

HIGHLAND GAMES

*Tradition meets contemporary design
in this immaculately renovated
property in Perthshire – a welcome
escape from the bleak Scottish winter*

Words **ORLA NELIGAN**

Photography **RUTH MARIA MURPHY/LIVING INSIDE**





Entrance The original tiling, front door and handcrafted crochet 'Glück' pendant light by Naomi Paul make a striking first impression **Opposite** Surrounded by mountain scenery in the Tay Valley, the historic building enjoys serene views ►

T

here are no twee touches or tartan curtains in Dun Aluinn (Scots Gaelic for 'beautiful hill fort'), John Burke and Susie Whyte's nine-bedroom holiday home in the Perthshire countryside. In fact, there are no curtains at all. 'I think people thought we couldn't afford them,' laughs Susie. 'But it's really about bringing the landscape inside and ensuring the building doesn't compete with the views.' The house sits in the Tay Valley, which is overlooked by mist-shrouded mountains. It's a place of quiet beauty and this home's interior matches the serenity of the scenery.

When the couple first saw the property, however, its cornices and gables were painted candy pink, typical of its Queen Anne Victorian style. 'It looked like a big fancy cream cake,' says Susie, who set about dialling back the décor and revealing the period architecture beneath. 'It had this lovely eerie, haunted house feel to it and I didn't want to lose that,' she explains. 'My aim was to uncover the building's existing features, as opposed to renovating them.' Taking no credit for the final look of the former hotel and boarding house, John attributes its transformation to his wife, who, he says, 'had the final say from the start'. Given her career as an interior designer and architect, it made sense for her to take the reins, though she admits the design is an expression of both their talents, with John being the more flamboyant in terms of style.

It was John's 'can-do' attitude that meant an Italian art deco drinks cabinet could be shipped from Barcelona to this remote part of Scotland, for example. The dining room table, on the other hand, was Susie's brainchild. John was happy to buy a table, but Susie had the idea to design and make one from scratch. The result is a 5.5-metre work of art made from poured bronze and oak – it's understated yet a real focal point in the house. Although simplicity underpins the design of this home, there are daring flourishes dotted around. Susie had reservations about using Farrow and Ball's 'Off Black' in the hallway, but it makes for a dramatic, and surprisingly warm, entrance.

A lot of the original Victorian woodwork is still intact, too, with authenticity a constant watchword for Susie. 'The floor in the living room is made up of three different sections of wood. It's not perfect, but we didn't want to hide that. It was about keeping it honest,' she explains, crediting local carpenters Hamish Walker and Andrew Brown for seamlessly blending new boards with the originals. There are spaces in the house with a feeling of time suspended, while others nod to a more contemporary aesthetic. What underpins it all, though, is Susie's sympathetic approach. 'There is a sense of achievement now it's all done,' she admits. 'We went over budget and that can be stressful, but I know we've created the home we wanted: it's not austere, it's comfortable, simple and honest.' dunaluinn.com



'The building had a LOVELY HAUNTED HOUSE feel to it and I didn't want to LOSE that. MY AIM was to UNCOVER the property's EXISTING FEATURES'

Hallway The panelling, banister and ironmongery are original features, while the radiator was salvaged from a derelict school in Blairgowrie. The lamp is antique and the chair is from Lynn Antiques in Mullingar

Living room Contemporary touches, such as the orange 'Tufty-Too' sofa by Patricia Urquiola for B&B Italia and 'Heron' lamp by Michael Verheyden for CTO Lighting, harmonise with Victorian panelling and window surrounds ►





Above, from left Original floorboards in the living room were restored by local carpenters. The leather chair is a 1950s design bought in Fins de Siècles, a store in Barcelona; an ornate fireplace is the focal point, decorated with rustic twigs and berries **Dining room** Designed by Susie, the bronze and oak table made by Black Isle Bronze in Nairn, northern Scotland, is surrounded by the 'Chicago' chairs by Bolia. The light that hangs above the table was designed by Susie and made by Kreon ►



When John and Susie first saw the HOUSE, they thought 'it looked like a BIG FANCY CREAM CAKE', with its CORNICES and GABLES painted CANDY PINK






Terrace John and Susie relax on 'Sandur' sofas and chairs from Oasiq, while sheepskins from Dyreskinn and a Kadai fire bowl add warmth **Main bedroom** A handmade leather pendant by Paris-based Lulé Studio hangs beside a B&B Italia bed in a luxurious deep red wine hue. The turquoise cushions are from Dunnes Store **Bathroom** A white stone bath offers views over the valley. For similar, try West One Bathrooms ►



OVERLOOKED by mist-shrouded MOUNTAINS, the Tay Valley is a place of QUIET BEAUTY –and this home's interior MATCHES THE SERENITY of the scenery



Guest bedroom A throw from Johnstons of Elgin adds a pop of colour to this oak four-poster bed from Benchmark **Bathroom** Inspired by a Japanese soaking tub, the teak bath was handmade by William Garvey Furniture **Opposite** A white chair by XVL based in Belgium adds comfort to the pared-back scheme **See Stockists page for details** 



Despite its GRANDIOSE
SCALE and history of the
property, John and Susie
have MADE this a PLACE
that's COMFORTABLE,
SIMPLE and HONEST

