



A BROAD MIND

Caroline and Philip Search restored this magnificent **Queen Anne house** on the edge of Norfolk's Wroxham Broads



Situated beside tranquil waters and surrounded by secluded gardens, wild meadows and woodlands sits Grade II listed Broad House. This 16th-century Queen Anne country home and its estate first caught the eye of Caroline and Philip Search when they saw it for sale on the front page of a local newspaper. "We had been grazing the market and had looked at a few properties but they just weren't for us," Caroline recalls. "We originally planned to purchase something smaller but nothing quite fit the bill. Broad House, however, had exactly what we were looking for and more."

Days later the couple went to view the property first hand. "As soon as we walked through the door we fell in love with it," says Caroline. "It's a perfect private building, full of character, so Philip and I were instantly convinced that guests would appreciate its warm and homely atmosphere. From that moment on we became very excited, and began drawing plans immediately."

In Good Company

As part of the buying process Caroline and Philip had to agree to an interview regarding their ambitions for the property. This would be conducted by the heir of the estate, Mr Trafford, whose family had lived at Broad House for more than 60 years. "With the passing of his father, and with his brothers and sister having left home, his mother lived alone in this large house with the housekeeper and gardener for company," says Caroline. "Interestingly, the same gardener, Mike Skipper, has worked for the Traffords since he was a lad. His mother was the family's cook and they lived in the coach house. Mike has been here for 33 years and continues to work here today."

The couple sold their previous barn conversion and moved into rented accommodation a mile away from Broad House. The sale was completed in January 2007 and so Caroline and Philip were able to move on site into the coach house. Using a trusted team of local builders and decorators it took six months to renovate the main house, requiring window

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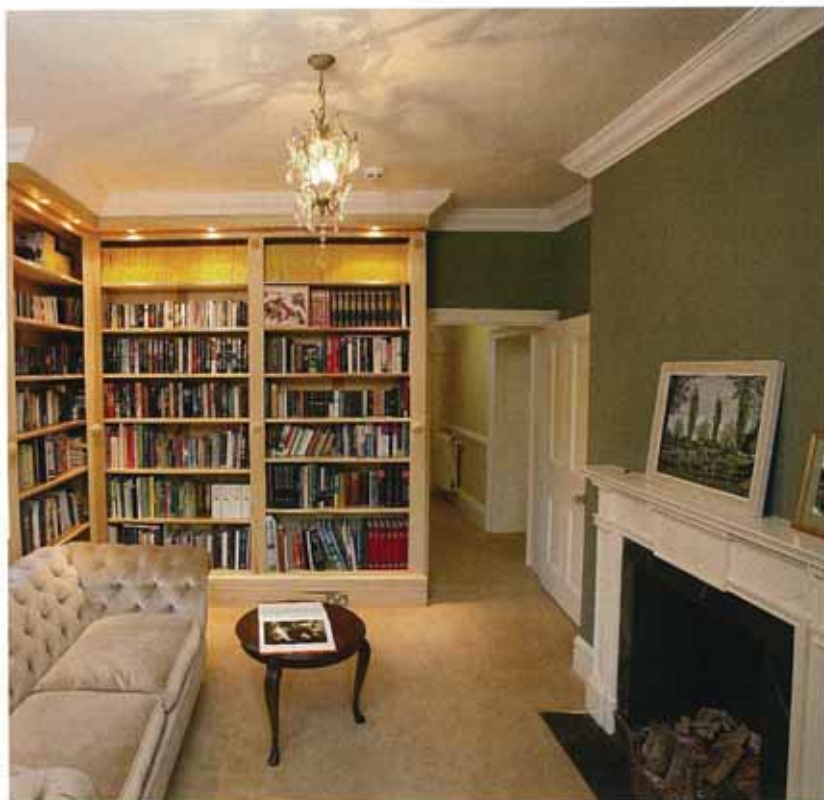


Words: Natalie Evans; Photos: Chris Taylor/Broads House





It's always been a dream of mine to have a room dedicated to our books, so I was thrilled when we had a local designer create the library for us



and roof repairs, a new heating system, rewiring and replumbing.

A Clean Break

Caroline oversaw the renovation herself, taking the roles of project manager and interior designer. "The layout upstairs was just perfect and was one of the things that excited us the most about the house," Caroline says. "Wherever we knocked through there was either a family bathroom, small bedroom or laundry room next door, which meant we were able to ensure that all nine bedrooms now have an en suite bathroom." Her main focus was to create individual, timeless interiors with homespun touches. She puts her success down to a passion for pattern and colour. "For years I've collected pictures of landscapes and water scenes and experimented with colour as a hobby," she explains. "So it wasn't at all difficult to choose different schemes for each room."

Opting for glamorous fabrics, Caroline designed mood boards for each room and two local interior design companies provided a helping hand. "Jane and Roger Page at The Red Shed and upholsterer Julie Handforth-Doidge of JHD Interiors were great," she says. "Julie covered all six sofas that came with us from our previous home. With such a fabulous choice of fabrics I could have designed another 60 bedrooms!" Caroline also discovered furniture items in antique fairs and hotel clearances, while purchasing several pieces from local



company Eric Bates, including a magnificent four-poster bed that took four months to craft. "Eric also designed the bookshelves in the library," says Caroline. "This finally fulfilled a dream of mine to have a room dedicated to our books."

The Best-Laid Plans

Caroline had a very clear view of what she wanted for the bathrooms, and everything possible was done to achieve this, but her ambitious ideas weren't quite achievable. "We would have liked stone tiles and underfloor heating in all the bathrooms," she explains. "Unfortunately this was impossible due to the structure and age of the building, so we opted for a durable luxury classic oak Karndean vinyl that looks just like natural flooring." As well as the main house, Caroline and Philip have also put a lot of time and thought into renovating the outbuildings, most recently transforming the 16th-century thatched barn into a majestic rustic venue. They even converted a former office outbuilding into a luxury retirement flat for Caroline's parents.

The renovation was completed back in 2007, just in time for the arrival of their son Henry two weeks later. "Considering we hadn't anticipated renewing the roof and re-plumbing the entire house, it's amazing that we only overran by two weeks," says Caroline. "The house has more than lived up to our expectations and I absolutely adore it. When we have time to ourselves we love escaping down to the jetty or taking the boat out onto the Broads, which is an absolute treat. Broad House is simply a lovely place to be and makes people very happy when they visit."





Warm Feelings

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Strong Roots

With over 50 species of tree on the grounds, the beautifully-nurtured gardens have been kept as natural as possible to help support the wildlife. "Mrs Trafford was extremely passionate about the gardens, so what you see today is pretty much how it was when we came here," Caroline adds. "I absolutely love gardening and come from a family of enthusiastic gardeners. We have the most fantastic established asparagus beds that have been there for over 60 years. We try to grow as much as possible so that there's always freshly-picked produce from the market garden available."

FIND OUT MORE

If you've been inspired by Caroline and Philip's success, why not visit Broad House yourself? The couple run it as a luxury hotel. Call 01603 783 567 or visit broadhousehotel.co.uk.

