



# GRAND DESIGN

*An essay in calm modernism – with an old water tower at its core*



**T**he Harris family purchased the grade II-listed Lymm Water Tower six years ago, with the aim of making a contribution to local heritage by rescuing a derelict building, while creating a design-led, minimalist family home of the future. They have worked tirelessly, through complex negotiations and spiralling budgets, to bring the project to fruition. Working with their third team of architects, they finally got the conversion underway in 2002, and they moved into their new home in the autumn of last year.

The 130-year-old landmark is of special architectural and historical interest, and the aim throughout the project has been to blend a stunning contemporary design with the building's traditional features, resulting in simple, powerful detailing. Designed by one of Britain's leading architects, a wrap-around extension follows the shape of the octagonal tower, while making allowances for the mature trees which surround the site.

Changes in level define the roles of the various spaces, which are cleverly arranged to catch the natural light as the sun tracks daily

from one side of the tower to the other. Rising on the kitchen and early morning spaces, the sun sets on the dining and evening spaces. The summer lounge sits in the middle, facing due south, while the vast panels of low-energy structural glass in the façade allow these spaces a sensory contact with nature and the seasons.

All the surfaces of the building are white – even the floor is a white resin. Colour is added by lighting, but there are very few light fittings as such, with almost all lighting being indirect and concealed. To achieve this took a huge effort, since the more you reduce and eliminate unnecessary clutter, the more exacting your standards have to be. What is left is put into sharp focus and so has to be perfect.

Lymm Water Tower has become an essay in calm modernism. The new works with the old, and has the feel and appearance of quality ➔

**Opposite:** looking across the water feature to the kitchen at the back of the house.

**Above:** the summer lounge is dominated by two large red sofas and a superb central fireplace.

**Left:** the contemporary building has been wrapped around the original water tower.



**Above:** the kitchen is completely white and handleless, with the central island being a block of solid white Corian – An advanced blend of natural materials and pure acrylic polymer by DuPont..

**Opposite:** another view of the huge summer lounge.

due to the careful use of materials. The garden looks out over the rolling Cheshire countryside, and is surrounded by mature beech, oak and lime trees, a number of which are up-lit. A haw-haw forms the boundary and the garden is simple: black gravel, black, hard paving, grassed areas and minimal planting, mainly bamboo. A 70 square-metre black, circular dining patio is a dominant feature.

A hardwood-decked space adjacent to the kitchen, a water feature in the form of a shallow black reflection pool, and bamboo features make for a Zen-like space which is completely enclosed in white rendered walls and benefits from fantastic early morning light producing

wonderful reflections of the water tower in the pool.

The winter lounge is a modern, minimal snug. The centre of the space is covered with wide-board oak flooring, surrounded by a white resin plinth. A curving cone wall wraps itself around this space. The furniture is simple: two modular, low Italian sofas and a low white table form the centre point, with two dramatic lights hanging from the ceiling on either side. Lighting is varied, with much of it hidden and discrete. Images are projected onto a large cinemascope curved wall.

Descending into the summer lounge, the views through the glass doors across the ➤➤





**Above:** the winter lounge with low Italian sofas and table and a wide-board oak floor.

**Below left:** the en suite to the master bedroom, with the bath sitting on oak blocks on a raised plinth of limestone, and looking out through a large floor-to-ceiling windows.

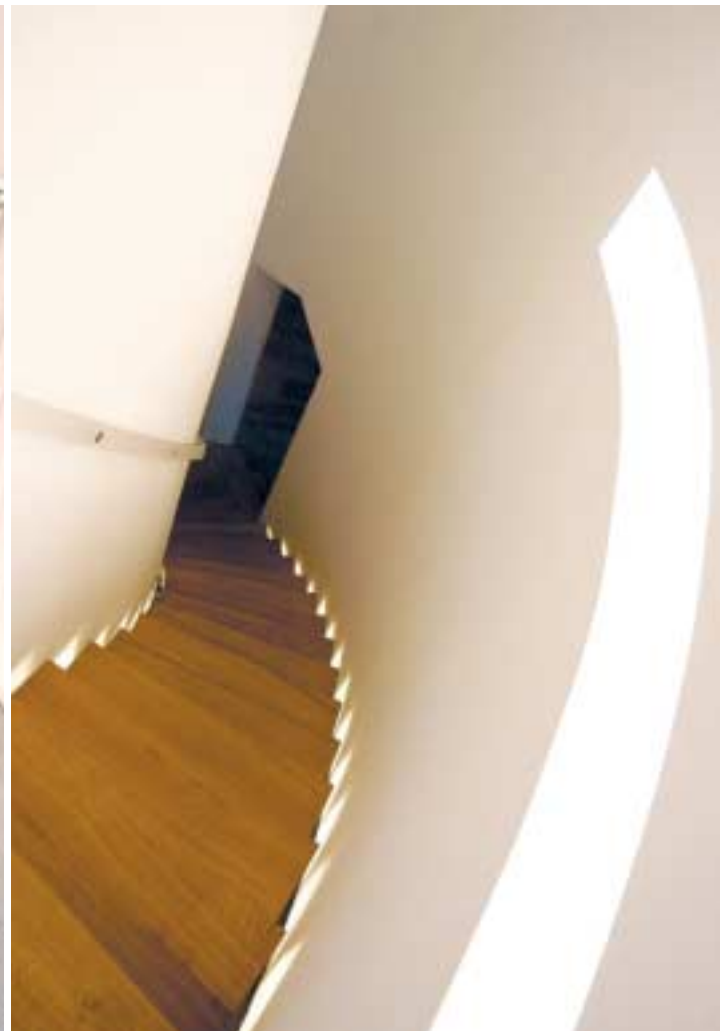
**Below right:** the main staircase contours around the water tower.

garden to the fields beyond are breathtaking. With its white resin floor, this space forms the heart of the open-plan ground floor. The furniture consists simply of two red sofas facing each other across a low table. The wood-burning fire, a work of art in itself, is the focus of the space, hanging centrally in front of the glazed walls that separate the room from the garden.

A large round white table sits centrally in this double-height space,

surrounded by eight Italian-suede swivel chairs. Above is a wall of glass blocks that can be illuminated from behind with coloured lights.

Looking out onto the water feature, the kitchen is a double-height space with gallery above. It is white, completely without handles, and with the central island being block of solid white Corian. The high window of curtain wall glazing looks out across the garden and the Cheshire countryside. Behind the =>







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**This page:** one of the water tower's bedrooms, which has a low, modern bed which sits against a backlit headboard. Behind this is an en suite (inset).





**Above left:** the open-plan kitchen are thick-frosted glass wooden staircase which leads up to the roof space.

**Above right:** the view down onto the garden.

**Below:** Lymm Water Tower ancient and modern.

The mezzanine bathroom floats over one of the bedrooms. Its bath sits on oak blocks, the twin basins on an Iroko table. The pan and walk-in shower are set on floors of Portland limestone and travertine mosaic, and lighting is sensitively installed throughout.

On the roof of the original tower is a hardwood-decked space which has 360-degree views across Cheshire, Lancashire and beyond, and Manchester can be clearly seen a

few miles away. The old tower turret rises a further 20 feet, looming over the roof garden, which has a selection of large plants surrounding a solid teak Japanese hot-tub, dining table, chairs and two sun-loungers.

The owners of this unique example of wraparound modernism are happy to make their house available for photo-shoots and commercials. Contact Russell and Jannette Harris at Lymm Water Tower on 01925 750190 or visit their website at [www.lymmtower.com](http://www.lymmtower.com) 