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A barn conversion with a timber-clad extension equals a bright modern makeover

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Go easy with the secateurs and embrace the tangled overgrowth

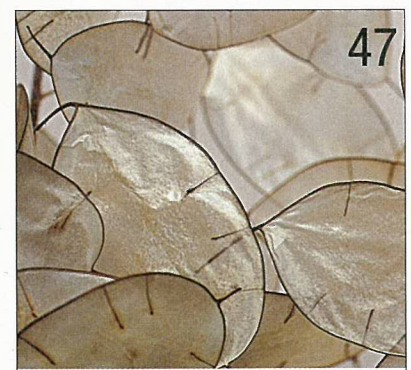
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Barn again

A run-down bothy in Forres has been sensitively rebirthed into a bright, bijou dwelling

A BOTHY used to mean a hut that housed unmarried workers on a farm, but today, that definition has widened. It can be a place where hillwalkers can shelter for the night, or simply a small rural home. This particular bothy is one of several buildings that make up Wester Lawrenceton farm, by the town of Forres near the coastline of Moray, Aberdeenshire. The tiny building, just five metres by nine metres, had originally been built as a basic dwelling, but many years of neglect and use as a storage shed had left it in a state of virtual ruin. Only the four stone walls and old corrugated metal roof remained. The gable end was crumbling, some windows had fallen out, the rest were broken and chickens had begun to roost inside.

The owner of Wester Lawrenceton had bought the farm almost six years before her decision to renovate the bothy. Until then, she had only visited the farm for short periods. Her desire to restore the house was based on her

The Douglas fir ceiling, exposed beams and cream, plastered walls give a modern feel to an old building

wish to move there on a permanent basis and work there as an artist and sculptor, and to become more involved with the farm itself. She then commissioned Edge Architecture and Design, a Forres-based practice run by architect Nicole Edmonds, to transform the building into a modern living space.

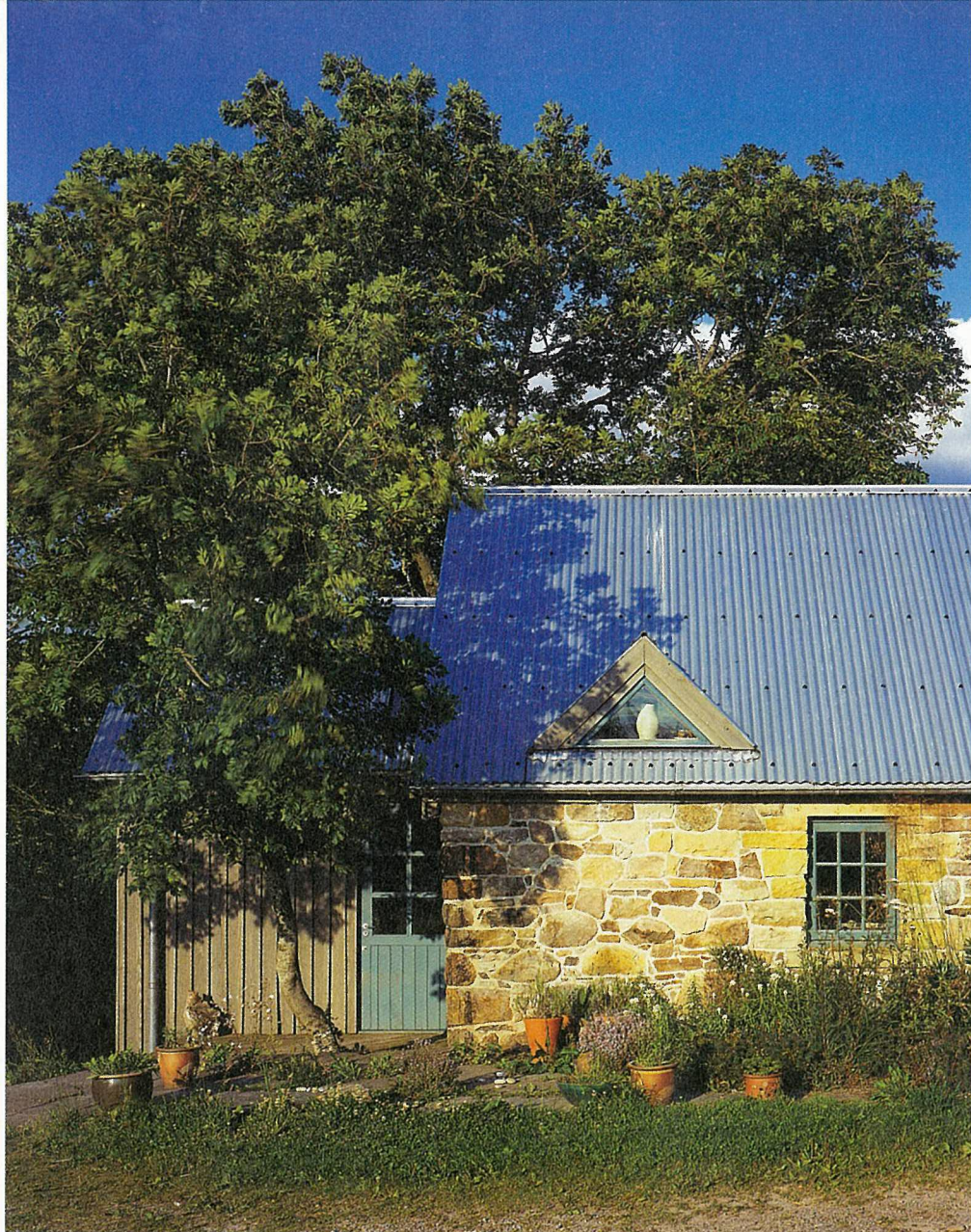
Before moving to Wester Lawrenceton, the owner had rented the farm out to a couple, who ran it as a successful organic farm. The existing farmhouse was too small to

‘Only the four stone walls and corrugated metal roof remained. Windows had fallen out and chickens were roosting inside,’

accommodate everyone, so she wanted the bothy to be a private place for her to live. She decided that she didn't need, or want, her own kitchen, as she intended to share meals with her companions in the main farmhouse. This was very much part of the communal and environmental spirit of the farm. However, building control would not allow a house with no cooking facilities, as this would prevent it being sold in the future.

Nicole Edmonds renovated the existing stone structure and added a small, timber-clad extension. The original walls were repaired and rebuilt where necessary, using a mixture of

Above: The bothy has retained its traditional stone exterior and corrugated metal roof. Below, the open, pitched ceiling and skylights create a lofty and bright living space



recycled and new stone. New blockwork was used when extra stability was required. A new roof was built from local Douglas fir timber trusses, which have been left exposed in the interior. Corrugated steel covers the roof externally, and several roof windows let extra daylight in.

The arrangement of rooms is simple – the living area is within the old building and the sleeping space is on a new raised mezzanine deck which overlooks the living room. Within the new extension is a small bathroom and the minimal kitchen facilities (a sink, a two-ring hob and some storage cupboards) are incorporated into the entrance area.

The floor within the old building is finished in dark grey Caithness slate with terracotta tiles used in the extension. The floor of the sleeping deck and the windowsills are made from birch. Walls are plastered internally, and painted cream to give a simple, modern appearance. The exposed timber of the roof structure gives a feeling of warmth and homeliness and the extra height provided by the open roof space makes it roomy and bright. It's hard to believe such a tiny ruin could have become such a cosy and appealing new home.

Anna Chambers is assistant editor of Prospect magazine. Nicole Edmonds of Edge Architecture and Design can be contacted on 01309 691408