

Natural history

Interior designer Charlotte Findlater has used natural materials, industrial styling and state-of-the art technology to transform her family's home near Kirkby Lonsdale. They're now reluctantly selling the Grade II-listed watermill which has an asking price of £1.45 million

WORDS MICHAELA ROBINSON-TATE PHOTOGRAPHY PHIL RIGBY

Charlotte Findlater says buying her family home, Lupton Mill, three-and-a-half years ago was an emotional decision.

"This was a purchase from the heart, not the head," says Charlotte, who lives at the former working watermill with her husband, Scott and nine-year-old daughter Isabella. "I remember coming here with Scott. We sat downstairs and it was very quiet. We just said to ourselves we've got to get this."

After undertaking a major refurbishment of the mill, Charlotte says they hadn't anticipated selling the property but Scott's job now regularly takes him away from home and Isabella is at school in Newcastle. After realising that the Lune Valley was no longer the right location for them they have put the mill on the market.

Lupton Mill, which is a few minutes from the A65 and a short drive from the M6, had already been converted to a family home when Charlotte and Scott bought the property. They have remodelled the building, raising the floor levels and moving many of the walls to create a five-bedroom home over three floors. The original mill machinery - milling ended in the Sixties - and three pairs of mill stones have been conserved and can be viewed from the lower ground and ground floors.

They carried out extensive work outside, removing trees and planting large numbers of azaleas and camellias. Lupton Beck runs alongside the property and the house overlooks the mill pond which has its own boathouse. The detached garage has been fitted with decking and a

bathing platform from which the family and visitors can access the pond for swimming.

Charlotte designed the layout and project managed the work, collaborating with builder Neil Norman of NSN Construction of Kirkby Lonsdale and joiner James Cook from Milnthorpe, who undertook all the woodwork including replacing many joists. The plans were drawn up by Chris Potts of CNP Associates in Kirkby Lonsdale.

Charlotte was at the house throughout and was hands-on, sanding beams herself when it wasn't possible to use power tools.

"Blood, sweat and tears went into this building and outside," she says. "I was here every single day."

Charlotte didn't train as an interior designer - she studied criminology and law at university and served as an army officer - but says she's been fascinated by design since she was a child when she would continually redesign her bedroom.

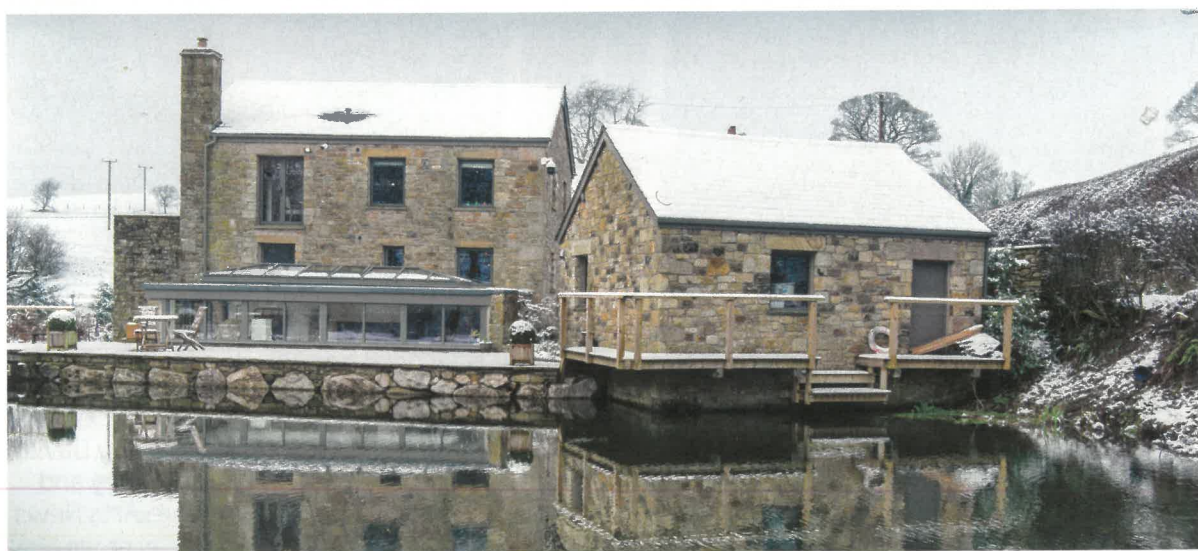
When the interior designer undertakes a project for herself or a client, she doesn't focus on curtains, carpets and cushions but instead looks at the overall design, coming up with a plan for how a property could work better inside and outside.

