

7th heaven: Hermitage

In the same family's possession since 1999, **Tommy Barker** says the

— cared for religiously

hi-spec home was reconfigured during the post-Celtic Tiger slump



Glanmire, Cork
 €695,000
 Size: 282 sq m (3,040 sq ft)
 Bedrooms: 4
 Bathrooms: 4
 BER: B2
 Best Feature: Hi-spec

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NO 7 The Hermitage has been home to the same family from day one, back in 1999, but now, after nearly 20 years here, they are leaving. Leaving for the second time.

How's that? Well, back day one, they'd bought a site, with outline planning permission on it for a quite substantial dormer home and, as a young couple, they made every financial stretch the could to secure site No 7, as their 'starter' home.

Built initially with the aid of a parent who was a builder, they managed to get a decent home of about 2,000 sq ft, not too scanty in anyone's books, not to mind as a first home. And, they enjoyed things like a first floor living room, with feature roof-set eyrie window for lofty views over the Glanmire valley: homes in The Hermitage get some of the best views of still wooded hills, over towards Sarsfields Court, now in late au-

turn and early winter russets, and set seven minutes from the Jack Lynch Tunnel via the Glanmire access sliproad.

But, it was only when children started to come along they did they find shortcomings with the layout and the rooms' shapes, positioning and even purposes.

So, they took the bold decision to not only enlarge it, but to pretty much totally reconfigure it, reckoning that after so many years in situ, they know all of its pluses and how to adapt to what wasn't working for hem.

They moved out, for the first time, in 2012, to facilitate an 11-



month rebuild project, with walls removed and repositioned, all services were pretty much updated, as was the external look, with zinc-roofed additions on either gable end, one small, the other large.

About an additional 1,000 sq ft more was grafted on, to bring the home's size now to c 3,040 sq ft. All of it is high end, with all four of its double rooms with en suite bathrooms, in an adaptable format, with three of them up at first floor level, and one at ground, for life-long use for anyone with access concerns, now or in the future, as well as being ideal for guests.

It was thoughtfully done too, future-proofed for the family and handily using a design team they were already familiar with, having a family background in the bar/restaurant business in Cork with several premises now to their credit, and having previously seen some premises' overhauls, in a constantly evolving hospitality sector.

The couple had worked with Cork-based architect Derek O'Leary, of O'Leary Architecture + Design, whose work spans a broad residential and commercial sector, including leisure, retail and hospitality. They brought on board, as builder, the engineer Kieran McCarthy, whose own company KMC has been making increasingly impressive and steady waves in the on-off sector of Cork's private homes market, with KMC's construction boards up on some of the suburbs most exclusive residential projects.

They also had worked with freelance interior designer Róisín O'Brien, and so when it came to making the jump to reinvent their home, they brought both on board, as well as using suppliers they also had worked with during work projects.

Of course, it helped that they were doing it in 2012, when most of the country was still in a slump, the construction sector was on its

knees – and those surviving tradespeople still eking out a survival path had free slots in their diaries.

Going through the costs for the project in 2012, the couple remark on the incredible value they got, and on the courtesy of people they engaged with, and even recall a representative of a kitchen company based in Dublin calling down not once, but three times, to their late '90s dormer home, travelling each time by train, to try to woo their business.

Suffice to say, that level of attention, and canvassing, and follow-through support, hardly applies now as a new mini 'boom' sees storages all over the place of suitably skilled craftsmen (and, women) – as No 7's vendors will possibly find to their chagrin, as they prepare to take on a new project.

They are selling now only because a classic Cork house, with 1930s roots on a large, south-facing

site with 300 year history, has crossed their path: they are smitten by it, and they are prepared to dip a toe in the renovations sector all over again, but feel they'll move into their next 'second' home first, to get a feel for it and what they'd like to do with it over a next life chapter.

Now, No 7 is fresh to market with estate agent Jackie Cohalan of Cohalan Downing, and she guides the 3,000 sq ft-plus home, on a private site of one third of an acre at €695,000 – that's about €230 per sq ft. Some very expensive lighting, drapes, blinds, fixtures and more are all going with it, as they are so specific to this home they just won't work with the next project.

Apart from the very effective re-ordering and creation of extra space, and the quality of the glazing (from Ballincollig-based 2020 Glazing, a company founded in 2009 by Ken Matson and now very active on both residential and com-

mercial projects), and the integrity of the standing seam zinc new roofs, and the super-slick kitchen (Liecht, from Chris Keating House of Design), possibly the most eye-catching feature of this home is the lighting, with more than a handful of striking, stand-out and oversize pieces.

The lighting all came from

Shane O'Byrne's shop called Light, in Douglas's East Village, and includes some engaging pendant lights, such as the two big ones over the stairs, with the shades' interiors seemingly finished in gold (no, no, it's not real gold.) Some may have roots in the commercial hospitality sector but, judiciously chosen, looking right

at home in a domestic setting, almost the making of it, in some cases, such as in the master bedroom, kitchen/living room, and in the masterfully handled hall, stairs and landing.

As engaging, underfoot, is the high-gloss herringbone parquet floor in a stained oak, in the hallway and main adjoining living room and finished with a super-high gloss or coats and coats of lacquer: the effect is reflectively liquid, and a testament to the leveling abilities of the builders KMC, as there's nary a skirting board across the ground floor's various finishes be it carpet, tile or glistening parquet.

Exemplary too is the carpeted staircase, with its timbered first step and its elegant, slender and snaking handrail a contrast to the clear glass balusters, done by Stan