

Thursday 11th June:

Phase 3: Redecoration and finishing touches!

Travelled up in the evening with Judith and a friend of ours, Jan, who has volunteered to help us with the painting. Bringing with us a tin of Zinsser B.I.N. Sealer – a Shellac based undercoat primer that apparently really does stop knots bleeding through the paint. Very expensive but worth it we're told.

Friday 12th June – Tuesday 16th June:

Judith and Jan started painting the picture rails and the boarding on the window reveals while I got on with fitting the kitchen wall cupboards, the oven, hob and sink, and the doors to all the units. Also, the cornice and pelmets on the kitchen wall units. That cleared the living room so that we could get to the walls and ceiling to start painting.

Jan's most insistent that it's a tabard, not a pinny!



Over the next few days;

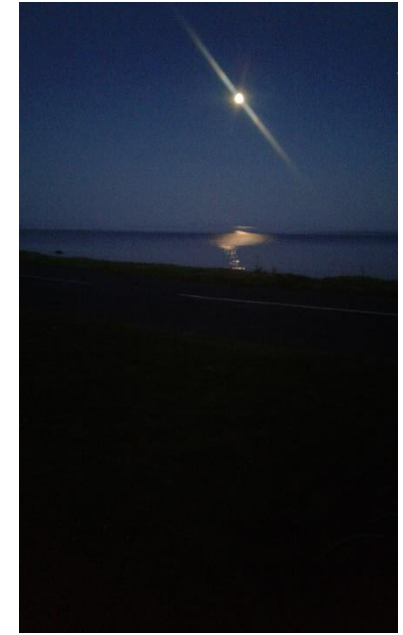
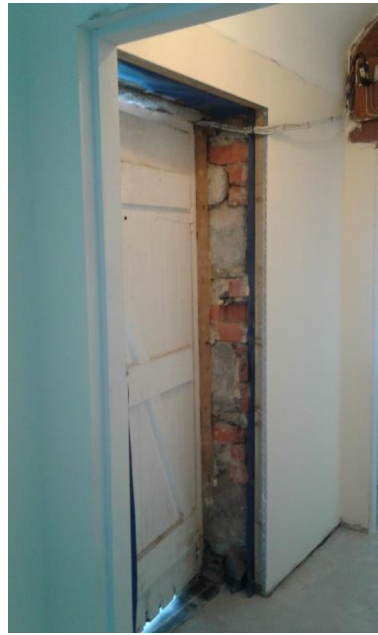
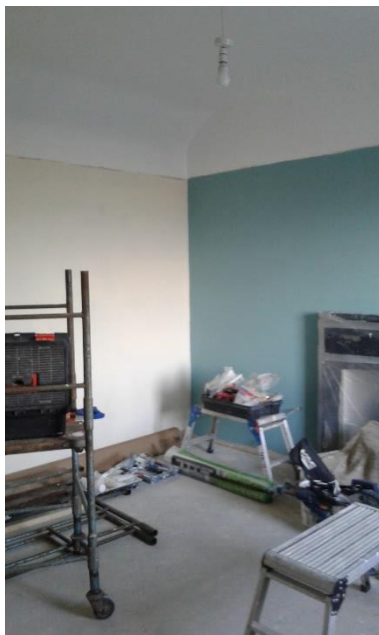
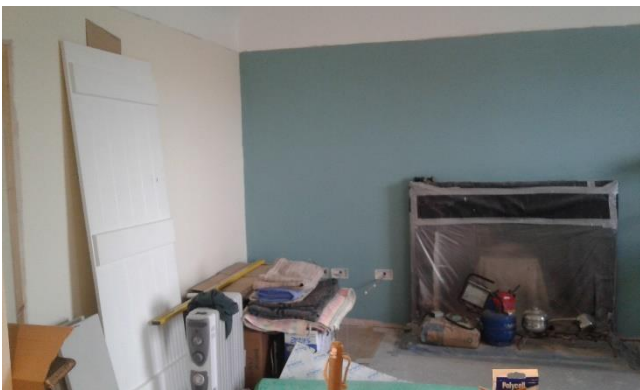
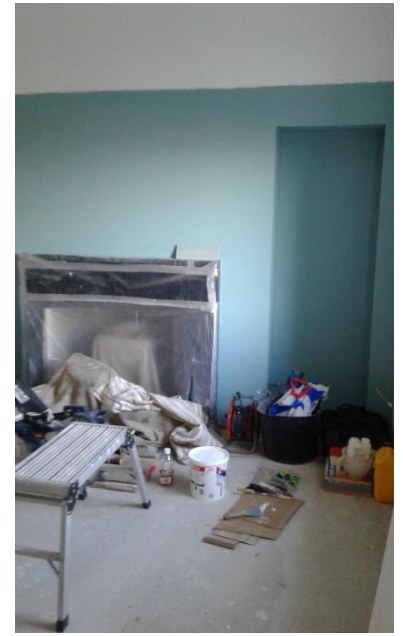
3 coats of White Matt emulsion on the ceiling;

