

# dream home

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*homes in...*

LIMERICK  
GALWAY  
DUBLIN  
TIPPERARY  
MAYO  
LAOIS

*Altamont  
gardens*

IN CO CARLOW

RAVING ABOUT  
**RUGS**

**KEY LOOKS FOR 2010**





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## WELCOME

As I write I have to say I am overwhelmed by the devastation from floods that has impacted the people on this little island of ours but it is heartening to see the support communities and neighbours have offered and shared in helping each other.

I believe we must look to ourselves and support each other in these trying times. Shop local and help to regenerate and build homes and businesses that have been affected by this catastrophe.

We are a resilient lot and as we face Christmas and a New Year I hope we at **urdreamhome** can bring a little cheer into your lives.

We have filled the pages with beautiful readers' homes from all over Ireland. If you're looking to 2010 and want to be ahead with colour look at what the experts say on **page 18**.

We have a new series starting in this issue, so a big welcome to Bernice Poolozzi and her team - From Ber to BEER, a new approach to an energy efficient dwelling starts on **page 48**.

We continue with an update from Cloughjordan Village in Tipperary and have the first in a series of fascinating articles on Renovating in Mayo by Mark Stephens.

Lisa McGee is Raving about Rugs and Mike Rice expands on the theory of Biological Architecture as he explores the Golden Number.

Ciaran Burke thrills us with his visit to Altamont Gardens in Co Carlow and we have Competitions, Art and Book reviews along with all the News from your local shops.

So - lots and lots to carry you through the festive season and into the New Year.

A BIG thank you to all our Readers and Advertisers; without you we could not bring you **urdreamhome**. Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful, safe and joyful Christmas and New Year.

Be safe. See you in 2010.

*Olga*



# CONTENTS

## DREAM HOMES

- 21 **MODERN DAY CASTLE** - Heathfield Castle - a stunning dream castle finished with a contemporary interior in county Limerick.
- 41 **SPACIOUS LIVING IN ROSCAHILL** - A four-bedroom 'modern but cosy' self-build bungalow in county Galway.
- 48 **FROM BER TO BEER** - First in a four part series following the sustainable upgrading of a traditional two-storey house in North Dublin from a 'G' rated to a 'B1' rated house.
- 55 **DREAMY HOME IN CO LAOIS** - A uniquely-designed, timber frame home set in a beautiful rural setting which features many innovative aspects.

## FEATURES

- 11 **RAVING ABOUT RUGS** - Lisa McGee has rugs on her mind and she shares some of her favourites with us.
- 18 **KEY TRENDS FOR 2010** - Colour experts Farrow & Ball give us the low-down on four strikingly different colour schemes.
- 36 **MAKE ROOM FOR CHRISTMAS** - Turn your home into a festive sanctuary with our seasonal advice from the style experts.
- 52 **BIOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE** - Michael Rice continues his series of articles on biological architecture by focussing on the Golden Number.
- 64 **RENOVATE - THE FOXFORD WAY** - Mark Stephens brings us the first in a series documenting the refurbishment and extension of a traditional stone cottage near Foxford, Co Mayo.





# RENOVATE the Foxford way

**W**elcome to the first in a series of articles documenting the refurbishment and extension of a traditional stone cottage near Foxford, Co Mayo. This first article introduces the project, discusses the evolution behind the design concept and how the completed design was arrived at. Future articles will focus on the design detail, construction, eco-features and project completion.

The existing cottage had been in the client's family for four generations and would be described as traditional Irish vernacular cottage; comprising essentially a two room cottage with each room either side of a large central space containing the open stone fire and traditional 'outshot'.

The outshot took the traditional form of a small section of the building protruding from the outside wall leaving a small extra space next to the fire. A bed frame was traditionally fitted into this place but currently this area housed the hot water cylinder.

The plan therefore was to move this cylinder and reinstate the

outshot 'as it was'. Interestingly the house seems to have been reversed with the original entrance door to the east; with the house being flipped a new entrance was created on the west together with a 'unique' design of porch with the result being no windows to the front (west elevation).

Similar to most properties of this period, the walls were constructed in rubble stonework, with lime/clay mortar. The original roof would have been thatch but this was removed by the client's father and replaced with corrugated iron although the removal of the thatch would have lowered the insulation in the roof.

