

IRELAND'S HOMES INTERIORS & LIVING

IRELAND'S LARGEST SELLING MONTHLY INTERIORS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

May 20

47

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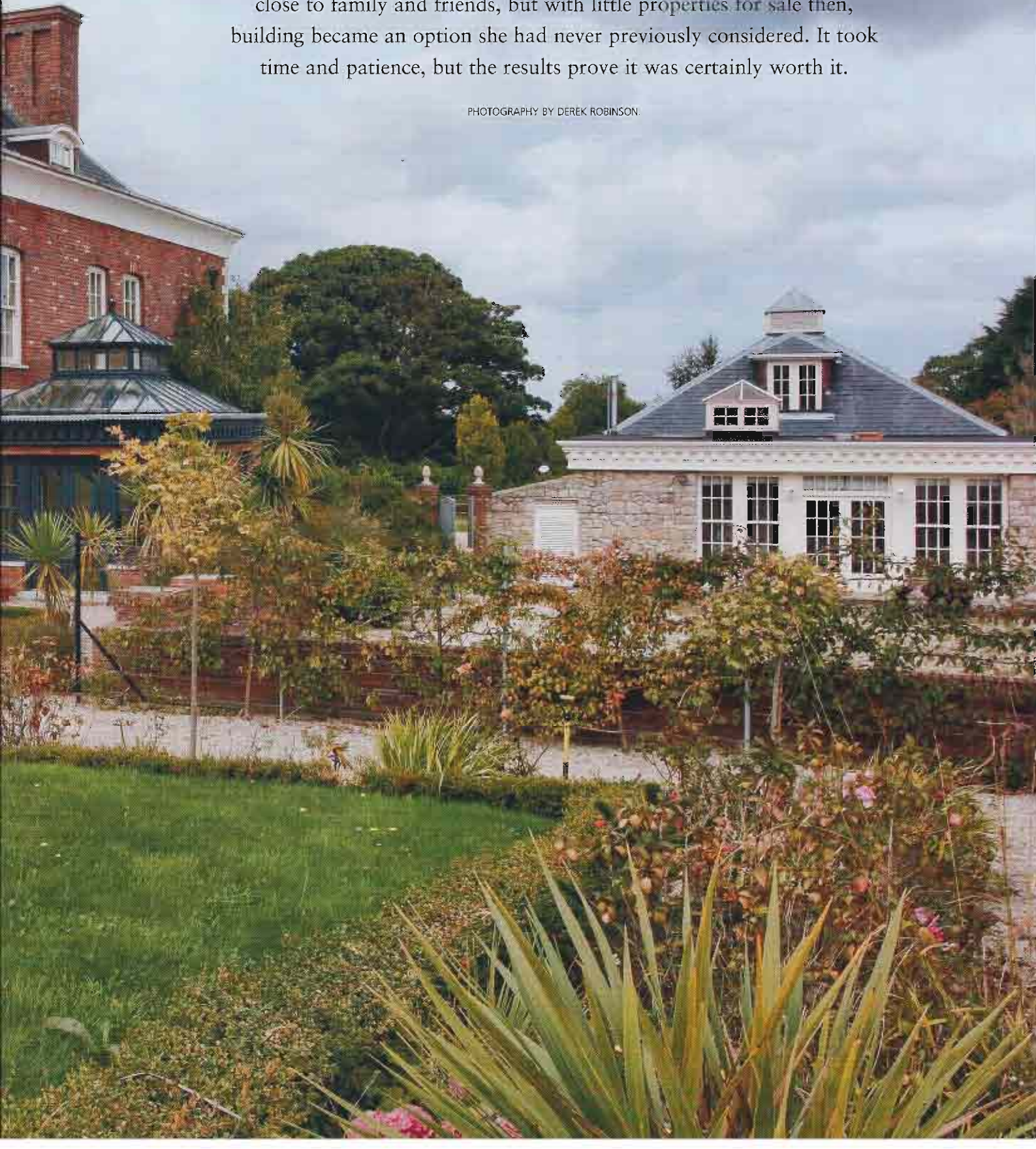
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A Grand Scale

Rhona and her husband had built their home twelve years ago after outgrowing their old house nearby. She loved the area and wanted to stay close to family and friends, but with little properties for sale then, building became an option she had never previously considered. It took time and patience, but the results prove it was certainly worth it.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK ROBINSON.





