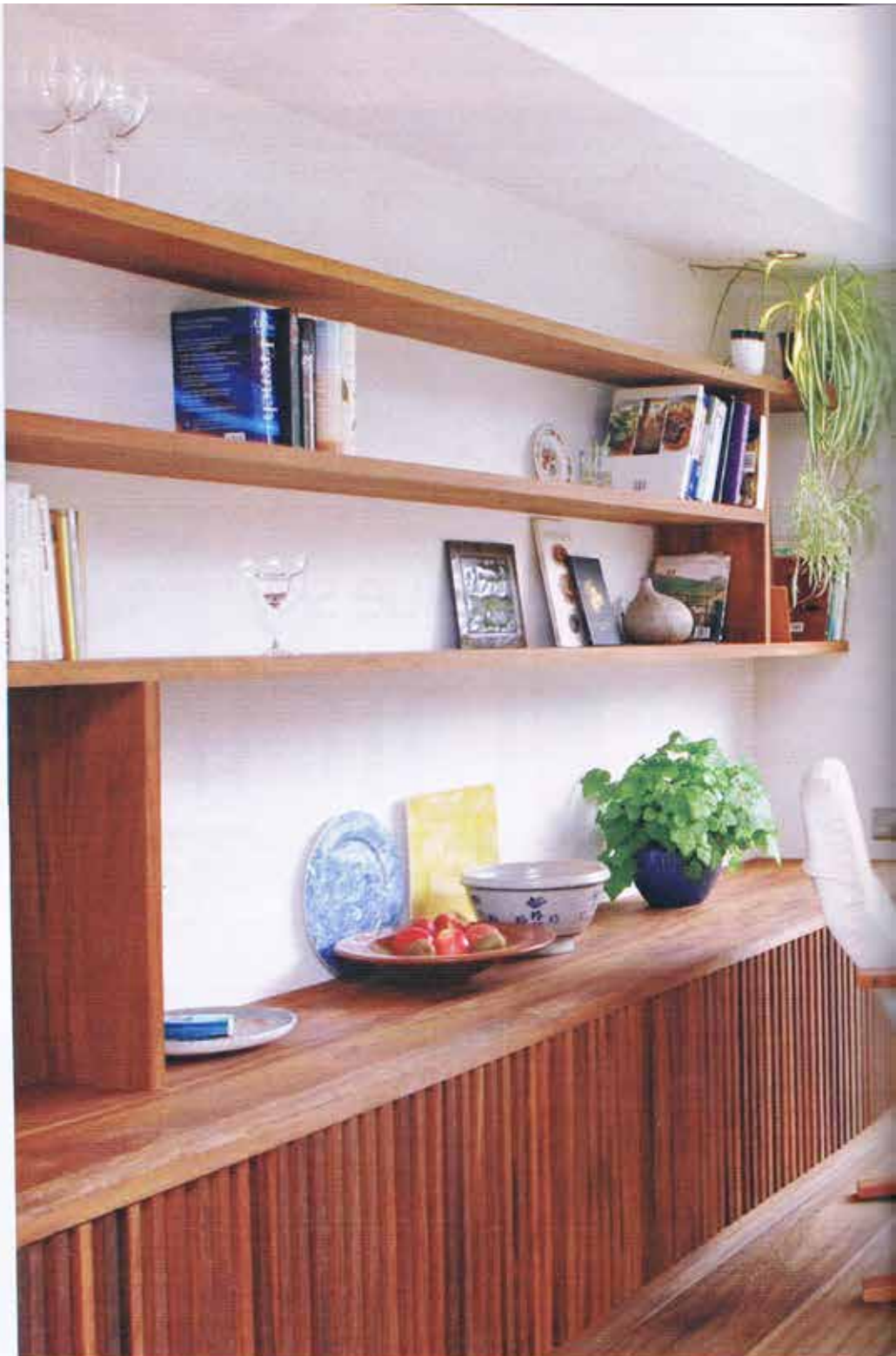
The renovation: The refurbishment and remodelling of the existing ground floor living space incorporating a new atrium-type extension containing the kitchen, along with a first floor extension and remodelling of the existing return to accommodate an additional bedroom.

Architect: Alan O'Connell, OC Architects & Design, a practice accredited in conservation at grade III.

Budget: €102,500

Actual cost: €102,300

Timeframe: Ten weeks.



The owners of this 19th century house, a couple looking ahead to retirement, were keen to make it better reflect modern living and their needs in particular. "The original house was similar in terms of layout and appearance to many of the houses along Moyne Road," remarks architect Alan O'Connell of OC Architects & Design. Entry was through a solid timber main door, with a sitting and dining room on the ground floor of the main house and a kitchen in the return. The first floor return, accessed by a simple timber staircase, contained the bathroom and the first floor of the main house had two bedrooms with a recently added study in the attic space.

REVITALISATION

The house had survived from the mid-1890s with its exterior and its main internal spaces relatively unaltered, apart from a single storey extension to the rear, which formed part of the kitchen area. "The dwelling underwent a moderate makeover and extension in the late 1980s but, in general, was dark,



cramped and badly in need of revitalisation," says Alan. "The existing extension and return were poorly laid out and no longer functional as living spaces. The rooms were cramped and floor-to-ceiling heights were very low. The interaction between the main house and the return was poor, which meant that the clients were not using the house to its full potential."

BRIEF

Their brief was simple. They wanted an open plan light-filled living area that would integrate better with the existing house, as well as an extra bedroom at first floor level. "We set about this working through a number of options with the use of 3D models, ensuring that the final design would fully realise the potential of the house," Alan recalls. "The concept and design were guided by creating a space suitable for the clients' lifestyles, integrating the rooms and the inside and outside spaces and availing of light throughout the day.

