

# Past to present

Melanie O'Donoghue, VN, VetAssist explores the design and redevelopment of the historic practice at Athenry Pet Clinic.

## VetAssist practice profile

<b>Practice Profile</b>	<b>Athenry Pet Clinic</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Athenry, Co. Galway</b>
<b>Practice Category</b>	<b>Mixed practice / Registered Vet Clinic</b>
<b>Practice Principal</b>	<b>Frank Brody MVB, MRCVS</b>
<b>Practice Team</b>	<b>Two veterinary practitioners. One qualified veterinary nurse Two practice secretaries</b>
<b>Property Specifications</b>	<b>Converted block of stone built stables, a listed building, approx 550 sq. feet</b>

It is not often that I get the opportunity to work on such an unusual conversion as a beautifully constructed block of stone stables, which are listed and approximately 200 years old. Most of the premises that I convert are houses or retail units, so I was delighted for the opportunity to work on this project in the Athenry Pet Clinic. The stables are in immaculate condition and have been well maintained. They have been used previously for the small animal surgery and also housed the stocks for large animal work as well as providing the practice with additional storage. It is a beautiful location for such a busy mixed practice.

## Expansion plans

My first contact with the practice was in May 2007, when Frank Brody made the decision to extend his small animal premises. This would serve two purposes: firstly, it would give him the additional room and facilities that his small animal practice now needed and, secondly, the extension would also help him comply with the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Practice Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS). The practice is a well-established large animal practice and, over the last few years, Frank has seen an increase in the small animal side of his business, which is partly due to the increase in property development in and around Athenry. It is a bustling town with good local amenities and has an added bonus of lying within close proximity to Galway city.

## Project construction

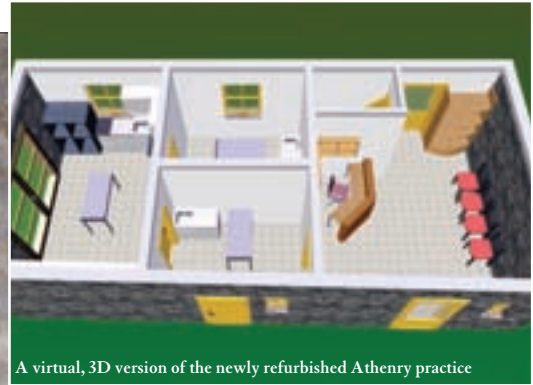
As the building is listed we had to ensure that there were no external changes to the building and any work carried out would be done in keeping with the original building. The building was divided internally into three sections – a small animal surgery, an office and an area that housed the stocks for scanning. This division was achieved through the use of stud wall partitions. After discussing the practice's needs and correlating the practice wish list, I set about redesigning the practice layout. By removing some of the internal walls and constructing new ones, it created four good-sized rooms:



This unique practice is based in a block of converted stone stables almost 200 years old.



Pictured is the reception/ retail room with part of the original town wall of Athenry.



A virtual, 3D version of the newly refurbished Athenry practice

- A waiting and retail area
- A consulting room
- A prep-room
- A combined theatre and x-ray room
- A WC for clients' use, which is located off the waiting room

### Extraordinary practice feature

The flow of the rooms in this practice is vital to the design and each room in this design is interconnecting. The waiting room is a compact space, while housing a reception desk, retail shelving and a client seating area. The room now has a spacious feel and a unique feature with part of the old, original town wall incorporated into the design. We hence decided to make it a quality feature of the room by leaving it exposed and highlighting it with spot lighting – all adding to the charm of the practice!

From the waiting room you enter the consulting room and from the consulting room you can access the prep-room, which has easy entry to the pharmacy. This is very practical as it is centrally located to facilitate both the consulting room and prep-room, thus eliminating multiple bottles of medicines being opened and used allowing for better stock control.

The prep-room is a multifunctional room, with a bank of kennels which allows you to monitor patients closely while recovering from surgery. Also, in the centre of the room there is a very useful tub table. This is extremely helpful for performing dentals procedures and other procedures that are deemed dirty and unsuitable for theatre. The practice's lab facility is also located in this room. From the prep-room you can access the theatre, which also houses the x-ray machine. The door and frame are lead lined to

comply with the RPII regulations. The walls in the theatre have been plastered and painted to provide a more aseptic environment.

The project started in July 2007 and was completed by October of that year. To support the changes that have been made to the practice, Frank has also employed a qualified veterinary nurse to offer support to the growing small animal business. Clients are free to visit the clinic throughout the day to purchase pet products and receive information and advice, while the small animal clinic times have also been extended to facilitate clients' needs.

### Special thanks

I have no doubt that the commitment that Frank has put into this project, coupled with the fact that he has a very supportive family and practice team, will be very rewarding from a professional and financial point of view. I would like to take this opportunity to wish them every success in the future with their newly improved small animal practice facility and service.

*Melanie O'Donoghue has been in the veterinary profession – both clinical practice and industry – since 1990 and has worked in both Ireland and the UK. She qualified as a veterinary nurse through the RCVS in 1995. Melanie was appointed to the Veterinary Council of Ireland in 2006 and now runs practice development company VetAssist.*

