



**IN BRIEF**  
**PROJECT** New build  
**LOCATION** Cornwall  
**COST** Existing garden  
**SPENT** £250,000  
**VALUE** Annexe to main house



**EXTERIOR**

The annexe replaces a carport and store in the garden of a listed thatched cottage and was designed as a contemporary building, clad in untreated cedar shingles and rough render, with a fibreglass monopitch roof and aluminium windows.



# HOLIDAY HIDEAWAY

Inspired by bird hides and designed to connect with nature, this quirky new build is a perfect retreat.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **DAVID CURRAN/UNIQUE HOMESTAYS**

**W**hen Sarah Stanley and Andy Davey bought their listed thatched cottage in a small hamlet near the Cornish seaside town of Perranporth in 2015, they immediately spotted potential in the garden. “An existing carport and store on the site seemed to offer the ideal place to build an annexe,” explains Sarah. “It’s tucked away, nestled in trees, and the old structures weren’t making best use of the space.”

As the founder and director of Unique Homestays, a company which lets some of the most extraordinary and luxurious holiday homes in the UK and overseas, Sarah knows a thing or two about property.

She grew up in a Cornish farmhouse and decided to follow in her father’s footsteps as a farmer, but then changed course to train as a chef when farming faced an uncertain future. Later, she travelled the world and lived in Australia for 12 years – all experiences which have influenced her love of indoor/outdoor homes that focus on cooking, relaxing and entertaining.

“I find myself drawn to rustic tin sheds and natural materials, which could be attributed to my farm-life childhood and to a positive association with places I stayed when travelling in developing countries,” she explains. “Once we’d finished renovating our thatched cottage, I couldn’t wait to get started on designing an annexe to replace the old carport.”







**“I loved the idea of peeking out of the angled flap window and being totally ensconced in nature.”**

Jess Clark, Unique Homestays’ in-house design consultant, was invited to work with Sarah and Andy to create a suitable building for the site. Jess has worked with the company for 14 years, and her passion for creative, quirky architecture and interiors played a vital role in the design process. “Taking shelter in a bird hide during a downpour was my starting point for The Hide,” she recalls. “I was walking with my children at the Argal Lake, near our home in Falmouth, and loved the idea of peeking out of the angled flap window and being totally ensconced in nature.”

Jess was keen to develop a simple design which would encompass the rustic simplicity of the bird hide, and was further inspired by the visitor centre at the Eden Project, which is clad externally in cracked wooden shingles, weathered to a soft silver colour.

**WINDOWS**

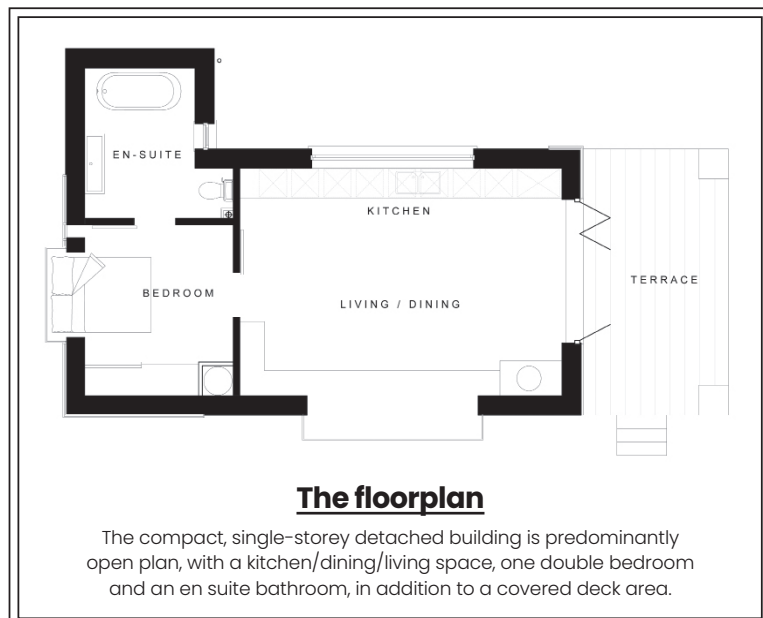
The glazing was one of the more problematic and expensive aspects of the project. The window in the main living area measures four metres across.

“I naturally gravitate towards very rough-and-ready natural materials, but I wanted to try and do something out of my comfort zone and create a building which was also linear and contemporary – softened by the warmth of the wood inside and out,” Jess continues. “I drew up the designs by hand and then a local architecture practice produced workable plans and submitted them for planning permission.”

“Although it’s tucked down in the landscape and fairly hidden from view, we were still amazed that the planning application was passed in just eight weeks, with no objections,” admits Sarah, whose partner Andy was always going to complete the build.

The site was cleared, and concrete strip foundations laid before cavity blockwork walls could be erected. Structural steelwork supports one end of the building, where the open-plan living kitchen leads out onto a covered deck through bifold doors.

The carport on the site had a sloping mono-pitch roof, and this is echoed on the new structure, which has a fibreglass roof covering and walls which are partially clad in shingles. The remainder have







been finished in a trowelled cement render, and the building's sharp lines and contemporary appeal contrast with the crooked cob walls and deep thatch of the neighbouring Grade II-listed cottage.

In addition to the large sections of glazing and unusual angled windows overhanging the garden, small frameless glazed peepholes punctuate the building's fabric and create a dappled effect, designed to emulate sunlight through leaves in a forest, with nest lights creating a similar impression after dark.

