



VISITORS WELCOME

A GUEST-HOUSE MADE FROM RECYCLED STONE IS PROVING TO BE VERY POPULAR



[Above] The living area has uninterrupted views of Loch Tay. [Left] The 20ft drop from the main house to the guest-house can be clearly seen, though access has been made easy thanks to Janusz's stairs [below, left]

Words Roz Erskine



DETAILS

The brief To create a two-bedroom guest house with Frank Lloyd Wright influences

Where Loch Tay, near Aberfeldy

Construction time Eight months

Budget £70,000

When the awkward location and tricky position of your site have made every builder who's seen it refuse to take on the job, you could be forgiven for just giving up on your plans. But with perseverance and the assistance of award-winning Polish builder Janusz Jolkowicz, Lou Oppenheim and her husband Bill finally got their much-needed guesthouse, which sits next to their house on Loch Tay.

The couple had moved into the property in 1994. They loved the spectacular views of the loch and the surrounding landscape, but always wondered what to do with the dilapidated old barn at the foot of the garden. "It had been habitable at one time but it was cold and rat-infested – it had to go," says Lou.

In stepped Andrew Khoury, a relative of Lou's – although it was not the family connection that led her to choosing him. "It definitely wasn't nepotism," she says. "I talked to him because he was an architect. I know a lot of architects – I have a passion for architecture and very specific ideas about what I like – but I was impressed by the way Andrew listened to me and by his interest in the ecological aspect of the build, and I've grown to respect his style and work ethic," she says.

It was during a late-night chat over a glass of whisky that Lou decided to use Andrew as her architect for the build, and through him that she finally found a builder who was willing to accept the job. "Andrew had done a lot of work with a firm of

Polish builders down in Birmingham. I told him I'd be happy to use them, but that I didn't want cheap labour – I wanted builders who knew what they were doing and who'd get a decent wage in return," explains Lou.

Janusz took a look at the site and the plans, declared that it was "no problem", and set to work. Within 24 hours, he had demolished the old steps down to the barn and set up a chute, made from the remnants of the old barn, to transport his bags of cement and everything else to the site. Janusz also proved his worth by coming up with suggestions for drainage and access,

It stands cantilevered over a burn to the west, and thanks to the inspiration of Wright's Falling Water, the views are unbroken.

"We increased the amount of insulation in the walls and roof to improve the thermal performance and also to allow us to use glass so expansively," says Andrew. "These eco elements weren't hard to incorporate at all – specific calculations were done to ensure the right balance of insulation and glass, and ideas for recycling were easy to come by as the materials, such as the slate, were already there on the site."

The guest-house is exactly what Lou and Bill wanted – and

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and by working through a typical Scottish winter of rain, snow and gale-force winds to complete the build in just eight months.

Made from reclaimed stone and incorporating eco-friendly elements such as recycled slate and a high-efficiency boiler, the guest-house also reflects Lou's adoration for Frank Lloyd Wright: "I love his work, especially his use of glass, and wanted to incorporate this into the build – partly because I wanted a place to hang my stained glass. But at the same time I also wanted the build to fit in with its location and be modern," she explains.

needed. "We think it's wonderful, and so do our visitors. It's said that guests are like fish – they go off after three days! We have a large family and lots of friends and clients coming to stay, and we desperately needed the space," laughs Lou.

Access down the steep slope from the house to the guest house is now, as Janusz put it, "no problem", thanks to the well-spaced, well-lit staircase, leaving visitors free to come and go from Lou and Bill's to their own space as they please. ■

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