2 coats of Orchid White Matt emulsion on the walls;

2 coats of Sea Urchin 3 on the fireplace wall;

2 undercoats of B.I.N. sealer on the window reveals followed by 2 coats of White eggshell;

2 undercoats of B.I.N. sealer on the bedroom and living room doors plus the door through to the bathroom, followed by the 1st coat of eggshell and 2 coats of eggshell on the picture rails.



Perfect moon on the Monday evening, to cap our few days of hard work and non-stop painting!

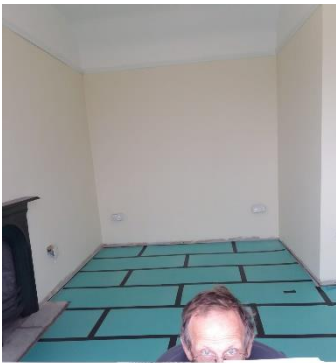
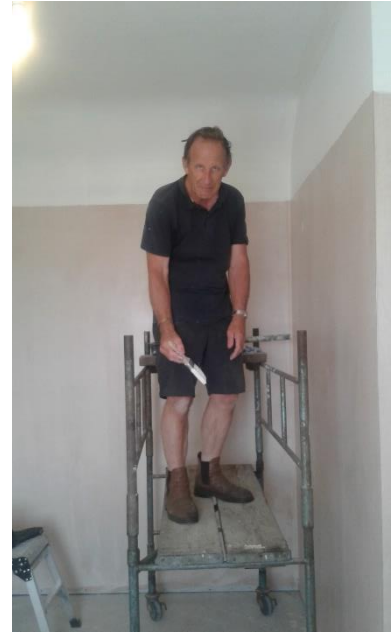
Finished off on the Tuesday morning by moving all the furniture etc through from the bedroom to the living room, so that next time we can get on with the painting in the bedroom. Travelled back Tuesday afternoon / evening.

After 5 days up and down onto the scaffolding painting ceilings and clambering over all the clutter on the floors and numerous trips up and down onto the beach to get stones for her rockery, Jan went for a nice relaxing day at the Spa on Wednesday with another friend, - - - and broke a bone in her foot stepping down into the Jacuzzi!! Spent most of the day at A&E! The irony of it!

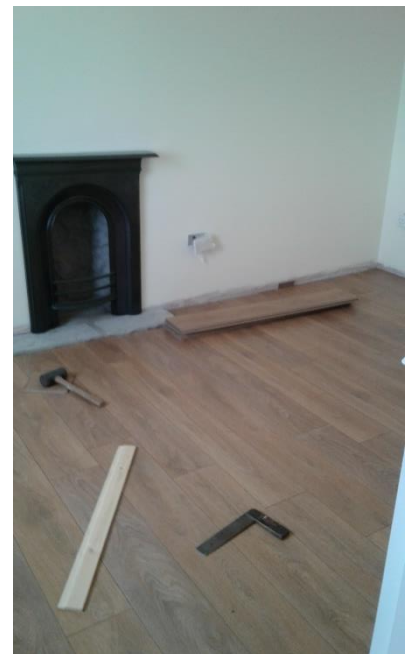
Thursday 1st August - Tuesday 6th August:

Travelled up last night to carry on with the painting and decorating. Started on the ceiling of the bedroom while Judith put a first coat on the walls. Got 3 coats on the ceiling in the one day. The old man's looking a bit the worse for wear!

