

IN BRIEF

PROJECT Remodel & first floor extension
LOCATION Isle of Skye
COST £190,000 in 2017
SPENT £150,000
Worth £350,000+



SEA & SKYE

This incredible property stands on the easterly shore of the Isle of Skye and mirrors the local black-clad farm buildings.

STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY PHOTOGRAPHY: UNIQUE HOME STAYS

Michelle Clancy and Barry Hilliard had already made up their minds to buy the modest bungalow they were going to view on the Isle of Skye before even setting eyes on the small pebble-dashed building. As they drove down the long single-track mountain road, which is the highest on Skye, a breathtaking panorama of sea and mountains stretched out ahead which made them determined to buy the property, no matter what.

“We’d enjoyed holidays on Skye and had been looking for a small and manageable holiday home there for some time, but weren’t really sure what we wanted,” says Michelle, who viewed numerous

EXTERIOR
 Built to blend with its surroundings, Kyn mimics the buildings which dot the hills and crofts of Skye. The huge windows offer views of sea and mountains.





The floorplan

The 67 sqm ground floor is mainly open plan with a large kitchen/dining/living space and a separate bathroom to meet Scottish Building Regulations. Upstairs, the 52 sqm loft was converted into two new bedrooms and a shower room.



The build

Built in 2007, the original bungalow was in a poor state of repair. The dwelling was stripped back to a shell, with the footprint reconfigured to make the most of the views. New flooring, insulation, plasterboard, heating, doors and windows have been installed.



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potential properties. For us it was more about the location and view than the house.”

Skye is the second largest of Scotland’s islands, boasting a 50-mile stretch of dramatic sea cliffs, glittering lochs, heather-cloaked moors and craggy mountains. Situated on the island’s south-easterly shore, overlooking the Five Sisters of Kintail and the Kylerhea Straits, the bungalow was being sold with two acres of land. The enormous skies and dramatic sea vistas ensured that Michelle and Barry were instantly smitten with the location, which is also renowned for its wildlife.

“Margaret, the elderly previous owner and lifelong Kylerhea resident, had owned the croft land on which the house sits for more than 50 years, having inherited it from her father,” says Michelle. “In 2006 she applied to de-croft part of the land and build a house there. This is a fairly long and torturous process as the Crofting Commission which decides on such applications is reluctant to lose crofting land to development, but as Margaret had been a crofter all her adult life the commission granted the application quite quickly.”

Built in 2007, the rudimentary property was in a poor state of repair for its age, and everything seemed half finished. Only the ground floor of the dormer bungalow was habitable and contained a warren of small rooms.

“It was quite a basic structure, and although the loft was boarded out there was no staircase – just a small kitchen, a living room, a tiny bedroom and a huge bathroom on the ground floor,” says Michelle.



Michelle and Barry's top tip
 "Expect the unexpected and budget accordingly!"

"Due to poor health, Margaret had decided to move to live on the mainland and sell the property. We wanted to use it as a holiday home, which meant we couldn't buy the attached croft land because we're based in Cornwall and don't live close enough to cultivate the land."

Margaret therefore retained ownership of the croft and the couple purchased the decrofted land where the house sits. Michelle and Barry, who are both criminal defence solicitors with three children – Orla, 12, Erin, 11, and Lorcan, 8 – began to contact local architects to discuss how best to remodel and extend the property, both for their own family use and to rent out as a holiday cottage.

They chose to work with Tansy Grigor-Taylor, a chartered architect based on Skye with more than 20 years experience working throughout Scotland. Her starting point for the design was to take the architectural vernacular of Skye farm buildings and sheds to deliver a modern, yet sympathetic, building that would sit comfortably within the croft. The design mirrors the black-clad farm buildings found across the island and a simple palette of materials, including wood and tin, was used to reflect this aesthetic.

"We didn't extend the footprint of the original house because we hoped to work with the existing space as far as possible," says Michelle. "There was already planning permission to convert the loft into three bedrooms



KITCHEN

The bespoke oak kitchen was handmade in a small workshop in Cornwall before being transported by van to Skye.



IN DETAIL

PROJECT

Architect Grigor-Taylor Associates: grigor-taylorassociates.co.uk
Builder Belladrum Homes Ltd: 07703 488288

STRUCTURE

Insulation Kingspan: Kingspan.com
Steel DMH Blacksmiths Ltd, Inverness: 01463 233736
Timber Highland Industrial Supplies, Inverness: hisltd.co.uk
Siberian larch cladding MGM Timber: mgmtimber.co.uk
Decking Rembrandt: rembrandt.co
Roof windows Velux: velux.co.uk
Pumped water system and storage GRC Aquatech: 01464 820107
Poppy red corrugated roofing Steadmans: steadmans.co.uk

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Kitchen Out of wood: outofwood.co.uk
Kitchen brass taps & Belfast sink Perrin and Rowe: perrinandrowe.co.uk
Occasional chairs Nordic House: nordichouse.co.uk
Internal lighting, hanging planters Tom Raffield: tomraffield.com
Brass kitchen wall lights Jim Lawrence: jim-lawrence.co.uk
External lighting, dining table & chairs Garden Trading: gardentrading.co.uk
Solid oak wide plank floor Wood and Beyond: woodandbeyond.com
Sisal carpet Naked Flooring: nakedflooring.co.uk
Beds Loaf: loaf.com