It was the aluminium-framed glazing and bifolds which delayed the project and caused the most issues, including several on-site breakages when the glass was delivered. The sitting room window measures four



metres across and needed to be craned up a relatively small driveway, with the glazing proving to be one of the more expensive elements of the £250,000 build.

"The angled window in the living room creates a huge window-seat area, overlooking the garden and green hills," says Jess, who designed log storage below the seat to supply the corner fireplace. "It's a cosy space to sit and read, although it can get quite warm in summer, sitting right beside the glass. Originally, I'd planned for the little side triangular sections to be openable, but the cost was just too high."

A similar angled window in the private bedroom enables stargazing at night, with the head of the bed pushed right into the glazed section, and concrete finishes to floors, walls and ceilings continuing through the bedroom and en suite.

**"I like to keep the essence of the property rustic and simple, then the individuality lies in the dressing and accessories."**



**"Concrete is one of the main materials, which we've used for everything from the garden seating to the fireplace, with the TV hidden behind a secret door on the chimney breast."**

A vast cast concrete bath was originally sold as an animal trough, more often seen on farms, which Jess found at an agricultural store. "It was such an inexpensive thing to buy – just £130 – although it needed work to adapt and took four men to manoeuvre into place, which pushed up the cost," she says.

"I like to keep the essence of the property rustic and simple, then the individuality lies in the dressing and accessorising, and this bath is probably my favourite purchase to date. It's massive, and we needed to check that the floor would be sturdy enough to support it and that the air source heat pump could cope with heating the water."

A sliding door between the bedroom and bathroom was made from reclaimed scaffold boards, as were the wardrobes, and Jess found a reclaimed wooden dough bowl online, which was adapted as an unusual sink in the bathroom.

A quote for finishing internal ceilings and walls in a tadelakt plaster proved prohibitively high, at around £30,000. Instead, a wet cement render was trowelled on and then sealed by the builders to create a textured concrete effect, with a concrete floor laid over underfloor heating throughout the building.

The kitchen was another of Jess Clark's designs, which was made by the builders from a combination of cast concrete and reclaimed scaffold boards. The £1.50 metal

## IN DETAIL

### PROJECT

**Architect** Studio Arc:  
studio-arc.co.uk  
**Builder** Andy Davey,  
Davey Construction:  
daveyconstruction.co.uk

### STRUCTURE

**Building materials**  
Jewson: jewson.co.uk  
**Insulation** Celotex:  
celotex.co.uk

### Concrete blocks

Denis May & Sons Ltd:  
denismay.co.uk

### Railway sleepers

Build Supplies:  
buildsupplies.co.uk

### Roofing

Sowden and Sons:  
sowdenroofing  
cornwall.co.uk

### Flue, fire cowl

Hawk Stoves Ltd:  
hawkstoves.co.uk

### Insulation supply

Encon:  
encon.co.uk

### Shingles

Silva:  
silvatimber.co.uk

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

### Air source heat pump

Mitsubishi:  
les.mitsubishielectric.co.uk

### Concrete bath,

### kitchen handles

Mole Valley Farmers:  
molevalleyfarmers.com

### Deck

Millboard:  
millboard.co.uk

### Hot tub

Cornish Hot Tubs:  
cornishhottubs.co.uk

### Lights

Graham and Green:  
grahamandgreen.co.uk

### Kitchen, worktops,

### fireplace, bed, concrete

### furniture, firepit

Davey Construction:  
daveyconstruction.co.uk





**Sarah's top tip:**

**“Be bold with your design, but don't overcomplicate things. I wanted an organic, winding path leading to The Hide, but cutting railway sleepers was so labour intensive that the builders were cursing me!”**

ring handles were another find at Mole Valley Farmers, more usually found on a farm for tethering cows, and cast concrete worktops complete the look. Even the extractor housing above the hob was made to suit.

“Designing and making unusual items are so rewarding,” says Jess. “Concrete is one of the main materials, which we've used for everything from the garden seating to the fireplace, with the TV hidden behind a secret door on the chimney breast. The bed was also handmade, with a concrete base and timber slats.”

**BATHROOM**

An open rain shower, concrete bath and monochrome finishes give the bathroom a pared-back, industrial feel.

Despite its striking architectural design, The Hide is subtly immersed in its rural setting, deep within pastoral Poldark country and ensconced in nature at the end of a winding Cornish lane. Its covered deck leads from the kitchen and features a handcrafted concrete barbecue, with a raised deck and hot tub enjoying far-reaching valley views, a verdant lawn and a large corner seating area, complete with fire pit.

“The outside space is definitely as important as the interior, because the setting is what makes it so special. Building something new in the grounds of a listed building was actually far more straightforward than we'd anticipated,” says Sarah.

“Although we used reclaimed materials, bespoke elements like the kitchen do take time, and labour costs can soon elevate. In such a pared-back space, it's important that every element has a design-led edge, though, and a high level of craftsmanship is vital to the overall aesthetic.”



**FINAL WORD**

**What was the high point of the project?**

Creating something which is a fusion of contemporary architecture and rustic design – it works so well on the site.

**...and the low point?**

The glazing. We had several breakages when the company delivered the doors and windows – it was like a farcical slapstick comedy of disaster!

**Your best buy?**

Undoubtedly the concrete feed trough, which became the designer bath! It cost less than £150 from Mole Valley Farmers,



although the time spent adapting and installing it bumped up the final price.

**Biggest extravagance?**

The glazed elements of the house and corner concrete seating.