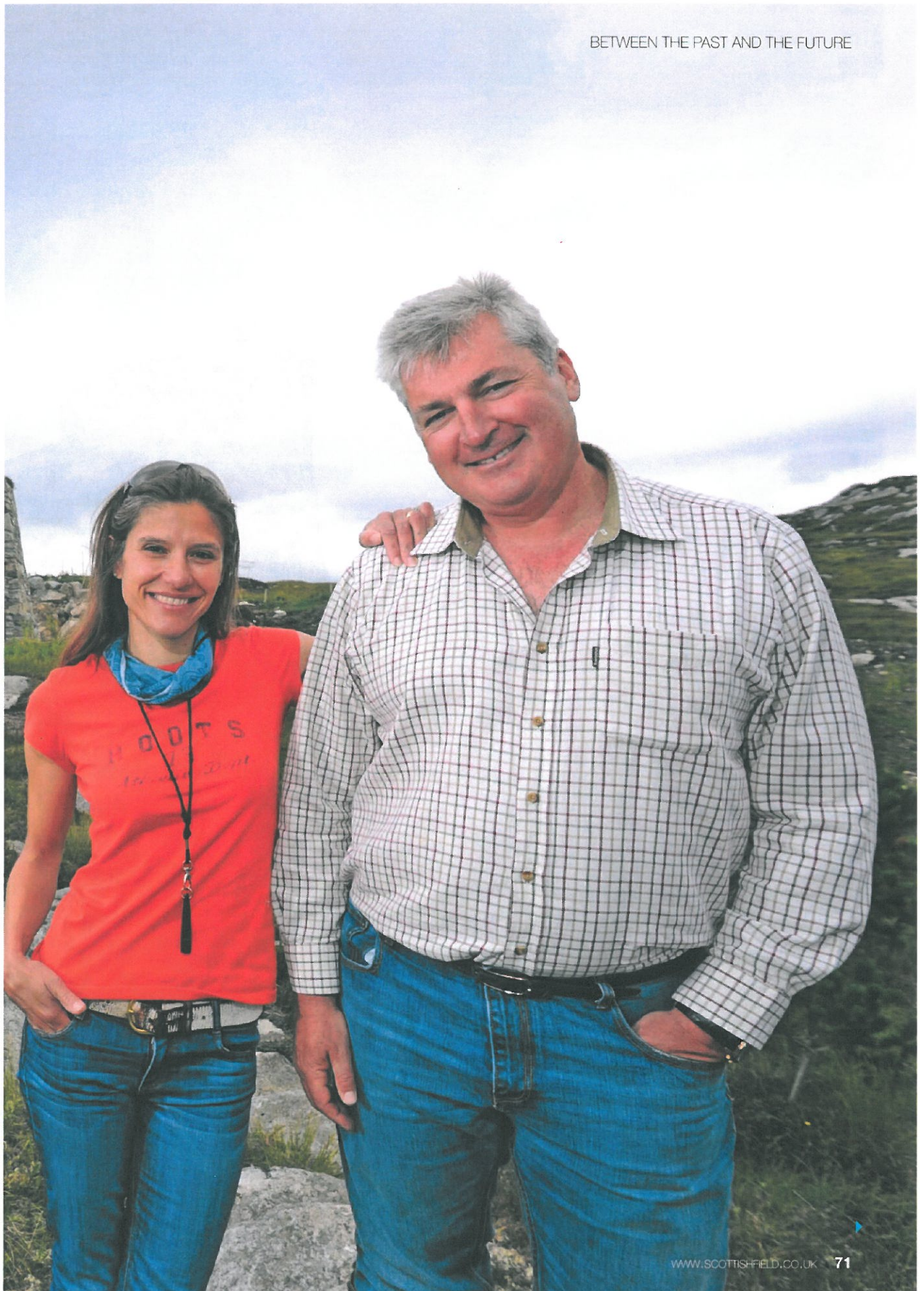


Between the past and the future

Based on the design of Scotland's ancient brochs, this unique house on Harris uses the island's age-old rocks and traditional building techniques to create a home that should last forever

WORDS SERGIO BURNS IMAGES ANGUS BLACKBURN

BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE





Above: The kitchen and dining area on the ground floor, with its wonderful staircase. **Right:** The Broch stands strong against the Hebridean weather. **Previous pages:** Owners Cathra and Adam Kelliher.