Shower room Lusso Stone: lussostone.com

Wall & floor tiles, teak bench, washstand Fired Earth: firedearth.com
Towel rails, mirrors, accessories Rowen & Wren: rowenandwren.co.uk
Whirlpool bath Whirlpool Bath Company: whirlpoolbathcompany.co.uk
Table lamps, bedroom chair Graham and Green: grahamandgreen.co.uk
Bedroom mirrors House Doctor: housedoctor.com

Ash & walnut bench Another Country: anothercountry.com

Wardrobe rails & hangers Skagerak: skagerak.dk
Sofa Habitat: habitat.co.uk
Living room rug The White Company: thewhitecompany.com
Wall-mounted oak media cabinet

Holloways of Ludlow: hollowaysofludlow.com
Living room side table Heals: heals.com

Sheepskin & hide rugs Skye Skyns: skyeskyns.co.uk

Fumed oak porch swing Old North Designs, Tennessee: oldnorthdesigns.com

Garden table & chairs Crocus: crocus.co.uk

Accessories, cushions, throws, ornaments & art: housecurious.com, anothercountry.com, Skagerak.dk
Fire Rais: rais.com

Kyn is available for holiday rental with Unique Home Stays: uniquehomestays.com

LIVING AREA

Solid oak wide-plank flooring was laid throughout the open-plan living space, which is divided from the kitchen by a partial wall, inset with a minimal wood-burning stove.

and a shower, but we just didn't think that the space allowed for this, so we submitted our own plans for two larger bedrooms and a shower room instead and Tansy took full control of all the planning for us."

Michelle and Barry had previously renovated properties in Cornwall but, despite their experience, Michelle knew that managing the Skye renovation long-distance from Falmouth would prove impossible without the help of a knowledgeable and trusted local builder.

"Our architect had worked with Belladrum Homes before, which gave us a sense of security. They were absolutely fantastic builders, who came from Inverness and camped out in caravans on Skye during the week, going home at weekends," says Michelle, who visited the site regularly during the 12-month build.

The builders stripped back the bungalow to a shell, knocking down all the walls downstairs and reconfiguring rooms to make the most of the views, before installing new flooring, insulation, plasterboard, heating, doors and windows.

A partial internal wall with an inset wood-burner was built between the kitchen and living areas, and a staircase to the new first-floor rooms was installed, with a covered veranda built on the side of the house.

Externally, some of the grey cement render was falling off and this has now been covered with vertical black-stained larch cladding on battens, so that the building is almost unrecognisable from the original. The house is also surrounded by wrap-around decking.

"The main roof was actually in good condition, so we decided to leave this," says Michelle. "For the



BATHROOMS

The wood-clad bathroom on the ground floor has a whirlpool bath and hand-held shower. Upstairs is a new tiled shower room with a rainfall shower.

BEDROOMS

The loft space has been converted to include a king-size and a double bedroom, which have been built into the eaves.



veranda, though, we chose a red tin roof which contrasts with the black of the wood cladding. The weather in Skye can be very changeable so a covered outdoor area made sense."

New and enlarged openings were made for the triple-glazed doors and windows, and steelwork was inserted to support a corner window in the kitchen, based on calculations by a structural engineer.

"As with many builds, the project overran significantly due to problems with the glazing," says Michelle. "A Scandinavian window company was commissioned to install our windows and doors, but got confused between height and width measurements. The low point was when, having waited 15 weeks for delivery of the patio



"I love to sit on the veranda in the evening, wrapped in a blanket on the porch swing, listening to the sound of the stream."



doors, we were told that they'd been damaged leaving the factory and there would be a further delay – holding up the whole project!"

The existing drainage system was inadequate, and a new septic tank was installed. The family also experienced problems with the fresh water supply and ended up commissioning a new filtration system. Water flows down from the mountain and is stored in a large tank on the hill behind the house, with pressure increased by a powerful pump.

Michelle likes Danish-inspired design, which was her starting point for the simple interiors. "I worked with Out of Wood in their Truro workshop to design our handmade, solid oak kitchen with the head joiner," she explains. "It's been finished with a heavy wash of dark inky blue, which is almost black, after the joiner made and tested various stains to achieve the right colour so that the grain of the wood still shows through."

The house was completed in May 2019, when the family were able to visit for their first holiday, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed – taking walks down to the beach and travelling across to the mainland on the nearby ferry.

"I love to sit on the veranda in the evening, wrapped in a blanket on the porch swing, listening to the sound of the stream that runs down the mountain, past the house and out into the straits of Kylesha Kylesha," says Michelle. "It really is the perfect peaceful spot to read or star-gaze."



FINAL WORD

What was the high point of the project?

Seeing the transformation and then spending our first night there after the work was completed.

...and the low point?

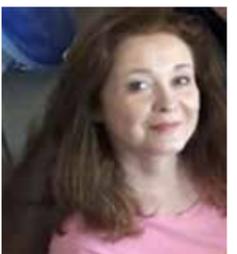
The problem with the delay with the windows was very frustrating and getting materials to the site was often tricky.

Your biggest extravagance?

Our hand-crafted solid oak kitchen was probably the biggest extravagance.

Your best buy?

The decision to ship an American smoked-oak porch swing from Tennessee to Skye probably wasn't the most sensible decision,



but it arrived without any problems and is my favourite piece of furniture in the house.