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At ease

First-time selfbuilder Jane Langridge has created an incredible Cornish retreat, designed as a healthy building to calm the mind.

STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY PICTURES: UNIQUE HOME STAYS

Botanical artist Jane Langridge's desire to create a healing, restful Cornish refuge was inspired by her plot's incredible setting. "We had spent over 10 blissful years holidaying on the Roseland Peninsula as a family, but when our children grew up, we made the difficult decision to sell our Cornish cottage and find a larger property where we could all meet and spend time together as adults," she explains.

"Three years ago, after selling the cottage, we were literally packing up our belongings there when I spotted an advert for a garden plot with planning permission. I just had to go and look and as soon as I saw the location I knew it was the one."

The small plot is located in the picturesque village of St Just in Roseland, which boasts one of the UK's most beautiful churches. Overlooking the Fal Estuary and open countryside, a former garden had been divided from the neighbouring bungalow by its owner, who worked with Cornish architects Märraum to design a detached two-storey property for the steeply banked site.

EXTERIOR

Creating a clean-living environment was at the top of Jane's agenda when building a contemporary new house on an enviable garden plot in St Just, which enjoys country and estuary views.

IN BRIEF

PROJECT New build

LOCATION Cornwall

COST Undisclosed

SPENT £2,280/sqm

WORTH Unknown



“The architects gave me a virtual reality headset and I was able to walk through the design and explain exactly what I wanted.”

“I spoke to the architects before making an offer on the land,” explains Jane, who is based in Kent and made several trips to the practice’s Cornish office during the design stage. “They had already angled the contemporary house away from neighbouring properties, for privacy and to take in the view. Apart from enlarging some areas of glazing and adding Juliet balconies, the exterior wasn’t greatly altered.

“It was the interior layout which I wanted to change to better suit our family, with open-plan living on the ground floor to take in the views, and three of the four bedrooms on the level below. One of the biggest decisions was to create a fourth bedroom, which did increase the budget but felt like a worthwhile investment.”

From the front, the building looks like a compact low-slung bungalow, but the sloping nature of the site allows it to drop down to form two storeys at the rear, with bedrooms opening onto decking overlooking the water below.



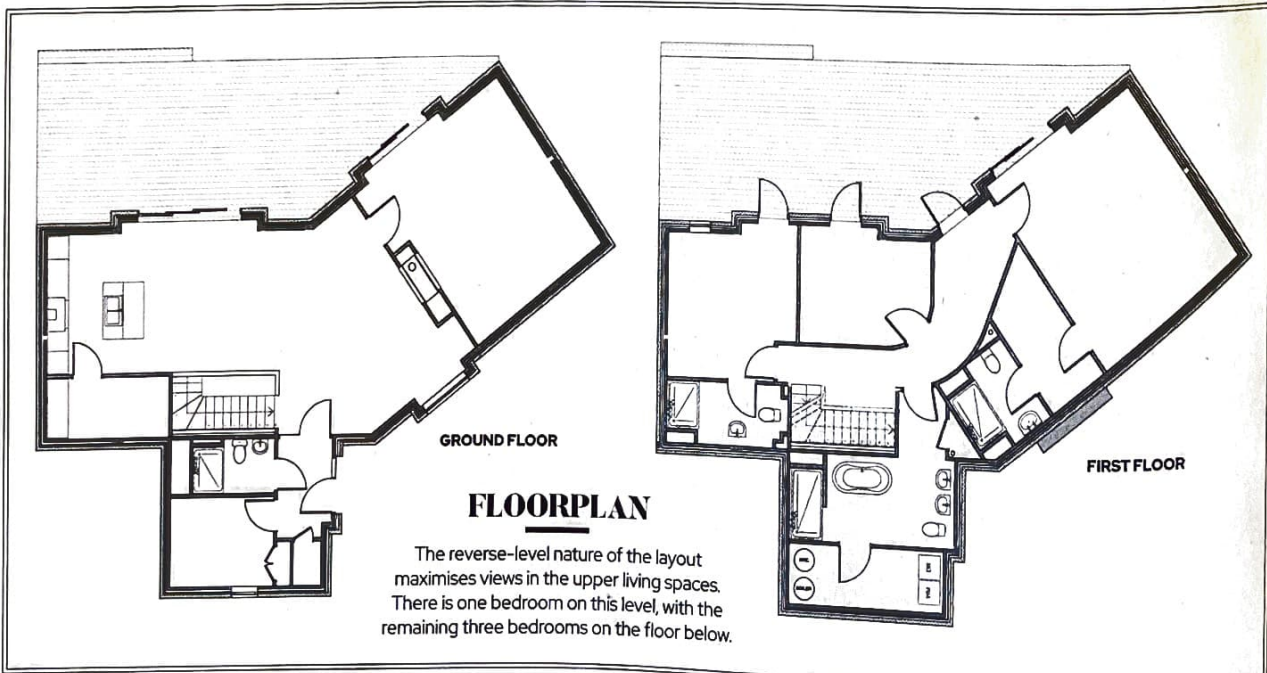
GARDEN
Bespoke gardens were designed by a leading landscape architect to reflect the tropical planting in the local area. A hot tub provides the perfect place to admire the coastal views.