"It's just really bringing life to a property. I believe we should take our inspiration from nature and cues in terms of colour and products. I use natural products - I'm a huge fan of natural wood and natural stone."

At Lupton Mill, Charlotte has also referenced the building's heritage, using cladding made from building grade timber, which she painted herself in Farrow & Ball's Elephant's Breath or

The milling machinery has been preserved and can be seen from the dining area, which is furnished with a Timothy Oulton dining table constructed from ancient Chinese junk ships

Left: Lupton Mill has been used for fulling, and later operated as a grinding mill for grain





The cinema room is a favourite spot for the family to relax in

'I believe we should take our inspiration from nature and cues in terms of colour and products. I'm a huge fan of natural wood and natural stone'

Skimming Stone, as a feature on some walls. Cladding would at one time have been used on the mill walls for insulation.

The staircases were made by Chris Nelson Metalworks of Kendal using oak treads, glass and RSJ structural supports which give the industrial look that Charlotte was seeking. She says the staircase ties in with the mill's past but doesn't overshadow the feature that's been made of the mill machinery.

"I needed to do something that wasn't going to take the focus away from this (the mill workings) because this is what the building's about, it was a mill.

"I didn't want to put any more wood in and lots of spindles. I had seen something similar elsewhere and wanted to bring in something really industrial feeling but modern."

The original water wheel is in place but doesn't turn. Charlotte says to have the powerful mid-breastfed wheel in use would be noisy, potentially dangerous and not conducive to family life: "It's a home now, it's had it's time as a working mill."

The couple installed state-of-the-art technology, including a CCTV system and remote control for lighting, heating, cinema room and sound system, which can be operated wherever they are in the world.

Underfloor heating has been used throughout. Charlotte likes to support local suppliers and the limed oak band-sawn flooring was supplied by Havwoods of Carnforth while Pure Stone of Kendal supplied limestone flagstones.

The only thing the mill doesn't have is a fully fitted kitchen in the newly built orangery. Charlotte says that having decided to put the house on the market, they were advised that a new owner might want to choose their own kitchen, so they have left the space with the relevant plumbing and electrics ready for future use.

Most of the walls are painted white. The lower ground floor accommodation includes a large open dining area situated next to the mill workings. Charlotte appreciates the story attached to the Timothy Oulton dining table which was constructed from ancient Chinese junk ships.

The windowless cinema room, which has cladding and is painted in Farrow & Ball Down Pipe, is a favourite place for Charlotte and Scott to relax and for Isabella to hide away with friends. Charlotte has chosen a Fendi sofa and made a set of occasional tables using logs from trees on the property which were stripped of their bark and dried prior to being brought indoors.

The lounge, which is painted in Farrow & Ball Skimming Stone, has a glass roof to make the most of the light. Furnished with a pair of John Sankey sofas, it has a log-burning stove and a wall of high shelves custom-made for the room.

The cloakroom has a pedestal sink in chiselled marble bought from Tikamoon.

There are three guest bedrooms on the ground floor. One has an equestrian-style

Charlotte and Tilly in the open dining room



The glass-roofed lounge has custom-made shelves (below) and John Sankey sofas; below right: the orangery, which is ready for a new kitchen to be installed



Charlotte inherited the desk, which takes pride of place in the study



The master bedroom with a Simon Horn bed and Eichholtz light fitting



Charlotte's dressing table with views of the mill pond

'This was a purchase from the heart, not the head'

leather-look bed and bedside tables from the company And So To Bed which are actually made from metal frames. A glass pendant light was a purchase from Yew Tree Barn at Low Newton many years ago which Charlotte has installed in every house she's lived in since.

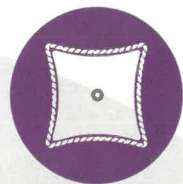
Another guest room has a goatskin bed by Simon Horn and a cupboard from Oka. A light fitting from Sweetpea and Willow and a screen which Charlotte bought in Cheshire many years ago are features of a third guest room.

