




HOUSE THAT NICK REBUILT

ALL CHANGE ARCHITECT NICK MIDGLEY'S HANDS-ON APPROACH TRANSFORMED A TINY YORKSHIRE COTTAGE INTO A CONTEMPORARY HOME. **SHARON DALE** REPORTS. PICTURES BY **SIMON HULME**

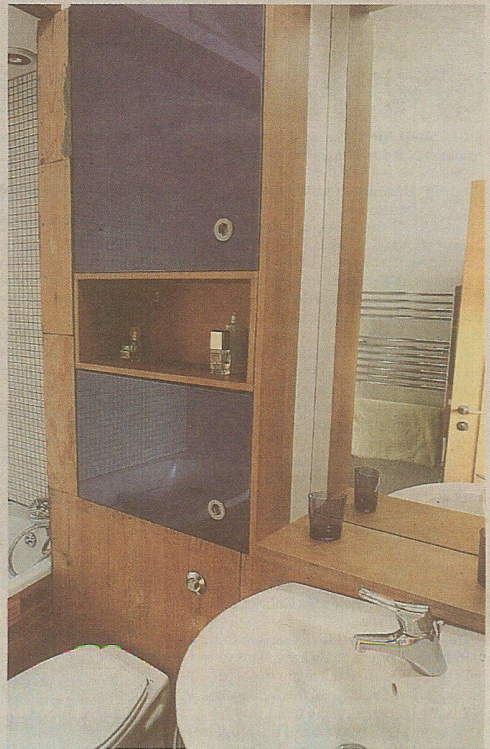
NICK Midgley's CV is certainly impressive and includes designing everything from striking one-off homes to Apple's London HQ, but it took a tiny mill worker's cottage in Yorkshire to really test his mettle. Nick took a hands-on approach when tackling the renovation of the 18th century property in Rastrick and did everything from the plans to the plumbing. "It's been a fantastic learning curve for

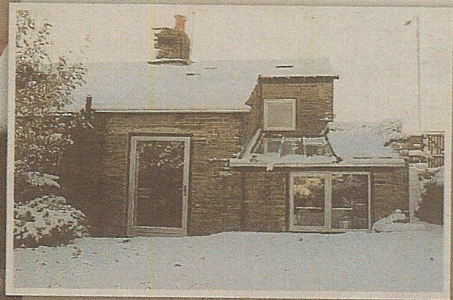
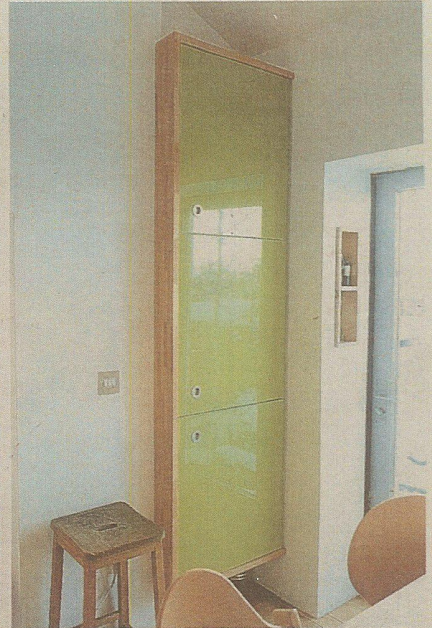
me," says Nick. He bought the house nine years ago after a block viewing, where would-be buyers were queuing out of the door of the two-up two-down. "There were lots of people there, but it needed such a lot of work that most of them were put off. I knew straight away what I wanted to do with it. I went down the planning office at 8.30am on Monday morning and by 10.30am I put an offer on the house." Dark and damp with no heating, there was a sitting room, corridor, a separate kitchen and a small bathroom and toilet downstairs. 





SPACE SAVERS: The light-filled kitchen, left; the dining area is raised and has a window onto the garden, above. The bathroom has neat storage solutions, including a built-in cupboard with doors from Howdens.





LIGHT AND AIRY: The old sitting room and hallway have made way for a contemporary, light-filled living room with the original fireplace as the focal point. The gloss cupboard was created by Nick and features kitchen doors from Howdens, above right. The kitchen now features a glass roof and the dining area has a picture window filling the interior with light, bottom right.

Upstairs, there were two bedrooms. "I knew the space could be changed and re-designed. I could also see that there was space at the side for an extension that I could do at a later date," says Nick, whose radical design squeezed every last inch of useable space out of the cottage.

The cellar is now a laundry-boiler room and the sitting room and corridor are now one large living space. He sacrificed a second bedroom upstairs to create a double height dining area within the open-plan kitchen.