The property was in a poor state of repair with damp problems, practically nil insulation (at the time of the survey it was actually warmer outside than inside!) and drainage problems due to cracks, 'improvements' over the years and a poorly constructed extension to the rear.

Repairs were made over the years with infill concrete blockwork and the cement render on these also contributed to the damp problem as water penetrates the cracks and cannot escape other than by entering



The cottage as it would have looked originally before the new entrance was created on the west together with the porch.



The 'unique' design of porch with the result being no windows to the front (west elevation).





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(and staying in) the building. Again, interestingly, a substantial part of the north wall was also propped by cemented concrete block corners and it appeared that a large rock from outside actually penetrated the building creating a cold bridge from outside to the interior.

The principal premise of the brief therefore was to create a warmer, more comfortable environment with a modern level of living accommodation and to maximise the fantastic views and solar aspect to the south. The house was built directly onto a stone shelf on a site littered with large boulders, the house stepping down a few feet from one side of the dwelling to the other – the difference in levels was so great that presumably it was easier to construct the ridge sloping down rather than build it level!

The house was incredibly damp and cold due to water penetration at ground level and through the cracks in the painted cement plaster walls. Obviously a house of this period had little or no insulation (a token amount of loft insulation was added) and relied on the open fire to keep the house relatively dry and constantly in heat.

The priority therefore in the refurbishment of the cottage was to



The existing cottage originally had a glazed covered area to the south which the clients enjoyed sitting under on the occasional dry Mayo day!

eradicate the damp and increase the heat retention of the house by insulating the walls, floor and roof. The existing single storey rear extension housed the bathroom and the problems with the flat roof at this point resulted in a gutter inside the house draining into a bucket. The client's father had also created his own roof light from glass and mastic which were completely waterproof.

The additional accommodation required therefore was to replace the bathroom in the rear extension, create a newer/modern kitchen (the existing kitchen was a simple stand-alone two ring cooker and fridge) and a bedroom with ensuite. It was obvious at an early stage that the single storey rear extension had to come down and any new extension would need to occupy a larger footprint.

The cottage is a charming property of this period and the goal from the beginning was to maintain this charm and to keep the integrity of the cottage's proportions and scale.

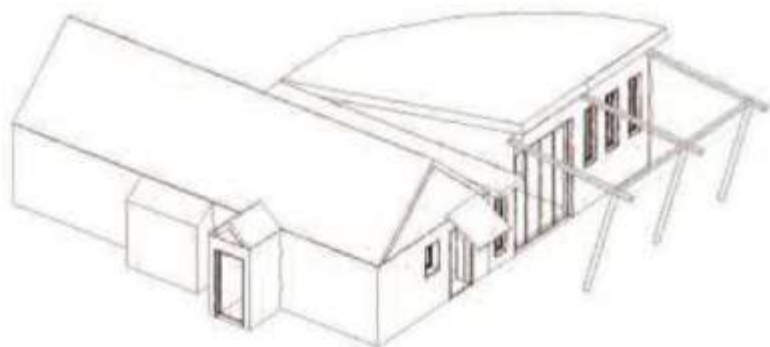
The first stage in any design of this type starts with a full measured survey of the house and surrounding buildings/site to include all the internal and external measurements in both plan, section and elevation. This measured survey also includes the orientation of the house and any design needs to take the sun's path and any prevailing wind conditions into account. The large shed to the rear plus the huge number of large rocks would pose a problem – any extension would have to take these into account also.

The concept of the design was to remove a large section of the wall to the rear of the property to create a large open plan space – enlarging the existing living area into a new kitchen and dining area orientated south to maximise solar gain and take advantage of the fantastic views over the Foxford Way Walk.

Normally I'd try and keep bathrooms to the north but the 'wrap-around' living area necessitated converting one of the bedrooms into a bathroom/utility area and press. The original design included a provisional window to the bathroom on the south elevation but frequently trying to create any new openings in properties of this type results in entire walls collapsing.

The new extension would then curve around from north to south, delicately swerving around the obstructing rocks and shed (a gap was





3D View: One of the early 3D views showing the canopy and different extension levels.

maintained between extension and shed for access) and orientate a new bedroom and ensuite; again towards the south and views. This curved wall also minimises the wall to the north (where heat loss is greatest) and maximises the solar gain to the south.

