

# creating an ideal home



*Blending modern interior design with period architecture may not sound a recipe for a success but one couple have done it. Sarah Lane went to visit them*

**T**hey weren't looking at the apartment for themselves when Nat and Tania Daniels visited the former mansion at Langley Park.

"We'd gone to have a look for my parents because they wanted to move out of their house in Chislehurst. But as soon as we saw it, we knew it was for us," said Nat.

He and his wife Tania had been looking at four and five bedroom detached houses for themselves but felt the two bedroom penthouse in the mansion which once served as offices for the Glaxo Wellcome company near Beckenham was their "ideal home".

The couple, who married in May last year, had been looking at properties on and off since November. Tania, 28, had bought a one-bedroom flat in Blackheath when she first moved to London from her native Durham and after meeting Nat, 33, he moved in with her and they sold his property in Shortlands.

## *suitable*

Tania was also working with Nat at his estate agency business, Daniels Property and Financial Services in Grove Park, and their 15-year plan was to find a home with some land where they could settle down and have a family – they couldn't find anything suitable.

It was while they were viewing a house in Chislehurst, the agent suggested looking at Langley Park which is now being developed by Laing Homes into luxury homes with 24-hour security.

"We just fell in love with the apartment," said Tania. "It was completely not what we were looking for and it was just a shell but we knew we had to have it."



*"It was completely not what we were looking for and it was just a shell but we knew we had to have it..."*

The mansion – and other original buildings on the site such as the Coach House, the Chapel and the Dairy Cottages – had been bought by Kent firm Morgan Restoration which had converted it into luxury accommodation.

One wing became an eight bedroom house and the rest turned into apartments, three on the ground floor, two on the second (which were both bought by the same person and made into one) and two penthouses – one with a roof garden and the other with a "secret" terrace nestling among the chimney pots.

Once the sale had been completed in April, the couple were anxious for the work to start to turn the home into the ultimate "des res" – and it was all finished

in time for them to move in on May 28, their first wedding anniversary!

Although each had their own ideas of what they would like – Nat wanted false brick walls to create an illusion of age and lots of mirrors; Tania wanted wooden floors everywhere except for in the bedrooms where she wanted deep-pile carpet – their tastes and ideas were very similar.

## *creative*

The unusual layout and room shapes gave a great deal of scope for imagination. The creative use of glass, both for mirrors and for walls, has added even more light and space and unusual fixtures and fittings draw the eye.

The only room which had been finished when they completed the sale was the kitchen in terms of the units and appliances. Tania managed to find floor tiles which matched the walls and they created an adjacent dining area with, unusually, the lighting in the floor rather than the walls or ceiling.

The formal sitting room, with glass brick wall, features an antique-style fire and a spiral staircase which leads up what could also serve as a third bedroom. That in turn leads out onto the roof with magnificent views across Langley Park and beyond – even to glimpses of the City.

The room also serves as an entertainment centre and office and is the hub of an amazing sound system which means the radio, television, CD player, video and DVD can all be heard in any room in the house.

Nat said: "The wiring was done by Musical Images in Beckenham and they did all the chasing in which was a major

undertaking. But we are delighted with the result." He is also pleased with the huge widescreen television which dominates the room.

Tania explained: "We decided right from the start we didn't want a television in the sitting room so, if we entertain friends, we're not tempted to watch it. Instead, we escape up here with a bottle of wine when we're on our own and can relax on the sofa bed we have in case we need the extra room for guests. Sometimes getting back down the spiral staircase can be a bit difficult!"

**fantastic**

It was while they were visiting Atrium in Beckenham for furniture Nat and Tania saw the work of Neil Dolding. "I noticed the fantastic paint effect on their walls and asked who had done it, they put us in touch with Neil and he was a marvel," said Tania.

"He was really interested in doing a modern design house and he turned out to be much more than just a painter and decorator. He laid the wooden floors for us, put in the glass brick wall and the brick slivers to create the false brick walls, took off the door from the main bedroom into the bathroom and created an archway, laid the decking on the roof terrace – and painted the walls."

With the help of Neil, several tradesmen from Morgan Restoration and their own flair and imagination – like changing the main en-suite bathroom into a combined shower, steam and sauna and finding a big enough bed for 6ft 6in Nat – the couple have their ultimate home.

Their one problem? What happens when they have a family, as they plan to do soon?

"I suppose we'll have to move but it will be a wrench," said Tania. Nat agreed. "We can always do it again with another property ....." he suggested. **LE**



Clockwise, from top left: The work starts, laying the dining room floor, the sauna-steam room in the main bedroom, a spiral staircase dominates the main living room, the guest room is one of two which has luxurious carpet



Above, from left: The dining area off the kitchen features unusual lighting in the floor; the upstairs entertainment room has a huge widescreen television and is the control point for the sound system, the "secret" roof terrace is laid with decking