The stone slate roof above the kitchen was replaced with a glass and aluminium roof and new windows and roof lights were installed throughout the house.

Upstairs, the two bedrooms were replaced with a bathroom and one and half bedrooms – one bedroom for him and partner Claire with a stud wall hiding a sleeping area for their sons Gabriel, nine, and Lucien, three.

The end of the corridor leading to the bathroom is now a study area. "Our view was that we wanted the living space to feel large and roomy and the bedroom space was secondary. We make do for now knowing we can extend the property sideways to create two more bedrooms."

NICK'S SOURCING AND PLANNING CONTACTS

- **WINDOWS AND DOORS:** Rationel from Denmark, www.rationel.co.uk
- **KITCHEN:** Scammell Interiors, York, www.scammellinteriors.co.uk. Other kitchen items from trade suppliers
- **WORKTOPS AND LONG STAINLESS SINK-DRAINER:** Ikea www.ikea.com
- **TAPS:** HansGrohe www.hansgrohe.co.uk – check supplier's costs online
- **APPLIANCES:** Direct Discounts, Halifax www.direct-discounts.com
- **LIGHTING:** Trade supplier for bulk buying – cheaper than online.
- **1001 THINGS LOCALLY/OVERNIGHT AT TRADE PRICES:** Screwfix: www.screwfix.com
- **OILS AND WAXES:** Osmo, a German manufacturer, www.osmouk.com
- **INSULATION:** Screwfix or online or trade. Insulation from YBS, www.ybsinsulation.com
- **ROOF GLAZING:** trade suppliers/local glass merchants
- **OTHERS:** Ebay for reclaimed or second-hand materials – though know what it is you want and what you are buying. Always ask questions and go to look or collect where possible.
- **PLANNING:** Visit www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning and for Building Control compliance: www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments

Though the interior design is 21st century, the cottage's historic character is intact.

says Nick, who tackled the renovation himself.

He did everything from the insulation, plumbing, plastering and damp proofing to the joinery, window fitting and underfloor heating. His first job was to strip everything back to the stone and timbers, which were then grit blasted.

"The only thing we didn't touch was the stone roof because that had been done a few years before and the timbers were

intact which is amazing considering they were half cut trees and branches from 1776," says Nick, who lived in nearby Huddersfield, while the work was ongoing. "I've always enjoyed being hands-on with DIY. My steep learning curve was tackling jobs I hadn't done before. I'd start slowly and by the end have acquired another set of tools and skills."

The transformation is remarkable and though the interior design is 21st century, the cottage's historic character is intact.

"It was done on a tight budget," says Nick, who mixed designer pieces with bargains finds. His woodburner was £170 from eBay and his cupboards and kitchen units a blend of Howdens, Ikea and Scammells of York.

The sink is Ikea, but his taps are top of the range Hans Grohe. The range cooker and fridge were from Direct Discounts in Halifax.

His thrift and hard work have paid off. The house was £65,500 and he spent £30,000 on the renovation, which would've been three times more had he employed contractors.

It also cost nine years of Nick's evenings, and weekends but the result is testament to his vision and his experience.

Even though the square footage hasn't increased, the once



DESIGNS IN HAND: Nick did most of the renovation of the cottage himself, from the initial planning to putting in the plumbing.

Cottage that is now ready for its next 200 years

NICK'S DESIGN AND BUILD DIARY:

THE first tasks were to open up and remove all the old lime plaster from walls and ceilings to expose the structural repairs needed.

With the ceilings down a fine king post truss was revealed in oak and chestnut. We carefully pulled every last nail out and everything was grit blasted and then wire brushed by hand with a final spray of a preservative/anti-fungal/anti insect liquid before the wood was oiled.

We used materials that give off no phenols or solvents, so natural mineral, vegetable or water-based products to minimise potential health irritants, something we are now pleased we stuck to, as our little boy's chronic asthma has improved tenfold being surrounded by natural wood and stone with no nylon foam-based carpet, resin varnish, paints, solvent-based glues and finishing oils. We followed this right through to the sealant we used on the stone, sadly many of these products are from Europe and not manufactured in the UK, Germany has much more comprehensive rules on materials and their substance parts so it's worth researching their products.

The ground floors were excavated and damp-proofed and deep slabs of 120mm insulation, concrete infill and underfloor heating pipes were threaded through the whole of the little cottage.

We wrapped up the walls and roof inside with a multi-layered superquilt insulation of one inch thick plasticised foil and spun polyester, which stopped the damp and draughts getting through the two-foot thick stone.

