

Words **Fiona Reid** Photographs **Phil Wilkinson**



A perfect match

This B-listed property with its huge walled garden proved a winning combination for footballer **Jackie McNamara**



EDGERTON HOUSE in Midlothian is quite deceptive. When pulling in through the electric gates, this B-listed property looks a bit like the house a child would draw. It is simple and symmetrical, although there is a wing on one side. Its door is in the middle framed by astragal windows, and the facade is trailed in ivy. It's a handsome-looking house.

The same is true on the other side of the building, where it overlooks the vast walled garden. However, here you can really appreciate its scale. Its two bay-windowed sections flood the principal rooms with light, while the sun room opens into the garden.

It is when standing here that you gain a snapshot of what family life is like at Edgerton. The set of goalposts at one side of the garden offer a clue, although today it's not Falkirk defender Jackie McNamara scoring, but his two eldest kids, Erin, 10, and Sidney, 4. Meanwhile 3-year-old Evie has wandered off with her mum, Jackie's wife Samantha. If you add in the

family's boisterous nine-month-old miniature schnauzers gambolling around the garden, you have what would appear to be a fairly typical late afternoon in the McNamara household. This lovely old house is buzzing with the chaos of family life.

Amongst this scene, Jackie looks the picture of calm. Earlier this year he left Aberdeen just short of his first year with the club to join Falkirk, and regained his family life in the process. He was following in the footsteps of his father, Jackie Snr, when he chose a career in football. He made his name when he moved to Celtic in 1995, where he stayed for 10 years. He picked up the Scottish PFA Young Player of the Year title in 1996 and the Football Writers Player of the Year in 2004, before being named Captain in 2005.

Jackie had been commuting every day while at Aberdeen – a commitment that anyone would have found exhausting. "I felt like packing it in a few times and retiring, but now I feel a million times better and I'm enjoying my work again," he says. "I'm

This page
clockwise from
top left: the hall is
floored with solid
oak boards; a
dressing-room
opens from the
master bedroom;
Jackie McNamara
with his wife
Samantha and
children Evie, Erin
and Sidney

loving everything about it – training, being back here with the family. That's important in any job you do. Otherwise you're doing it for the wrong reasons."

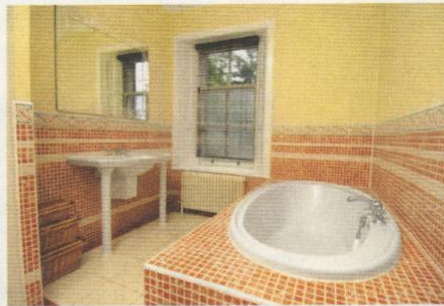
Jackie and Samantha moved to Edgerton House on Hillhead in Lasswade eight years ago, having previously been living in a new-build. "We always wanted an older house with character, and we liked the solidity of this place," he says. They were also sold on the huge walled garden, as Erin was only a toddler and they wanted a safe place for kids to run around in.

Refurbishing the house was a substantial project for the couple. They also renovated the adjacent coach house two years ago – now a two-bedroom property, it had previously been used for storage. By this stage Jackie was based down south playing for Wolverhampton. In many ways, distance made this second project easier. "You're not standing over people and stressing about it all the time, whereas with the house we were living through it," he says.

The family had to move out of the main house →



This page clockwise from main: the drawing-room features purple velvety sofas; Evie, Sidney and Erin on the quad bike in the garden; the kitchen was designed around an inherited Aga and has a central circular island



← for three months while the major work was being done. "It needed everything: heating, plumbing, drainage," recalls Jackie. "To be honest, we thought it would be minor stuff, but there was only one toilet, so we had to dig trenches to bring water round the other side of the house for the en suites."

A previous owner had installed a lift in what is now the breakfast room. This was a massive undertaking to remove, but they not only gained this extra space downstairs, but also a dressing-room above. It opens from the master bedroom and leads into their en suite.

The house is awash with period features - from the dado rails and the unusual architraves and panelled doors to the original brass servants' bells in the kids' playroom. The parquet flooring in the drawing-room is original, and the couple complemented this with solid oak boards elsewhere. They inherited the Aga and designed the kitchen around it. The units are by Chalon, including a central circular island.

Jackie credits Samantha for the interior decisions. "I'm pretty laid-back about it," he says. "Samantha has chosen most of it around the kids - things that you can change easily enough and that won't be damaged."

The one exception is the drawing-room. It was designed by Joanne McDonald of Luma Interiors as a grown-up space - the velvety sofas were certainly never intended for jammy fingers. Chelsea Cobb, an artist friend, painted the giant triptych that picks up on the purple tones of the furniture.

It's Jackie's favourite room. "I love just sitting here with Samantha at the end of the day, with the fire lit," he says.

The house has been a sanctuary for the McNamaras, even if - with the kids tearing around outside on a quad bike - it's not always the most peaceful one. Clearly Jackie wouldn't have it any other way. * Offers of over £1,350,000 should be made to Rettie & Co (0131-220 4160, www.rettie.co.uk). Open viewing today, 2-4pm

Clockwise from main: the drawing-room features parquet flooring; the couple added en suites; the dining-room; the kitchen units were made by Chalon

My favourite things

What is your favourite meal?
Pasta, boring pasta, but I love it.

What is your favourite sport to watch?
Golf, and I play it as well - well, I try.

What is the last film you loved?
Old School with Will Ferrell, Luke Wilson and Vince Vaughn. I love comedies. I can't watch scary movies or I won't sleep at night!

What currently gets the most airplay on your iPod?
Embrace and Ian Brown.

What is your favourite city escape?
London with just the two of us. Samantha and I have been a few times on our own and always have a good time - good food, lovely hotels.

Favourite holiday destination?
The south of France. We have a place there so we go every year. It's not a touristy place and the food is fantastic.



How do you relax?
Come home, put my feet up and watch TV. I love watching football. It doesn't matter what league or who's playing - if it's on, I'll watch it.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose?
The Cayman Islands. Samantha and I went there before we had kids and it was so laid-back. Everything about it was fantastic.

What was your favourite sporting moment?
Watching Scotland beat France in Paris. It was a great experience being Scottish, and sitting there with a Scotland shirt on watching it.

What has been the highlight of your own career?
Scoring in the Cup Final and lifting the trophy was a great experience; winning the Football Writers Player of the Year; and being Captain for Scotland.

If you had to choose a career other than football, what would it be?
Without a shadow of a doubt, I'd have loved to be a professional golfer.

What is in the future?
I have started coaching and I'd like to stay in football. I wanted to keep playing for as long as possible and keep learning.



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