



# Outside the box



When the Scott family kept on growing, they expanded their Stockbridge home with a very modern extension that's been a big hit with all the occupants

**A**SANGUS, 9, sits up a tree, legs swinging. Freya, 1, powers across the ash wood floor on her hands and knees. Meanwhile Tançra, 7, has escaped for a little girl-time with one of her friends, as Ewan is making a few calls in his ground floor office (previously the formal dining room until the family decided they'd had quite enough of formality). And keeping an eye on everyone is mum Catriona, perched on the bench at one end of the family's new extension, with the giant concertina door pushed back to open up the house into the garden.

A typical scene for the Scott family in their Edinburgh home, where each member of the family has their own breathing space and where, generally speaking, life revolves around the new-build extension that has transformed their way of life. "It's fair to say we spend 99% of our time living in here," Ewan acknowledges. "It's completely changed the way we use the house," Catriona agrees. "Before, we'd spend our evenings in the drawing room, whereas now this space is so light and airy, why would you sit anywhere else? And the children actually play in the garden now."

The Scotts bought the property in 1994, moving from a tiny flat in Howe Street, Edinburgh, when Catriona was six months pregnant with Angus. "We were panicking over whether we'd find something in time," Ewan recalls, and the couple viewed the house during a blizzard-stricken winter's day, "when I guess most people couldn't see the potential." Fortunately, the Scotts could. The townhouse was built in 1802 and the previous owners had lived there since the 1950s, over time restoring the original features from the Adam fire surrounds to the Victorian encaustic terrazzo floor tiles in the hallway. Despite the very modern extension, the couple have kept the rest of the house in a more traditional manner. The drawing room is a case in point, complete with its ornately carved fire surround and extensive wood panelling, an effect heightened by the mix of antiques. The kitchen represents the meeting between the two, in the Aga the couple installed after moving in and the worn, paint-spattered kitchen table Catriona bought years ago in London, combined with the Habitat pendants hanging above.

But it's the extension that really catches your eye. >



► Three years ago, when the Scotts first approached architect Will Tunnell to discuss adding an extension on to their B-listed Georgian townhouse in Stockbridge, they were facing a common problem: with a growing family, the existing living space was feeling tighter by the year, yet the couple didn't want to leave the area. A fact not helped by the ever-escalating property prices, making upsizing a challenge within the city centre.

"Catriona and Ewan wanted a space that was relevant to living today," explains Will (the extension was his first solo project). Rather than try to emulate the 200-year old building, the couple wanted a contemporary addition that would co-exist happily alongside the Georgian architecture. "Catriona and Ewan had specific ideas about the aim of the extension, if not the form of it," says Will. The root of his approach here harks back to his days spent building and making furniture.

"The way this building is put together reflected the idea of making furniture with these 'boxes' constructed like pieces of marquetry," Will explains, referring to the inglenook space, a cosy contrast to the airy volume of the main dining and lounging area, along with two storage areas that were designed to replace the old garden sheds.

One such "box" contains a drinks cabinet built into its inner side, while another section pushes open (note, no handles) to access the laundry area, previously held within the old Victorian offshoot that once stood in this spot. "I wanted to make a fairly honed ensemble of component parts that were like pieces of furniture in themselves, where the three boxes define the space and then the curved canopy of the roof glides over it," says Will.

While those wooden boxes – oak-clad on the outside, with a refined oak veneer on the inside – connect the new building to the house, the roof appears to float free thanks to the curved panel of glass between the two that spills shafts of light into the adjoining kitchen. "It's an old trick," Will agrees, "but it helps create the feeling that this is almost a separate building, like a pavilion that sits in the garden."

Today, it's hard to visualise this house without its latest addition, a place where Catriona holds her wine tastings and Ewan, company director of a golf sponsorship consultancy, can have informal meetings. "It's the 'everything' space," says Will, "having superseded as well as complemented the rest of the house".

While undeniably contemporary, they were careful to cross-reference details with the main house, most notably in the use of materials. "If you use lots of white plasterwork and hard surfaces, a space can become cold and unforgiving, whereas softer materials like timber bring warmth, and you can have lots of timbers working together."

By demarcating the inglenook in cherry, Will explains, "we've created a warm space that's like an old timber-lined library, with slot windows to peek out into the garden. It's an arts and crafts motif done in a modern way."

The floating bench, a trick achieved thanks to the slice of glass below it, was used to demarcate the end of the internal space, "rather than having doors to the floor, which

could have made the space bleed out into the garden too much". The concertina doors, meanwhile, were a response to "the romance of the idea of being able to sit in your garden in a pavilion that doesn't have walls." For all the apparent ease, the structure itself was tricky to achieve – the cantilevered corner needed a considerable grounding of steelwork to ensure the whole structure wouldn't take off on a windy Edinburgh day. "It's about making something look effortless," Will says, "with elements placed carefully together, but designing out a lot of the things you would normally see".

It's certainly become a talking point. First-time visitors to the house are invariably "gobsmacked", according to Ewan. "The front of the house is quite dark compared with this, and so people expect to be tiptoeing around until they reach here and it's whoosh!" He smiles. "It's very satisfying." □