With four or five quarries and mines down the side of the Calderdale Valley behind the house, everything possible in the house seems to have been built out of stone. From the stone staircases,

which we have over-boarded with reclaimed pith pine to the fridge recesses in the living room walls and the 5ft x 3ft slabs of stone in the fireplaces, where there are holes for posting bars through to support hams for smoking.

The tough folk who built the house must have lifted the building materials from close by and built it with primitive tools and skills, though as we've repaired and replaced materials an undying respect for their hard graft has grown up, we broke or wore out three rotary hammer drills, two wood drills and two hammers.

We deliberately opened up the height of all the first floor rooms into the roof space, exposing timbers, beams and the sloping soffits, keeping all junctions as angled changes in directions gives the impression of much more space.

Careful positioning of roof lights for ventilation and light also gives the feel of space. The height and airy aspect is created even with relatively small windows. Bigger ones tend to look ugly from outside and spoil the character and scale internally. Also, consider top hung as well as pivot roof lights as these stop surprise summer rainfall spoiling internal decorations.

We stepped roof-lights back over dead space above corridors and used the space to the side of the corridors as useful storage.

With open-plan and semi open-plan living think hard about the appliances you are buying, check out on-line the 'db' ratings, that is the noise output from appliances, I know clients who cannot talk to guests when entertaining in their open-plan kitchen-diners as the extract fan/hood is blasting away. We got one of the most powerful units from Italy which is also the quietest.

Forget the expense of the glass and stainless steel hoods that have to be dusted and polished, think about

purchasing another wall cupboard unit and hiding the extract in this, it disappears from sight giving a less industrial feel to the kitchen and usually the heavier more solid cupboard construction deadens the fan noise even more.

Underfloor heating in a kitchen is a major plus, there is always a struggle to position radiators with appliances and fixtures vying for wall space. I also used a professional kitchen designer and supplier as they were able to design exactly what I needed for a tight space. I fitted the kitchen and found budget appliances and worktops.

The glass roof is a wonder, bringing in so much north light that even on the darkest winter mornings we rarely turn on the kitchen lights. Other windows and doors come from Denmark. One of my continual gripes is that we don't produce good value super sound and energy insulating units in this country,

Our glass roof in the kitchen was broken down into component parts as our original quotes were ridiculously high and we managed to install the system for a sixth of the quoted prices, though it's not for the faint hearted and all the junctions and weather proofing details have to be understood.

In the bathroom space, the cisterns and plumbing is all built within a carefully designed access wall that hides soil pipes and also provides storage cupboards and shelf space, money was saved on tiling on part of the wall by pre planning a large full height recessed mirror, again giving a good impression of space, though don't put mirrors together in corners as you'll get strange multiple reflections that just confuse the space.

The lighting is all by low energy lamps. **Having repaired drains and foundations,** wrapped up the structure and brought in new light, the house is ready for its next 200 years of life.

dark, pokey property now feels spacious and light thanks to a host of ingenious architectural solutions.

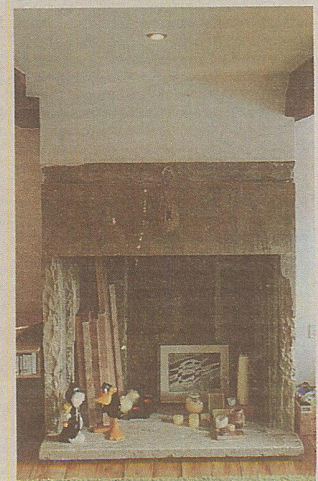
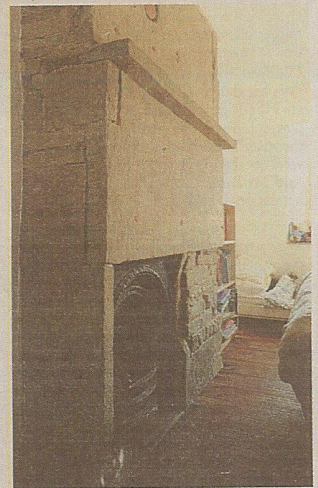
"It's a microcosm of everything I do and every detail and every little trick I've learnt over the years," says Nick "I know how to design and I've always understood the construction process but this project has taught me a lot more.

"It's taught me how long a job can take, but most of all it's taught me about cost," says Nick, who is now planning his side extension, which will create a double-fronted property.

"That will be built as a near Passiv Haus construction of deep wall super insulated timber frame wrapped up in local reclaimed stone and slate," he says.

"It will show how truly modern living and build techniques can be cost effectively integrated into our stock of period cottage dwellings."

■ Nick Middley Design Associates: 07711 182313, or 01422 255818 www.architecturegroup.co.uk



EXPOSED: A gas fire covered a bricked up open fire that Nick has exposed, top. The original fireplace Nick found during the work.