

# THE LONG VIEW

*In an inspirational coastal setting, this contemporary take on a traditional Irish home was designed to embrace its surroundings and be a sociable space for three generations of family*

**Words** Penny Crawford-Collins **Photography** Philip Lauterbach

**S**et on an elevated site in Donegal on Ireland's north-west tip, Tony and Mary Bateman's house boasts a stunning vista that overlooks Gola island and the other islands in the archipelago of Inishfree Bay. When you first encounter this strikingly modern home you are immediately impressed by the clean crisp angles of the exterior and the flow of light that is channelled through the internal space.

Designed by MacGabhann Architects, it was built in 2009. The brief was to come up with an innovative design that would capitalise on the views and allow as much light into the house as possible. 'The first consideration was the location,' says Tarla MacGabhann of MacGabhann Architects. 'The weather can be very changeable here; as we walked about →

*this picture* The design was based on the traditional farm and agricultural buildings that form the local vernacular



*this picture* The kitchen is the hub of the home where Tony and Mary can spend time with their family



*this picture* Simple modern cabinetry is clean and functional, and everything has been positioned for ease of use

the site to decide on the location, within the space of a few hours we had driving rain, strong winds and bright sunshine.' 'So ultimately it was the weather that helped influence the decision on the positioning of the house. It's nestled near a rocky outcrop which is to the east of the house and offers some shelter from the harsh, variable conditions.'

The Batemans were keen that the house would also work with the landscape. They didn't want it to be at all conspicuous; it had to be harmonious with its dramatic surroundings, so the angles and lines of the house were derived from the jagged forms of the local terrain. 'Tony and Mary were keen to bring in the latest in architectural thinking and connect this to the Donegal vernacular, as they wanted to respect the landscape,' explains MacGabhann. 'Thankfully, our practice is familiar with the stringent planning regulations so we were careful to make sure the design met all the local requirements to prevent any delays.'

The house was designed to utilise natural materials, drawing inspiration from the traditional farmhouses in the area. Its whitewashed render and corrugated roof are reminiscent of an agricultural barn meaning the modern structure sits perfectly in the surrounding landscape. 'The

property is quite narrow, similar to a traditional Irish long house,' says MacGabhann. 'It's one room deep, so by incorporating large windows on either side of the main rooms the light floods in from the west and the east and the views can be enjoyed to both sides simultaneously.'

'The ridge line of the pitched roof gently rises and steps up to provide the space for the first-floor belvedere. There's a glazed area where the two geometrics of the roof intersect, allowing even more light into the space. The house has a strong element of protection against the forces of nature; its solid walls are perforated by deep windows that have large projecting oversized reveals. The traditional roughcast wet-dash render accentuates the robustness of the structure.'

Not only were the view and the landscape important to Tony and Mary, but the layout was a major consideration. They were keen to have a very sociable house, with plenty of space for entertaining their children and grandchildren. To achieve this, the house was designed with the bedrooms at the opposite end to the open-plan kitchen, dining and living area, which is the focal point and hub of the house. The first-floor belvedere was designed as a timber-clad retreat, with roof lights offering views out over the bay. 'We have a large →

## AT A GLANCE

**Name** Tony and Mary Bateman

**Age** 55 and 56

**Location** Donegal, north-west Ireland

**Property** New-build

**Bedrooms** 4 **Bathrooms** 4

**Project started** 2005

**Project finished** 2009

**Size of house** 300sqm

*this picture* A simple window seat provides the perfect spot to enjoy the magnificent views



*this picture* The wood-burning stove provides a focal point to the living area, while the deep hues of the Columbian pine add to the feeling of warmth



*'Columbian pine was chosen for its hue and works really well with the Donegal light'*

*left* Simple white walls and wooden flooring in the guest room keep the look cool and uncluttered

*right* The hallway has a bank of wall-to-ceiling storage and the beautiful timber cladding continues up the stairwell to the belvedere

*below* The cream mosaic tiling gives the main bathroom a stylish, modern spa feel

