

The eagle has **LANDED**

Blessed with a stunning clifftop plot in rural Scotland on which to build a new home, architect Roderick James and his wife Amanda Markham needed to come up with an equally breathtaking design — and the end result doesn't disappoint





Any house lucky enough to be positioned in as beautiful a spot as the cliffs overlooking the Sound of Mull in Argyll needed to do the site justice — and there is no question that the location's new occupant, Eagle Rock, does just that. Designed and owned by architect Roderick James and his wife, interior designer Amanda Markham, Eagle Rock is as striking in its design as the location it occupies.

“We had already built two houses in this area,” begins Roderick, whose family hails from Scotland. “Back in 2000 we bought a plot for just £15,000 and built a house there — so many friends wanted to come and stay with us that we ended up building another house just behind it!”

In 2012 Roderick's practice was approached by the Ardtornish Estate, the main landowners in the area, asking them to get planning permission for a new township to be built on the land.

“We were worried about how many people might want to live all the way out here,” explains Roderick. “So Amanda and I decided to kickstart things by buying the first plot. We always thought that we would rent it out as a holiday home but we actually liked the house so much that we ended up making it our home and now rent out our old house.”

The design Roderick and Amanda, along with architect Mike Hope, came up with for the plot was a symmetrical, elliptical-shaped house.

“We began with a round building,” explains Roderick. “But I have found that people tend to find elliptical-shaped homes easier to live in — not only does the furniture fit in better, but it means rooms don't overlook one another. All four bedrooms in this house look out in different directions.”

The planners were initially dubious about the non-traditional design of the house, with its three different roof types, all at varying levels, and generous proportions (the house is 400m²). However, Roderick, who started his practice in 1974, was able to persuade them that its low-lying form and planted sedum roof actually made it far less visible than some of the more conventional dormer-style homes on the site. The house is further bedded into the site due to the way in which its walls have been constructed to slope inwards from the bottom up, a technique often used by Roderick.

The final design fully embraces its exposed position and has been designed not only to make the most of its spectacular setting, but also to be as energy efficient as possible.

The house has been constructed using a primary frame of Douglas fir glulam beams, chosen for their stability and crisp, contemporary appearance.

“The exterior walls are constructed from 50mm thick Celenit woodwool panels, filled with 450mm of Warmcell recycled newspaper insulation (as is the roof),” explains Roderick. “Woodwool is made using wooden fibres encased in cement.” A final exterior finish of self-coloured lime render gives the house its interesting, textural finish.

The northerly façade, to which the house is approached, has been kept deliberately austere, with small windows designed to minimise heat loss and retain a sense of privacy.



PROJECT NOTES

HOMEOWNERS Roderick James and Amanda Markham

PROJECT Timber framed self-build
SIZE 400m²

BUILD TIME April 2013 – July 2015

BUILD COST £2,000/m²

VALUE Unknown

BEDDED INTO THE SITE

The design for the house was originally round, but was changed to elliptical as Roderick (above, with Amanda) felt it would give better views and mean that none of the bedrooms would overlook one

another. The varied roof coverings include sedum, lead and glass. The south elevation of the house looks out over the Sound of Mull (bottom left) — huge triple-glazed argon-filled windows ensure maximum solar gain without overheating.

OPEN LIVING SPACES

The living room is located centrally and projects out from the south of the building, with views over the water beyond. The Scan stove was purchased from the Stirling Stove Centre.



Any sense of reclusiveness is dispersed on entering the property, however, as the double entrance doors open into a ‘compressed’ hallway and then straight into the soaring glazed entry courtyard.

“This main living area is open up to the sky thanks to the glazed ceiling,” says Roderick. “It is an extraordinary space and is light all day long. We never realised we’d spend so much time in here.”

This internal courtyard sits at the very heart of the house, separating the guest bedrooms from the main bedrooms. The amazing space is overlooked by a first floor gallery, accessed by sweeping staircases to either side. Here, a cinema, music room and games area, along with a library, sit beneath a sloping softwood tongue-and-groove ceiling.

The house has been cleverly designed to keep the ‘service’ areas of the house, such as the utility, laundry, cloakroom and larder, separate from the living spaces by locating them in the outer walls. “The wall that separates them from the rest of the house is solid concrete,” explains Roderick. “The larder, which is located on the north side of the house, always remains cold.”

To the rear, south side of the house sits the living room — a stunning space with 270° views of the Sound of Mull. This room flows into the open-plan kitchen and dining area, with French doors opening out to a deck beyond.

