



### Family style

Charlotte and Rob Lawson found the perfect family apartment with plenty of space and natural light for Charlotte to run her floristry business from home.

house fact file



**THE PROPERTY**  
A ground-floor apartment in a 19th-century tenement flat in a conservation area of West Glasgow. Charlotte and Rob Lawson live here with their children, Greta, 3, and Frida, 11 months.

**BEDROOMS**  
Two.

**BATHROOMS**  
One.

**RENOVATIONS MADE** The flat was rewired and replumbed, and central heating was fitted. New kitchen and bathroom fittings were added. Decorated throughout.

**BUYING COST**  
£275,000 in 2006.

**RENOVATION COSTS** £20,000.

**NOW WORTH**  
£350,000.

# Natural harmony

Charlotte Lawson complemented the period features of her Victorian tenement flat with soothing colours to create a relaxed look

FEATURE LOUISE O'BRYAN PHOTOGRAPHS HOLLY JOLLIFFE

**F**our years ago, Charlotte and Rob Lawson moved from London to Glasgow for a fresh start. Having both left behind very busy jobs, the couple embarked on new and exciting careers; Charlotte as a florist and Rob as a primary school teacher. For the first six months the couple rented a flat in the west of the city while they found their feet. 'We fell in love with the area while we were renting, so decided to buy something here,' says Charlotte.

They didn't have to look very far as a flat came up for sale on the road they were already living on. 'Period properties in this area sell extremely quickly because of their charm and big proportions. The flat had just come back on the market when we saw it. Our agent knew we were very keen buyers, having recently had other deals fall through, so he contacted us before

it was advertised. As we were the only buyers in the running, the process went through quickly and smoothly.'

### A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The previous owner had lived in the property for 50 years and had hardly updated the interior, so Charlotte and Rob had a lot of work ahead of them. 'We fell in love with the huge rooms, large windows and the fabulous old features, and although it needed total renovation, we could see its potential for becoming a wonderful family home.'

The couple moved in straight away and made a start on the renovation work. Their main priorities were to get the flat rewired and central heating added. The kitchen and bathroom were in a bad condition, and rotting joints were found beneath the bath. Both rooms were replastered and replumbed, and fitted with new fixtures. »

A dining table from Burnt Toast (0781 552 7110, burnttoastdesign.co.uk) gives Charlotte plenty of space to create her floral displays.

GET THE LOOK  
Page 72



**RIGHT** The leather sofa came from Barker and Stonehouse (0844 420 4220, barkerandstonehouse.co.uk). The green floor lamp is from Habitat (0844 499 4686, habitat.co.uk).

**FAR RIGHT** Bold red shelving units from Ikea (0845 355 1141, ikea.co.uk) give the classic living room a modern twist and provide plenty of storage for the family's toys and books.



## Home working

'I definitely have a better work-life balance since setting up Lotte & Bloom. I do miss working alongside other people and the daily goings on of the florist shop; however, having my own clients and being able to have total creative freedom over my displays is fantastic. I'm not planning to open a shop as I find the passing trade too restricting for the sort of floral displays that I like to create. Instead, I'm thinking about expanding the business into a flower school and holding one-day lessons here at the apartment. That would allow me to interact with more people and continue to practice my own floristry style.'



## 'I love being surrounded by period features that are steeped in history'

'We lived with bare plaster and floorboards for a while so we could get used to each room and decide how to decorate. However, I fell pregnant not long after we moved in so we had to work quickly to get everything completed before the baby arrived. I was still decorating just a few weeks before my due date.'

### WORK LIFE

When the couple's first daughter, Greta, arrived, Charlotte gave up her job at a florists to look after her. 'It was while I was looking after Greta that I decided to make the most of my new floristry skills by working from home. It also meant that I could earn a

living without needing to put her into a nursery. I started creating displays for private and corporate clients, and large events, such as weddings. I really enjoy the creative freedom that comes with working for yourself.'

