

BLUE REEF COTTAGES ON THE SECLUDED SHORES OF HARRIS OFFER A PRIVATE HAVEN FOR HONEYMOONERS AND HOLIDAYMAKERS. WITH TURE ROOFS BUILT INTO THE MACHAIR HILLSIDE, YOU'D HARDLY KNOW THESE UNIQUE AND STYLISH PROPERTIES WERE THERE AS BRIDGET MCGROUTHER DISCOVERED.



# At The Cutting Edge

PHOTOGRAPHS ROD HUCKBODY

A breathtaking panoramic view of the sweeping white sands of Scarista Bay through picture windows is the mesmerising outlook of Blue Reef Cottages. The name came from the Gaelic description of the area – Rubha Liath, meaning Blue Reef, undoubtedly inspired by the bright turquoise hue of the water – at least on a clear, sunny day.

The unique holiday homes on Harris are the brainchild of Neil and Rhoda Campbell, who live in the new property next door. Yet with the cottages cleverly built into the side of



Above: The well-equipped office, but who would want to work with a such a scenic view? Right: The patio.

machair hillside with camouflaged turf roofs, you would hardly notice they were there.

After selling their fish farm on Skye two years ago, the young couple decided to move back to Harris – where Rhoda is originally from – and build a house and two self-catering cottages on the family croft. After all, with a baby on the way, it was perhaps time to have grandparents on hand for babysitting!

The Campbells wanted their holiday homes to be five star, with the best of everything. Hence the cutting-edge design which was proposed by Stornoway architect Stuart Bagshaw, who had already built the unusual, traditional-style self-catering homes at Garranan Blackhouse Village.

'We had a picture in our own mind of what we wanted, but we were surprised and delighted with the architect's plan,' Rhoda explains. 'We had stayed in five-star properties before and knew the type of luxury accommodation we were aiming to achieve.'

'We had honeymooners and professional couples in mind so we wanted a Jacuzzi and sauna for two as well as an office with Internet facilities.'

The building work was left to the architect who contracted tradesmen and sourced the natural materials locally. The stone comes from island ruins, the roof is covered with turf, while the wooden ceilings are supported by tree trunks. From inside, it's much like being in an upturned boat with breathtaking ocean views through the curved bay window.



Below: Architect Stuart Bagshaw's Garranan design. Bottom: A rooftop outlook to Scarista Bay

All doors were joiner made and there are built-in wardrobes in the spacious bedrooms. The Campbells are pleased with the high standard of workmanship and only the desks had to be recovered in a hardwearing mamoleum.

However, despite planning to have the cottages ready by the end of February, it was May before they were completed and the tradesmen were finished just hours before the first guests were due to arrive. The Campbells burned the midnight oil painting and hanging pictures to get the cottages ready in the nick of time.

Quiet indoors and cocooned from the strong winds that can whip up around this exposed coast, it's relaxing to lounge in the comfortable settees of the 'Observation Area'.

The surrounding machair has been fenced off to encourage the growth of wildflowers and wildlife includes otters,



LEFT - HOY SUPPERS



seals and rare birds. Cozy, too – even in winter, there is under-floor heating and a wood-burning stove in the living-room.

The open-plan design incorporates a spacious kitchen and adjoining dining area with all mod cons including a dishwasher, washer/drier, microwave, grill fan oven, fridge freezer and toaster. A welcome pack includes groceries, wine and chocolates.

Rhoda had fun sourcing the furniture from around the UK and then arranging for it all to be shipped to Harris. Main items such as the beds, sofas and kitchen units came from as far afield as Glasgow and Inverness, while local tweed makers supplied soft furnishings.

The bedroom has Ducal pine furniture and a king-size bed, the office has a computer, printer and fax, but it's the bathroom that is most luxurious. With a Jacuzzi and built-in sauna for two, complete with a window to enjoy the view, the

Right: The Observation Area with curved bay window and comfortable settees.

Below: The kitchen is stocked on arrival and well equipped with all the latest gadgets.



tourist board representative who awarded the accommodation with a five-star grading said he'd 'never seen a better bathroom!' Now the Blue Reef Cottages are the only five-star self-catering properties available on Lewis and Harris.

Rhoda and Neil seem to have thought of everything for their guests. There is satellite television, a video, CD and an entertainment store filled with books and games. There are deckchairs, towels, backpacks, a portable barbecue, mountain bikes and even golf clubs plus temporary membership of the nine-hole course across the road. In other words an island idyll. □

## Get the Look

**Kitchen units** – Ashley Ann, 18 Carsegate Rd, Inverness.

**Crockery** – Denty from Debenhams and House of Fraser.

**Sofas** – Sofa Workshop, Nelson Mandela Place, Glasgow, visit: [sofaworkshopdirect.co.uk](http://sofaworkshopdirect.co.uk).

**Tweeds** – Luskenytre, Harris.

**Bedding** – Mire Furnishing Group Ltd, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan.

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FROM INSIDE IT'S MUCH LIKE BEING IN AN UPTURNED BOAT.