“The most important thing to me when designing this house was to avoid passages and corridors,” says Roderick. “I wanted every space to open up to one another so you never feel constrained. This means that your eyes can roam everywhere and take in the points of interest and texture that we have designed in.” And visual interest is everywhere, from the concrete arches tucked under the stairs to the rough finish of the Carlite undercoat plaster on the internal walls, which has a softness that Roderick and Amanda like for its homely appeal.

Appearances aside, the house is also incredibly energy efficient. “The house has an energy efficiency rating of 99 out of 100 and an environmental impact rating of 100 out of a 100,” reveals Roderick. “These ratings are driven by the inclusion of the 450mm thick Warmcell insulation in the walls and roof and the fact that all windows and doors have triple-glazed, argon-filled K Glass.”

All the electricity for the house is generated by 15kW of ground-mounted PV (photovoltaic) solar panels. Surplus heat is stored in the thick concrete beneath the timber floors, while heating is provided via wet underfloor heating, powered by an air source heat pump.

“Our monitoring to date suggests that we have no net electricity costs per year,” says Roderick.

“For us, this is the perfect house,” he continues. “We’re not moving from this one. We use every single bit of it even though it is a big house. We have lots of people up to come and stay but find that everyone has their own space.”

“As an architectural practice, we have designed between 1,500 to 2,000 houses, and Amanda and I have designed 10 for ourselves — this one embodies everything we have learned during that time.”



“
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FRAMING THE VISTA

The house's primary structure is constructed from a Douglas Fir glulam frame, chosen for its stability and modern appearance. The beams, softwood tongue-and-groove ceilings and timber floors have all been washed with a diluted white undercoat, giving a soft, light finish and preventing the timber from turning orange over time.

INNER AND OUTER SPACES
The kitchen lies towards the centre of the elliptical plan and is open to the dining room and living spaces beyond. The house has been designed to incorporate 'compressed' areas along with soaring spaces to ensure there is visual interest everywhere. Texture is important too — the walls have been finished with a soft undercoat using Carilite bonding.

