



THE *Edwardian* HOME

As we continue our series celebrating Britain's most cherished residential architecture, we spotlight the houses that combine considered decorative detailing with a nod to the Arts and Crafts movement

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE

ABOVE Edwardian homes have ornate detailing inside and out and were built on wider plots than their Victorian forbears.

Although the Edwardian era was a relatively short one, covering only a decade or so at the turn of the 20th century, its impact was meaningful. Houses of this era bear the same attention to detail as their Victorian predecessors, while often being decoratively more pared back. Heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, these builds tend to demonstrate an appreciation for the handmade and unique, as a counter to the mass production of the Victorian age.

Timber framing, hanging tiles and a combination of red brick and pebbledash can be seen on many Edwardian homes, especially terraces, along with fretwork and stained glass. As buildings pushed further out into the suburbs during this era, front and rear gardens were also given greater consideration and houses tended to be roomier than their forbears, featuring wider hallways, a better connection between inside and out and simpler internal features.

As gas and eventually electricity became the norm, banishing soot-laden interiors, decoration shifted towards lighter, brighter colours. "There's a stylistic playfulness surrounding homes of this era," says architect Tim Gledstone of Squire & Partners. "Edwardian properties often demonstrate a lifting of seriousness, instead celebrating richness and craft, decoration and detailing. Materials such as brick, stained glass and wood were married with tremendous craftsmanship, resulting in robust structures that have stood the test of time."

SQUARE UP

Edwardian properties tend to have slightly shorter window lengths and wider staircases than their Victorian predecessors, giving them a squarer, more

generous feel. "There are several bonuses to working with this kind of building," says interior designer Laura Stephens. "They feature distinctive, often wooden, fire surrounds and I like to draw the eye to these with a stronger paint colour than on the walls for a contemporary feel. I also enjoy working with the squarer hallways of these homes, which are often combined with staircases that wind round, and make for a really welcoming entrance that you can fit plenty of storage into. Though ceiling heights are sometimes a little reduced, I adore their decorative mouldings, which add elegance and character. Banisters tend to be solid and staircases easily enhanced with stair runners."

When it comes to layout, the shape of an Edwardian home often lends itself well to wide rear extensions, whether classic or contemporary in feel. Try referencing the original architecture by commissioning an extension that riffs on Edwardian joinery styles, such as classic wood-framed doors, or opt for clean, graphic lines instead to provide a confident note of contrast.

"Opening up these homes to suit more sociable or family living is quite straightforward," says K Space's Krystyna Martin-Dominguez. "As they tend to be wide, they can accommodate generous extensions to allow for open-plan living and roomy rear kitchens. There's also often the potential to undertake a loft conversion without the need to lower the first-floor ceiling to facilitate it. Covings, sash windows, fireplaces and stained-glass front doors can all be incorporated into new configurations. However, original cupboards in bedroom alcoves and first-floor hallways are not often that solid or useful, so these spaces might be better served in more imaginative ways." ▶



ABOVE The entrance hall of interior designer Krystyna Martin-Dominguez's house features graphic ceramic tiles by Vives which provide an updated take on traditional encaustic flooring.

RIGHT In this scheme by interior designer Louise Robinson, rose pink walls complemented by a velvet burgundy ottoman and an original fireplace finished in matt black give the room a contemporary update.



DESIGN INSIGHT



LEFT In this new extension, rear doors by Westbury Joinery replicate the style and proportions of Edwardian architecture. The scheme is by Laura Stephens.

FAR LEFT A bespoke window seat and a textured rug create a natural pause point in this hardworking space, which once housed a study. Elegant panelled storage complements the property's original architecture.

WORK IT

The key to making an Edwardian home work for modern living is knowing when to preserve and when to thoughtfully upgrade original detailing. “The structured design of these properties, left unaltered, doesn’t always align with modern, lateral, open-plan living,” says Gledstone. “That said, multiple rooms that accommodate different functions can be beneficial in creating private or semi closed-off spaces such as home offices, children’s play areas or dining rooms, all useful for family life.”

In addition, the integrity of this kind of architecture does mean that repairs and alterations can be costly. “Glazing is a key example,” says Gledstone. “Original single-glazing panes no longer meet modern energy performance criteria, but upgrading to double-glazed sash windows, while painstaking, is ultimately a worthwhile enterprise.”

Extensions are a good way to introduce a more up-to-date feel. “We added a glass extension to the back of the house with a steel frame to remove the load-bearing walls and maximise flexibility, as well as tall floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors,” says interior designer Claudia Ludwig. “In this way, we created an open-plan kitchen-diner with direct garden access. Side extensions are less dramatic but very effective when it comes to creating additional living space. The steeped pitched roofs of Edwardian homes are also ideal for loft conversions. Consider converting and expanding the original eaves to create a loft space for a guest bedroom, storage and an en-suite bathroom.”

A feature worth enhancing is usually the staircase. “Ours was hidden under many layers of glossy white paint, which we removed to reveal the wood grain underneath and then lime-washed,” says Ludwig. “We also discovered an intricate, curved fretwork baluster with pillars at the bottom of the stairs beneath the old plasterboards. So, I fitted a dramatic glass chandelier to the top of the staircase. It follows the line of the stairs from the loft to the basement, creating a beautiful dialogue between old and new.” ▶

ABOVE RIGHT In this scheme by Laura Stephens, a mid-century-style floor lamp and half-height shutters complement pared-back original architectural detailing.

BELOW RIGHT Bespoke joinery painted in a soft-blue grey makes the most of the airy proportions of this sitting room conceived by Studio Peake.