Rhona is the owner of Hedgeroe Living, www.hedgeroe.com which was established as a natural progression of her design consultancy business and as a result of frustration in the process of getting solutions to clients. 'It was becoming difficult to get furniture and furnishings for our clients. UK companies kept stock of their products, but we were constantly told we had to wait for up to twelve weeks by Irish furniture suppliers so it was frustrating. We now keep stock of all products so customers can take them straight home themselves or get next day delivery.' With such a background, it's no wonder Rhona's home reflects the kind of design elements she absorbs on a daily basis. But to get to the final stage took a tremendous amount of work and the story behind it is fascinating and Rhona's travelling which she does for her business played a vital part. 'I can't say I travel purely for inspiration, I mostly travel for work and it would be impossible for me not to take back some new understanding. Connecting with other people and their cultures makes me realise how everyone shares the same dreams for themselves and their children. What inspires us makes us individual and unique.'











'Building a house is certainly a huge undertaking, and not for the faint hearted. My father had fallen in love with a small neglected farm close to where we lived. He was thrilled when he was able to buy it at auction, I think it must have been the last piece of land sold before the Celtic tiger took off. So it was not that my husband and I were so wise and found this lovely site, I must hand that credit to my father! The farm was very neglected when we first saw it. Gorse bushes were so tall giraffes could have hid behind them, if there had been any on the run from the zoo! There was rag weed everywhere, all of which was pulled by hand with help from family. The gates had not been in use for so long, the grass had concealed them from sight. But all this didn't diminish the beauty of a forgotten place at the foot of a forested hill down a country lane.'





For Rhona, convincing the local planning department that a building would not detract from the lovely surroundings was very important. But crucially the planners knew exactly where she was coming from with the plan, the interest taken in the materials they were using and how it would sit in its surroundings. It turned out to be less daunting than expected. With planning in place, the style of the home could come together. 'Style is something you hone and develop, it is not static and my previous homes were more cluttered, a lot of patterned curtains and seating. The older I get the more I want to pair back and simplify my surroundings. Now I find texture rather than too much pattern and natural calm colours suit me far better. For the house itself, with Dublin being a Georgian city, I took inspiration from its warm orange bricks and stone as well as the proportions. I don't know any visitor to Dublin who has not been impressed with this period of very elegant architecture, I'm very proud of it.'

All the furniture in the house comes either from Hedgeroe or has come through family. For example Phyllis, Rhona's mother in law, had a very good eye for antiques and was involved with the antiques section of the Beaufield Mews in Stillorgan for many years. But there are many more family influences and influences from further afield, as Rhona explains. 'The table in the hall belonged to my father, though it is my mother who searches out the odd treasure, this included. As for curtains and any other soft furnishings, I hate to admit it, but I am a fabric hoarder. I simply love the craft and the story, behind a piece of material.'







For example, our chain stitched rugs are all made by hand, no two are the same. I have sat amazed watching the men who make these individual expressions of art, working with an oversized crochet needle, punching wool through heavy cotton and pulling it back through again. It is a great skill and one which is being eroded by the migration of such men to work on road building in northern India. There are many such crafts and skills under threat, not everything is mass produced on vast machines. And you don't need to look outside Ireland to see this. John England manufacture the most beautiful quality Irish linen, and this is what I chose for most of the curtains in our home, in mousy grey, and a finely woven sacking sheer with a weft of gold shooting through it. They are simply a joy. Others are made from fabric from another Irish gem, John Hanly. They weave woollen plaids and checks for some very famous names in international fashion. Though their fabrics are used mainly for clothes, they make the most beautiful curtains.'