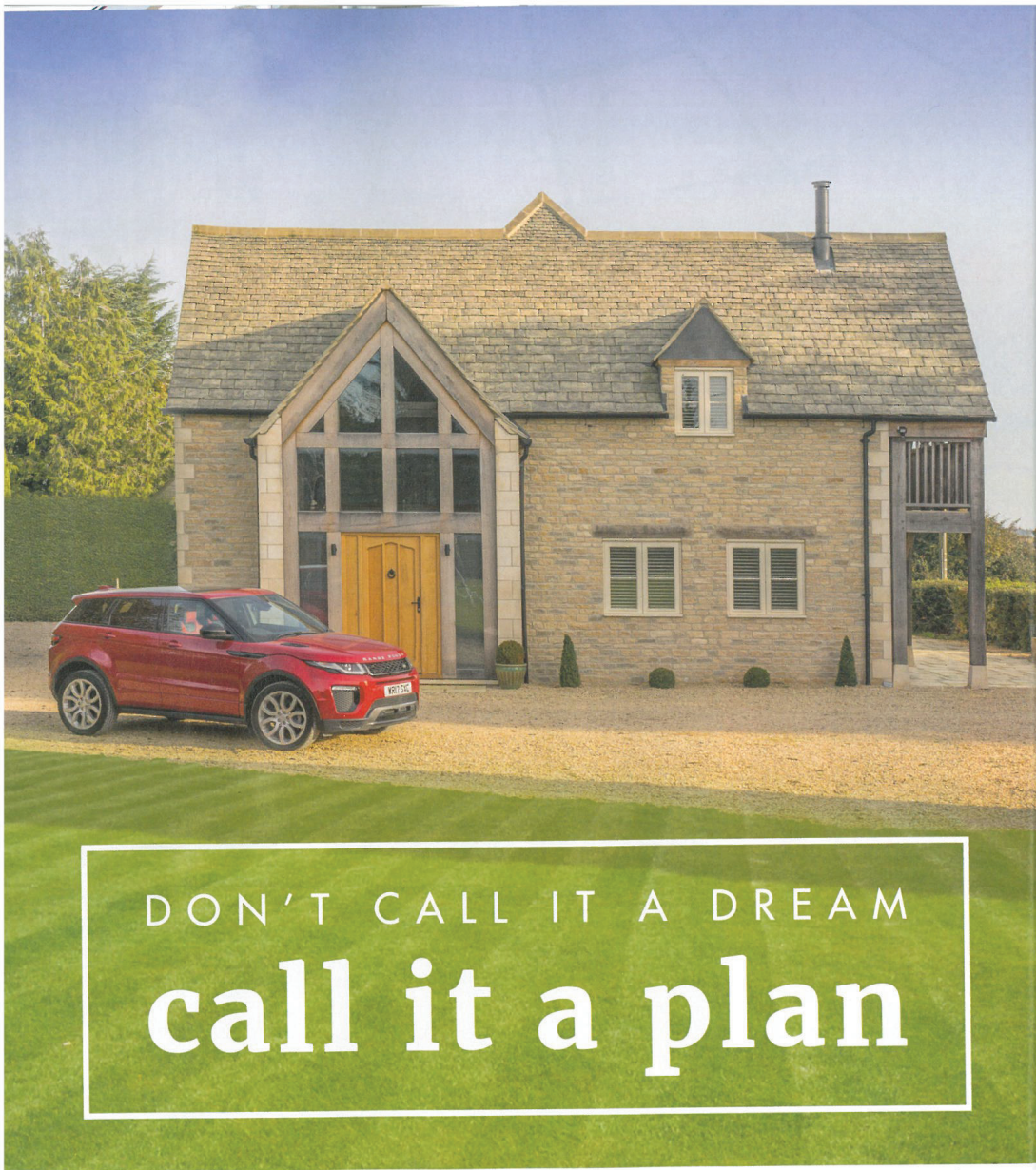




DRAMATIC ENTRANCE
The entry courtyard is topped with a huge elliptical glazed roof – from Roofglaze – allowing light to pour into the centre of this new house. Architectural interest is everywhere, from the concrete arches beneath the

stairs (the smallest one is for the dog), to the combination of glass and timber balustrading and spindles — even the woodburner flue has been turned into a feature, passing up and out of the glass ceiling. The woodburner is from Clearview Stoves.

FIRST FLOOR SPACES
The first floor gallery, overlooking the entrance courtyard, houses a cinema, music and games area, library and work spaces. There is also the provision for further occasional sleeping accommodation.



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SLEEPING SPACES
 The four en suite bedrooms have been located to either side of the main living spaces, keeping guest rooms separate from the main bedrooms.

OUTDOOR ROOMS
 Outdoor seating (left), located on a projecting timber deck, is sheltered by the overhanging roof — also featuring timber cladding.

SUPPLIERS

HOUSE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

Roderick James & Amanda
Markham with Mike Hope:
Roderick James Architects LLP
www.rjarchitects.co.uk;
01803 868000

MAIN CONTRACTOR AND JOINERY

A.A.Macdonald Joinery:
01397 713866; 07788 296331

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

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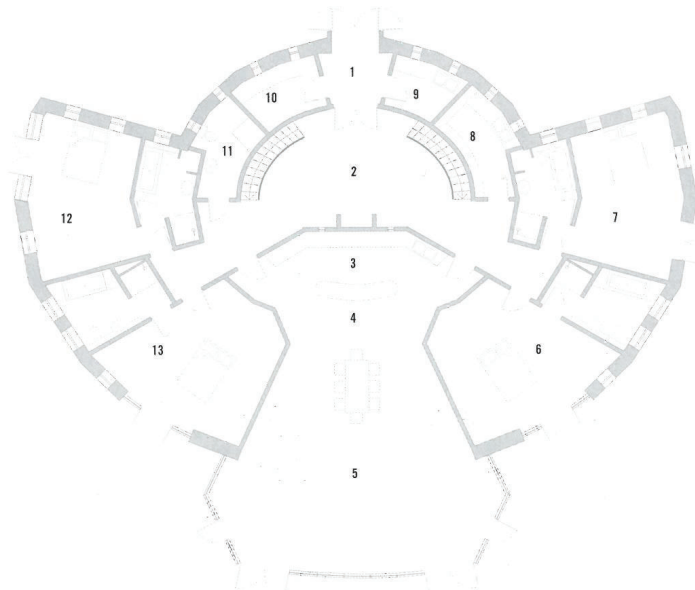
AIRSHIP www.airbnb.co.uk/

rooms/19997279

THE FLOORPLAN

The outer walls of the house contain the service areas. Symmetrically located to either side of the main living spaces are four en suite bedrooms. The staircases in the entry courtyard lead to a first floor gallery (not shown) where a cinema, music and games rooms, study space and occasional sleeping space are all located.

- 1 Entry
- 2 Entry courtyard
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Dining
- 5 Living room
- 6 Bedroom 1
- 7 Bedroom 3
- 8 Larder
- 9 Laundry
- 10 Cloakroom
- 11 Shower
- 12 Bedroom 2
- 13 Bedroom 4



Roderick James Architects has been designing country houses throughout the UK for over 40 years.

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