



Building on the Past

A DILAPIDATED COTTAGE IN COUNTY TIPPERARY HAS BEEN GIVEN A NEW LEASE OF LIFE BY ITS ARCHITECT OWNER PATTI O'NEILL

WORDS AND STYLING BY **PENNY CRAWFORD-COLLINS.**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PHILIP LAUTERBACH.**

Situated down a picturesque country lane near Ballycommon, a stone's throw from the shores of Lough Derg, this quaint whitewashed cottage has been painstakingly restored over a period of three years by award-winning architect Patti O'Neill. "When I first saw the cottage, back in 2013, it was in desperate need of attention. It was damp, dark and disjointed and covered in layers of cement render with low door openings, so it felt cramped and cold," says Patti. "But I could see the potential the cottage had to offer and knew instinctively how I wanted to tackle the project. I wanted to re-inject the cottage with character and make it much more functional for modern living. I really wanted to take everything back to basics, and to rediscover the true essence of the house."

Built over 250 years ago, the cottage was owned by the same family for generations and was originally a one room stone dwelling, which had been extended over the years to accommodate the needs of the family. "In recent years every time the house was renovated or extended another layer of cement concrete screed was added. This would have been done as the rising water table was causing dampness, in the erroneous belief that cement concrete floors would block this. But the layers of concrete just resulted in lower door openings and trapped moisture. My challenge was to reinstate the natural materials so the house would breath again, and make it much more practical whilst creating a home that would be full of

character, drawing on the past as well as the present," explains Patti.

With considerable knowledge, passion, and flair for renovating old buildings using natural materials, Patti was prepared to take on the daunting task of renovating the cottage and reinstating the natural breathable materials. "I removed an incredible 60 plus tons of cement concrete from the walls, floors and exterior pathways, completely stripping back the house to the bone. I used lime mortar instead of cement for the walls and created new floors with limecrete, all supplied by the Traditional Lime Company. At one time every parish in Ireland had a lime kiln. Lime is much more ecologically friendly to produce and is a natural moisture regulator for interior spaces," says Patti. By taking up the floors and reinstating them to the original levels as well as raising the door lintels Patti made the door openings an acceptable height. She was able to reinstate the floors with a lime and leca (light expanded clay aggregate) insulating mix and install underfloor heating within the limecrete layer without using any damp-proof membranes, as any dampness is now able to dissipate naturally.



THE DOUBLE HEIGHT CEILING AND LARGE EXPANSE OF GLASS MAKE THE ROOM FEEL REALLY SPACIOUS SO THE SPACE IS REALLY BRIGHT AND FUNCTIONAL



THE LOVELY BRIGHT OFFICE PROVIDES PATTI WITH PLENTY OF SPACE TO WORK. IT HAS BEEN FURNISHED WITH A COMBINATION OF NEW AND OLD PIECES



"The layout was very important to me, along with the light. I pretty much worked out the layout within the first week of purchasing the property. I wanted to bring as much light into the house as possible so removed the unsightly mass concrete porch to the front of the house and fitted a glass door, so the natural light now pours in from the front of the house. I opened up the back of the house, removing a small impractical conservatory and inserted two four-metre galvanized steel beams. I replaced the existing window and door with a 2.4 x 2.4 metre window and glass doors that make the most of the south-facing aspect. This also

maximises the views and allowed the natural light to flood into the kitchen and heat it up though massive solar gain. I changed this space into a double height kitchen, using salvaged pitch pine for the ceiling, which is heavily insulated with sheep's wool and wood fibre board, again all without membranes and totally breathable," explains Patti.

