



'Who wouldn't want to come and stay?'

Gethin Chamberlain and Carolynn Shaw have transformed The Five Turrets in Selkirk into a unique holiday let

Words **Nichola Hunter**
Photographs **Gethin Chamberlain**

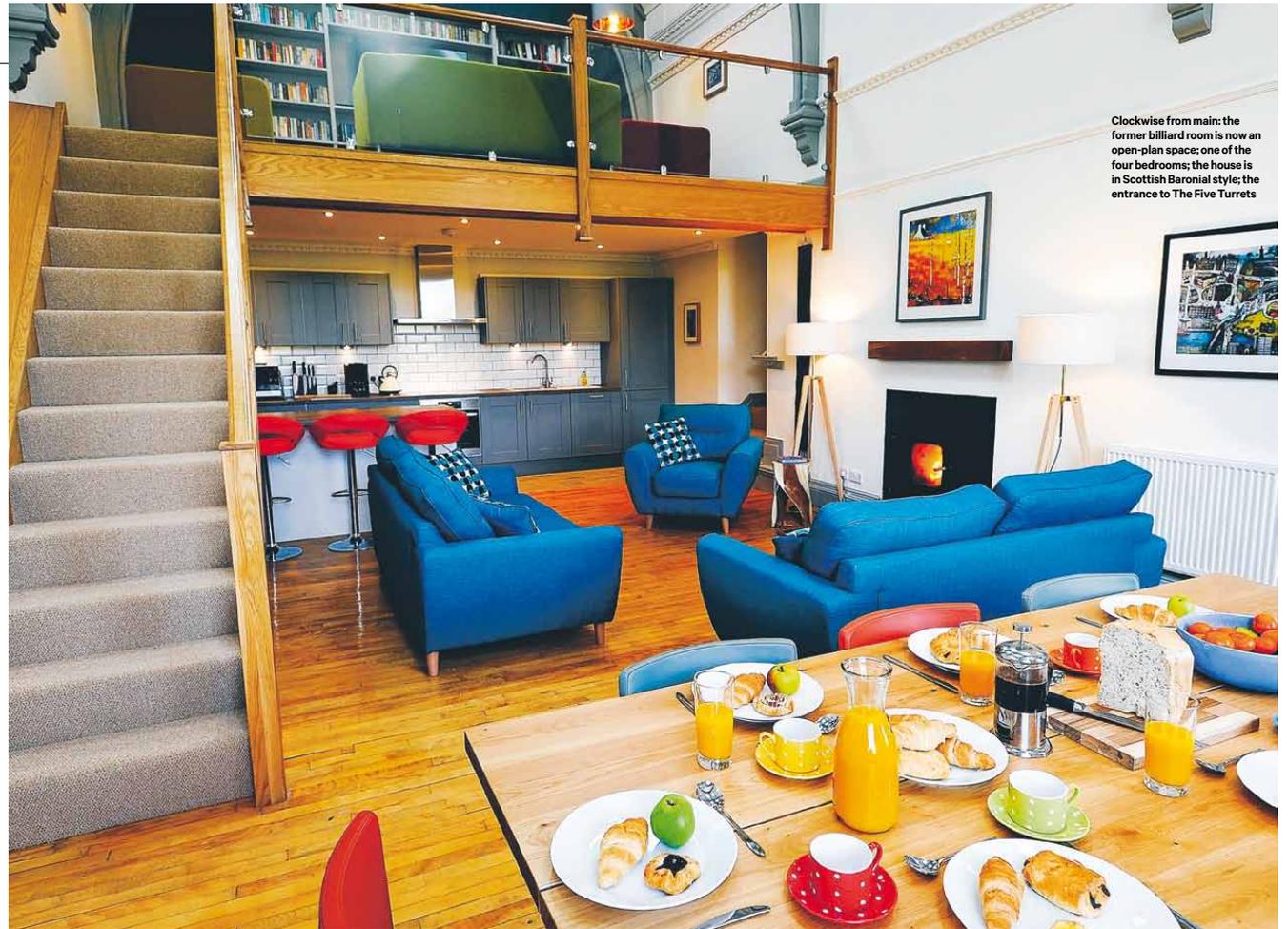
When Gethin Chamberlain and Carolynn Shaw bought The Five Turrets, it gave them the opportunity to indulge their love of colour with impressive results.

Journalist Gethin had been based in Scotland for the past four years and he and Carolynn have their family home in Selkirk.