Friday, Judith got a second coat on the walls while I was doing finishing off jobs in the kitchen. Katherine arrived in the early hours of Saturday morning to help as well. Saturday, refitted the bedroom fireplace and got the pre-painted picture rail up. Katherine put a third coat on the walls, then put a final coat on the picture rails. I spent a large part of the day making a filler to mask the gap between the tall cupboard and the wall, hiding all the pipe-work behind. Had to cut down a plinth and fix it to the side of the cupboard.



Sunday, started to put down the floor in the bedroom. 6mm insulation boards first, all taped at the joints. Then we had to work out how to lay the underfloor heating mat. Managed to work out an arrangement that runs along either side of the bed and covers the majority of the exposed floor area. Can't put it underneath the bed as the under-bed storage has a base quite close to the floor, which could potentially prevent the heat rising from the floor and cause problems. Managed to pull the power lead to the heating mat, and the floor sensor thermostat cable through the wall cavity, to connect up to the switch fused spur and the room thermostat. Great relief! Then putting down the laminate directly on top of the very thin heating mat. Should be nice and warm underfoot! Used the laminate from the living room. Most of it was good, but when we took it up we had to reject quite a bit that had swelled with the damp in the old floor.





Monday, up to the loft to bring down the lengths of new skirting board we've had stored up there for some time. Got some cut and profiled to match the original some years ago. We'll need to get some more done but plenty for the bedroom. Cut all the skirtings for the bedroom and started painting everything before fitting them – again, multiple coats in one day.

Tuesday, loose fitted all the bedroom skirtings and moved all the furniture back through to the bedroom. Cut and fitted the architraves to the bedroom window and got these final coated. Fitted the picture rails in the kitchen and Katherine got these all final coated.

Set off for home in convoy with Katherine about 15:30 – she's on holiday this week so will be at home with us for the rest of the week.

Next time will be laying the flooring in the living room.

Tuesday 20th – Thursday 29th August:-

Travelled up Tuesday evening arriving just as it was dark. Noticed a satellite TV van as I went past the Community Hall. Wondered what was going on – no cars around?

Wednesday, started with boxing in the electricity meter and putting up the picture rails in the hallway. Discovered the phone wasn't working in No. 1 cottage so they took me through all the usual checks before saying they'd have to send out an engineer, but that if the fault was in our property they'd charge us £85! Declined the engineer as I needed to talk to my brother since technically it's his phone. Suspicious, because tried to ring the Taylors at the farm but their phone wasn't working either. Heard Mr. Taylor cutting his grass so popped up to see him. Apparently the exchange at Auchenmalg had burnt to the ground Monday lunchtime! Clearly, BT knew nothing about this! They're working on putting up a temporary exchange at the Community Hall with a satellite link – hence the van I'd seen – within the next 4 days!

Lunch, then into Stranraer for a bit more timber for boxing in the meter, past traffic lights and about 15 BT vans outside the exchange. Finished off the boxing and started trying to clear things out of the living room. Did the last bit of filler on the kitchen units – up above the top of the tall cupboards. Took the plaster off the wall behind the door into the Lobby to the bathroom. There's been a damp issue in that wall, so stripped all the plaster to 1m height and injected the wall. Having to wait for Jewson's to get me some renovating plaster from Glasgow.

Spent the next few days steadily working my way through jobs which cleared things out of the living room.

Fitted all the sockets in the living room so now have the main sockets ring live and I can plug in anywhere instead of using just one socket.

Fitted the oven and hob finally, wiring them up as they went in.



Fitted taps and waste to the new ceramic sink. It tells you to knock out the part pre-cut hole for the tap with a hammer and chisel. Bit reluctant to do that, but that's what I had to do in the end and it worked fine. Fitted the wastes and overflow. Connected up the hot and cold and tested it. One small leak on the u-bend but sealed that and everything seems fine.

Put up the architraves on the living room and kitchen windows, and on the hall side of the doors to the living room and to the bedroom.

Fitted the kitchen sockets and all seem to be working fine.

Fixed and connected up the cabinet lights in the kitchen – small LED strip lights underneath the wall units which will light the worktop, but also 2 in the top corners above the units. We find they highlight what is otherwise a bit of a black hole and lift the ‘mood’ in kitchens.



