

The newly built orangery is filled with light all year round thanks to the lantern roof



We have all gone on holiday and fallen in love with the idea of living in our perfect idyll. For most of us, it remains an idle dream. But two years ago, Christopher and Linda Kilmurry drew a circle on a map of Cumbria and obsessively searched for their ideal house in their perfect location.

Today, Glen Bank in Brampton near Appleby is testament to their determination to find exactly what they wanted and also to their flair for interior design.

Christopher and Linda, both creatives who studied at London's St Martins School of Art in their early 20s, have fused old and new in the large beamed village house which was originally built in 1755.

Glen Bank is a fascinating mix of ideas and styles which sit comfortably together. For instance, the sitting room (originally a kitchen) features an original range and spice cupboard while the newly built orangery boasts a contemporary lantern roof complete with fans.

The couple, both aged 60, bought the house with a view to retiring to Cumbria where they holidayed at least three times a year. For the moment, they are still only living here sporadically as Christopher, who has worked as an artist and as a management consultant, has just launched a new career as an author and senior TV executive.

In fact, a TV drama written by Christopher will be screened in 2019 but at the moment he is not at liberty to say what it is called or even which channel has bought it.

So while the couple continue to live in Cheltenham, they holiday let Glen Bank, blocking out the weeks they covet for themselves.

The house has been furnished and decorated to the highest standard and has been awarded Visit England's highest rating - 5 Star Gold. The couple are also finalists in this year's Cumbria Tourism Awards.

Linda says: "I fell in love with the character and charm of the house with its part red sandstone exterior. It was bigger than we had originally wanted but as we have four adult children we persuaded ourselves that it was perfect for family get-togethers.

"The only downside was that it felt a bit dark but we thought we could do something about that," she adds.

Linda removed all the curtains, replacing them with shutters. It was an instant lift.

Next, she took up all the carpets



The exterior combines a sandstone facade with rendered walls

Great escape

Christopher and Linda Kilmurry have transformed their 18th-century house in the Eden Valley into the perfect retreat for themselves and others to enjoy

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The well-stocked library has doors to a private courtyard



Christopher and Linda with their West Highland terrier Douglas; below: the boot room



The sitting room, once a kitchen, has an original spice cupboard

'I fell in love with the character and charm of the house'

exposing perfect wooden oak floors which needed minimal effort to bring back to life and which are now scattered with oriental rugs. A clever palette of neutral paints from either Farrow & Ball or Little Greene also added brightness.

A gifted designer, Linda originally worked in fashion. She was an apprentice to the renowned London designer Margaret Howell before setting up her own fashion label until the demands of raising four children put her career on the back foot.

Belatedly, she wishes she had chosen to be a professional interior designer. Certainly, Glen Bank's stylish interior suggests a lost career.

Christopher and Linda's priority was to source an eclectic mix of furnishings that would enhance the natural character of the house. Some things were already in their possession but Cumbria's auction houses and shops were scoured for the

perfect pieces, some of which were revived and painted by Linda.

Meanwhile Christopher project managed the renovation of the house. For 10 months, various teams of skilled local tradesmen worked on Glen Bank.

Linda says: "As we had stripped almost everything out of the house, we started with a blank canvas which means there were no distractions and we really got to know the house."

The kitchen layout was unchanged but the old units were replaced with hand-painted wooden doors. A convection hob and American fridge were installed and a wooden kitchen table that can seat 12 was painted with layers of varnish and surrounded by old cinema seats.

A boot room was added next to the kitchen and a downstairs en-suite bedroom was created from the former garage with visiting elderly parents in mind.

Downstairs most of the rooms have underfloor heating. Warmth and cosiness are absolute priorities.

There is also a library with a good





The kitchen is a welcoming hub, with a table that can seat 12

'As we had stripped almost everything out of the house, we started with a blank canvas. There were no distractions and we really got to know the house'

collection of books and doors to a private courtyard.

The sitting room with its log burning stove and old range is quirky and cosy. Linda has furnished it with antiques, good paintings and mirrors and comfy sofas.

However the heart of the house downstairs is the orangery which is flooded with light in the summer from its magnificent lantern roof and warm in the winter with both underfloor heating and a wood burning stove.

Two joiners based in Penrith made a long ash table specifically for the room and Linda sourced a French-style painted bench on eBay which sits perfectly alongside the table and then designed cushions to complement it.

Upstairs the four bedrooms and four bathrooms were put together with comfort as the priority.

Each bedroom is named after a fell and boasts large beds - two are superkings - which are dressed beautifully with



The practical and quirky dog shower





Each bedroom has been named after a fell - above is the High Cup Nick master suite and below are the Croglin and Dufton doubles

textured bedspreads and piles of cushions. The colours in each room are neutral with added tones of reds and blues. You can lie in bed in Murton and look out at the fell with the same name while in Croglin, you view both Murton and Dufton Pikes.

The master bedroom has a Juliet balcony which looks across to the Lake District fells. The wardrobe and chest in that room are modern pine which Linda has cleverly disguised by rag rolling. The effect is shades of gold, pink and blue.

Much thought has also been put into the gardens which had to be as maintenance-free as possible. The garden is on three levels with lots of spaces to walk and benches to sit on.

One area is covered in chipped Honister slate. Linda could have achieved a similar effect more cheaply by using Indian slate but insisted on using local materials wherever possible. She also created a gorgeous wildflower garden.

A practical but quirky feature is an outside dog shower with hot and cold water, dog shampoo and towels. A brilliant idea for people coming off the fells with their pets. Christopher says with a laugh: "We noticed Johnny Vegas ▶



'We fell in love with the cottage. Now we hope other people will too'



The Murton bedroom has views of the eponymous fell and a sandstone fireplace; below: the Great Dun bathroom on the ground floor; right: Christopher and Linda found much of the furniture and accessories in local auction houses and antique shops



The garden is filled with wild flowers

made a joke about a dog shower when he opened a new shower complex on a camp site in Cumbria recently. We were ahead of the game as we installed it two years ago.”

For the moment, the Kilmurrys are part-time Cumbrians but they look forward to the day they are here permanently. And in the meantime they are congratulating themselves on finding that perfect location in their beloved Eden Valley.

Christopher says: “The night before we took possession of the house, we stayed at the George & Dragon near Penrith and the barman told us Brampton is one of the friendliest villages in the county

which is exactly what we discovered.

“The heart of that community is our own local pub, The New Inn, which produces great food so to encourage guests to use it, we offer them a free bottle of wine if they eat there,” adds Christopher.

No doubt there will be drinks all round when the details of Christopher’s first TV drama are finally allowed to be known.

Glen Bank is available for let through Lake Lovers (www.lakelovers.co.uk) and Rural Retreats (www.ruralretreats.co.uk). It also has its own website: www.glenbankcumbria.co.uk.