

PERIOD DRAMA

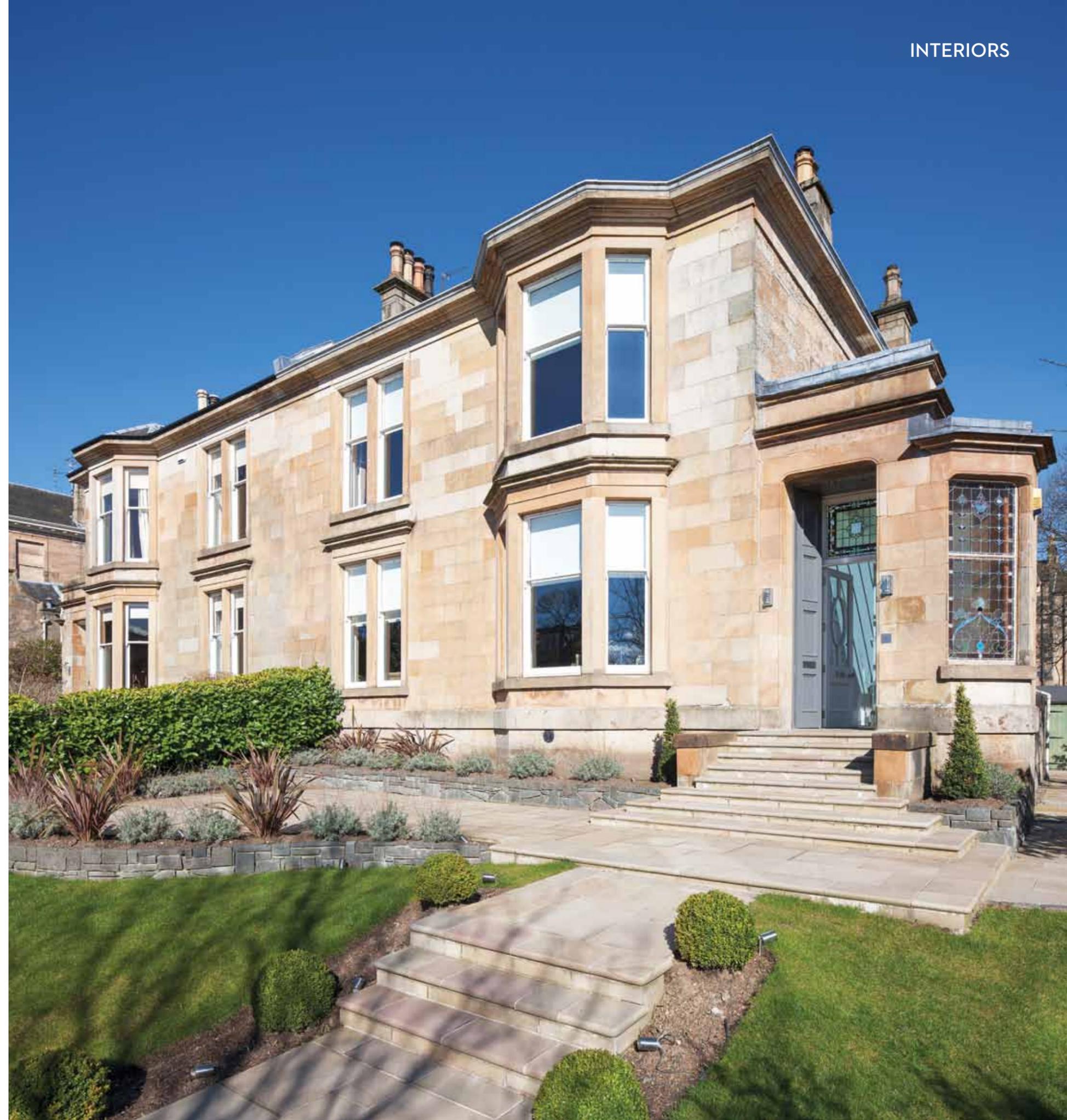
A Victorian villa that had lost many of its original features has been given a second chance

Photography Neale Smith Words Catherine Coyle

EVEN THE MOST EXPERIENCED OF interior designers might have felt a little intimidated by the sheer scale of the work required by this commanding semi-detached villa in the west end of Glasgow. Margot Paton, founder and design director at Chelsea Mclaine Interior Design, however, was quite unfazed. A long-standing relationship with the owners made her confident she knew exactly how to tackle the enormous renovation project.

Her task, though, was far from straightforward. The property didn't capitalise on the natural light and was full of gloomy, dark-stained wood. The Victorian layout did not lend itself to modern family living. "And there were few original features left in the place," she recalls. The broad and all-encompassing brief was to create a home that was both elegant and functional, where the high-quality craftsmanship would endure for decades, but where you would enjoy your surroundings and not be frightened to use the furnishings.