A family bathroom includes a unit which Charlotte adapted by adding a slate top to accommodate twin basins from Pure Stone in Kendal.

The master bedroom is on the first floor, where Charlotte has installed a Firenze bed and bedside cupboards by



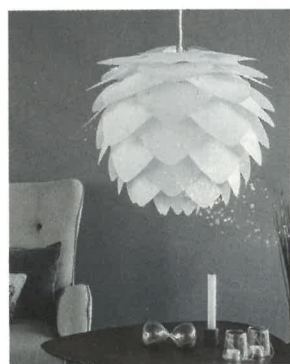
Industrial styling and mill driving gear in its original position in the en-suite bathroom



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'Blood, sweat and tears went into this building and outside. I was here every single day'

Simon Horn. The oversized statement light fitting is by Eichholtz.

Charlotte has used a blind to dress one window where the mill is overlooked but has left other windows uncovered for views of the mill pond and the beck.

"It's just a joy to wake up and look out there," she says.

Sliding doors open to a stone patio area where Charlotte and Scott enjoy sitting out throughout the year.

The en-suite bathroom has a stainless steel bath by Hurlingham The Bath Company, which is finished with rivets, giving a nod to Charlotte's industrial theme.

The walls and floor are in marble from Pure Stone of Kendal. A French sink unit and marble top are complemented by Eichholtz lights.

A section of driving gear from the mill workings was removed during building work but has been reinstated in the bathroom ceiling in its original place.

Isabella's bedroom has an oceanic theme to reflect her love of the sea and collecting shells.

Charlotte already had a number of glass fish, made by Jo Downs of Devon, which



she had bought for another project. She asked Jo to make some more so that she could create a shoal of fish swimming across the wall.

Charlotte commissioned Chris Nelson Metalworks to make a spiral staircase to link the bedroom and mezzanine area. She had already chosen Andy Warhol tiles for the en-suite bathroom and the artist's use of Campbell's soup cans inspired the tubular design for the staircase. Charlotte added holes to resemble air bubbles

which fit the oceanic theme.

Isabella and her friends love to spend time in the mezzanine area where there is an Arne Jacobsen egg chair covered in Indian ikat fabric.

In Isabella's en-suite bathroom, the Andy Warhol tiles by Dune mosaics are used on one wall in the shower and the area behind the wave-shaped Bauhaus sink and cabinet unit. Charlotte says such a bright feature has more impact if it's used only in smaller areas.



Guest bedroom with Sweetpea and Willow light fitting and a screen which Charlotte bought many years ago



Equestrian-style bed and tables in a guest room; twin basins from Pure Stone in Kendal



A guest room with an Oka cupboard

'It's a home now, it's had it's time as a working mill'



An oversized turquoise light by Kartell reminds Charlotte of a jellyfish and the material used for blinds was chosen for its beachscape design. Old lockers bought from Timothy Oulton have been repurposed for bedroom storage.

Charlotte, who spent some of her early childhood in south Cumbria before moving away, was drawn back partly because her mum and sister live in Kendal but also because of her love of the area and in particular the Lune Valley.

She enjoys being outside at the mill where wildlife includes kingfishers, cormorants, herons and deer. Although it's the right thing for the family to sell, Charlotte says that having fallen in love with the mill, leaving it will be emotional.

"I've never felt like it in a building before - that's why it's so hard to think we're going to potentially move. I had planned to move here and grow old."

Lupton Mill is marketed by MSW Hewetsons: www.mshewetsons.co.uk
Charlotte Findlater: www.charlottefindlater.co.uk

Grist to the mill



Milling was carried out at the site of Lupton Mill for many centuries, with the earliest reference to it dating from 1301.

Its first use was as a fulling mill, where thick, hard-wearing cloth was produced and it later operated as a grinding mill for grain.

Members of the Hayhurst family were millers at Lupton from the early 19th century. The last miller was James Nelson Hayhurst, a father of 11, who worked at Lupton - where he also kept cattle and sheep - for more than 50 years and who died in 1968.

One of his sayings was: "Life's nowt but grinding."

The mill was converted to a private home before being bought by Charlotte and Scott.

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