A joinery company from Belfast worked on all the interior woodwork of the house, including the kitchen. They had never made one before, so Rhona had to do a working drawing of every square inch, which was not only enjoyable, but encouraged her to think about how the design would multi-task. It has been painted three times since it went in, and the practical thing is, in two days the units can be transformed into a new kitchen again with fresh colour. 'We all love the kitchen as you can see, and the sitting room. They are across a small hall from each other with a door to the garden, and both are in a sunny part of the house. There is an AGA in the kitchen and it is like another member of the family, always warm and welcoming. The two windows are large and the whole room bounces the light around. But the windows can look bleak on dark evenings, so I chose plantation shutters in a stone colour to solve this, they open for full on light or can have the slats half open to let dapple sun through and are so cosy when closed at night. On the wall between them is one of the few things I would call a treasured possession, a large aboriginal painting of song lines. All the family love this painting, it has great movement and joy.' The sitting room is a small and cosy room with an oversized fireplace. The walls and part of the ceiling is panelled and painted and there is a dark wood floor with a large sisal area rug. Furniture is oversized too and the mix and match works effortlessly. The coffee table is actually an old kitchen table with the legs cut down, so it is big enough for absolutely everything, he it for teenage boys to put their feet up on, or eat dinner from while watching a movie. It is the smallest room in the house, but it is actually Rhona's favourite and she fully admits she would miss it if it wasn't part of the home.







An extraordinary project on an extraordinary scale, the amount of work and detailing that needed to be carried out at each and every stage is astonishing. From the research to planning, tweaking and execution, it is a phenomenal piece of work both architecturally and design wise and something that people, no matter what their taste whether it be contemporary or traditional, will take inspiration from in some level. But with such a grand scale, what are Rhona's tips for those embarking on something similar? 'We called in the experts where we needed them, it is money well spent, especially for eco-friendly and energy saving advice. Be as careful at the start of a project (and you will definitely have to be at the end of your project), with your money. Put aside some money to do the garden, (and don't be tempted to raid it) if you are building on a green field site, even tiny trees can grow amazingly in five or six years and don't cost too much. Nothing settles a building into its surroundings quite like plants. Get good quality bed, sofa and curtains, you use and see them every day and they can become your best friends or worst enemies. Ask all your best friends to wear their oldest clothes and come around to help with the painting. Give a surprise house warming instead, or as in our case, after the painting was finished!' 🏠

Create the look

FROM THE DUBLIN HOME

Rhona has furnished her home with flair using a range of elegant, classic pieces.



San Genis terracotta floor tile by **Fired Earth** is characterised by spots and swirls which are created by the combination of light and dark clay. The 300 x 300mm tiles cost £39.92/€45.08 per m². Phone Belfast 028 9023 8000 and Dun Laoghaire 01 663 6160. www.firedearth.com



Rosa Alba curtain (NCF3942-03) £50.50 per metre, lined with Ponte Vecchio (NCF3943-05) £68.50 per metre; sofa covered in Rosa Alba (NCF3942-05) £50.50 per metre; cushion Ponte Vecchio (NCF3943-05) £68.50 per metre and Rosa Alba wallpaper (NCW4033-01) £50.50 per roll. All by **Nina Campbell** distributed by Osborne & Little. Euro prices on request. Phone Alan Espey Interiors, Newtownards 028 9181 5076; Caroline Fletcher Design, Doagh 07870 670442; Hampton Furnishings, Lisburn 028 9267 2220. www.ninacampbell.com For further stockists visit www.osborneandlittle.com



Henley 1,200mm round table from **Neptune** designed around the unique steel centered pedestal, engineered for the ultimate in strength yet finished in beautiful curvaceous oak, this table looks great with any of Neptune's range of upholstered dining chairs. £850/€1,095. Visit www.neptune.co.uk for your nearest Irish stockist.

The Riviera armchair by **Hedgeroe**. This French-style armchair is elegant and comfortable and comes in a choice of three fabrics, charcoal herringbone wool, natural linen or pale grey cotton, and has a weathered oak frame. Matching footstools also available. (720mm x 600mm x 850mm). €699. Phone Dublin 01 2948932. www.hedgeroe.com

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