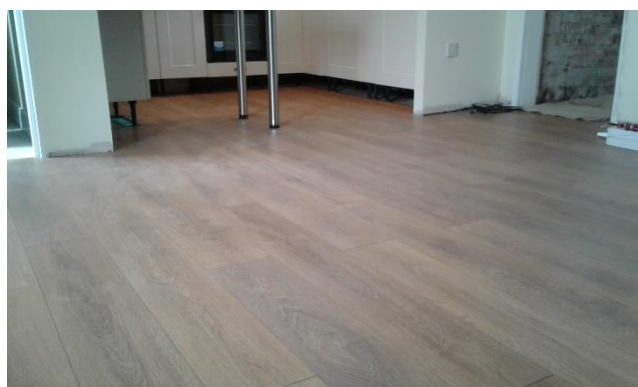
Took advantage of a dry and sunny day to clear everything out of the kitchen and living room and mixed up some self-levelling compound. You pour it onto the floor as a very runny liquid and it levels out any dips and hollows. Had several on the old kitchen floor and some to do around the fireplace and the door through to the bathroom plus across the join between our two concrete pours in the hallway. Left it to set overnight.

Spent the evening trying to work out how to lay the heating mat in the living room / kitchen. Basically it's 30m long and half a meter wide. Eventually worked out a plan that started by the tank cupboard where I need to connect to the thermostat, went across by the sink, then at 90 degrees backwards and forwards across the kitchen and under the breakfast bar, along to the front wall, then across to the fireplace wall backwards and forwards to the back wall! This meant that if I got to the back wall and still had mat left, I could use it up by going through into the lobby to the bathroom. If not, I had an additional 3m long mat which would do this bit with the connection starting again near the tank cupboard where it has to be connected to the same thermostat. That's the plan anyway.

Laid all the insulation boards and then started on the mat.

Finished short of the back wall, but that's fine as it's under the bed settee. Added the 3m mat to run from the larder back through the door towards the kitchen.

Then laminate next. Started at the front wall and finished up 12 hours later at the door into the bathroom! It looks very good. Time to test the underfloor heating. Didn't leave it on for long because I've still got the floor covered with protective sheets / blankets, but long enough to tell that it seems to be working ok.



Sunday, woke to a fairly large ship anchored in the Bay over near Drummore. Ship worked its way very slowly up to the head of the Bay. Thought it was servicing the marker buoys for the bombing range and sure enough, mid-afternoon, it arrived at the buoy opposite the cottage. After an hour or so, it made its way slowly off towards Port William.

Tuesday, finally got the renovating plaster so set to re-plastering the wall in the bathroom lobby. Pleased with how it went on, my plastering's getting better! I'll leave the dehumidifier on overnight tonight to help it to dry out ready for skimming tomorrow.



Meanwhile, trimmed and re-fitted the living room door and cut the architraves ready to fit. A bit more awkward because the hinges are behind the architrave so that has to be cut away at the back to accommodate the hinges. Can't fit it yet as it still needs several coats of paint. Same with the bedroom door. Everything's ready for a final coat of paint before fitting next time.

Roughly cut to size all the skirting for the living room. Able to fit a couple of pieces finally, but the rest still needs painting.



Wednesday, skimmed the bathroom lobby wall and cleared up all the protective sheeting afterwards. Painted all the architraves and skirting that still need doing and left them in the living room to dry. Did a lot of clearing up, loading all the things we no longer need into the trailer to go home tomorrow.

Thursday, another coat of paint on the skirtings / architraves then clearing up in No. 1 cottage before setting off about midday.



Sunday 22nd September – Monday 30th:-

Brought up the timber for the new front door. All to be painted before assembly. Not so easy now because the weather wasn't very good so had to paint everything inside. Ordered some special paint from a firm in Edinburgh, which was delivered Tuesday.

Meanwhile, got all the skirtings fitted in the living room. Got the shelves up in the recess in the living room and got the bathroom lobby all prepared ready for decorating.



Started tiling the kitchen. Fortunately the weather was a little better that day so was able to set the tile cutter up outside. Looking very good, but a slow job cutting tiles around all the sockets etc.



