

## HOME TRUTHS

**THE PROPERTY** A detached single-storey home built in the 1950s and set in an acre of woodland

**ROOMS** Sitting/dining room, kitchen, utility room, playroom, three bedrooms, bathroom, shower room, exterior sauna and gym

**LOCATION** Scotland

# *A woodland* FANTASY

Relishing the challenge of rescuing a modernist gem, Seamus and Lucy Shanks created a home that celebrates its extraordinary surroundings

FEATURE ALEXANDRA PRATT | PHOTOGRAPHY [UNIQUEHOMESTAYS.COM](https://www.uniquehomestays.com)





## EXTERIOR

**The home's fairy-tale setting won over the family at first sight. Seamus used zinc and larch cladding to weatherproof the building.**

Key Wood solid teak garden armchairs, £299 each, Tikamoon. St Ives cushion covers in Stone, £55 each, Dusk. Artisan mugs, £19.50 for four, M&S, are similar

## SITTING ROOM

**The new woodburner creates an all-important cosiness in this woodland retreat and the natural wood brings warmth to the neutral schemes.**

Vermont throw in Stone, £35, Dusk. Portobello table lamp in brass and bronze, £230, Pooky. Pebble wall mirror, £80, Dunelm. Andrea sofa, £1,775, LaRedoute

Seamus and Lucy Shanks were looking for a place to escape their busy lives in London and found it in Melrose, Scotland. 'When we saw this house, we knew immediately we could create something beautiful,' says Seamus. They fell for the setting: an acre of woodland with an almost magical sense of remoteness. Yet the property is just a few minutes' walk from the foodie town of Melrose, with all the convenience that offers a young family.

It wasn't just the woodland setting that won over the couple. 'I recognised the value in the architecture straight away,' says Seamus, who owns dRAW Architecture. 'The house was a very good example of modernism, but with the condition of the existing building, not many would have seen that.' Built

sometime in the late 1950s, what was once a glamorous home at the cutting edge of design had fallen into disrepair. Part of the roof had collapsed, the windows were rotten and damp was everywhere. One of Seamus' first jobs was to put light back into the heart of the building. 'We installed glazing in parts of the roof over the kitchen and hallway, and it completely changed the quality of light,' he says.

The internal layout also needed some radical rethinking. 'The flow just didn't work,' says Seamus, who installed a new underfloor heating system and reclaimed space by removing the wall-hung radiators. A new dining area with built-in seating now defines one end of the sitting room.

While the two smaller bedrooms and a shower room are tucked away up a few steps, the main suite is on the lower level

and enjoys direct access into the woods through glazed doors. Next door is a new playroom, which Seamus carved out from wasted space in the main bedroom suite.

'Modernist buildings are all about their relationship to the setting,' says Seamus. 'Here, the sitting room windows focus the view onto the [tree] canopy. This creates a sense of elevation; it's a wonderful thing.

'This summer, I'll be adding a green roof. The building is evolving to become part of the landscape,' says Seamus. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the family's favourite activities include bird-watching and listening to the owls. 'I'd never seen a badger until I spent time here – it's lovely to see the wonder on a child's face when they experience that.' 🐾

*The property is available to rent via [uniquehomestays.com](https://www.uniquehomestays.com)*



## HALLWAY AND PLAYROOM

**Seamus painted the exposed bricks white to brighten the space. The built-in seating also offers easy storage for games and toys.**

St Ives cushion covers in Stone, £55 each; Vermont throw in Stone, £35, all Dusk. Built-in storage seat covered in a similar fabric to Greta Oatmeal, £39m, Linen Fabrics

‘Space was gained by removing wall-hung radiators and installing new underfloor heating’



#### DINING AREA

**Built-in seating makes the most of the space.**

Mira oak extendable dining table, £1,269, Hardman Design, is similar

#### KITCHEN

**‘I made the open shelving from old railway sleepers,’ says Seamus.**

Greenwich super-matt handleless cabinetry, price on request, Howdens. Induction hob, £1,729, Neff

#### MAIN BEDROOM

**Seamus squared off this room to create a simple, restful space with a direct connection to the outside.**

Try Nashville chair in Ivory boucle, £299, Cult Furniture, and Luna Stoneware Hummus table lamp, £8, Dunelm