

16 OCTOBER 2019

A COASTAL CONNEMARA HOME



As you leave the bustle of Clifden town towards Ballyconneely, the narrow stone bridge at Ballinaboy marks a shift in both the width of the road and the landscape beyond. The sheltered inlets and running

rivers of sharp blues and greens make way for boggy, windswept fields and murky browns and yellows that Connemara is renowned for.

In these marshlands, Guglielmo Marconi established his transatlantic telegraph station in 1907 and pilots John Alcock and Arthur Brown landed following the first non-stop transatlantic flight from St Johns Newfoundland in 1919.



Here too, on the narrow peninsula between Clifden harbour and the westerly stretch to Slyne Head, is Errislannan House. Located on the tip of the headland, it sits surprisingly

close to the Atlantic shores. Whereas nearby cottages huddle in lolloping valleys away from the ripping winds, Errislannan stands tall against them.

Up a pair of sweeping stone steps, the five-bedroom house overlooks a rocky beach and 19th-century pier. Built in 1863 by a Dublin solicitor, John Byrne, it's now owned by Marcus Williams and his wife Olga, who split its time between renting it as a holiday let and staying in it themselves. The house has been owned by just three families – the Byrnes, briefly a family friend of Marcus' parents who sadly passed away not long after he purchased it and the Williams' family who inherited it in 1979.





While the Byrne family crest still sits on the exterior of the building, its interiors have seen many iterations, most recently in 2010 when Marcus and Olga did an extensive renovation. It began as a small job. “We had a problem with a chimney breast, one of the original ones from 1863,” Marcus tells me. “And about a year later, we had pretty much renovated the entire house.” New bathrooms, rebuilding some of the walls, updating the heating and restoring the original windows, makes it now a warm and cosy home all-year round.



While undertaking the renovation, it was

While undertaking the renovation, it was important for Marcus and Olga that they retain as much of the character of the house as possible. “To us it's just one of those magical spots,” says Marcus, and they worked hard to retain the three-foot walls around the chimney – though trying to clear the car-tyre sized boulders within them probably would have proved impossible.

Against the advice of their builder, Marcus decided to repair the original timber windows rather than opt for new PVC ones, as it was important that the house be comfortable and warm, but also that it retained links to its past. “He kept telling me, ‘Marcus, you're in the west of Ireland you'll be repairing them every five minutes,’ but I paint them every year and they look great.”





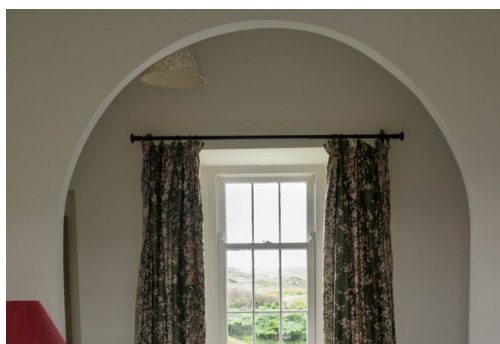
The house is a T-shaped and had once been eight bedrooms before previous owners gradually reduced it to five. Now, a comfortable living room, dining room and one bedroom front onto the water's edge while the rest of the bedrooms look upon the green Connemara landscape behind.

While within a ten-minute drive of Clifden and not much further in the other direction to Roundstone, the house is truly an escape. There are number of walks directly on the doorstep – Marcus directs me to turn left at the front gate to get to the Errislannan point, or right along the coastline to the guiding beacon into Clifden harbour. It's also an enjoyable stroll to the Alcock and Brown memorial, which marks the spot where the duo crash-landed a hundred years ago.





Unlike so many holiday homes that are let but rarely lived in, Marcus and Olga spend as much time as they can there, meaning they've thought through all the niggly things that tend to take away from the holiday experience. Like having to do the washing up, for example. "Our housekeeper Karen comes in every day for two hours while the guests are there," says Marcus. "So it means breakfast and head off for the day and when you got back everything's cleared away."





With so many places to relax and socialise nearby – Ballynahinch Castle, Mullarkeys in Clifden and O’Dowds in Roundstone – Marcus notes that his favourite thing is actually sitting in the living room of Errislannan, with the fire on, watching the wild Atlantic weather sweeping up the west coast. “It’s incredible, one minute it’s clear skies and 90 seconds later you can barely see out the window.”



You can rent Errislannan House for €2,250
per week, speak to Marcus directly at
errislannanhouse.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY CLIODHNA

PRENDERGAST



PREVIOUS

NEXT

FIND US ON INSTAGRAM...



Follow us on [@image_interiors](https://www.instagram.com/image_interiors)

JOIN US...

Sign up for a weekly *Image Interiors*
& *Living* edit, direct to your inbox.

Email Address

JOIN

We respect your privacy and won't share your details with any third parties. More more details see our privacy policy [here](#).

ABOUT CONTACT ADVERTISE