She also removed the new bricks around the fireplace and chimney stack, which was disintegrating and had a tree growing out of it. This was then rebuilt using salvaged bricks. The house is very simply furnished particularly in the



A WALL OF SALVAGED PITCH PINE INTRODUCES WARMTH AND TEXTURE INTO THE LIVING SPACE WHICH IS FURNISHED WITH A SOFA FROM IKEA AND A PERSPEX SIDE TABLE THAT WAS DESIGNED BY PATTI

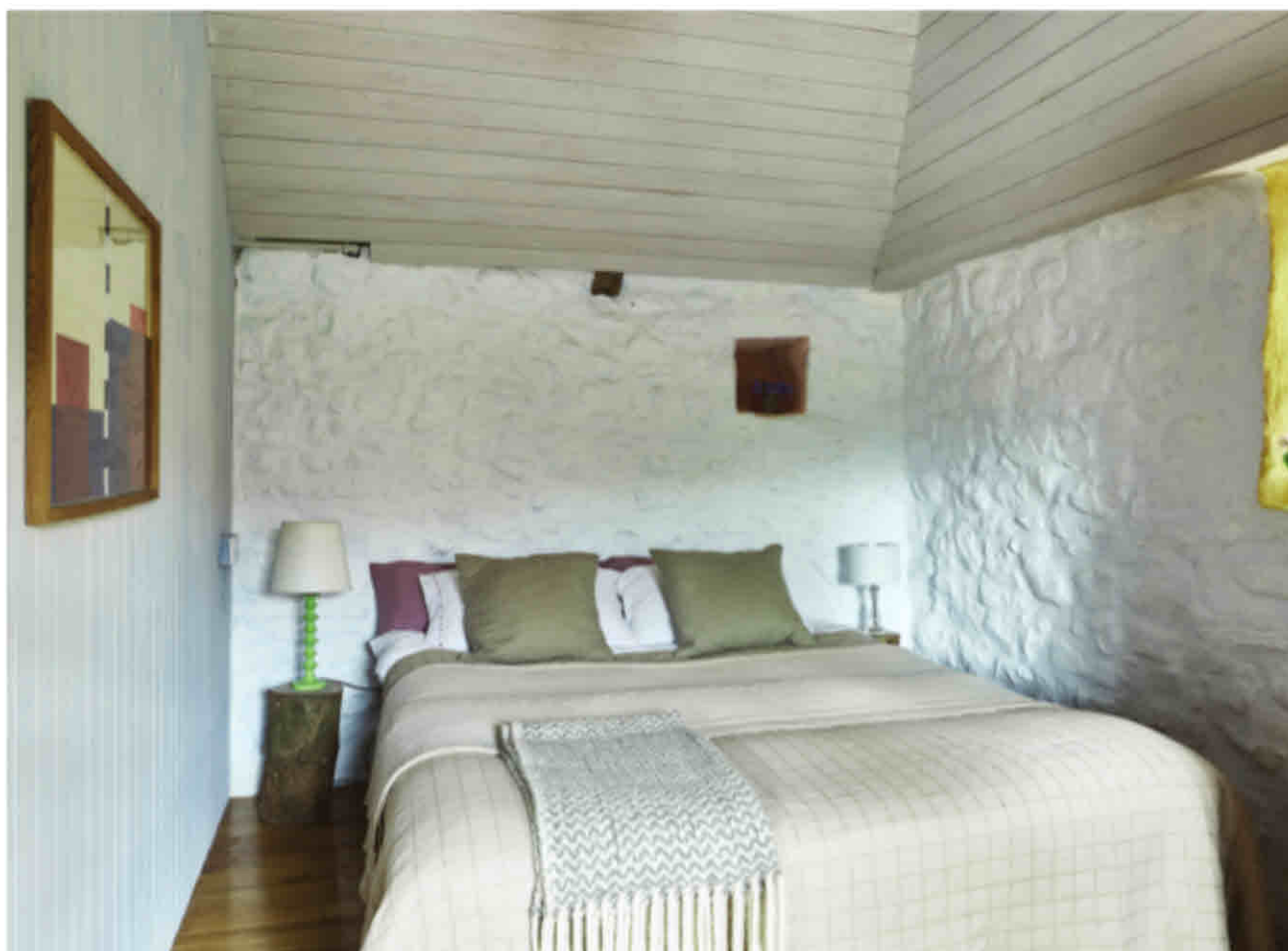


AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO NORMAL HOOKS PATTI FOUND SOME ROUND HOOKS AT DUCK DUCK GO AND SELECTED VARIOUS SIZED HOOKS ON WHICH TO HANG HER COATS AND SCARVES



kitchen where Patti opted to fit simple free-standing industrial style stainless steel units from Ikea, creating a sleek contrast to the rustic stonework. "As the stonework is so beautiful I wanted it to be seen so I didn't want any wall hung units. The open shelving allows the stonework to be seen and I opted for stainless steel for its reflective and practical qualities. The double height ceiling and large expanse of glass make the room feel really spacious so the space is really bright and functional," she adds.

