

Modernist home in classic town

Tommy Barker, Property Editor, visits a modernist home in Summercove, Kinsale, with stunning views in a corner of Ireland which remains one of the most highly sought after property locations in Europe

Pictures: F.22 Photography

THIS crisp-looking, just-finished, Kinsale harbour home has risen and fallen in its outline, like the tides, over 200 years and more.

Set out towards the mouth of the harbour, in the very heart of the almost embarrassingly pretty Summercove (which dips vertiginously from heights all around down to the water's edge by a pier,) at its core is a house with roots to the early 1800s.

At one stage, it had three modest cottages snuggled up to it to its right hand side, tucked into the

lower end of a hill heading up towards Charles Fort from the pier and from what's now the Bulman bar, sort of where the Wild

Atlantic Way gets on its merry way. Now, after a major redesign and detailed build period, it's a fascinating mix of traditional and modernist, with the 'ghost' outlines of the trio of old cottages now picked up in a smart, highly individual extension and new wing, yet in a homage to the old house, and those since-departed cottages.

The three cottages were re-

moved, and in the 1970s when bought by one wing of the Crosbie family, they were replaced eventually by a two-storey extension, well designed for the views, with a parking deck underneath, and a living room up above.

Then called Corlin Lodge, it sold again after about 40 years of Crosbie ownership, back in early 2016, and was bought by a couple with an international background, and their young family, who'd been looking for a site in and around Kinsale, having rented in several different lo-

cations, all the while charmed by the views, and the lure of the sea.

They almost had to be dragged to see the bottom of hill house just by the Bullman bar and oft-busy pier: it was the persistence of the locally-based, Tasmania Australia-born designer Craig Morrison, married to an Irish woman who'd seen the potential in this site and setting, the aspect and views over water, back to the town of Kinsale, spanning an ever changing coastal vista, from close quarters.

However, once visited, and appreciated, and exploring what could be done with further investment and architectural flair, the commitment was made pretty readily. It was then down to designing what worked best for the site.

Planners from the outset made plain that while the 1970s addition wasn't too important in their eyes, the older 19th century house section was to be kept, and could not be demolished for a clear-slate site design.

So, fairly quickly it was a case of restoration/conservation/adaptation on the one hand, and a complete new-build on the other, with as much as 250 year age gap between them, and both coming together for a new home of a quite modest 2,500 sq ft or so, on a rocky site with lots of water flowing down exposed sandstone cliff to the back.

It took a year to design and to secure get the planning approval, with locals consulted before and during the process.

Craig Morrison also had another, high end modernist new-build come to fruition nearby at Ardbrack, so his design abilities could be seen in actuality, as well as in drawings and plans.

The brief was quite simple, really: no fuss, restrained materials palette, everything was to be about the view out, while getting back in as much privacy as possible in an extensively glazed new structure, in an open setting.

Best decision was to alter the position of the new bright section, and to deferentially step it back from the older structure.

It's lower-slung, too, thanks to a



Summercove, Kinsale
Size: 2,500 sq ft
Bedrooms: 4
Bathrooms 4
BER: A3



flat roof, than its slate hung and pitched, slate-roofed counterpart to the left.

Craig Morrison says the aim to was make it look it had 'slid back' from the roofline of the original dwelling, and his four, crisp white pillars on top repeat the exact angle of that roof pitch, with the two central ones separated from



the flat roof and sloping soffits by small steel fins: it's a detail, but an inspired one.

It got planning approval without any third party interventions, and then coming on board as local and seasoned builder was the second generation builder Joe Neville of the 1963-founded Joe Neville Construction, who've

done residential projects in the heart of Kinsale, in Middleton and in Cork's Tivoli, as well as numerous one-offs.

On a tough site, with restricted access and right on the road in front, and backing into a cliff at the back over the rubble of long-removed cottages, it took a year to build, with progress watched by

passers-by, winter walkers and summer strollers.

"I never before realised just how many people walk out to Charles Fort from the town," says Joe Neville, who got used to public comments on the project along its passage, getting much appreciative feedback plus some more critical dissent from a minority who think

it's too modern for the setting.

It was completed in December 2017, in time for Christmas, and so has just had its first half-year of wholly-positive occupation, and the occupants say it's as engaging in all weathers, sun, rain, hail or snow (they've had them all already), in all turns of the tides, by day, and by night, and especially

when moonlight over the water casts its own magic spell, they add.

Meanwhile, an early heavy input into landscaping and planting (via John Curnow of Belgooly-based Kinsale Landscapes) is already yielding dividend, and over the next few years will grant back