The wall between the ensuite and bedroom continues the curvy concept and the ensuite curved wall creates an interesting dynamic between the curve of the bedroom and the straightness of the existing cottage. As well as being keen to maintain the 'cottage-ness' of the existing building we were eager to make a clear differentiation between what was old and what will be new. The use of curved walls creates an 'energy' in any design; they're not that difficult for builders to construct once the curve's centre and radii is established – the use of CAD makes this a great deal easier as all the dimensions can be easily set and laid out.

As well as delicately swerving the extension around the obstacles such as the rocks and shed, the surrounding hill and rocks played a large part in the design as any extension should appear as if it's emerging from the landscape – it was also important that we retain the trees as these create a frame from which any view is enjoyed.

The existing cottage originally had a glazed covered area to the south which the clients enjoyed sitting under and a design concept for a replacement was again investigated and tested in 3D with the result shown top right.

As well as designing in plan, it is also imperative to understand space in three dimensions and in particular the cross-section through the building. Working along side the plan (Le Corbusier said that "The



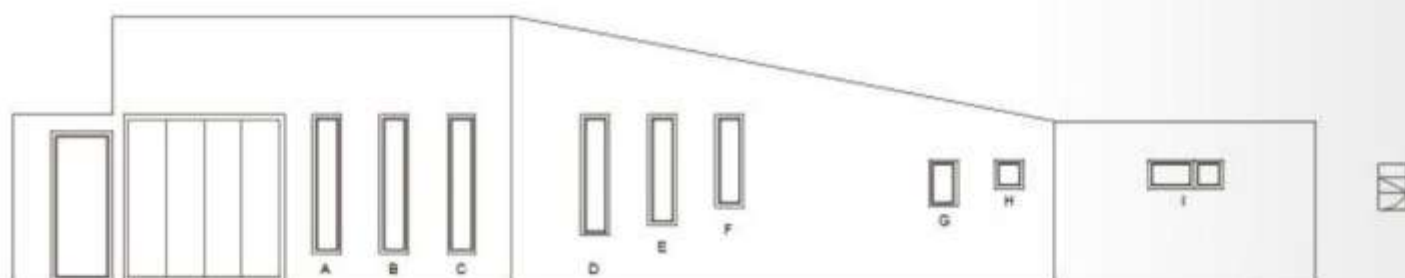
Existing Plan: Drawing following the survey.

plan is the generator") the section is equally as important and to investigate the play of space in cross-section as well as plan. Therefore the concept of demarcating old from new in plan is continued in section, where the extension drops in level before rising again in order to maintain and create a separation from the existing cottage.

