

# A family affair

A light colour scheme and clean design lines gives this home a sense of space.



Renovating and refurbishing a family home, only to move out of it, must be a frustrating affair. But as **Helen Brown** discovered, Robin and Irena Menzies are used to sharing their family space

**D**URING THE 19th century, Mains of Taymouth, a 160-acre estate in the heart of Highland Perthshire, was the home farm for nearby Taymouth Castle, seat of the Earls and Marquises of Breadalbane. It was acquired in the 1920s by the Menzies family and it is still in family hands today.

In difficult times for farming, Duncan and Diana Menzies diversified into holiday cottage lettings and a popular caravan park.

Until very recently, their son Robin, his wife Irena and their three children, Danni (now a model in London), Rory and Mia, lived in the farmhouse but they have now transformed their former home and added it to the already extensive portfolio of lettings and holiday homes on site.

They've made such an impressive job of it that it has featured in 25 Beautiful Homes magazine.

Robin Menzies was brought up in the house with his five brothers and sisters and Irena is also a local girl and one of six children – the couple met at primary school and eventually married after university.

Irena's parents, originally from Poland, met when her mother was nursing at Tay-

mouth Castle – many large-scale Scottish homes had been commandeered as hospitals during the war – while her father recovered from injuries received at Monte Cassino, one of the toughest battles of the Second World War.

"I grew up here, knowing the area, the farm, the estate.

"I worked in the caravan park shop when I was about 14 and since Robin and I have been here, I think I've lived or worked in practically every bit of the place!

"It's given me a lifelong love of it and a real desire to make a life here."

Robin, trained in civil engineering at Strathclyde University and Irena, who studied business at Glasgow, have undertaken considerable development over the past 20 years or so, from

a bunk-house created out of a former byre, via a bar and bistro and a golf course to the conversion of traditional farm buildings and the addition of new-build lodge properties across the estate.

The Courtyard restaurant and deli were built about six years ago.

The farmhouse itself is perhaps the most personal project for the couple. "We were in this house for years as a family before

we changed anything," Irena explained. To the stone-built original has been added a contemporary two-storey extension. The result is a jaw-dropping six-bedroom house with a stunning open-plan ground floor flooded with natural light through a wall of french doors.

Floor-to-ceiling glass frames the large private garden and beautiful scenery beyond and the opulent master bedroom upstairs has a balcony to make the most of the views.

"It's my dream room, I love it!" Irena claims. It also boasts an elegantly-tiled ensuite wet room.

All the bedrooms have ensuite bathrooms, there is an integral sound system and underfloor heating throughout, supplemented in the main living area by a wood-burning stove. Outside there is extensive decking, barbecue and a highly desirable hot tub!

Irena has a strong artistic imagination and her taste is evident, with local crafts and trades playing a major role.

The bespoke kitchen from Callum Walker in Perth surrounds an "inherited" Aga – "for me, it's the heart of the home". Sweeping tweed curtains are from the Glenlyon tweed mill in Aberfeldy.

"We grew into doing this and it's very much about family working together. It's an amazing thing in life to end up doing what you love so dearly in a place as lovely as this."



Irena and Robin have used local crafts and trades to best effect within the farmhouse.

*"We grew into doing this and it's very much about family working together."*





● For more about  
**Mains of Taymouth Farmhouse**, call **01887 830226**  
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