



A warm welcome awaits in Winster

Penny Baddeley explores the beautifully and carefully renovated
home of Julie and Steven White

PHOTOGRAPHY: LU JEFFERY



A rural idyll. Julie and Steven's home was built with a combination of local limestone and pink gritstone from nearby Birchover quarry
Photo: Jim Dixon



Steven and Julie White

When Julie and Steven White began renovating their stunning 17th century country home, which lies in the ancient and historic village of Winster, they came across an unexpected gift. A small bundle of clay pipes, each intact, had been carefully laid in a space behind old brickwork: it was a genial offering from past owners to the present day occupants, a kind of hospitable handshake bridging several centuries.

'It was absolutely amazing,' said Julie, a former health visitor. 'It gave us goose bumps!'

'It made us feel that this was a very happy house,' added husband Steven, who formerly worked in sales and marketing for major construction companies.

This unusual warm welcome and fortuitous find seems to have characterised the couple's entire experience of Winster which lies hidden in a conservation area of limestone hills and glorious scenery, just four miles west of Matlock. Julie aged 58,

and Steven aged 60, were first drawn to the former lead mining village as a sanctuary from busy lives and careers in the city of Derby. Initially they bought a tiny cottage as a weekend bolt hole.

'After three years we knew more people in Winster than we knew in Derby - despite having lived there for eighteen years,' said Steve. Impressed by the friendliness of the close knit community in this corner of the Peak District National Park they eventually bought the 17th century former public house, The Old Shoulder of Mutton - in a swap with the owner for some cash and a second cottage they had bought, renovated and extended in the village.

After moving into their charming grade two listed period property, more than six years ago, Julie and Steven put their shoulders into The Old Shoulder. It took two years of building work to re-configure the interior. Whole sections of the house were shut off while work was underway and even a temporary hot water and shower facility was set up. It was an undertaking that



The kitchen. Steven made the units using Canadian yellow pine. He said: 'They have a sawn finish and are incredibly durable.'

required a sense of history but also vision.

'It's Steven who has the vision,' laughed Julie. 'He would say to me, "Where do you want the sockets in this room" and I couldn't even envisage the room, never mind see the sockets!'

Built partially with local limestone and pink-tinged grit stone from neighbouring Birchover, this rural retreat is now transformed into a stylish six-bedroomed space which seamlessly blends traditional detail built around original features with modern comfort to suit contemporary living.

Steven said: 'Our over-arching aim was to keep the integrity of the property but to make the house suitable for comfortable 21st century living, without making it look too modern.'

To maximise space and allow for extra bedrooms with generously proportioned en-suite bathrooms, the couple developed the huge unused loft area, carefully working round architectural features such as the partially exposed cruck frame and other ancient oak roof timbers.



The 19th century long case chiming clock plays a tune on each quarter of the hour. It was a find on eBay

Getting access into the loft space, however, proved to be one of the major difficulties in the development of this country home. A previous owner, aided by several different architects, had tried and failed to come up with a suitable and workable design for a staircase.

'How to get stairs into the loft was an absolute puzzle but I managed to get in one of the country's leading architects, who is based with HLM in Sheffield and between us we came up with the design to get a staircase into the loft and utilise the loft space. That staircase now looks like it has always been there.'

It is now just a fading memory for Julie, that she once perfected the technique of climbing a ladder with two cups of tea balanced in one hand, to deliver tea and sympathy to the workers.

In a curious twist, the pair also faced the daunting prospect of moving an existing staircase out of the dining room, where it had been moved in the 1800s, back to its original 1700s location in the lobby. This



One of Winsters lovely gardens

“This is my favourite room, It just has loads of history. You can imagine people sitting in here with a pint, chewing the fat, next to a blazing log fire”

move helped create a stunning and spacious dining room, in the setting that was once the tap room.

Steven said: ‘Moving the staircase back to where it had been, allowed us to use the dining room space more effectively, because it freed up space. Before it was moved you could not have had a table in here. Secondly it helped us keep the room warm, as before the heat from the log burner went straight up the staircase!’

