



The future's **bright**

Adding a contemporary extension to a traditional stone-built house has not just resulted in more space – it has created a light-filled family home that will look good for years to come

Words **Fiona Reid** Photographs **Dave Morris**

DETAILS

What A five-bedroom, five-bathroom detached house

Where The Grange, Edinburgh

Architect Helen Lucas Architects, 0131 478 8880, www.helenlucas.co.uk

Building Contractor Braidwood Building Contractors, 0131 440 4044, www.bbc-ltd.co.uk





It takes a leap of faith – and considerable confidence in your architect – to embark on the wholesale reconfiguration of the house you’ve just bought while living on the other side of the planet. Yet Charlotte and Allan Marson did exactly this when they decided to relocate from Singapore to Scotland three years ago.

The couple had been living abroad for 11 years but were ready to return to Britain with their young son Harry. Edinburgh (“Such a stunning city,” according to Charlotte) was their top choice as they have family there, but finding the right property proved challenging as there wasn’t much that was suitable on

the market. “I’d previously lived in a London townhouse and was keen to try horizontal living rather than a multi-storey house,” Charlotte says. “And we were desperate to finally have a place of our own after years of renting in Singapore.”

Their search led them to a detached house in the Grange area which had once been the home of an artist. It had a lovely feel but was badly in need of renovation. The bay-windowed rooms to the front were spacious and filled with light, but those at the rear were dull and cramped. The upper floor had three bedrooms and two bathrooms, and attempts had been made to create more space downstairs, with several small extensions



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having been added over the years. One of these was a felt-roofed, single-storey structure against the western boundary wall. As Charlotte explains, "It was all very higgledy piggledy at the back. The small kitchen and dining room meant it didn't work for the way we wanted to live."

After consulting three architectural practices, the couple chose Helen Lucas Architects. "Helen had already done a lot of work in this part of the city and I think that experience was invaluable," says Charlotte, who began by giving Helen and project architect Rosalind Livingstone a storyboard detailing the styles she liked. "I wanted something very light, with ►

IN HINDSIGHT

"I wish we'd had an architect with us when we were looking at houses. I had no idea we would be removing the existing extension, which added to the cost. That might have influenced our choice of house"

Habitat stools match the solid oak breakfast bar in the sleek, Corian-topped kitchen. Hans Wegner chairs and a James Burleigh table complete the dining area



plenty of natural materials, and I was keen that we try to use sustainable products wherever possible.” (Charlotte runs Temple Garden Foundation, a charity that works in partnership with local communities in rural Cambodia to promote sustainable development, where programmes include healthcare and child and adult education.)

From the very outset Helen Lucas advised the Marsons that the felt-roofed extension had to go. “We hadn’t considered that possibility when we bought the house,” Charlotte admits, “but I’m so pleased we accepted that decision. Creating a brand new extension to the eastern side of the garden means we get the afternoon sun. It’s stunning in here,” she says of the new light-drenched dining-kitchen. “In summer it can get rather warm, but after Singapore that’s fine!”

Indeed, arriving at the Marsons’ home today and walking into the hallway, your eye is drawn by the light through to the new dining and kitchen area. The two-storey extension is clad in untreated western red cedar and zinc, and a single winter has already mellowed the timber to reflect the hues of the original stonework. The new walls were insulated using a sustainable, high-performance natural wood-fibre product called Pavaflex, and an additional airtight wrap of insulation was then added to the outer leaf of the timber kit (before the cladding was ►

The combination of pale wood and white walls recurs throughout the house, adding to the sense of light and space. Jericho limestone tiles from Fired Earth add warmth and texture to the floors



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[Left] The house has a fine collection of stags' heads, including this one in the hall; [top, right] the bed in Harry's room is from Feather & Black, while the rug is Argentinian cowhide; [above] Duravit fittings and Grohe taps feature in all the bathrooms

added), making the walls super-insulated – a system provided by Natural Building Technologies.

The interior is just as understated. Alan Craighead of Craighead & Woolf designed the streamlined Warendorf kitchen in white laminate with white Corian tops, with its solid oak breakfast bar and Gaggenau and Siemens appliances. Jericho limestone tiles from Fired Earth add an organic texture underfoot. Charlotte found the white table from London designer James Burleigh and combined it with Hans Wegner's 1950s Wishbone chairs ("I'd had my eye on these for years!" she laughs), while she turned to Louis Poulsen for the lighting, with the classic PH5 pendant above the table and Toldbod 120 pendants over the island.

Sliding doors open to the garden, which was replanted after the building work. "Once the garden matures, it'll feel more like a courtyard," reflects Charlotte. Windows in one elevation offer views to the neighbouring gardens, while opaque rooflights bathe the kitchen in soft light.

The upper level of the extension has a bedroom and en-suite for Harry, with French doors in the bedroom opening on to a glass balcony. Back downstairs, the utility area tucked behind the kitchen leads to another new bedroom and en-suite, with a third bedroom and en-suite above the new garage. The oak staircase which gives access to this area was made by Bob Logan of Woodgate Joinery – it's a beautiful piece, as Charlotte says, illustrating the fine craftsmanship that was lavished on this house.

Credit also goes to the builders, Braidwood Building Contractors, and the company's director David Neave, along with structural engineer Gordon Eadie. "The builders were amazing; David is so proud of the work he does," Charlotte says, "and it shows in the quality of the detailing"

Major alterations were also made to the existing main staircase (again by Logan) as a room upstairs was removed to create the generous landing space, which leads to Harry's bedroom and the newly designed family bathroom. The latter features a large walk-in shower area – having grown accustomed to wet rooms in Singapore, the Marsons wanted to recapture the experience here.



The two-storey extension is clad in untreated western red cedar which is already mellowing to match the tones of the original stonework of the house

A storage wall was removed in the master bedroom, granting access to a new dressing-room and en-suite. All the bathrooms, along with the ground-floor WC, were designed with the same palette of finishes and fittings: chunky Corian (forming a countertop for the Duravit basins in the family bathroom, for example, with a bespoke cabinet by made by Colin Parker Furniture & Bespoke Joinery) and matt-finish tiling (all from the Waxman Architectural Linea range) and oak detailing, creating an organic and contemporary palette similar to that in the dining-kitchen. As Charlotte says, “You’ll never get bored of these materials.” This is quiet, timeless design.

The Marsons remained in Singapore during the build, eventually moving into the house last July.

“It was nice being thousands of miles away – it stops you over-thinking things,” says Charlotte. “It’s good to let someone else make those decisions.” The architects and clients communicated by e-mail, with Charlotte making only a few trips over as

the project was nearing completion. “Towards the end we really found ourselves on the same wavelength,” she says. “I was very impressed.”

No hard sell was required from the team at Helen Lucas – Charlotte was happy to embrace the contemporary aesthetic. “I wanted that contrast between the old and the new; that’s what makes it interesting,” she says. This contrast is apparent in the hallway with its plaster cornice detailing. It’s clear from the furnishings and lighting that Charlotte also enjoys eclectic flourishes: the WC features an opulent black chandelier (“I didn’t buy it for here but it didn’t fit anywhere else!”) while the family bathroom has a cowhide-upholstered ottoman. There’s also a collection of stags’ heads (“None of them real,” she stresses), including a South African mosaic-tiled deer head in the hallway.

Old and new merge beautifully in this house, but it’s the new elements that have created a home fit for the future. ■

BETTER THAN EXPECTED

“When the old buildings were initially removed you could see the marks on the stone where they’d been; now, with the stone repointed, you’d never know”