The glass pendant light in the kitchen is from Woodies and the large glass door was supplied by Carey Glass. The kitchen table was salvaged when being thrown out of a woodwork shop in Stuttgart. "I have had this table since the 1990s. I lowered it to dining height and sanded it down and it really suits this setting," says Patti. The room is heating with underfloor heating supplied by Pipelife Ireland. As an alternative to normal hooks Patti found some round hooks at Duck Duck Go and selected various sized hooks on which to hang her coats and scarves.



THE PRETTY WHITEWASHED WALLS AND PANELLED CEILINGS GIVE THE MASTER BEDROOM PLENTY OF OLD STYLE CHARM. PATTI MADE THE SIDE TABLES FROM OFFCUTS OF WOOD



Once covered in layers of cement concrete the exposed stone introduces a cosy rustic element into the living space which is heated by a newly fitted stove from Ryan Stoves. The chair is from TK Maxx and the curtains are made up in a fabric from John Hanly & Co. The newly fitted wooden floor was supplied by Robert Sheehan. A wall of salvaged pitch pine introduces warmth and texture into this space which is furnished with a sofa from Ikea and a perspex side table that was designed by Patti. The lovely bright office provides Patti with plenty of space to work. It has been furnished with a combination of new and old pieces; the desk is from Ikea. The pretty whitewashed walls and panelled ceilings give the master bedroom plenty of old style charm. Patti made the side tables from offcuts of wood. To keep the compact bathroom bright and fresh she selected a white bathroom suite from P.J. Matthews and painted the walls in a striking blue, trowel finished by Lyshna Design.

For Patti, one of the most exciting aspects of doing the renovations was uncovering the changes that had been made to the property



over hundreds of years and discovering hidden gems, such as a letter written by the previous owner dated 1863 along with some beautiful hand printed wallpaper. "These discoveries have given me a much-appreciated insight into the lives of the previous owners," she says. Patti also put a huge amount of time and effort into the gardens. Once overgrown, they are now beautifully maintained, with a lovely combination of mature fruit trees and new planting. "I built up some stone walls and incorporated a vegetable patch; it's lovely to have your own natural produce and the freshly dug potatoes and vegetables are wonderfully tasty too," she says.

"This house was a huge project for me but I now have a home that is really comfortable. It was hard moving into a property before the construction was complete and living in a house with waterlogged floors, particularly through the winter, which was very soul destroying. I'm really pleased all the work is over and I can now enjoy the fruits of my labour. I still have a few ideas for it. I am thinking of replacing the bathroom in about three years time with a 40 square metre extension, so it's an ongoing project," says Patti.

Source Directory

Armchair: TK Maxx, T: 061 490000, Tkmaxx.ie	Slate Suppliers, T: 067 23269, Irishslate.com
Bathroom suite: P.J. Matthews, T: 061 413722, Pjmatthews.ie	Solar panels: Heat Merchants, T: 067 50660, Heatmerchants.ie
Curtain fabric: John Hanly & Co, T: 067 24278, Johnhanly.com	Stove: Ryan Stoves, T: 061 430600, Ryanstoves.ie
Insulation: Sheeps Wool Insulation, T: 0404 46100, Sheepswoolinsulation.ie	Underfloor heating: Pipelife Ireland, T: 021 4884700, Pipelife.ie
Kitchen units: Ikea, T: 01 5413300, Ikea.com	Wall hooks: Duck Duck Go, Duckduckgo.com
Large glass door: Carey Glass, T: 067 50700, Careyglass.com	Windows: Youghal Glass, T: 067 40000, Youghalglass.ie
Limecrete: The Traditional Lime Company, T: 059 9151750, Traditionallime.com	Wood fibre board: Acara Concepts, T: 01 8409286, Acaraconcepts.com
Pendant light: Woodies, T: 061 582424, Woodies.ie	Wood flooring: Robert Sheehan, M: 086 0291800, Goldenpages.ie
Reclaimed bricks: Irish	