



Homes & more

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Heart of stone

Modern décor
with a rural glow
by the beach



Three of a kind

Turning B-listed farm steadings that were almost derelict into a row of dazzling contemporary holiday lets was a daunting collaborative effort

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When Steph and Ryan Lothian first came across Williamstone Farm Steadings two years ago, the property had been on the market for a year, with the scale of the work required having probably put many people off a purchase. But not so Steph and Ryan, who were looking for a project having already built two of their homes. The previous owners had lived in the farmhouse for 35 years and the steading buildings were almost derelict. "They were watertight but only just," says Steph.

The steadings are set in their own four-acre plot of farmland on the edge of North Berwick and the beach there is within walking distance.

While you might imagine that Steph and Ryan arrived at Williamstone in September 2015 with a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve here, Steph insists: "We didn't have a clue what we were going to do at first, and then it just evolved with the idea of developing the steadings as holiday cottages."

Today, there are three properties: The Barn, The Bothy and The Byre. Each combines the features of the original steading – think exposed stone walls and vaulted ceilings with roof beams – with contemporary features including wide plank Kährs oak flooring (with underfloor heating) and RAIS wood-burning stoves (from Bonk & Co in Edinburgh) and with sleek Poggenpohl kitchens and bathrooms featuring fittings by Duravit and Porcelanosa.

The couple worked with two Edinburgh-based design studios for this

project: the architectural practice Studio LBA, which transformed the original steadings into today's three properties; and Decor Air, a recently launched interior design and project management service offering tailored design packages to the buy-to-let market.

The initial design process took about a year from first consultation to planning permission, and the couple worked closely with project architect David Hill. "We wanted to be true to the buildings," says Steph. "We laboured over which walls we could have as exposed stone, and we kept as much as we could, down to the old metal grab handles, as they all tell a story of the history of these buildings."

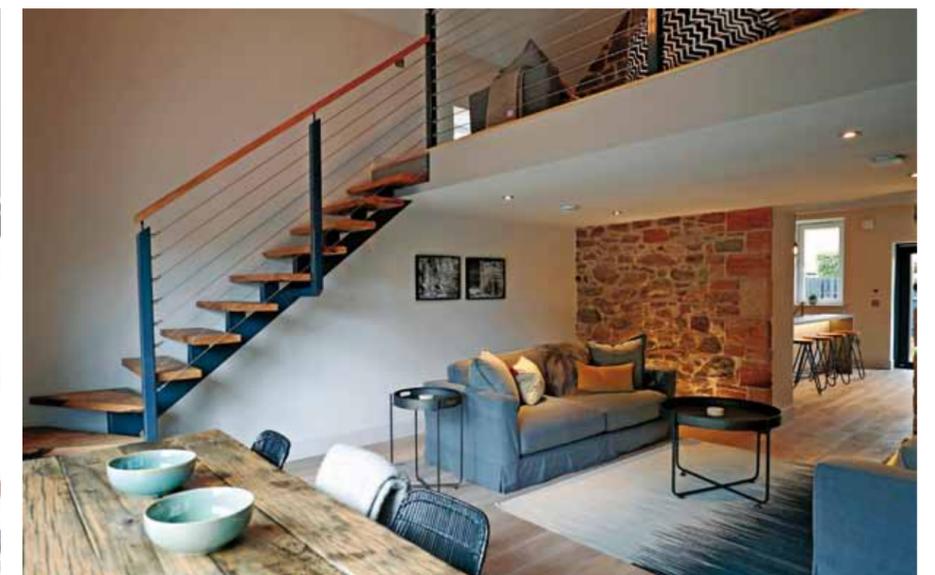
"Also we didn't want to cram in bedrooms. We wanted the spaces to flow and to be proportionate. Each property has three bedrooms as well as lovely living and entertaining spaces."

Notably, where the buildings called for new elements to be introduced, the features are contemporary. The new openings created in the fabric of the buildings are wrapped in Corten steel, which complements the original stonework beautifully while also feeling distinct from the existing materials. And, perhaps most striking of all, a new glass corridor was added when designing The Bothy, linking the bedrooms with the living space. "There was this one really narrow steading that we couldn't have used, but adding this glass corridor then allowed us to use this space," says Steph.

Naturally, the project brought its challenges, not least in the beginning when the steadings had to be cleared. "We had to replace the drainage as it was



Clockwise from top left: the front door of The Bothy; the kitchen diner in The Byre; a split level view of The Barn; The Bothy's dining area





“The beauty of the buildings is that they have so many original features”



From top down: the steadings seen from a neighbouring field; original stone complements the décor of a bedroom in The Barn; the swish bathroom in the same property



so old, and then we had so many layers of manure in the steadings, as there used to be horses and pigs here, and the smell... Also a lot of the timbers had to be replaced. The two new houses we built previously were easy by comparison.”

Here, it was about fitting a new shell, with all the insulation and the requirements for building regulations, into each building without compromising on the inherent character of these B-listed steadings.

Prior to this project, Steph had worked as co-director of a development company specialising in refurbishments of period properties, and this experience helped here, particularly as Steph and Ryan were jointly project managing and working with a team of tradesmen.

“We divided up jobs and would write a list every night of what was to be done the next day,” says Steph. “If we’d had a builder in to do all this we couldn’t have afforded it. You save so much when sourcing the materials and project managing yourself, but it’s not for the fainthearted.”

When the buildings were completed, Steph found herself facing a new challenge: how to design the interiors. She turned to Rachel Richmond and Xanthe Weir of DecorAir. Rachel is also the design director at the interior design company Hen & Crask while Xanthe runs the online store Lair specialising in mid-century furniture, lighting and curios.

Xanthe says: “Rachel and I have much in common when it comes to our design aesthetic. Where we contrast, we also complement, and we both have a very eclectic approach to design.”

Steph and Ryan had already chosen the kitchens (from Kitchens by J.S. Geddes) and the bathroom fittings (sourced from Victor Paris) and had brought in colour consultant Patricia Hunter to specify the paints from Farrow & Ball used throughout. Rachel and Xanthe were brought in to plan the spaces and choose furniture and lighting. “When

Rachel came to see the place, it was such a weight off my shoulders,” says Steph.

“We wanted to create a pared back, relaxed look with a quality finish,” Rachel explains. “The beauty of the buildings is that they have so many original features. The stunning stone and fabric of the building stands out, so we wanted to make it the centrepiece and create a look that had a flow throughout the three properties. Each room is different, but the properties are cohesive in their overall look.

“All of the purchases were a mix of Heal’s, French Connection, Made.com, Cox & Cox, The Conran Shop, Urbanara and Desenio. We’re not committed to any one brand, which gives us free rein to explore different looks,” Rachel continues. “We used local tradespeople along with skilled craftsmen to create the dining tables, bar stools, wardrobe rails and staircases.”

When considering what people might want from a holiday let, Steph and Ryan called on their own experiences – and the bad experiences were just as useful in understanding what not to do. “Also,” says Steph, “because the buildings are quite industrial, we wanted a more cool and edgy style.”

There are so many highlights in these three holiday homes, from the remarkable open plan kitchen, dining and living space in The Byre (which is also dog-friendly) to the living room in The Barn with its impressive vaulted ceiling and mezzanine level snug, to The Bothy with its stunning glass link and views from the bedrooms on to the orchard. The hardest thing about staying at Williamstone Farm Steadings will be having to pack your bags again and leave as each of these properties feels like a very stylish home-from-home.

For more information on staying at Williamstone Farm Steadings call 01620 481107 or visit www.williamstonefarmsteadings.com. For information on Decor Air visit www.decorair.co.uk