

history to its original glories, it's amazing what you might uncover as you peel back the past



DAVID POOLE

STRIPPED: While Adrienne Brecher's lovely Bow home was being restored, saucy wallpaper was uncovered from its days as a Victorian brothel



weather but there's a lovely, tranquil atmosphere.'

Dating from earlier in the 18th Century, in what is thought to be the first formal terrace of houses built in London, is Adrienne Brecher's Grade II listed Queen Anne home in Bow, East London (£975,000, freehold. Winkworth, 020 8981 6776).

Built for sea captains, the terrace, on the Mile End Road, was rescued from dereliction by the Spitalfields Trust about 15 years ago. It was restored using traditional methods, such as pegs and glue where panelling had to be recreated. Adrienne, now retired, bought the house ten years ago when she worked for an American insurance broker in the City.

'My friends thought I was nuts but I was born in this area,' she says. 'It has been a labour of love - I had to install electric wiring, gas and mains water and it took nearly two years of work before I could move in - but it's a very special and unique home.'

Indeed, each room still has its original fireplace, while surviving box shutters on the landing were used as a template from which to design additional replicas. The original cupboards

are still intact and in the master bedroom is a section of saucy mid-Victorian wallpaper from when the house was believed to have been a brothel.

Even developers are beginning to see the value of sympathetic restoration that highlights and retains as much of the original design as possible.

Also unique, though a couple of centuries younger, is the Sir Giles Gilbert Scott Building at Whitelands Park, near East Putney. Named after



HOT HOME: Dancer Philippa Hardman loves the Sir Giles Gilbert Scott Building

its architect - whose portfolio of work included Battersea Power Station and the red telephone box - the Italianate-style building opened as a teacher training college in 1931.

Now, it's being converted into 100 flats and houses. Developer Westcity Properties has retained much of the character of the Grade II listed brick building, such as its decorative iron balustrades and parquet flooring. Prices start at £325,000 for two bedrooms and £550,000 for three bedrooms (Hamptons International, 0870 111 0046).

Former Hot Gossip dancer Philippa

Hardman, 44, who has bought a two-bedroom flat, says the building has a real 'wow factor'. 'My flat has incredibly high ceilings and large French windows with oak frames carved to look like an open book. The main entrance is lovely too, with huge doors and a marble floor - you really have a sense of living somewhere with history.'

Westcity has converted the old refectories into a library and a gym that will be run by Philippa's business, Raw Corporate Health. With the original parquet flooring and three sets of French windows, it is, says Philippa, 'a beautiful, light space'.