The first big decision was to alter the layout of the hotch-potch of rooms (including five bedrooms) to better serve the occupants. On the ground floor, the rooms were essentially switched from the rear of the building to the front, since ►





[Above] Stone flooring from Artisans of Devizes in the conservatory which looks out to the garden, transformed by Earth Angels. [Opposite] The hall's beautiful panelling and plasterwork are accurate reproductions of Victorian style



that's the elevation that gets the sun and the views. It was a big undertaking, says Margot, but the results have confirmed that it was the right move to make. "It's quite unusual to have the kitchen at the front of a house like this," she says. "This would normally be the dining and drawing rooms. But we wanted the house to make an impact as soon as you stepped through the front door."

Removing the wall between the original dining and drawing rooms allowed for the creation of a large, open kitchen-dining-living room, perfectly suiting the young family who live here. The kitchen, designed in-house by Chelsea McLaine and made by hand by Michael Acey, is entirely unique. "The clients wanted something that would be streamlined and contemporary but still acknowledge the age of the house and the period features that we'd replicated," explains Margot.

The owners like to entertain but they also have a busy working week, so hi-tech gadgetry had to fit seamlessly with functional kit. The slim Corian worktop, for example, has been built up underneath the cabinets and larder cupboards to prevent water damage to the timber. A lowered ceiling raft rests above the island – this is to create dedicated task lighting over the hob. ("Lighting in Victorian properties is often too high," claims Margot.) The Gutmann hob and extraction system is remote-controlled and vented to ►



[Left to right] The living, kitchen and dining areas of the new open-plan space at the front of the house. The kitchen has been designed to look contemporary while hinting at the age and period of the building



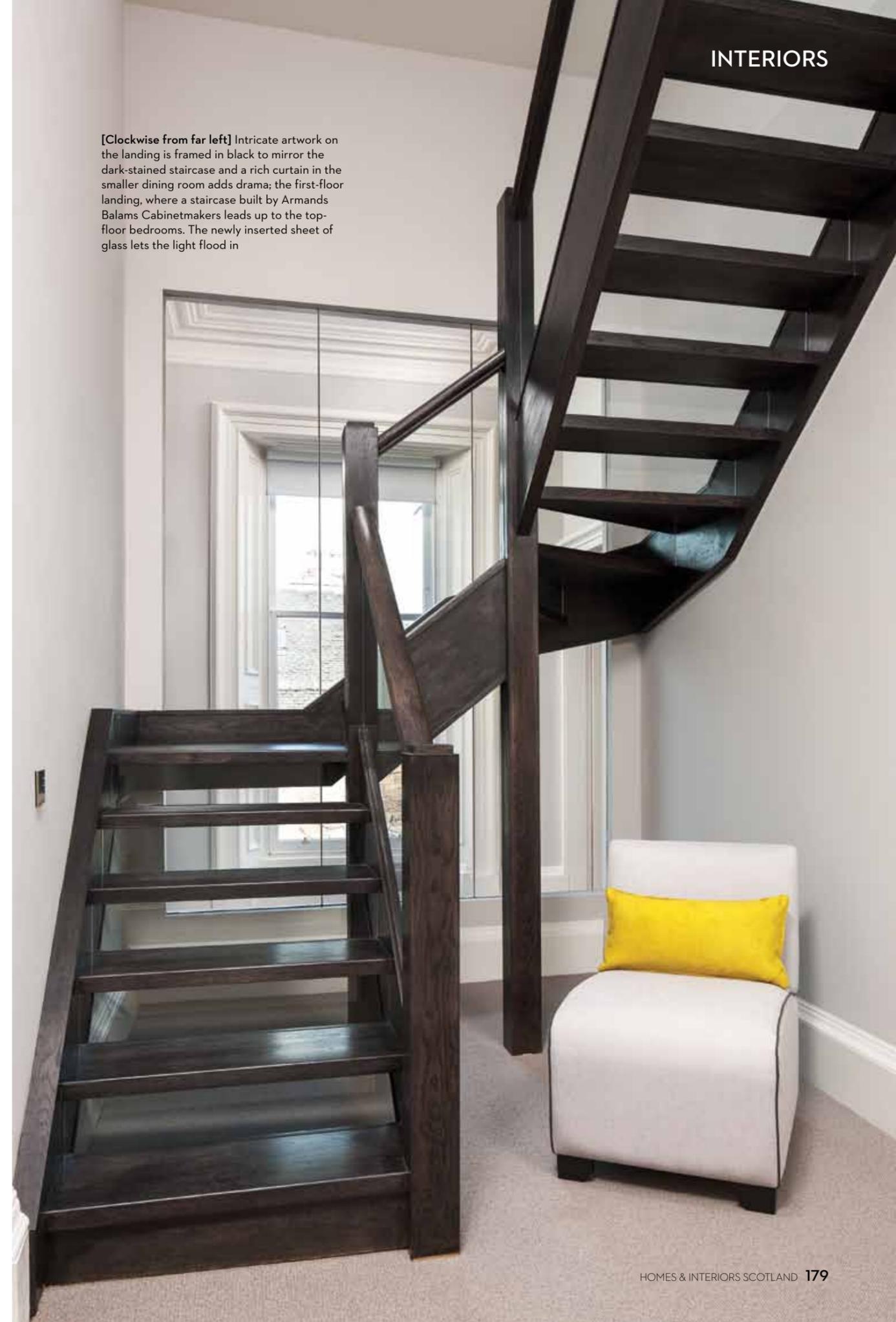
the back of the building to prevent food smells ruining the high-spec furnishings, such as the Zoffany Town and Country covered sofas and the Fox Linton drapes in the living area. The clients had requested a real coal fire and Margot was happy to oblige: the fireplace in the new living area was retained, swept and found to be in perfect working order. It's now one of the focal points in the kitchen-dining-living room.

