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[2] The retreat

Oka CEO Annabel Astor's
bothy in the Hebrides

There are very few corners of Britain as remote as Jura in the Scottish Hebrides, an island where the red deer outnumber the residents 25 to one. George Orwell, who wrote *1984* there, described the landscape as 'unforgettable', and for those who want a complete escape from modern life, Annabel Astor's seaside cottage is heaven. But while the setting is idyllic, the real charm lies in the execution of its romantic, unpretentious interiors. Bought in 1918 by Nancy Astor - Annabel's husband's grandmother - the cottage has been gently updated over the decades. 'It was only fairly recently that we got electricity, gas and plumbing,' says Annabel. 'For the first 10 years I was here, the house was lit by hurricane lamps and we had to wash in the stream.' Preserving the cottage's original features, the Astors have delicately enhanced the rooms, saving most of the pine cladding from Nancy Astor's day and pairing it with comfortable furniture covered in pretty floral linens from Robert Kime and checked blankets from the local Islay Woollen Mill. In the sitting room, Annabel's colleague at Oka, Sue Jones, has brought the beach indoors, ordering bags of shells from the mainland and arranging them in mosaic-like patterns around the fires. 'With the sunset through the window and the firelight, it really is beautiful,' says Annabel. 'Then we get down to a serious game of Scrabble or Monopoly.'
Oka: 0844-815 7380; www.okadirect.com

GET THE LOOK

'Coquille' wall lights, 20 x 31cm, £320 each, from Nicholas Haslam (www.nicholashaslam.com)

