



TRESTA HOUSE

Building for a modern lifestyle,
but reflecting the traditional
house styles of Shetland.

When Shetlanders Angela and Brydon Leask decided they wanted to build themselves a new house they knew what they wanted and had the knowledge to make the project happen. Brydon is a skilled builder with plenty of experience and superb attention to detail. They both knew that they wanted a family house, not too big, which was to be contemporary but also had to reflect the traditional building styles of Shetland.

After looking around they found land they could buy in Tresta, the first community you reach after driving over the ridge of hills which divides the west mainland from the rest of mainland Shetland. Tresta is backed by hills which block the worst of the cold northerly winds and benefits from facing south with open views over the voe. Trees grow well here and the site is just a few hundred yards away from the well-established Lea gardens, a pocket of lush planting which surprises visitors. Tresta is also well placed between their families in Lerwick and Walls and has easy access to the local school and services at nearby Aith as well as being on a main road and bus route.

The couple did a lot of research which included looking at other new houses recently built in Shetland. They placed importance on how the house was to look from the outside and were keen that it was low scale and should not appear too big in relation to the other houses which run along the foot of the hills behind Tresta. They

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already knew Nick Brett and Adrian Wishart of Richard Gibson Architects and appointed the practice to design the three-bedroom house to maximise usable space and to keep the house bright and contemporary as well as homely. Knowledgeable clients: a shopping list of their requirements formed their brief to the architects. As well as the spaces they needed for their family to live in they wanted the house to be their long term home. It needed to be flexible and able to adapt to changing family needs. It had to be energy efficient with air and heat recovery systems. The land they bought was large enough for Brydon to build himself a workshop on site.

They carefully thought how the house had to work for them and this meant that the staircase had to be in the circulation area and not accessed through living spaces. The resulting design is a relatively narrow one room deep main house with a small wing out to the back. All the main living areas face south and get the spectacular open view to the south as well as the sun. The sheltered entrance, utility areas, bathrooms and storage are tucked towards the back of the house. Keen to maximise the feeling of space without adding additional floor area, the architects cut back part of the upper floor to form a wide circulation, study and play area which looks down into the glazed dining space off the kitchen. There is a flow of space from the entrance, past the staircase, an interesting structure itself, and around the curved larder towards the living room and dining space. There are carefully considered details such as a tall narrow

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window between the kitchen and living room which keep the spaces connected and allow glimpses through to the outside. The family have been in the house for two years and are slowly making their mark on it. They are now landscaping and constructing sheltering stone walls to form outside sitting areas to maximise their use of the site.

Driving along the main road towards the west the house is a crisp white building with a splash of bright red timber on the lower rear wing. It sits happily into the landscape alongside the other older houses and in time will have its own group of trees. The investment in time, careful thought and sound professional advice has paid off in this contemporary house which will continue to serve the family as they grow and age.