The couple advise that before undertaking any renovation project, a plan or overall vision for the property is essential. Steven said: ‘The design principal we adopted was that if we were dealing with something that was part of the fabric of the building we would use traditional materials and design but otherwise, items such as soft furnishings and décor would be principally contemporary and modern.’

The couple relied on local craftspeople to undertake detailed period work. When they moved into the property only one original 18th century door remained, so Steven commissioned special tools to be made that could cut and shape the panelling of new doors in keeping with the original.

‘It was very expensive to do,’ said Steven. ‘But we have beautiful doors now,’ added Julie.

Attention to detail has been a watchword for the couple. They chose wide plank oak

flooring for the lounge and requested that their local joiner nailed down the planks in the traditional manner, rather than use contemporary concealed fixings. Sharp right-angled edges to window recesses and walls, a product of 1980s’ ‘modernisation’, were ‘hacked off’ and replaced with softly curving rounded reveals in keeping with the period property. Local joiners were brought in to create gently rounded skirting boards.



Serene and stylish en suite bathroom. London freestanding bath from Bathstore £499. Durable floor covering from Karndean



Julie created a cohesive country combination of florals and checks by selecting from the same colour palette. Checked blanket from Cromford Mills shop, Cromford, Matlock. Floral full-length curtains from Fabric Design, Matlock Bath. Coffee table by Indigo of Matlock

One key find was a period chimney piece bought for £50 off eBay, which surrounds the original gritstone hearth and provides a feature in the family lounge.

‘I was thrilled to bits with it and didn’t mind paying the £350 delivery fee!’

In addition to their grand plan for the building, they had a scheme planned for décor which involved consistent colour ways throughout: soft neutrals such as rich creams are used for walls. This understated palette is offset by the warm tones of natural wood, evidenced with exposed oak beams and wooden staircase handrails.

Julie plumbed for country colours including earthy reds and greens, which add depth in the lounge and a sense of opulence in the bedrooms. The couple chose Smithbrook dark wrought-iron light fittings throughout their home, to provide a sense of period coherence.

Longcase clocks are also a recurrent theme, a weakness for the Winsters clock winder (Steven), who now has the parish church clock working within ten seconds of



accuracy. 'I do love clocks. They give a house life. They give a house a pulse!'

But the most striking cohesive effect is achieved by choosing a single furniture supplier, Indigo of Matlock, for all requirements from dining room table to bedroom furniture. Steven said: 'Our previous house was 1930s style and our furniture simply didn't fit here. It's not often you get the opportunity to start from scratch with furniture and we made a big decision to go with Indigo. It is all made in and around Matlock and we love the feel of it. It is country style with a modern twist which is so in keeping with the house.'

A capacious Indigo chunky plank table, surrounded by oak framed leather backed chairs, makes a dramatic and beautifully bold statement in the dining room, where guests receive a warm welcome at the gritstone inglenook fireplace.

Recently Steven, using a process similar to brass rubbing, was able to reveal from the etched stone, the shape and profile of the original mantel piece, which would have

been pegged directly into the stone fireplace. He had a replica made - the sort of project in which he takes delight.

'This is my favourite room,' he says. 'It just has loads of history. You can imagine people

sitting in here with a pint, chewing the fat, next to a blazing log fire. And you can just imagine old Tom and Bill perched in that window seat...'

It seems fitting then that Julie and Steven >



Julie and Steven chose distinctive handmade dining furniture from Indigo, based at Dale Road, Matlock. See www.indigofurniture.co.uk. Wrought iron Smithbrook pendant light was found on eBay



An exposed brick wall is a focal point in this striking bedroom, a favourite with bed and breakfast guests. During the late 19th century this room was used as clubroom, frequented by the Winster Oddfellows Friendly Society. Canvas print from Indigo of Matlock. Bedding from Next.

have, in a way, restored the Old Shoulder of Mutton to its original function. Following refurbishment in 2010 they opened their home up to bed and breakfast guests. They are delighted to announce that it is currently rated via TripAdvisor as the top Bed and Breakfast in the Peak District out of 290 properties.