Across the entrance hall, the original kitchen is now home to a neat dining room complete with a nook for

a wine cupboard. An oversized gilt-edged mirror from the family's previous home hangs in pride of place. Heavy drapes in Dedar's shimmering Fanfara give the room a club lounge feel. You get the impression that this is where cigar smoking and whisky drinking takes place long after the children have gone to bed.

Next door is a utility room, complete with pulley, sink, storage and ample space for white goods. Since the new kitchen is part of the living space, the clients preferred to keep these 'messy' aspects out of sight. ▶

“EVERYTHING WE HAVE DONE HAS BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO THE PERIOD OF THE HOUSE”



[Clockwise from far left] Intricate artwork on the landing is framed in black to mirror the dark-stained staircase and a rich curtain in the smaller dining room adds drama; the first-floor landing, where a staircase built by Armands Balams Cabinetmakers leads up to the top-floor bedrooms. The newly inserted sheet of glass lets the light flood in

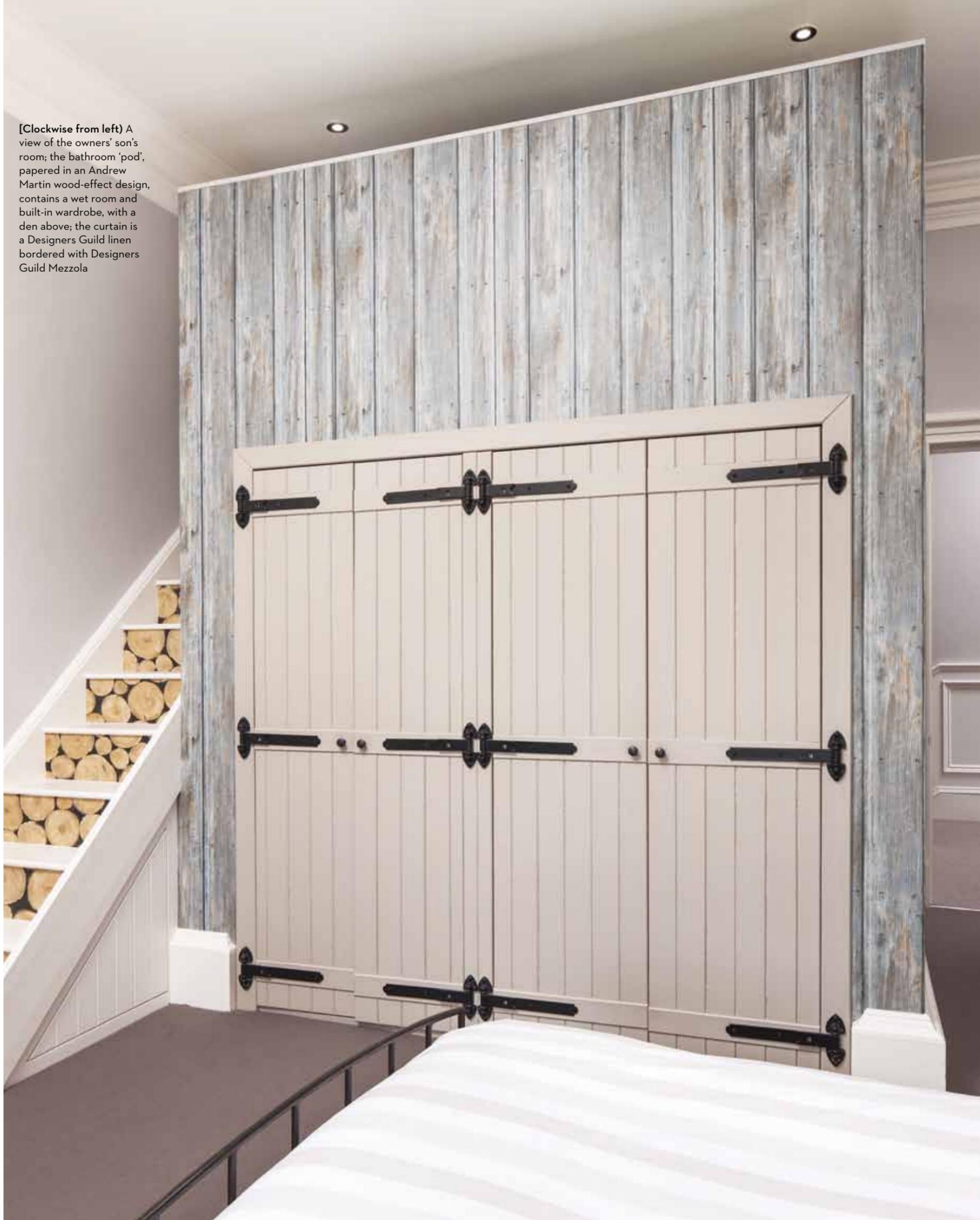
The impressively grand hallway looks like a Victorian original, but is actually a reproduction of what might have once been there. “We made everything you see here,” says Margot. The staircase was built by Michael Acey to her exacting design, while the timber panelling under the stairs was fashioned by Chelsea McLaine’s in-house cabinetmaker. The oiled and waxed flooring is a rustic engineered oak whose subtle tones are reflected in the Zoffany paintwork. All of the cornicing and ornamental plasterwork was repaired by the Reproduction Plaster Company in Glasgow. It’s a brilliantly executed job and looks to the naked eye as if these are all genuine period features dating from when the house was built.

