



LEFT The lime green units emphasise William and Juliette Tunnell's determination that their kitchen should be a modern, functional affair rather than a slavishly old-fashioned design that might be deemed more in keeping with their house. RIGHT The wall between the kitchen and the dining room is actually a panel which can be folded out of the way to create an open-plan space or closed over to separate the two rooms. ABOVE The couple's South Queensferry home viewed from the street



ABOVE The access to the terraced garden through the kitchen is a masterpiece of engineering that leaves visitors puzzling about what's holding it up. RIGHT The deck is a glorious suntrap with beautiful views over the Firth of Forth

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William Tunnell has a confession to make. He finally understands what it's like to be on the other side of the drawing board as a major architectural project gets underway. "In retrospect I can see how extreme it was," he admits as he stands surveying the results of his latest refurbishment job. "But I think, as an architect, it's good to go through that process when you expect clients to do the same."

That philosophy is only part of the reason he decided to transform the inside of his South Queensferry home. The process he is describing would make most building project virgins blanch. It all started innocently enough in 1999 when William and his wife Juliette, a university lecturer, first viewed the three-storey C-listed property, set back off the main street in an elevated terrace of houses, each as individual and charming as the last. "I've always felt a necessity to see the sea," William says vaguely when asked what attracted him to the property, and South Queensferry offers a prime ocean view, nestling on the edge of the Firth of Forth, framed by the road bridge on one side and the rail bridge on the other.

The house had been split into two properties at some point, and the inside was, William recalls, "a guddle of rooms, particularly on the lower level." Yet the couple knew immediately that they wanted to buy it. "The house had a lovely feel; you could tell it was a place that people had enjoyed living in."

The building was constructed in the 18th century as a single-storey structure between two existing gables. The top floor was added later, which explains why the upper and lower windows are different sizes, and the walls different thicknesses. "It's grown organically over the years, which was typical of a building of this type in what was a highly populated ferry port," William explains. People moved out of the area during the Second World War because the Forth Rail Bridge was under threat of being bombed (indeed, on the first-floor landing hangs a framed aerial reconnaissance photograph taken by the Luftwaffe, proving that the locals weren't being too wary), and the house was apparently used by the military police during this time.

Needless to say, the building fell into a state of disrepair. Subsequent owners tried refurbishment with varying degrees of success, and the house itself was fairly sound by the time William and Juliette moved in, but there was still a lot of work to be done. "The further down the building you went, >



the stronger a vision was needed for what it could be," says William. The couple lived in the house for four months before starting work, during which period William's plans for his new home changed substantially. "Any design improves given time," he says, "but I also found more efficient ways of doing the work after having more accurate surveys."

What followed can only be described as back-breaking. The entire lower level of the property was gutted—at one point, the floors above were being held up by twenty props. "The dust was horrendous," Juliette recalls, "because of course it just sifted up through the floors." Not as horrendous as it was downstairs in the basement, however, where William was working alongside the builders to lug every lump of stone, old plaster and wood up the terraced garden to the skip at the top. Quite a workout, yet he relished the challenge having rebuilt a croft on the Western Isle of Col in his student days. "I enjoy making and doing in the same way as I enjoy drawing," he says.

Juliette, who was by this stage pregnant with the couple's first child, Talitha, admits, "Having never done anything like this before, I entered into it quite happily without realising what it was all about!"

Talitha is now three years old, her sister Fionn has just turned one, and much has changed in the Tunnell household. The interior is by turns charming and surprising. The lower level now contains the >

LEFT AND ABOVE The dining room pictured with the false wall in place to separate it off from the kitchen area William based his design on the original interior and on other buildings in the area to create an authentic paneled look

dining room to the front with the kitchen at the rear along with the family bathroom, while the first floor has two bedrooms along with a tiny office for William, soon to be replaced by a studio space at the top of the garden that will offer a stunning vista across the Forth. Meanwhile, the main living space on the upper floor offers a dual aspect to the front and rear, the latter spanning the height of the garden.

Throughout the house William has combined the tradition and history of the building with the needs of a modern living space. The lower level displays the most striking juxtaposition of old and new as one enters the dining room to find tongue-and-groove wood paneled walls, antique furniture and framed antique maps. The paneling replicates some original boarding that was still in place. "It was a combination of matching and historical guesswork," says William, "although many shops in the area have retained similar paneling so it was original to the area as much as to the house itself."

The access to the kitchen is ingenious. One section of paneled "wall" in the dining room folds back to create an open-plan dining and kitchen space, with the contemporary style of the latter working to counterbalance the period feel in the former. "Kitchens have changed so much with technology that an 'olde worlde' design seems wholeheartedly inappropriate for today's use," says William. He created >

RIGHT The bedroom is a picture of serenity; the painting is by Josep Pla. William made the cherry wood bed himself. BELOW Cherry wood detailing is carried into the bathroom



LEFT (top to bottom) The open bookshelf design helps link the octave walls of the staircase with the cool blue living room, tying the upper level in to the rest of the house; the living room has views to the front and back of the building; William has restored some period features, such as the paneling in the hall, without getting too caught up in historical detail

house gives, but doesn't view it as a showcase," he reflects. "It's a house for living in, so she pushes me for things to be easier, especially with the kids."

The middle level again hints at the building's character in the wood-paneled landing. The couple have used this space to display their collection of photos. The kids' bedroom is a riot of colour and toys while the master bedroom offers a calm counterbalance with white walls, a solid cherry wood bed which William made himself, and a suitably serene seascape painting by the Catalan artist Josep Pla.

Heading to the top floor, one gets a glimpse of the main living space from the narrow stairwell through a wall of bookshelves with openings on both sides. "I wanted to draw attention to the fact that the space goes beyond this room," says William of the unusual shelving solution. "It felt quite linear beforehand with your eye drawn to the windows, but this gives it another dimension." The ochre of the stairwell glows through the open shelves as a warm contrast to the cool blue of the shelving and window seat, colours William decided to keep from the property's previous incarnation as a nod to its past life. He did strip out the existing, rather dominant fireplace, however, rendering instead a simple surround that blends into the white walls.

"In terms of the way we live, we use every space," says William, "but the spaces I enjoy most are the garden and living room. They're good for the soul. I was consciously trying to balance the number of calm, adult spaces with those that are more visually stimulating."

The garden alone was a mammoth task thanks to its steep slope, yet the couple use it now as an extended living zone with a large decked terrace near the top and a lower stone terrace that acts as a sun trap. "When the studio is built, the interior space will evolve again," William reflects. "Initially we didn't imagine being here longer than five years, but, of course, we love this house so much we can't imagine moving."

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TUNNELLVISION

Architect William Tunnell knew exactly what he wanted when he started renovating his own house. But his wife's input and his inspirational surroundings have resulted in a very different look