We worked in close contact with the owners to establish a design that we were all happy with and that was strongly influenced by their ideas but given direction by us as architects."

CONTRACTORS

Following a straightforward planning application and tender process, the architects appointed the main contractor, McMahon Construction, who had come in with the lowest tender price. Alan had worked with Michael McMahon on several projects and was impressed by his skill, initiative, attention to detail and problem-solving ability.

Any obstacles that arose during the project were tackled quickly. "As project architect, I was on-site whenever necessary to address any issues with the contractor and the clients so that the project could move along without delay. I was in constant communication with the clients and the contractor and his subcontractors throughout the build and this helped greatly in delivering the project on time and on budget," Alan recalls. "Every party understood their responsibilities and role in the project and what was needed to keep things moving. The clients' role was key as they were always at the end of the phone, understood when decisions needed to be made and put their trust in us and the contractor which allowed us make minor design decisions without delay."

HIDDEN FEATURES

During the early stages of the build as opening up works were taking place, several previously hidden original features of the house became apparent. "Part of Council policy relating to protected buildings stipulates that it is of the utmost importance to protect and preserve original features in situ," says Alan. "As they became evident, I worked closely with the main contractor to ensure that this policy was adhered to and that the integrity of the features was maintained."

It also became clear at this opening up phase that the walls of the original return were very poorly constructed and hadn't been tied back into the main building to give it sound structural stability. Due to the heavy construction work and opening up work, there was a real danger of the return detaching itself from the main building, which would have serious structural implications for both the return and the main house. "On discovering this, we organised an emergency site meeting with the construction team and the design team to assess the situation. Both teams worked hard to come to a simple but very effective solution which had minimal impact on cost and on the building," Alan recalls. "Steel ties were anchored in place to the structural walls of the main house and tied back into the structural walls of the return at various points. This allowed the whole building to work soundly, from a structural perspective, as the one unit."





USEFUL CONTACTS

Architect: OC Architects & Design, No.67A Ranelagh village, Dublin 6. Tel: 01 4913919 and 086 3647614. Kerry office: Anglore, Castleisland, www.ocarchitects.ie

Main Contractor: McMahon Construction, No. 9 Roosevelt Cottages, Navan Road, Dublin 7. Tel: 01 8686600, 087 1238790 mc.mahon.const@gmail.com

Structural Engineer: Ciaran O'Brien OBA Consulting Engineers, The School Yard, 1 Grantham Street, Dublin 8. Tel: 086-0214737

Joinery: McMahon Construction, No. 9 Roosevelt Cottages, Navan Road, Dublin 7. Tel: 01 8686600, 087 1238790 mc.mahon.const@gmail.com

Window and roof glazing supplier: The Folding Door Company of Ireland, Grants Drive, Greenogue Business Park, Rathcoole Co Dublin. Tel 01: 4018282, pat@foldingslidingdoors.ie www.foldingslidingdoors.ie

Kitchen Supplier: Nolan Kitchens Limited Hawthorn House, Oak Road, Western Industrial Estate, Naas Road, Dublin 12, Tel: 01 456 7621 info@nolankitchens.com www.nolankitchens.com

Timber flooring supplier: Irwin's Tiles, Lakeview, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan. Tel: 042 9740278, Info@irwintiles.ie www.irwintiles.ie

Tiling supplier: TileStyle, Ballymount Retail Centre, Ballymount Road Upper, Dublin 24. Tel: 01 855 5200 info@tilestyle.ie www.tilestyle.ie

Lighting: Hicken Lighting 17 Lwr. Bridge Street, Dublin 8. Free Phone 1800 777 077, Tel: 01 6777882 sales@hickenlighting.com

Granite Paving: Double L Unit 6/7, Osberstown Industrial Park, Naas, Co. Kildare. Tel: 045 872210 info@doubleconcrete.com www.doubleconcrete.com

EXTENSION

The completed extension and remodelling on the ground floor created a high quality open plan living space that the inhabitants enjoy everyday. An atrium-style double height extension, which contains the kitchen space, was added to fill the living areas with light throughout the day. The works helped revitalise the building, allowing the house to function as a home into the foreseeable future. As well as the new remodeled kitchen/living area, there's a new utility area and WC; hallway; dining room; front sitting room; three bedrooms and an attic study.

The reconfiguration involved a redesign of the existing rear external space creating a strong interaction between the interior and exterior spaces and blurring the boundaries. "The extension at first floor level provides a much needed third bedroom to the house which is far more sustainable for the size and quality of dwelling and its location, while retaining a good size bathroom," Alan says.

CONTEMPORARY

The new extensions and remodelling were treated in a contemporary way, allowing both the original building and new extension to stand on their own as of their time. "The contemporary design will stand on its own as a powerful element and the juxtaposition of the old and new will enhance the existing protected building," says Alan.

Bangor Blue slate was used on the roof, with a white render to the walls. "These simple but strong materials allow the extension to tie in with the original house while allowing it to stand alone as a contemporary addition," Alan adds.

Grey aluminium windows were incorporated in the new build with a folding door system on the rear wall overlooking the garden. These helped strengthen the contrast between the old and new, enhancing both the original house and the new contemporary extension. Hardwood teak timber cladding was used externally to soften the elevation and add some contrast. This hardwood features internally in the shelving feature piece to the living area, creating a unity of design throughout the build.

The delighted owners are revelling in what they see as a whole new home, attractive to go into and a comfortable environment in which to work and relax. "Our ground floor has been transformed into a flowing harmonious space, running from the opened-up reception rooms, through a light-filled double-height kitchen and into a new living-room with glass folding doors," they enthuse. "The newly landscaped garden enhances and has become a part of this design." 