Iain came on Thursday to help fit the new front door. While he was fitting the new frame, I got the door put together, ledges and braces marked up and fitted, and all screwed up ready for cutting to size and hanging after lunch. First cut

after lunch was to trim the door to height and as soon as we'd cut it I realised that we'd cut it too short! Entirely my mistake, but a very expensive one. Nothing to do but put the old door back on and sort it out next time. Two options – either get some more timber to make a 'frame' to the door, or get 6 new tongued and grooved boards and start again. I'll have to see what the relevant costs will be.

Iain's final job of the day was then to put the hole through the bathroom lobby wall to get the ventilation duct in from outside. We weren't looking forward to this job but in the end it was reasonably straightforward.

Judith and Jan travelled up to Edinburgh on Friday 27th by train and got the tram out to Hermiston Gate where Katherine picked them up at 4:00pm and they all came on over to the cottage.

Jan spent 4 days shut in the lobby to the bathroom decorating that area while Judith and Katherine were grouting and finishing off the tiling in the kitchen.

Saturday evening, moved all the furniture back through from the bedroom so were able to have a very comfortable evening on the settees in the living room. Wood burner lit, running on tickover and the temperature by the end of the evening was 25C! Wonderful!

Katherine set off about 04:45 Monday to be back for work at 08:00. We did a few final jobs before setting off back about 11:00 taking all the door timber back with us!

Monday 28th October – Friday 1st November:-

Much harder work at this time of year. Lovely sunny but very cold days. Trying to paint outside, I only had a couple of hours in the middle of the day when this could be done.

Brought up the new lot of timber for the front door ready painted! Got the door assembled and all marked out ready for trimming to size – after double and treble checking all measurements this time! Took off the old door and repositioned temporary stop rails ready for fitting the new door. Trimmed the door to size and fitted it ok. Put the final stop rails onto the frame with 'P' seals inserted into the grooves to give some draught-proofing. Sealed the new threshold to the concrete base and then did some touch-up painting.



Also painted No. 1 door with the same paint – supposed to be ‘bomb proof’ and will hopefully survive our situation better than conventional gloss. Didn’t manage to finish either door. Still needs a final top coat on No. 1 and No. 2 still needs quite a few coats on both door and frame.

Found the trip fuse for the underfloor heating circuits was buzzing when both came on. Managed to get a replacement but put in a 32A trip instead of a 16A. Seems to have cured the problem. Both heating mats together were drawing a maximum of about 14.7A so I guess the 16A trip wasn’t quite enough. Left the bedroom set at 16C and it was very comfortable in there day and night!



Put an additional switch on the cupboard lights in the kitchen so that the under cupboard lights and the top lights can be switched independently. The under cupboard LED lights were so bright that they could be a bit too much when you were sitting down on the settee.

Put door strips on between Bathroom and larder area and between the hall and living room, and hall and bedroom. Tried to start connecting up the MVHR (ventilation unit). I was supposed to have been sent a right hand unit but it had a label on the top saying it was a left hand unit! However, the condensate drain was on the right hand side as it should be on a right hand unit!! Took a full day on the phone to sort that one out so didn’t get anywhere with the installation this time.

Last morning, managed to get the thresh on the new front door. Not an easy job when you have to hold it level on the outside of the door while screwing in the fixings from the inside! 3 hours to do one job single handed.

All in all, a frustrating visit this time – not getting much done at all. Back home Friday via Katherine’s overnight.

Sunday 5th – Friday 10th December:

Trying to finally get the Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) unit installed and working. Positioned the unit and plumbed in the condensate drain. The MVHR has a natural dehumidifying effect which is a significant part of the reason we wanted it, and just like a dehumidifier, it extracts moisture from the air – hence the need for the drain.

Worked out the connections for the pipe work and spent the rest of the day cutting and connecting up:-

6” rigid ducting to draw fresh air in from the atmosphere;

6” rigid ducting to expel stale air to the atmosphere;

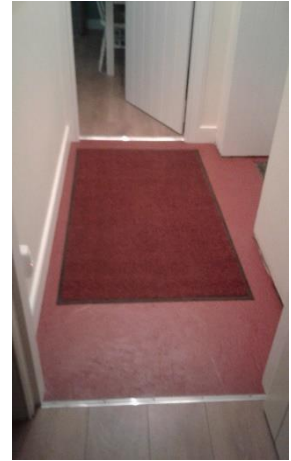
Short lengths of 6” rigid ducting to @plenum boxes’ which splits the duct into 3 smaller 3” flexible duct pipes which draw air out of two rooms, and feed fresh air in to the rooms as well.