Looking east, the house comes into view at Borve as you drive the meandering roads of the sandy west coast of the Isle of Harris. This three-storey build in the style of an ancient broch – the fort dwellings that once peppered the Hebrides and north-west Scotland – is an extraordinary example of contemporary architecture which blends effortlessly with the landscape. The house, known as 'The Broch', is the brainchild of Adam and Cathra Kelliher, owners of Borve Lodge and estate.

'We wanted to do something unique and of real architectural merit,' says Adam, a former war correspondent with United Press International, the *Times* and the BBC World Service.

'That was the idea, and I was quite drawn to the Carloway Broch because you can actually see how people lived, and see this intimacy with the landscape.'

The Kelliher's Broch is certainly striking. An exterior jacket of thick, dry-stone walling, about which Adam admits to being obsessive, is married to an interior that makes the most of fine natural materials. The project has been planned and executed with love and care, to mirror the couple's passion for the island.

It is a Hebridean love affair with roots in London-born Cathra's childhood. Growing up, she and her family would regularly holiday on Harris, so when Cathra and Adam were engaged

'I loved the intensity of the climate and landscape and immediately felt at home'

in 1991 they decided to celebrate New Year on the island; he was instantly smitten.

'I just really loved the intensity of the climate and the landscape,' says Adam. 'I'm from New Zealand originally, which is a coastal country where we're always in and around the ocean, so I immediately felt at home here in the Hebrides. It's a very special place for us.'

Over time, the family unit has grown to include four children. Adam has left the media and now enjoys a successful business career. A profitable nutritional venture was sold off in 2006, and until this year the Kelliheres were the owners of London-headquartered Equateq, a lipid manufacturing company with a plant at the north end of Lewis. Sold in May to the German chemicals giant BASF, it has been renamed BASF Pharma (Callanish).

In June 2011, Adam and Cathra generated some media interest when they added to their property portfolio by purchasing Taransay. Barely two miles off the coast of Harris, this little island shot to fame in 2000 when it featured on the BBC reality show *Castaway*.

Throughout the building of The Broch, the couple were determined, as far as possible, to



'We didn't want the hot tub; we didn't want it to be bourgeois fancy. We wanted to keep it raw and elemental'



Above: The first-floor living area makes the most of the stunning views, while the driftwood coffee table and fireplace fashioned from railway sleepers take pride of place.

use materials from the estate and island. 'What we have tried to maintain here is the rawness of the elements of Harris,' says Adam. 'You can see that we used slate, stone and natural wood and that there aren't any straight lines. Everything is curved and flowing and quite sensual in a way, so we wanted the rawness and simplicity. We didn't want the hot tub; we didn't want it to

be bourgeois fancy. We wanted to keep it raw and elemental.'

Wherever practicable, the couple also used local businesses and craftspeople, engaging the talents of Stornoway architect Stuart Bagshaw, who is renowned for his work on similar projects. Lewis Builders Ltd was also employed, while stonemason Murdo McCaskill of Landoch



Traditional Stonemasonry had to be brought in from Inverness.

The interior fittings were carefully considered and selected to reinforce the raw, elemental look of the build. Instructing the builders, joiners and stonemasons to 'be creative', the Kelliher's have been incredibly resourceful with their interior design. The attractive, rugged

beams for the fireplace in the first-floor living area were salvaged from an old wharf. Wooden closet doors are concave to match the curvature of the walls. Driftwood is integral to the design of the tables and lamps, while shelving has been sculpted from stone and slate.

