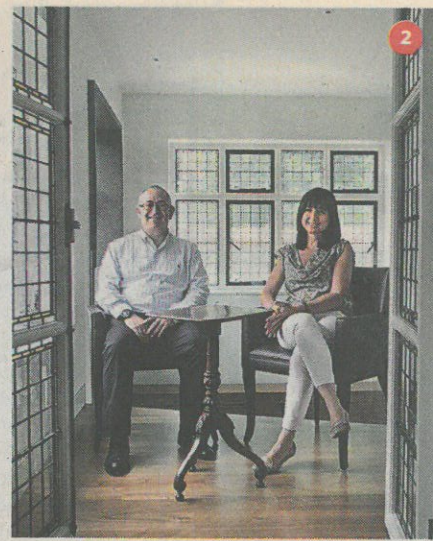


ON LOCATION
LONDON



1. An 1880s stone house in Hampstead and its twin chimneys had the "indescribable wow factor" that Daniel and Gaynor Harris were looking for. "I smile every time I see those chimneys," Mr. Harris said.

2. The Harris had spent 20 years raising their daughters in a home outside the city and were ready for a change. They replaced most of their country-style furniture and Impressionist art with modern furniture and art that are better suited to the new house.

3. A small alcove holds a sculpture by Lorenzo Quinn. The red chair is from Cassina.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK KANE; NOS. 2, 7 AND 8, NICK KANE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Downsizing, Gone Big



The goal: a smaller empty nest. Does 9,000 square feet, two chimneys and a gazebo count? (And the kids won't leave.)

By STEVEN KURUTZ

Daniel Harris and his wife, Gaynor, were looking for a home in London with something extra. They sought it in St. John's Wood. They hunted for it in Hampstead. Budget was not an impediment, since Mr. Harris, 53, was chief executive of his family's consumer electronics business. Still, no house they saw delivered the goods.

"Most places lacked sufficient personality," he said recently, by telephone from London. "They were nice, but they didn't have the indescribable wow factor that made you say, 'I want to live there.'"

In the end, they found the wow at Klippan House, an immense red stone home in Hampstead that they bought three years ago for \$17 million. (Wow.) It was built in the 1880s as a single-family residence by Ewan Christian, the architect who designed the National Portrait Gallery in London. Twin chimneys poke heavenward from the roof, an effect that is ecclesiastical, and unique.

"I smile every time I see those chimneys," Mr. Harris said. "I've never seen another chimney like them."

The Harrises had spent 20 years raising their two daughters in a modern home in Radlett, a village outside the city.

"We built the house and designed every aspect of it," Mr. Harris said. Then he clarified: "More accurately, my wife designed every aspect of it, and I just moved in."

Now that their children were grown, they wanted to move into the city and downsize. With Klippan House, which sits across from Hampstead Heath, one of the great parklands in London, they achieved half their goal. But despite the four-story home's monumental footprint and nearly 9,700 square feet, the couple fell in love with its architectural details and spacious grounds, which offer a bit of the privacy they enjoyed in the countryside.

And with the guidance of an architect, Shahriar Nasser (and another \$4.5 million in renovation costs), the Harrises embarked on an extensive and complicated overhaul to transform the chopped-up Victorian-era interior into an unexpectedly modern, open, light-filled space.



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Selectively preserved details retain a sense of history. Kitchen appliances and cabinets are hidden behind a slick wall unit, for example, but the wood ceiling was refurbished to add warmth. And in an alcove off the entryway, a modern sculpture stands in front of original windows that still have lines of poetry by John Keats that someone etched into them.

Mr. Harris's favorite spot is the library, which incorporates the original brick exterior wall into a great gallery-like room with Basaltina stone floors and a windowed ceiling that offers views of the tree tops.

"Coming from a village, I wanted something that feels like you don't have neighbors," Mr. Harris said. "Because the windows face upwards, you get that quiet and



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4. The fireplace in the living room is made of Basaltina stone. The couches are from B & B Italia.

5. In the kitchen, Boffi appliances are hidden behind a Zebra wood cabinet. The original timber ceiling was retained and refurbished.

6. Chairs from B & B Italia add color to the library. The original brick exterior wall has been incorporated into the cantilevered addition.

7. The house was previously divided into three apartments. One of the trickiest parts of the renovation was opening up dark, gloomy interior spaces like the main staircase. The photographs on the wall are of Marilyn Monroe.

8. The master bedroom has a traditional feeling, with hardwood floors and windows original to the home. The small table and chairs in the corner are nearly all that remain of the couple's furniture from their previous home. The painting is by Jeffrey Kroll.

9. The architect designed an enclosed gazebo in the garden. "In the unlikely event that you get a sunny day in England," Mr. Harris joked, "you can do a barbecue."

isolation."

One downside of moving into a house with this much wow is that furniture from the old house no longer works. Two wooden chairs, a table and a few framed pieces of art in the master bedroom "are all that remains of Radlett," Mr. Harris said. Out with the country-style wood furniture and Impressionist art, in with modern art, boxy leather couches and colorful chairs from B & B Italia to fit the stark white interiors.

Another downside of achieving wow:

Grown children won't want to leave home.

The couple converted the top floor of what was to be their empty-nest residence into an apartment for one daughter, who is studying to be a doctor; their other daughter lives at home, too.

Mr. Harris wryly noted the difference between teenage and adult children.

"They're not sitting around on their bedroom floor anymore," he said. "They want the library or the cinema room just as much as we do."