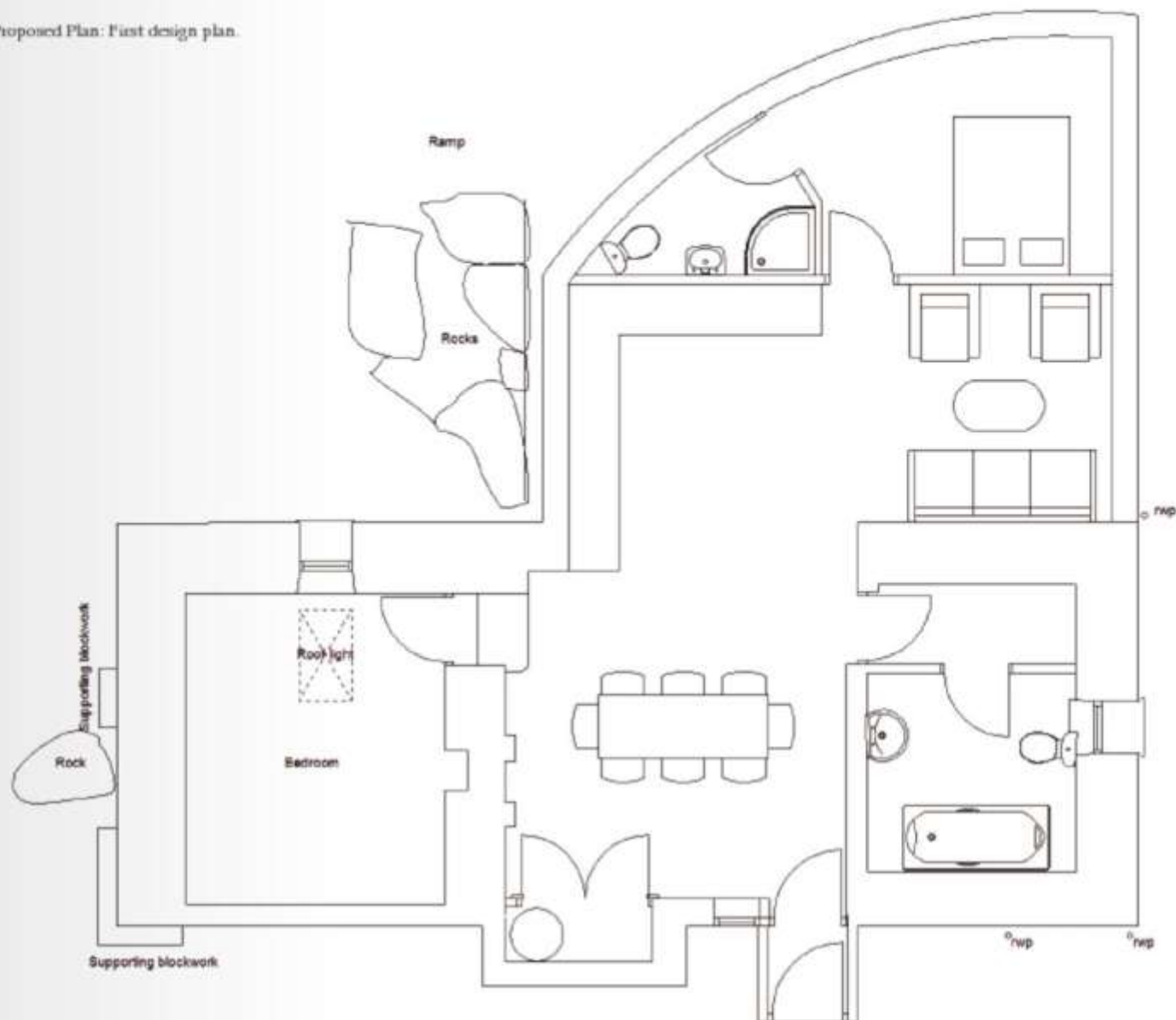
I also tested and investigated different designs in three dimensions using Computer Aided Design (CAD) modelling software and the decision was made to create a large mono-pitch roof over the main part of the extension which links into a modern flat roof connecting into the existing cottage. Details on how these 'flat' roofs are constructed will follow in a later article that details the modern methods of waterproofing and insulating roofs of this type.

The client was highly informed in both design and technical detail and was enthusiastic in referencing design concepts from a variety of sources in the detail design. The window and door designs are unusual to say the least with some based on the Golden Section (see the article by Michael Rice in this issue on how the Golden Section is created) and Le Corbusier's Modulor (a proportion system based on the human body). The arrangement of windows on the south and eastern facades is also my humble homage to Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp where the disorganised array of openings is actually carefully planned!

The next article takes this design onto the next stage of the building process and outlines the technical and structural considerations in order to create a warm and comfortable building and for the builder to provide an accurate price.



Window Proportions: A drawing showing how the window proportions were calculated, you can see the golden section on the right.



#### LE CORBUSIER

Born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris in Switzerland, 1887 he originally trained as an artist but adopted the name Le Corbusier (The master builder) in the 1920's and became a leading architect of modern high design; his buildings were based on the 'Modulor' a system (and book by Le Corbusier), a proportional system based on the golden section but taken further by integrating the proportions of the human body.

The Chapel, Notre Dame du Haut, informally known as Ronchamp, is one of his most famous works and is one of the most important examples of twentieth-century religious architecture. Constructed mostly in concrete the billowing sail-like roof symbolises the ship of God bringing salvation and safety to its followers.

His work has been both celebrated and cursed as pioneering work and many cite his work as the reason for the appalling post war 'modern architecture'.

THE FOXFORD WAY  
FOLLOW THIS  
RENOVATION  
PROJECT IN THE  
NEXT ISSUE!

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