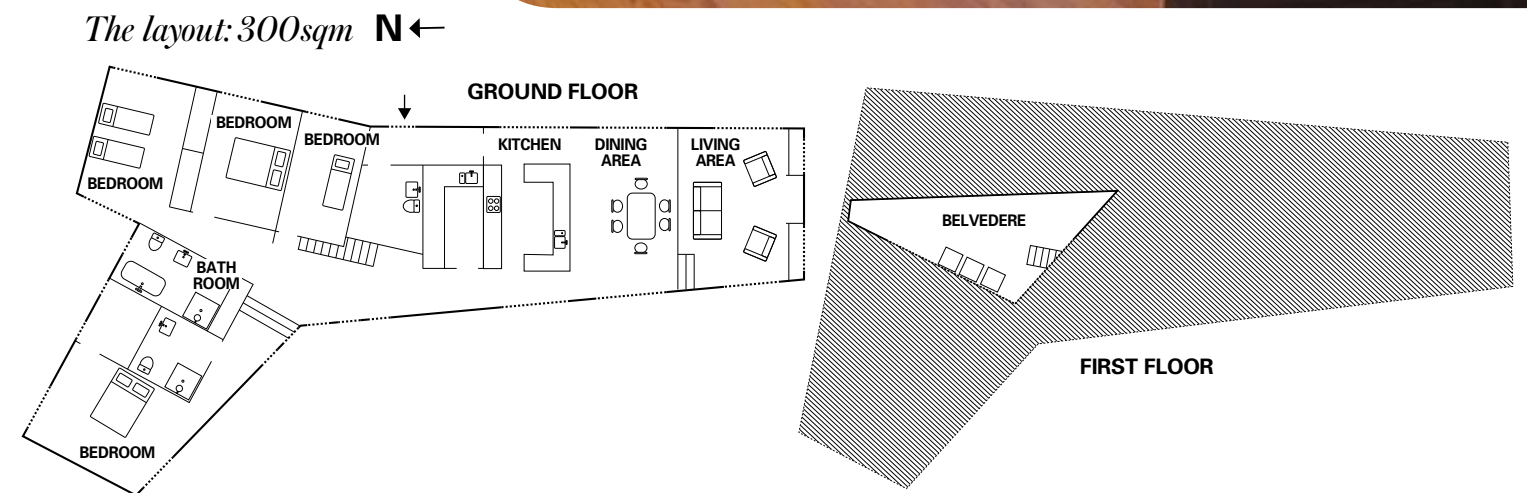


*this picture* Clad in timber, the belvedere has a seafaring theme and is a comfortable and secluded retreat

family, so it was important for us to have a space where everyone could gather, and the open-plan nature of the design takes this into consideration,' says Tony. 'It's simple yet functional, and the large glazed areas maximise the views and merge the inside and out. The whole house is practical for the family and feels wonderfully light and spacious. The four double bedrooms are also large and bright and offer privacy while still enjoying the views.'

The simple, streamlined kitchen echoes the clean lines of the building's architecture and has plenty of storage and workspaces. The unfussy layout and understated styling mean that the kitchen doesn't impinge on the living area. The large picture window maintains the emphasis on openness and natural light, and lets the kitchen cohere with the other spaces to give the owners the joined-up, sociable feel they required. The look for the living area is sophisticated and uncluttered, and the contemporary wood-burning stove provides warmth and ambience in the cold winter months while fitting perfectly in its modern setting.

When it came to the decor throughout, the look has been kept simple and pared-back. All the materials were chosen for their quality in terms of appearance and texture. 'The wooden finishes mean that the house doesn't feel cold and clinical. Columbian pine was chosen for its hue and works really well with the Donegal light,' says MacGabhann. 'I drew inspiration →







*this picture*  
From the exterior you can appreciate how the building's geometry sits in the Donegal landscape

from the eminent Donegal architect Liam McCormick, the father of modern church architecture in Ireland. He designed more than thirty churches that used natural materials and timber cladding to great visual effect. As he was a local architect, I thought it would be nice to incorporate some of his influence into the house.'

In their choice of furnishings, Mary and Tony opted for natural fabrics and timeless wooden pieces that complement the Columbian pine perfectly and keep the space uncluttered and contemporary. The bedrooms are sparsely furnished with wooden beds and simple wooden tables, while the light cream tiles in the bathrooms emphasise the geometric lines.

Mary and Tony wanted a modern house that embraced the surrounding views. The result is a perfect illustration of how their architect worked with them to fulfill the brief, at the same time designing a stunning piece of architecture that is sympathetic to its owners' aspirations and requirements. **GD**

## Suppliers

### PROJECT TEAM

**Architect** MacGabhann Architects (+353 74 912 9440; macgabhannarchitects.ie)

**Contractor** Brian McGlinchey (+353 74 954 3177)

### STRUCTURE

**Windows** Dansk Window Systems (no longer trading)

**Roofing** Tegral Building Products (+353 59 863 1316; tegral.com)

### FIXTURES & FITTINGS

**Sanitaryware** Global Tiles (+353 74 912 5755; globaltiles.ie)

**Kitchen** Design House (+353 1 235 2222; designhousedublin.com)

### FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES

**Furniture** Habitat (0344 499 4686; habitat.co.uk)

## STYLE FINDER

Take inspiration from Tony and Mary's cosy, sophisticated scheme  
Compiled by *Duncan Hayes*



▲ **Clear winner** Triangle pendant in clear glass (H95xDiameter23cm), £20, Iconic Lights (0161 837 6092; iconiclights.co.uk)



▲ **Sixties inspiration** Brampton coffee table with shelf (H46xW105xD50cm), £349, Conran for Marks & Spencer (0333 014 8555; marksandspencer.com)



▲ **Warm reds** Cherry Charleston engineered wood floor (H242.3xW20xD1.5cm), £72 per sqm, Kahrs (023 9245 6045; kahrs.com)



▲ **Aqua ceramic** Evora in glazed earthenware in turquoise (H7.5xW16.5xD12cm), £10, Habitat (0344 499 4686; habitat.co.uk)



▲ **Classic fabric** Henley Stripe in cotton in cream and peony, £29.50 per m, Ian Mankin (020 7722 0997; ianmankin.co.uk)