DESIGN INSIGHT

ABOVE LEFT In this scheme by Laura Stephens, walls painted in soft neutrals blue the boundary between old and new in a rear extension.

LEFT A steel-framed glass extension with floor-to-ceiling sliding doors strikes a contemporary note in designer Claudia Ludwig’s Edwardian home.

ABOVE RIGHT Teals, blues and greens reference the jewel tones associated with Edwardian architecture in this kitchen.

RIGHT An overscaled gilt mirror above the fireplace and brass candle sconces either side of it riff on classic detailing.





ABOVE A bold chintz wallpaper, Cole & Son's Aurora, and an opulent chandelier complement original ceiling mouldings in this classically designed sitting room scheme by Laura Stephens.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

As this was an era dedicated to celebrating craft, it seems appropriate to look to artisanal solutions when bringing Edwardian architecture to life. "Reinvest in the period by looking at typical details and features in the wider architectural strata of your neighbourhood," suggests Gledstone. "Nearby buildings and structures can be referenced and integrated into your own renovation. Think on a global scale, too. Some of the designers and manufacturers working during the period still exist today, such as furniture maker Carl Hansen & Son and bentwood chairs specialist Ton." If the budget will allow, echo the Arts and Crafts movement by commissioning artisans who are specialists in their field, as opposed to buying an off-the-shelf product. The result will be modern motifs crafted using traditional techniques of the era.

"Bear in mind too that choosing to repair an original feature rather than replacing it with something new is not only more budget-friendly, but is a sustainable option," advises Gledstone. "The Japanese practice of Kintsugi embodies this principle by highlighting an imperfection and its subsequent repair as a way of celebrating an object's history."

Sometimes sensitive, respectful removal and replacement is the only way forward. "We are great believers in preserving the essence of an era," says K&H Design's Katie Glaister. "For example, you might want to remove a damaged, overly intricate Edwardian tiled fireplace, but instead of replacing it with stone or timber, consider a more contemporary option, such as Moroccan-style Zellige tiles, which offer a fresh twist while respecting the building's origins." Cornicing and skirtings can be given a modern interpretation with contrasting paint colours, while picture rails can add depth and character.

If original tessellated flooring has been removed, a modern geometric with a trompe l'œil effect will echo this classic style. "Otherwise, wood-block parquet works very well in Edwardian homes," advises interior designer Laura Stephens. "I also consider fixtures and fittings carefully. Art deco styles, such as metro tiles, work really well for bathrooms when combined with dado detailing. I also like to play on traditional stained-glass elements found in these homes by introducing a general colour palette of teals, aubergines and greens." ▶



ABOVE An art deco-style artwork and a mid-century pendant emphasise the generous proportions of this pared-back scheme designed by Studio Peake.

BELOW Alcove joinery and a fire surround finished in white pick out the original detailing in this sitting room design while teal and yellow add bold colour.



DESIGN INSIGHT



ABOVE In this kitchen scheme by Laura Stephens scalloped chairs and midnight blue painted bespoke joinery reference the respect for craft that is typical of Edwardian architecture.

LEFT Rattan furniture and a framed palm print, complemented by restored encaustic flooring, reference the original use of this garden room.



BRIGHT & LIGHT

Edwardian homes are flexible enough to accommodate fresh, bright decor as well as airy neutrals. “With high ceilings and light-filled rooms, don’t be scared to introduce colour,” says Martin-Dominguez. “Go as bold as you like: blue creates a fantastic backdrop for antique and vintage furniture because dark wood sits beautifully against it. Opt for stronger colour in north-facing rooms and use smaller spaces, such as cloakrooms, to introduce a fresh or playful note. I like to incorporate William Morris wallpapers in compact rooms and to add interest to hallways.”

Though Edwardian buildings often feature a greater number of separate rooms than contemporary properties, maintaining a sense of decorative cohesion is still important. “While it’s great to use a variety of different colours, for me, there needs to be a common thread linking everything together so that schemes don’t feel chaotic,” says interior designer Louise Robinson. “I like painted joinery as this can create a sense of visual cohesion, and I also think that framing a view by painting the sliding sections of traditional sashes in darker colours is very effective.”

Layered textures introduce a contemporising note. Antiques sit well with mid-century pieces in these airy but pared-back spaces, while natural materials such as bamboo and wicker have softening appeal. Upcycled pieces and architectural salvage can also be given a new context, and crisp, angular lighting will stand out among period details. Creating decorative tension, contrasting old and new, soft shapes with bold outlines, and playful patterns with classic, is the key to enhancing the beauty of these uniquely designed, architecturally timeless homes. ▶



ABOVE Contemporary geometric tiling and aged brass bathroom fittings bring an art deco flourish to this Edwardian bathroom by Studio Peake.

TOP Floor-to-ceiling joinery and edged Roman blinds create a classic look in this bedroom scheme by Louise Robinson.



ABOVE In this bedroom by K Space, the walls, joinery and fire surround have been given the same matt paint treatment, for a mellow but contemporary feel.

RIGHT A bold floral wallpaper and brass taps deliver period charm with a playful twist in this compact cloakroom by Laura Stephens.

ABOVE This scheme by Otta Design has been gently reworked to incorporate an en-suite bathroom linked to the bedroom by a soft palette of blues and greys.

ABOVE LEFT In this playful scheme by Louise Robinson, having the joinery, walls and mantelpiece painted in a soft pale pink enhances the colours of the tiles in the original fire surround.

RIGHT Floor-to-ceiling Crittall doors and a simple console table deliver pared-back elegance in this Edwardian home.



Rustic textures, woven wall panels and eye-catching stripes add a colourful, relaxed twist to the period features of this Edwardian sitting room, designed by Louise Robinson.



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