



# Marshalling DIY talents

A DIY enthusiast makes a 1,200 mile round trip every week to stay at her restored croft home in Wester Ross, Scotland.

Sylvia Marshall, of Coulsdon, has made a business out of her hobby, restoring old homes across the country.

It all started in 2002 when she was looking for new office space for her training business and decided to remodel a derelict bank in Waddon.

Miss Marshall had no DIY experience, so enrolled on courses at Croydon College.

The 50-year-old said: "I did bricklaying, plastering, plumbing, carpentry and electrical understanding."

She also broadcast her progress on the internet and was amazed when thousands watched her antics.

She decided to turn her hobby into a full-time career when she won a lifetime achievement award in the UK National Sales Awards for her

by **KIRSTY WHALLEY**

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training business and knew it was time to do something new.

She set up Cosy Homes after she met a builder and crofter while she was on holiday in Wester Ross who had land for sale with a derelict croft house on it and she decided to try to restore the old building.

She said: "We took the building down stone by stone and numbered them so we could put it back together again. We built it exactly as it had been 100 years ago but added two wings to it to make it bigger."

The project was such a success that Miss Marshall brought several other plots of land with old croft houses and converted them in exactly the same way.

"I now have those up for sale. They look so authentic that people do not realise they are new build and think they have always been there."

She said: "I love my home and I am there almost every weekend."



**Stone by stone: Sylvia Marshall restores the croft house in Wester Ross, Scotland**

"It takes me two hours to go door to door from my home in Old Coulsdon via Gatwick, that is less time than it takes for me to get to London."

She has been commended for her work by the Scottish Heritage foundation.

Her next project is an old thatched house in Selsey, West Sussex, that has come under

threat from developers who want to replace it with flats.

"We have stepped in and will be restoring it to its original state."

The Croydon Ambassador promotes local firms in a trade directory on her website [cosyhomesonline.com](http://cosyhomesonline.com) so people with DIY woes can get advice and help.

She is offering Croydon companies the chance to join and promote themselves for free.

She said: "I am very pro small businesses, I know what it is like to run one out of your living room, so I want to help people promote themselves."

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