

EVERY THURSDAY

19 AUGUST 2010

THE SCOTSMAN

Property



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Escape to East Lothian

This cottage offers country life close to Edinburgh, finds Kirsty McLuckie

MOVING from a city flat to a house with a garden in East Lothian is a well-worn path for many people, especially those who are planning to start a family. But while it is very common these days, when Judy and Alan Torrance moved out of the capital 29 years ago there were very few people doing the same.

"We wanted more space than we could afford in the city and we wanted a garden. And as we were still working in Edinburgh and commuting back in we needed to be within easy travelling distance," says Judy. They chose a period cottage in Garvald and moved into it in its bicentenary year, 1981.

Papana Cottage sounds small and quaint, but having started its life as two cottages, it is actually more substantial. The Torrances have added to the floor space considerably over the years too, so the house has grown with their family and their changing circumstances. But

"The conservatory is very warm and bright on the duller days"

despite Alan being an architect, it took them some time to get around to any major renovations. Judy says "We lived in it for nearly six years because we were too busy to attempt what we knew we wanted to do. But it meant we really had a good idea of what it needed when we did go ahead with a major extension."

The cottage was very traditional inside and therefore somewhat dark and a little poky. The Torrances took away an internal corridor to add space to the sitting room, extended the kitchen to make a real family area and made a large walk-in cupboard into a shower room to serve the downstairs bedroom. But the biggest job added a whole new room which has served many purposes over the time it has been there.

Judy says: "Because it is off the kitchen, it was originally the dining room, then when the children were small it was a playroom and allowed us to keep an eye on them and keep all their mess and clutter out of the rest of the house. Now because Alan works from home, it is a big study." The extension room, which also overlooks the garden and has access to it has served as a sometime spare bedroom and a TV room for the children, Jack, now 21 and Abbey, 19, in their teenage years.

While Alan, as the architect, had very clear ideas about the design of the extension and remodelling, Judy's one

requirement was to flood the back of the house with light. Although the initial project did open up the back of the house to the garden and add a huge amount of light with Velux windows in the kitchen, she felt she hadn't gone far enough and ten years ago the large conservatory was added on the other side to the original extension.

With access through double doors from the kitchen, this spacious room has become the focus of family life, even in winter. Judy says "In the summer all the doors are open and we spend a lot of time in the garden. In the winter the doors might be shut but the conservatory is very warm and bright on the duller days."

The garden, like the house, has changed and adapted with the family, it is sloped with the lie of the land and faces south, so is both sheltered and private. When the children were small the Torrances grassed the whole area for playing, since then they have added terracing for eating and barbecuing outside and now have a productive vegetable garden alongside trees and shrubs.

The couple rave about the location for bringing up children and it has proved to be exactly what they wanted when they first moved from Edinburgh. Judy says: "The local schools are good and there is good transport into Edinburgh for the private schools too." And they are no longer the only commuters in the village either; stations at Drem and Longniddry, good road links and buses from Haddington make it a very easily commutable distance to the capital.

With Jack and Abbey both now away at university the Torrances are looking to move further south to a spot by the sea but think Papana Cottage, with its flexible layout, will suit many different types of househunter, not just the typical young family moving from the city.

"It really is anything you want to be," says Judy.



Inside knowledge

PAPANA COTTAGE, GARVALD, EAST LoTHIAN

■ This 200-year-old home, converted from two former cottages, is now a charming three-bedroom semi-detached house in the popular conservation village of Garvald in the heart of the East Lothian countryside.

■ There is a lovely south-facing sloped garden which is private and sheltered from the elements and off-street parking for two cars at the front of the house.

■ The accommodation is versatile, with, on the ground floor, a hall, living room with multi-fuel stove, study/playroom, kitchen, a conservatory presently used as a dining room with doors to the garden, a large utility room, double bedroom three and contemporary shower room; and on the first floor, a landing with eaves storage off, the master bedroom, double bedroom two and family bathroom.

■ Offers Over £305,000, contact Simpson and Marwick, tel: 01620 892000.



Clockwise from main: the conservatory; view of Papana Cottage from the garden; the living room; the exterior; Alan and Judy Torrance, inset right Cover: JULIE BULL

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