Got it all connected up, switched on and it doesn’t seem to work. If anything it seems to be drawing air out of all the room vents! Must be a blockage somewhere or I’ve connected something up wrongly. Back to the Installation Manual for another read. Checked all the ducting – has a mouse made a nest inside the pipe while it’s been sitting in the loft awaiting connection? Have I connected it up wrong?

Three days spent trying everything to figure out what’s wrong! Eventually sorted identified what we thought was the problem after an hour long phone call with my brother. They told me this was definitely a left-handed unit, but actually it’s a right handed unit! Notwithstanding that it’s labelled as left handed and the company confirmed this when I had doubts and checked with them on 30th November!

Back onto Vent Axia and after another day exchanging photos and dismantling almost the entire machine they finally agreed that it was a right handed unit!!

After this, took me about half a day to re-configure the machine and effectively convert it to left handed. Re-connected the machine to all my duct work and not surprisingly, it now seems to be working fine!
Still pursuing Vent Axia on this one for 3 days wasted time, but they're refusing to pay up. Total Home Environment who supplied everything (you can't buy direct from Vent Axia as a private individual), could get nothing out of Vent Axia for me and unfortunately it would only be THE that I could pursue through the Small Claims Court as they are the company with whom I have the contract. As it was entirely Vent Axia's fault I'm stuck with no redress!



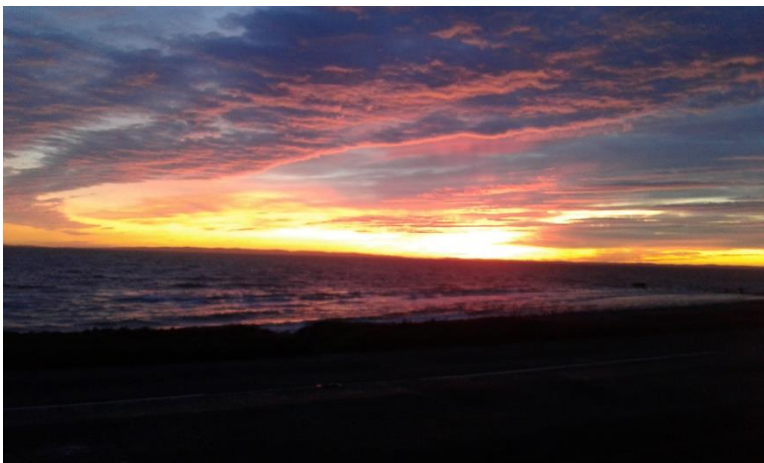
Had enough for this trip, so going home for some sanity, but first had to show the Taylors (Craignarget Farm) around
And explain how everything works. They are having a big family gathering at New Year and 4 of the family will be using the cottage as overflow sleeping quarters. Be a good test for the basics.

Friday 17th January 2020 – Tuesday 21st:

Came up with Jan to help again – doing all the final finishing off bits and pieces.

Not a bad view out of the front door – even in January on a cloudy day!

And a glorious sunset to finish off the day!



Hanging curtains, mirrors, pictures etc and organising the kitchen cupboards and storage. Katherine planning to come Friday night but her boiler was only repaired Friday afternoon and she needed to make sure it was going to carry on working. Had no heat since the day she came down to us before Christmas! She's been living in 7-10C temperatures since she went back after Christmas! She arrived about 10:00am Saturday with a borrowed camera and wide angle lens to get some good publicity shots for our advertising. She returned Very early Monday morning, and we travelled back Tuesday. Still a few things to get, instruction notes to write and bits and pieces to bring up next time!

It's been a long and at times frustrating project, but well worth it. We're very pleased with the final outcome and hopefully Katherine will be able to enjoy the cottage in years to come without having too much maintenance to do – and our visitors will enjoy it too!

For a little taster, here are a couple of the final photographs.



If you'd like to see more, have a look at the 'Photo gallery' on our website, www.craignargetcottage.co.uk

This is us signing off. We hope you enjoy your stay!