‘I particularly enjoy that the house is continuing to be used for a commercial enterprise and the thing I like best is that we are feeding business back into the local pubs and restaurants. It gives me a really warm feeling. It is just brilliant to be part of the local economy.’

The couple have thrown themselves into vibrant village life, embracing the friendly inclusive culture of Winster itself. ‘We just love it that the village is so inclusive, supportive and friendly.’

Steven and Julie are both members of the local history group and Julie is a member of Winster choir, which performs at many local events. In recent years the couple have taken a small role in the Winster Wakes, a week long annual carnival, which begins this year on Sunday, 29th June and will run until Saturday 5th July. They have often prepared

and served a hog roast for this carnival, which begins with the Wakes Parade and culminates with street stalls, entertainment and Morris dancing.

This year the couple will also be part of a village group visiting Winster’s twin village, Monterubbiano in Italy. But just now Steven and Julie are watching eagerly through the kitchen window, to monitor growth in their kitchen garden. Later in the summer a harvest of strawberries, raspberries and blackcurrants will be picked to make homemade ice cream to sell at Winster Secret Gardens’ event on 19th and 20th July.

During refurbishment of their home, the couple unearthed a 1793 penny coin, which had been placed inside the hollow casing of a wooden stair bannister. They decided to put it back along with a new pound coin. ‘It wasn’t ours to keep was it? It belongs to the house.’

The Old Shoulder of Mutton, it seems has a personality of its own as big as that of Steven and Julie. ■

* For further details of the luxury bed and breakfast business visit www.oldshoulderofmutton.co.uk or telephone 01629 650005



Steven & Julie White love eating at:

Stones, Dale Road, Matlock, for ‘fine dining’, 01629 56061

The Old Bowling Green, Winster, for ‘Great pub food and local hand pulled beers’, 01629 650219

The Druid Inn, Birchover, for ‘fantastic, fabulous food’, 01629 653836

The Maazi, Matlock, ‘wonderful Indian food’, 01629 582534

Shopping at:

The Village Shop, Winster

Wright’s Farm Shop, Darley Dale

Ebay

Bakewell car boot sales

Indigo of Matlock

David Mellor Country Shop, Hathersage

Favourite haunts

Chatsworth

Haddon Hall

Northern Lights Cinema, Wirksworth

Steven’s recommendations:

Carpentry - Sitefit, Swanwick

Joinery manufacture - Phil Atkinson, Matlock

Plumbing - Chatsworth Plumbing and Heating, Darley Dale

Plastering - Mark Parkin, Swanwick

Electrical - Cliff Hall, Ripley

History notes

It is thought that part of the first floor of the Old Shoulder of Mutton dates from the 1600s but there is some evidence, according to Steven White, that the ground floor may be older still. What is certain is that in 1753 The Old Shoulder of Mutton was one of 24 alehouses and inns operating in Winster. This period coincided with Winster’s heyday as a centre for the lead mining industry

during which the former public house provided refreshment to locals, travellers and hauliers, as well as providing the services of a blacksmith and stabling for 16 horses. ‘It was the equivalent of a modern motorway service station,’ says Steven.

At that time, the population of Winster was about 2,000 (compared to about 600 residents today) and

pubs were popular due to the lack of a potable water supply in the village. ‘The geology of Winster is such that there are no natural springs or wells in the village and it wasn’t until the 1950s that Winster got piped water.’

By the outbreak of World War I, only four pubs remained in Winster and the Old Shoulder of Mutton closed in 1916 after the Defence of the Realm Act introduced measures

to restrict the drinking of alcohol during the war, according to Steven. The Old Shoulder of Mutton was facing dereliction before development in the 1980s which led to the removal of many of its original internal features. It was acquired by Steven and Julie White in 2007. Refurbishment finished in 2010, when it was opened for bed and breakfast.