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The Aitchison's chose suitable period pieces, like a Victorian post office sorting-box as kitchen storage



The original roundhouse end

# Roundhouse Is A Lodge Like No Other

This tranquil and traditional Angus lodge is an ideal retreat

by GARRY FRASER

JUST how do you fix straight curtain-poles to a curved wall? Well, you steam them so that they bend! It sounds simple – but only after you know it – and that was just one of the tricks of the trade picked up by Pam and Mark Aitchison when they took on the task of the refurbishment of Knockshannoch Lodge, Glenisla, the last remaining thatched roundhouse in Scotland.

"We saw the property up for sale in November, 2013," says Pam. "It was in an area of Scotland we did not know at all, but after viewing the property and visiting the area we knew it was a renovation project we would

be passionate about. Of course, falling in love with Glenisla helped too!"

The work started at Easter 2014, and after three years' hard graft, mostly done by themselves, and an outlay of approximately £50,000, the Stirling-based Aitchisons have a home from home. It has also turned out to be a popular holiday let that has attracted guests from all over the UK and the continent.

"We purchased it for a number of reasons," she says. "One was to give us a both a DIY project – mainly Mark who is an amateur carpenter – but also to have a country

retreat for us and our son who has always loved wildlife and the outdoors.

"It's an investment for the future and renting it out makes sense financially. It's been lovely hearing what other couples and families enjoy doing in the area when they are here, whether they be wildlife lovers, hikers or dog owners.

"It cost a lot more than we had estimated," admits Pam. "Major damp work was the first issue, and next was installing a new septic tank system – the old one had collapsed in the ground. Plumbing was the main expense due to the thickness of the stone walls. They are two to three feet thick and we needed a specialist drilling job to drill through them to fit the copper piping in. That ate up a lot of the renovation budget.

"It also took us a lot longer than we had anticipated, but that gave us more time to think about what was right in terms of décor and style and also to purchase suitable pieces to fit in with the character of the cottage.

"We managed to acquire a Victorian post office sorting-box with the name of the house and other local houses and farms listed. It's in the kitchen as a storage piece for quirky display objects.

"We have also learned a lot about living in the Scottish countryside. We spent one weekend carefully planting a

hedge around the property and then came back the following week to find that deer had been down and eaten it all!"

The lodge was originally the gatehouse to Knockshannoch House, which was built in 1880 as hunting and shooting lodge with 25 bedrooms. Once the property of the Scottish Youth Hostelling Association, it is now privately owned as an activity centre.

Future plans for Pam and Mark over the next couple of years include making a homemade, ramshackle summer house for the top garden, a tree house or tree platform for children – or agile adults – and a wild flower meadow to the front of the property.

The success of the lodge is a double-edged sword for the Aitchisons as bookings come flooding in. "Sometimes we feel a little like we are losing out on staying there ourselves, but we booked ourselves in for a couple of sneaky weeks over the summer!"

As well as regular human visitors, Pam and Mark have a regular guest of the pine marten variety.

"We left jam sandwiches out for it one day, then found out he – or she – had been digging a hole in the thatch. That's an expensive repair but as it hasn't got worse, we'll put up with it!"

[www.knockshannochlodge.co.uk](http://www.knockshannochlodge.co.uk)