

*How good design helped a byre conversion grow into a holiday homes empire*

NICHOLA HUNTER

It's just over 20 years since Robin and Irena Menzies embarked on their first renovation project on the Mains of Taymouth Estate at Kenmore. It was a modest concept, converting a cow byre into a bunk house, but it worked. From these humble beginnings, Mains of Taymouth Country Estate and Golf Course has evolved – a holiday resort with a range of accommodation choices.

The most recent of these offerings, and the 15th to be added to their portfolio this year, is The Farmhouse, formerly the Menzies' family home which is why Irena knew it would work as a holiday let. "The property had been extended twice before we moved in but in 1999, when the porch roof collapsed, we decided to do a major overhaul."

This included a new lounge extension leading on to a partially covered patio which replaced the original flat-roofed porch and front door, which took up its new position at the opposite end of the house. The stairwell, which was located in what is now the dining area, was relocated to the centre of the open-plan living/dining space and the wall between the kitchen and dining room was removed to create a large contemporary cooking and eating area.

The Aga, a legacy from Irena's mother-in-law, was something that Irena wanted to retain and it provides a splash of colour against the cream gloss and mahogany kitchen. Irena also picked out the colour of the Aga with a painting in the dining area which she bought on holiday in Bali.

Elsewhere on the ground floor, the



Clockwise from main: the open-plan living space; the new staircase; Robin and Irena Menzies on the patio; the dining area; an exterior view of The Farmhouse

family's original sitting room became two en-suite guest bedrooms and the family room became a snug. Upstairs, three bedrooms were transformed into spacious en-suite rooms with a master bedroom suite incorporating a wet room. With a total of six en-suite bedrooms, The Farmhouse is now the largest property on the estate.

After these major changes, the family settled in for the long haul and until recently The Farmhouse has served them well. "The Farmhouse had started to suffer from the bad storms we'd had and we really needed to restore the fabric of the building, and whilst we were doing that we decided to update the look as well."

"Now that our children are growing up it seemed like a good time to add the property to our accommodation portfolio. We already knew how well it functions for a large family and the kitchen is brilliantly equipped with integrated appliances, which are excellent. However, The Farmhouse also has lots of little luxuries that appeal to guests, such as

**"I prefer to add colour through accessories or paintings"**

the hot tub on the deck and the private balcony off the master bedroom suite."

Of course, apart from the building work, this project gave Irena another chance to explore her interior design ideas. "I've learnt a lot from renovating the cottages on the estate. I like simplicity, and although I like colour, I prefer to add it through accessories or paintings. I'm definitely a fan of natural and neutral."

Natural and neutral is a scheme that's prevalent throughout the house, but the lack of coloured walls or wallpaper doesn't mean this is a bland or boring property. Irena's love of art and her commitment to sourcing exactly what she wants means that every wall tells a story, something that, again, has grown out of accessorising the cottages on the estate.

"Throughout the house, the blinds and curtains are made of tweed produced locally by the Glenlyon Tweed Mill and in the lounge, I've sourced photographs of the surrounding area. They came from the archives at Perth Museum. Paul Adair at the museum reproduced them for me and then I had them framed in Perth. I enjoy keeping the history of Kenmore





alive and when I use pictures such as this in the holiday cottages, our guests always comment on them.”

It's little touches such as these that keep the guestbook full, but it's also the commitment that Irena and Robin have to the estate. They use local contractors where possible, and much of the furniture and many of the accessories have been sourced from Irena's favourite local shops, such as Spirit of Wood and Enerfoil Magnum.

The couple's redevelopment programme is continuous and along with access to the golf course, guests can enjoy a meal in the newly refurbished Courtyard Restaurant, or open an account at the Courtyard Delicatessen, which makes self-catering a doddle. And, if you want to burn off all the Highland fare you've been consuming, then there's Mains of Taymouth Riding Stables right on your doorstep.

In fact, pretty much everything here is just a few minutes' walk away and now that the couple have introduced a bespoke beauty service and activities service, there is something for everyone. Irena is pragmatic, though: “We'll still be on the estate and not far away from The Farmhouse, but it makes sense to offer it to guests, and although I will miss our times here, it's a wonderful property.”

For details of holiday ownership or self catering accommodation at Mains of Taymouth Country Estate and Golf Course, tel: 01887 830226 or visit [www.taymouth.co.uk](http://www.taymouth.co.uk)

# Now Create the look

WITH GABY SOUTAR

## CLEAR WINNER

**CLEAR GLASS AND OAK VENEER COFFEE TABLE** £583

*BoConcept ([www.boconcept.co.uk](http://www.boconcept.co.uk))*

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## DINER IS SERVED

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Hoist yourself onto this leatherette and chrome bar stool, for that retro diner experience. Eggs over easy and hash browns, please.



Neutral tones contrast with bold accents in one of The Farmhouse bedrooms

## RUGGED PERFORMER

**VIOLA RUG** £175

*John Lewis ([www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com))*

This 100 per cent wool piece, by British textile designer Maggie Levien, is a warmer-looking version of the damask rug in The Farmhouse.

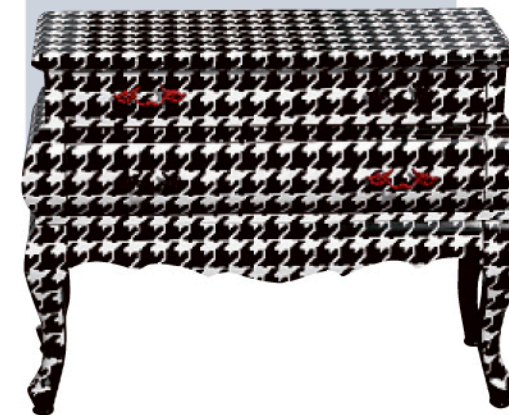


## CHECK IT OUT

**DOGTOOTH TWO-DRAWER CHEST** £1075

*Alexander & Pearl ([www.alexanderandpearl.co.uk](http://www.alexanderandpearl.co.uk))*

The formal associations of dogtooth (or houndstooth) print contrasts with the rather irreverent design of this Italian-made chest, with its funky mismatched handles.



## POUR YOUR ATTENTION

**BOTANIC GARDEN ETCHED CRYSTAL PITCHER** £30

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## THE SCOTSMAN

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The Scotsman has teamed up with Edinburgh School of Food & Wine and Taste of Edinburgh to offer four lucky readers the chance to be a VIP at Scotland's biggest food festival whilst polishing up their own culinary skills, courtesy of Edinburgh School of Food & Wine.

Edinburgh School of Food & Wine

Winners and a guest will be treated to a VIP experience at this year's Taste of Edinburgh. Winners will relax in the VIP lounge, indulge in a glass of the finest champagne, take part in exclusive chef q&a's and take home a Taste of Edinburgh recipe book. They will also get the chance to sample outstanding produce from over 100 exhibitors and producers. They will then have the chance to learn from the professionals as they spend a day at Edinburgh School of Food & Wine, one of the UK's most regarded cook schools. Winners will be able to create a envious three course menu using the best of Scotland's world class seasonal produce to impress their family and friends.

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Promotion closes midday Monday 25 June.



### Terms and Conditions

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