The conservatory – unusually situated at the front entrance – is an update on the original structure. The glass roof and windows make it an ideal sun trap, while an elegant flagstone floor by Artisans of Devizes gives a wonderful sense of fluidity from the outside garden steps, leading through into the house proper. Storm doors made by Armands Balams Cabinetmakers replicate the originals but have been given sleek new hardware by Joseph Giles. Pops of colour lift the mood: Christian Lacroix and Osborne & Little furnishings are bold and playful, hinting that this is a home not to be precious about.

This part of Glasgow is a conservation area, so any alterations and upgrades made to the property had to be scrutinised by the city council’s building and planning ►



[Clockwise from left] A view of the owners' son's room; the bathroom 'pod', papered in an Andrew Martin wood-effect design, contains a wet room and built-in wardrobe, with a den above; the curtain is a Designers Guild linen bordered with Designers Guild Mezzola



[Above and below] The daughter's bedroom is accessorised with a framed whiteboard, a built-in day bed and some cool graffiti on the brick-effect wallpaper. [Opposite] The master bathroom is by Porcelanosa, with Duravit fittings and a travertine natural stone floor



department. And while the building is not listed, the conservation requirements were onerous, says Margot. Detailed drawings about exactly what was proposed, along with samples of the materials, had to be submitted for inspection before the team could proceed. All the external guttering had to be replaced with cast iron. No roof windows were permitted on the front elevation, and the windows throughout the property had to be sash-and-case (albeit double-glazed versions). The stained glass from the bathroom had to be recycled in the back door and in the conservatory. “They also asked us to remove all the cement render from the façade and replace it with reclaimed sandstone.”

Back indoors and up the stairs, changes have been dramatic. A reinforced glass wall was inserted on the landing: on one side, a new black-stained oak staircase complete with glass risers, made by Armands Balams, leads visitors up to the top floor – to what once was the servants’ quarters; on the other side, a corridor leads to the master suite. “The glass wall was a way of bringing natural light through the upstairs.”

Margot describes the family’s teenage son as a ‘Hollister boy’, so the ambience in his room is Californian cool. A bathroom ‘pod’ was built to house his wet room, above which is a hangout area where he and his friends congregate to play computer games. It’s clad ▶

INTERIORS

in an Andrew Martin wood-effect wallpaper (as are the treads on the stairs leading up), with built-in wardrobes. His sister's bedroom, meanwhile, has a graffiti wall hand-drawn by Chelsea McLaine's in-house designer Tracy Sifaoui on top of a brick-effect wallpaper by Andrew Martin for an authentic feel. A bespoke day bed means that friends are welcome for sleepovers, while a framed whiteboard is just the thing for a budding artist.

The success of this project, believes Margot, is in the balance between the building and how it has been dressed. "Everything we've done has been sympathetic to the period of the structure; we've brought back the elegance and sophistication that a townhouse should have." ■



The utility room houses all the appliances that would have cluttered up the open-plan kitchen. The stained glass was relocated here from the main bathroom