The tall windows and generous proportions of the dining room make it an ideal space for Charlotte to put together her floral displays. She finds that the room inspires her relaxed and nostalgic floristry style. It is the only room that Charlotte and Rob have not redecorated, choosing instead to leave its original Anaglypta and flocked wallpaper in place.

Charlotte collects vintage vases from local secondhand shops and

antiques markets to display her flowers in. 'I've always been interested in vintage vases and glassware. Fortunately, Rob likes the look too, so our apartment is a mix of quirky vintage finds and modern items. My floristry style has definitely been influenced by my love of all things old.'

### HIDDEN FEATURES

Charlotte and Rob uncovered a wealth of period features that had been boarded up around the apartment, some with newspapers from the 1940s tucked inside them. 'We particularly loved the wall coverings and colours in the dining room and didn't want to change them. I love working at the dining table and being surrounded by features that are steeped in history.'

Charlotte continuously experiments with new floral arrangements and likes to display them around the apartment. »



**RIGHT** The couple were attracted to the apartment's original features, such as the Victorian pantry. They painted the shelves white and added a bold blue wallpaper from Cole & Son (020 7376 4628, cole-and-son.com) for a quirky touch. The dresser, which Charlotte found at The Salvation Army, brings a homely feel to the kitchen and prevents the white scheme from feeling cold.



**BELOW** Freestanding stainless steel units from Habitat (0844 499 4686, habitat.co.uk) give the kitchen an industrial feel. Vintage glass vases filled with roses demonstrate how Charlotte displays her work in both traditional and contemporary settings.



## 'We've used a lot of natural colours to tie schemes across different rooms together'

'I always put a floral display in every room of the apartment. Flowers and plants bring a calming feel to a space and can set a certain mood or tone. I also like to have empty vases out on show as I think they make interesting displays in themselves.'

### A CALM BALANCE

The entire apartment has been decorated to create a relaxed mood. Earthy colours bring a cosy feel to the living room and the bedrooms, and peaceful shades of green form a soothing scheme in the bathroom. 'We wanted each room to flow into the next, so we've used a lot of natural colours to tie the schemes together.'



The round dining table is from Ikea (0845 355 1141, ikea.co.uk). The original floorboards are painted in Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe Eggshell (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com).

In the kitchen Charlotte and Rob chose freestanding units to create a laid-back layout, centred around a modern dining table with traditional wooden chairs. Open shelves built into the wall above the sink are useful for keeping everyday essentials close to hand. The couple painted the original floorboards a warm shade of grey to soften the fresh white walls and industrial-style steel cupboards.

Storage is an extremely important factor in maintaining a balanced feel between work and family life around the apartment. 'The fireplaces and shelves in the living room have become storage areas as well as being used as visual displays for my vases.'

The spacious dining room has plenty of storage for Charlotte's floristry equipment. 'I have a lot of kit, including pins and scissors, that needs to be kept safely hidden from the children. The dining room can go from florist studio to serene family space in half an hour by tidying everything away into the large built-in cupboards.'

Charlotte says being able to clear away her work easily at the end of the day allows her to enjoy family life in a tranquil home. 'Working from home does have an element of never escaping from your work as you're reminded of your deadlines, but I can't complain - who wouldn't want to be surrounded by beautiful flowers every day?' **GH**

### INTERIOR INSPIRATION

'I have a make-do-and-mend attitude to decoration. I love being able to breathe new life into old pieces that I find in junk shops, or customise them for a totally new look. I think that quirky furniture gives rooms more character, particularly when teamed with new pieces, and can make a space instantly look interesting. I gave the glass cabinet in the dining room a fresh look by painting it grey and decorating the inside with maps for a quirky finish. I re-upholstered the chair in the girls' bedroom with fabric from Laura Ashley.'



A knitted throw found in a French market brings a vintage feel to the couple's bedroom. Bold curtains from Laura Ashley (0871 983 5999, lauraashley.com) add a touch of elegance.