Michaela Smith, of Isle of Lewis company Minki Enterprises, was responsible for the



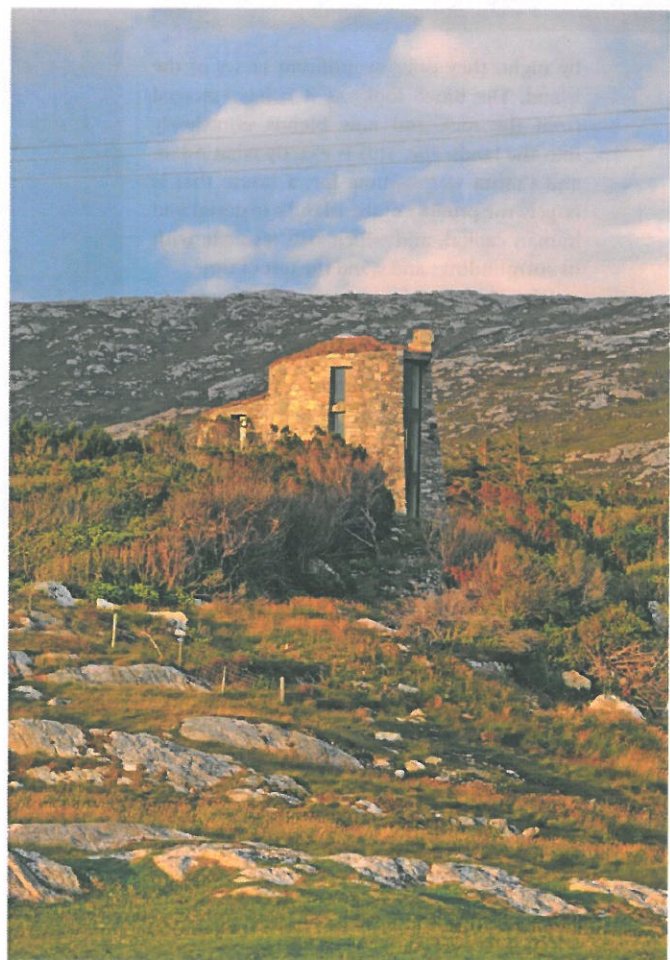
'We had to use detonators and charges to blow holes in the ground for the foundations'

curtains. The world-famous Harris Tweed fabric, she says, 'is gorgeous to work with'. Seascapes by local photographer Beka Globe adorn the walls.

There is a minimalist feel to the interior that is pleasing on the eye. It has a stark, raw, understated beauty which, paradoxically, impresses as a very modern and spacious living area, studded with surprises.

The wrought-iron banister leading from the ground-floor kitchen/dining area to the third-floor bedroom is a work of art in itself. Created by Alan Dawson of MPM-North West Ltd from Maryport in Cumbria, its flowing, curved, eccentric lines and aquatic-themed design perfectly complement the furnishings and accessories.

Also flowing from ground to roof are the enormous three-storey windows which were supplied by glass structure specialists Gray & Dick from Glasgow. Facing south toward the Uists and other ancient brochs, these enormous windows accentuate the feeling of light and space within the building. By day, or indeed



Top: A four-poster with a difference. **Right:** The rocky landscape made building The Broch very challenging.



BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

by night, they offer magnificent views of the island. The Broch looks as if it has emerged from the rock and now blends effortlessly into the landscape. This is exactly what Adam and Cathra were aiming for: a house that is largely the product of the island's material and human capital, and which will resonate with its surroundings and stand the test of time.

'The house took two and a half years to build,' says Adam. 'There were all those things you didn't envisage, like the toughness of the rock. Lewisian gneiss is some of the hardest in the world and certainly the oldest, so laying the foundations became problematic. What we thought was going to be a pretty straightforward job wasn't at all. We had this fierce rock to deal with. We had to use charges and detonators in order to blow holes in the ground for the foundations, and then that was the source of our stone to use in the building, so there was a golden side as well.'

Intimate, flowing and resonating with the Harris landscape, The Broch is unique. A new-build based on a 2,000-year-old design and constructed, as far as possible, from estate and island materials up to three billion years old, it is in every sense a Hebridean house that links the past and the future. 🏠

Top: Superb natural stone floors in the luxurious bathroom.
Middle: The Rock House, another of the Kelliher's 'clever properties on Harris. **Right:** That wonderful staircase.



FIELD FACTS

Borve Lodge
Estate,
Borve,
Isle of
Harris,
HS3 3HT

Tel: 01859 550 358
www.borvelodge.com