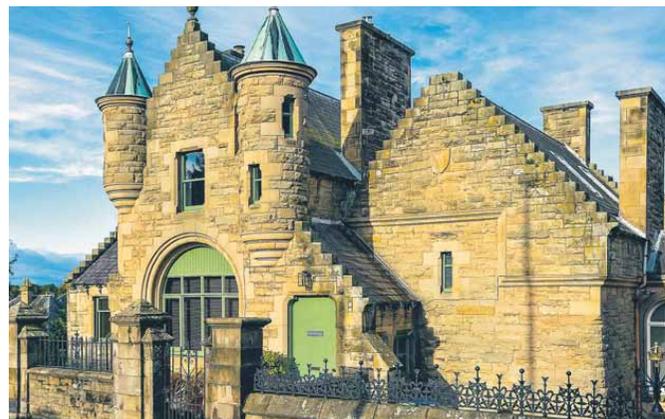
"I'd been looking around for something to subsidise my work," says Gethin. "Bang opposite where we live is an extraordinary building – The Five Turrets. I was sitting in the garden one day and realised a For Sale sign had gone up. I crossed the road, had a chat with the owner and we agreed on a price and that was it. It all happened very quickly."

The property had a complex history which explains its unique exterior. "Next door to it is Ettrick Lodge, a pretty imposing building which was built by a local mill owner in the 1800s. The architecture owes a lot to Walter Scott, who was the sheriff in Selkirk and kickstarted the Scottish Baronial style with his home at Abbotsford near Melrose. When work started on the new sheriff court building up the road, the owner of Ettrick Lodge liked the style, hired the architect and added to Ettrick Lodge what is now The Five Turrets."

Since then, however, The Five Turrets has endured hard times. "Over the years it's been renovated and slipped back and renovated again and slipped back," says Gethin. "By the late 1970s it was in quite a state of disrepair and a local builder took it



Clockwise from main: the former billiard room is now an open-plan space; one of the four bedrooms; the house is in Scottish Baronial style; the entrance to The Five Turrets





☞ You walk into this extraordinary space in the heart of the building which takes your breath away ☞



Above: strong colours feature in all the bedrooms. Below: the kitchen/living space



on and chopped it up into individual apartments."

The original property was three storeys high with a coach house, servants' quarters, coach yard, stabling for horses and a billiard room which took up all of what is now the main living space.

"It's very unusual from the outside but as you enter there is a lovely arched window, which is the original one from the coach house, and then you walk into this extraordinary space in the heart of the building which takes your breath away," says Gethin. "The windows overlook the Ettrick Valley and it's amazing. I think that was what convinced us to go down the holiday let route. Who wouldn't want to come and stay here?"

The building was, however, in need of an update when Gethin and Carolyne took it over. "It was very much of its time in terms of décor – an avocado bathroom suite, a fantastic, painted rainbow across one of the kids' bedroom walls and lots of dark brown woodwork. However, it did have three bedrooms and the existing kitchen was exactly the right shape to make into a fourth. The former billiard room was screaming out to become an open-plan kitchen/living space and that's what we decided to do."

While the mezzanine had already been created, it was accessed by a rather flimsy, wooden spindle staircase. "The first time I leant on it, it bowed out, which was quite terrifying seeing how high the mezzanine is. That was quickly replaced with a glass and oak staircase which made it a lot safer and also instantly brightened up the space.

"Our idea behind the décor was to go with one strong colour in each of the bedrooms to add interest," says Gethin. "I think the mustard shade was when it started to spiral into a slightly wilder palette. We were quite restrained until we did that room, but I do really like it. When it came to furniture, we looked around for bright, eye-catching pieces.

"You can go two ways with a building like this. You can stick some stags' heads on the walls and cover it in tartan, but there are a lot of places like that and we

wanted to offer something different and we hoped there would be a market for people who like something quirkier. I think there are a lot of people who want the chance to stay somewhere different to their own place. They want a bit of glamour and that's what we provide."

The property is certainly photogenic, including the entrance hall, which has a white piano sharing the stage with some wildly coloured chairs and a matching chandelier. "It was an entrance lobby that we didn't know what to do with, so we thought we'd put in the piano, create somewhere to sit and read and make it a usable space. It's a nice welcome to the place and when you look at the chandelier it sets the tone of the property and what you can expect.

"The chairs are old Parker Knoll armchairs. They belonged to my mother-in-law who died in 2017 and my wife wanted to hang on to them. They were recovered by a friend of Carolyne's – Susannah Love – and they're just fantastic. The piano came from the Victoria Hall just up the road. They were getting rid of some things and we got it for free and I painted it white."

Leading off from the piano room, there are two bedrooms, a boot room and the main shower room. A staircase leads to a further two bedrooms and bathroom, with the mustard bedroom having its own accessible turret.

The big room now accommodates a kitchen, dining and living area, which is Gethin's favourite part of the house. "It could have been quite austere, but I think with our colour choices and the different types of lighting that we've installed it's really warm and inviting. This is different from our own home, but it's been fun to do something a bit bolder. I've never done anything like this before. I've seen *Grand Designs* but that only takes an hour! I said we'd be done by Christmas and we were – just the wrong Christmas."

The Five Turrets is available to let from July to October through www.cottages.com, tel: 0345 498 6900, and through its own website, www.fiveturrets.com, for the rest of the year.