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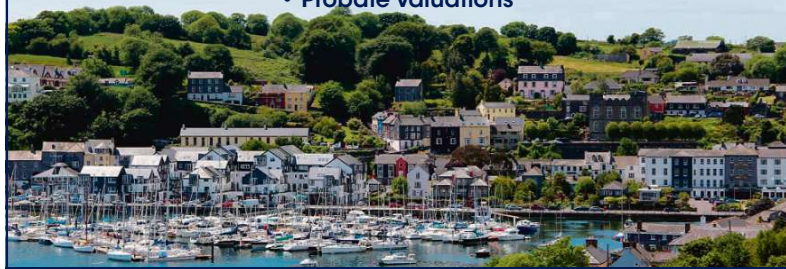
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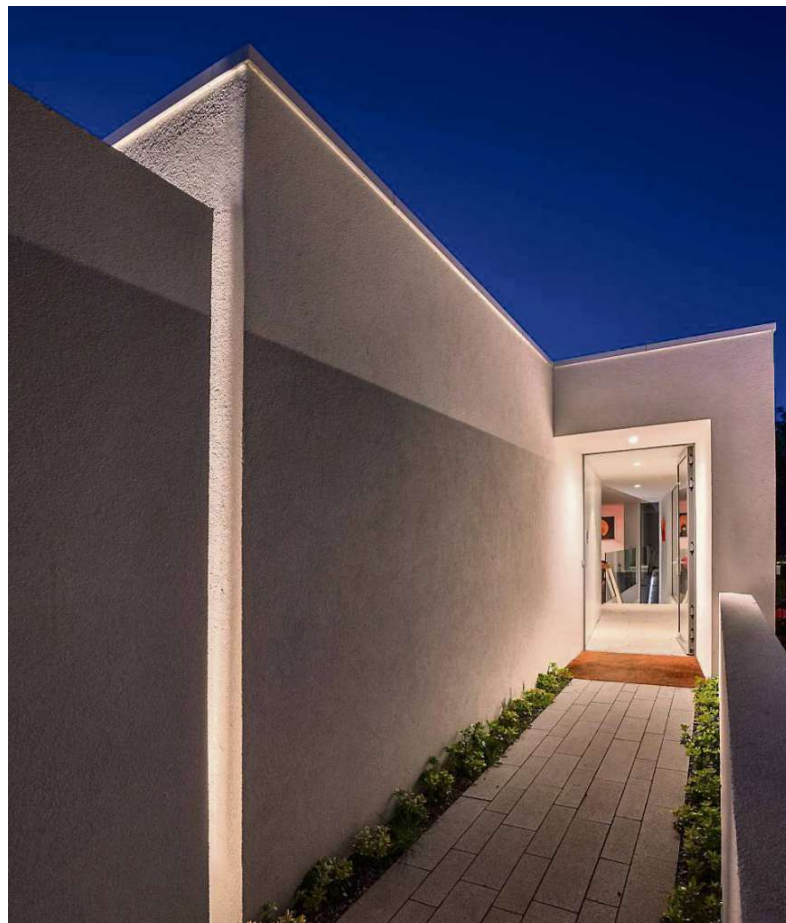
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considerable more privacy for those within. There are several grassed lawns areas and private courtyards, new hedging in Portuguese Laurel, there's a small stand of Himalayan Birch in a garden corner by the car parking area, with some 20-year-old Holm oaks in tall oak sleeper containers, replanted with trailing plants and agapanthus, in a private courtyard by two lower level bedrooms, while the 'hide and reveal' long entrance colonnade from the sentry-box like entrance port has Japanese 'carpet plants' interspersed between granite paving slabs.

Basic construction included uniting block work, timber and lots of steel, with Innishannon-based Jeremy Keohane doing the steel infrastructure, external steps, entrance gate/door and more, and locally based firm Graepels doing the perforated steel mesh for garden steps, leading up to two tiered rear gardens.

Engineering consultants were Murphy Matson O'Sullivan; electrician was Ger Calnan from Blackrock and plumber was Kevin O'Donoghue from Mallow, while HQ Kitchens in Forge Hill, Cork city did the slick, gloss kitchen and island where just about everything is hidden from sight, but reveals at the push of a handleless door.

Nothing was to distract from the view, say owners and designer alike.

That view! When you get to it, that is, visitors must first approach the house along an almost cloister like long walk from the secure private entrance on the hill, and it only really burst into the frame once past a small lobby.

Then? it's full on, irresistible.

Ensuring it is as unimpeded as possible, is the cleverly detailed window specification which sees the frames almost fully concealed in walls so that the glass appears almost floor to ceiling: not so easy to do, says builder Joe Neville, the art is sort of in concealing the art, and in the challenge of getting all windows to line up exactly, to the millimeter, under the soffit parapet.

The devil is in the detail, definitely, and as

the man behind the design, Craig Morrison was on site almost every day. He thinks he might have almost become a pest, but Joe Neville absolves him, saying while the brief was extensive, he was prepared to work around things to come up with appropriate on-site solutions. Oh! and "it came in on time, and on budget," says a justifiably proud Mr Morrison.

Windows and doors are triple glazed, Reynaers Aluminium, via Leo West Windows in Carrigaline, and the whole build was done to a passive house spec, with underfloor air-to-water geothermal heating.

It gets an A3 BER overall, more than fair going given the challenges of getting a good air tightness level when working with a portion that had a 250 year build history.

The original house, about 800 sq ft over two levels, now has a master bedroom with en suite and walk-in robe at first floor level, and bedroom and playroom with door to street (called 'the Bullman door!') at ground, and on each level, two very slight steps by tall, full-height doors demarcate the move from cutting edge 'new' to venerable 'aged.'

The older dwelling has been reroofed and its walls rehung in Bangor Blue slate, a very typical Kinsale feature, and the new arrival has a flat/low-pitch membrane roof, supported on steels from back wall to column steel fins, and walls are finished in an acrylic white render.

Internally, the lower ground levels floors are in a dark engineered wood, and upstairs (the tapering stairway linking the levels has recessed LED lighting by a shadow gap) the largely open plan kitchen/living/dining plus study able to be 'locked off' by a sliding door) is floored in a higher quality wide, dark oak plank.

The feel is pleasantly and deliberately minimalist, with a long run of low seating as a family fulcrum (designed by the aforementioned Mr Morrison) and it includes a pop-up feature bioethanol 2-3kw heater, as much as for mood-setting as anything else, perhaps against a backdrop of a winter sunset.

Oh, and did we mention the views?

Joe Neville

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