

A tiny self-build in the Hebrides

The wild landscapes and endless skies of the Isle of Harris tempted an intrepid young couple to design – and build – their own cosy lochside home



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HOME PROFILE

WHO LIVES HERE
Jack Arundell, an entrepreneur, and his partner Ellidh Izat, an architect

THE PROPERTY
A single-storey one-bedroom house on the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides, designed and built by the couple



EXTERIOR

Opposite The little house is perched at the head of a loch, where otters, seals and eagles are often spotted. Vast views carry across the Minch, separating the islands from the mainland

LIVING ROOM

This page Simple wood finishes and a concrete floor – made with local stone – are stylishly pared back and practical for rural life. Jack worked on the bespoke chair with the furniture maker Namon Gaston



After living in Edinburgh for 10 years, entrepreneur Jack Arundell and his partner, architect Eilidh Izat, felt ready to move on and tackle their next project. The couple, who own a craft-cider business, had created a home from a converted disused garage, which they now rent out, and this became their springboard to setting up their architectural practice Izat Arundell.

'We wanted a lifestyle change,' says Jack. 'Property on Harris is much more affordable than the city, but the flipside is it's expensive and slow to renovate here because tradespeople have to travel and materials need to be shipped over.'

Initially, Jack and Eilidh had planned to restore a ruin on the island, but the sale fell through at the last minute, so they made a quick decision to buy a small plot where a derelict house had once stood, which had outline planning for a one-bedroom property. The spot was below a rocky hillside on the east coast, behind a neighbouring property and facing a loch with panoramic views of the Isle of Skye.

'We actually bought the plot without seeing it,' says Jack, 'though we had been over to the island a few times and roughly knew the area, so we were confident about our decision.' The land they acquired is just 220 square metres and in a hamlet, with the quickest ferry journey back to the mainland from Stornoway taking nearly two hours.

A hardstanding was already in place, and Eilidh got to work on the new design. 'Depopulation is an issue on the island, so Planning was supportive of our different design,' Jack explains. 'They want people to build and live here.' The couple opted for a contemporary style that maximised the small footprint and, of course, embraced the stunning surroundings. However, Eilidh's



LIVING ROOM

Eilidh designed the shelving, which her brother Alasdair made from cedar. The Anglepoise is vintage and the Norwegian Jøtul 7kW woodburner was bought secondhand on Ebay

‘We wanted our home to feel grounded, warm and handmade’

ARTWORK

Eilidh designed the wall to accommodate this huge artwork by Zack Nauyokas, which they found at the Edinburgh College of Art Graduate Show. ‘It’s made of thick steel and very heavy, but we managed to get it delivered here safely,’ says Jack



KITCHEN

Beech cupboards were made by Eilidh’s brother Alasdair to her design. The charcoal Caithness stone worktop came from the Norse Stone quarry near Inverness

first design for a two-storey property in concrete made from local stone proved prohibitively expensive for a contractor to build. The couple quickly worked out they could only afford to see the project through if they adjusted their plans and built the house themselves. So, with this in mind, Eilidh scaled back the plan to an 85-square-metre, single-storey timber-frame structure clad in stone.

‘Eilidh’s design gave us all the rooms we needed and we didn’t have the expense of building a staircase or corridors that wouldn’t add actual living space,’ explains Jack. ‘I built the timber frame on site with Eilidh’s brother Alasdair Izat, a cabinetmaker. The local stone was readily available and we employed our stonemason friend Dan Macaulay to do the cladding.’

A major constraint was a giant piece of bedrock that took up about a third of the plot. ‘Lewisian gneiss is some of the toughest rock in the world and it would have been incredibly expensive to remove, so Eilidh designed the house around it,’ says Jack. ‘This is how the building got its sculptural shape, which we love, and the long windows on all sides.’

Its angular layout tracks the daylight with two corner pockets of living space that are separate yet interconnected. There’s only one bedroom and a must-have utility space – an extra freezer and food storage is necessary when it takes 25 minutes to drive to the nearest shop and the supermarket is 50 miles away.

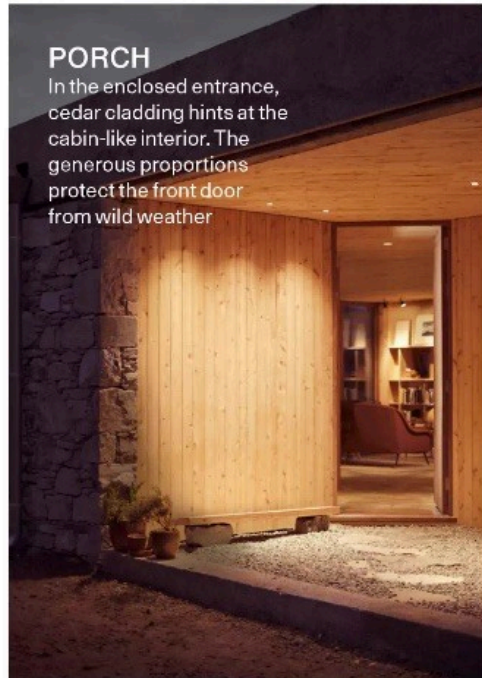
Jack had never built a home before and during the 18-month project, he and Alasdair lived in caravans bought on Gumtree and relied on Eilidh’s building knowledge and the help of YouTube. While digging the foundations, they uncovered strange things, such as a shower and armchair: evidence that the old property on the site had been demolished and pushed into



EXTERIOR

Above Eilidh’s timber-frame design enabled Jack and Alasdair to build the house on site. Local stone cladding by Dan Macaulay ensures the home blends into the landscape. The building’s sculptural form is a result of needing to build around a huge rock

SMALL-SPACE SPECIAL



PORCH

In the enclosed entrance, cedar cladding hints at the cabin-like interior. The generous proportions protect the front door from wild weather



the ground rather than disposed of. The pair battled nine storms during the build, and when Dan arrived to do the stonework, Jack gave him his digs and relocated to a tent on top of his car. As soon as the house was watertight, he set up camp inside.

Eilidh designed the interior with simple materials – local concrete for the polished floor, clay plaster walls and cedar cladding sourced from a sawmill in the Highlands. ‘The cedar was cheap and imperfect, but we like it that way,’ admits Jack. ‘We wanted our home to feel grounded, warm and handmade, and to reflect something of ourselves – it’s a new-old house.’

The couple have settled into their home and new lifestyle with ease. Their latest business venture is a pop-up café in the local community centre where Jack, who is an experienced chef, makes fresh seafood pasta and they catch up with friends.

‘We couldn’t have found a lovelier spot,’ says Jack. ‘Although the build was gruelling, we have no regrets. Eilidh’s design is just perfect – the house disappears into the hillside, yet people who come to visit are often surprised by how big it is on the inside. It’s a very special place to live.’

Find out about the couple’s cider business at [@linncider](#) and renting their home in Edinburgh at [@porteous.studio](#). The property won the Royal Institute of British Architects’ House of the Year Award 2025 ([izatarundell.com](#))

BEDROOM

Above left ‘We get lovely morning light in here,’ says Jack. ‘One of the best things is sitting in bed and looking through the living room and out of the window to see the sun rising’

BATHROOM

Left Tucked into the centre of the layout, this room still manages to fit a generous shower, while a roof window above the basin provides natural light