



It is said the Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer Noel Redding dropped a pin on a map when deciding where to live, landing on Clonakilty. It seems like an incredible quirk of fate for him to happen upon such an idyllic spot to live out his days, as Dunowen House is nestled in the heart of the west Cork countryside, down a lane that leads to Sands Cove.

The current owners, Kela and Steven Hodgins, did not happen upon the house in quite such haphazard manner, but were looking to swap Dublin life for the country. They had come down to view Inchdoney House having seen it advertised but were disappointed when they saw the amount of work the house needed. Afterwards in a nearby pub, they were scrolling through www.myhome.ie and Dunowen House cropped up.

"We drove out to see it and when you come over the hill and see that view of the sea and Galley Head, it's just gorgeous,"

Kela says. Within weeks they had sold their own house and made the move to Cork in October of 2013. The Hodgins were delighted to have discovered a place to live that they could make a living out of, and after renovating the main house, they opened as a B&B the following summer.

"We were surprised to find that the demand was actually for self-catering, and that groups would want to take the whole house," Kela says. The outbuildings were a big selling point for Kela and Stephen as they wanted to eventually have somewhere separate to live from the guests, so they decided to renovate the cottage and the coach house, working with Edge Architecture of Clonakilty. "They were in ruins, the coach house was just stone walls and the arch. It would have been easier to knock the whole thing but I love those *Escape to the Country* barn conversions so we wanted to keep as much of it as we could," Kela says. They lived in the cottage for 18 months during the renovations, and now they live in the coach house with their three children and the three-bedroom cottage and main house are for guests.

Kela uncovered a wealth of memorabilia from Noel's career before the renovations, which are now on display in the main house. *Hot Press* and



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ROCK STAR LIVING

Dunowen House in Cork was once owned by Noel Redding of the Jimi Hendrix Experience. The Hodgins family have restored the house and surrounding buildings into a luxurious haven

Words: Róisín Healy | Photography: Ramona Farrelly



Rolling Stone covers fill the stairwell, and posters and photos cover the walls of the music room.

"We also have framed the fax that was sent to Noel when he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," Kela says. "I love the magazine covers as those would all have been bands I was a fan of in the 80s, so it was fun to discover them in the house. We didn't find anything of enormous value or anything but it is lovely to salvage these little bits of history."

In the kitchen of her own home, Kela has a bar sign that was Noel's, and her son has his dartboard in his bedroom. The Noel Redding connection has a big appeal for guests. "The house is unique in itself but with the rock and roll element too, there are very few places to stay in Ireland that have a history like it. Noel was an important part of Clonakilty life, he brought so much of the music scene to the area," Kela says. "If you go into De Barras, there is a wall dedicated to Noel and the different rock stars that came to visit him over the years."



Other famous names are linked to Dunowen House. "George Sands built the house in 1772, and Michael Collins' aunts lived in it at one point. We must find out more about the other people who lived here, but it's wonderful to be part of it," Kela says. "Each person who lived here left their mark and I think we have now also made our mark on the house. The buildings were falling into disrepair, and I'd love to think if we ever move on or when our ashes are scattered down in Sands Cove, people will see we made the house our own."

Aside from the rock and roll artefacts and the more classic furnishings in the main house that were bought from the previous owners, Kela found pieces at auctions and online. "I am a bit of a magpie. We found the table in our kitchen for sale in Timoleague on DoneDeal. I also go to a lot of auctions - Skibbereen Market is great for finding different bits and Paul's Auld Shite shop in Clonakilty has lovely things," she says. "I can't walk out of The Old Mill Stores without buying something. I've gotten a lot of lamps and oil cloths for tables in there



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and I love their rug selection. We have bought Persian rugs over the years and they are just beautiful, if anything happened to them I would just be distraught. I wouldn't be precious about anything else, we want people to feel relaxed and that they can curl up on the couch and switch off."

There's a different style in each of the houses, with lots of colourful accessories in the cottage, dark navys and blues in the coach house and more luxe styling in the main house.

"I couldn't do minimalist and I couldn't do totally white, I have to have a bit of colour," Kela says. "I found that I used the Houzz website a lot when designing the spaces. I created folders for each house and gave the kitchen guys pictures of what I wanted. My style is classic with a bit of personality. I look at trends but I don't totally adopt them."

Pieces of art also take pride of place in the home. "The tiles on display in the kitchen are from Hegarty Auctions in Bandon," Kela says.

"The local artist Geraldine O'Sullivan does really lovely coastal scenes, and we have beautiful ones of Baltimore and Kinsale. My favourite is the big John Morris painting in the sitting room in the main house. When we were kids we used to go to Inch Strand with my parents. We bought that at an auction in Adams in Blackrock. It's of a family at Inch Strand and I always felt it looked like my memories of being there with my extended family."

www.dunowenhouse.ie