“The architects gave me a virtual reality headset, and I was able to walk through the design and explain exactly what I wanted,” says Jane. “A reverse-level layout works well with the site, and I was keen that people could walk in and enjoy the view straight away, rather than have it reveal itself gradually. Full-height glass doors open the house to its surroundings and views so that you are greeted by the amazing vista over countryside and onto the waters of the Carrick Roads.”

Following a year of working with the architects, planning permission was granted for the external changes to the original design, and Jane employed a local builder to construct the house.

Extensive geological tests and surveys were undertaken on the garden site to check for bedrock and a structural engineer designed appropriate concrete foundations and a curved blockwork retaining wall. Being based in Kent, Jane would catch the train to Cornwall every two weeks to stay in local B&Bs or inexpensive hotels throughout the project, in order to attend site meetings.

“New services were brought from the main road, with an access drive created through the neighbour’s garden, over which we own right of



INTERIORS

Organic materials and eco-friendly features were used wherever possible, enhanced by Scandi-inspired furnishings chosen to complement rather than compete with the view.



“The building is a reflection and extension of my personality, and it needed to be open and calming.”

way. Storing materials on site was tricky, and the builder needed to schedule deliveries carefully to maximise the available space,” she recalls.

The house is a hybrid construction of steel and timber framing, with blockwork walls and a slate roof. Externally, Jane took her architects’ advice to choose maintenance-free Millboard composite cladding, which emphasises the two bay elements projecting out from the rear of the building.

“I liked their palette of colours and chose the same material in a different shade for the decking,” she says. The off-white render was applied by a specialist company and provides a strong contrast to the cladding and black-framed windows.

“I would have loved frameless glazing but after attending a number of self-build shows to research products, I realised that my budget wouldn’t stretch, and chose black aluminium frames with argon-filled glass, which were supplied by a local firm.”

Internally, a local Cornish plasterer produced Venetian plaster floors for the bathrooms as a practical alternative to tiles, and the rear wall in the kitchen is also finished in the same way. The reverse-level layout means that upper living areas have been left open to the eaves, creating high vaulted spaces filled with natural light.

“My training in botanical art gave me a good grounding in colour and colour matching,” explains Jane. “I wanted





SITTING ROOM

A wall inset with a double-sided log-burner creates a cosy sitting room at entry level. Engineered white ash flooring has been laid over underfloor heating in the living areas.





KITCHEN

A stylish black VIPP kitchen was imported from Copenhagen, and a feature wall of Venetian plaster emphasises the high vaulted kitchen ceiling.

each paint or plaster shade to be slightly different and to create a feeling of nature, such as softly dappled sunlight, which wouldn't overload the brain. There are a couple of my paintings on the walls, but mostly they are left bare so the light can bounce around. My aim was to create a space in which we could fully relax in nature and not allow the senses to be distracted from doing so.

"I very much wanted the house to be a clean-living environment, so we used materials throughout that won't give off chemical toxins, such as VOC-free paints. Supporting local businesses and trades, where possible, was also a focus throughout the build."

Contemporary white ash floors provide a durable hardwood alternative to carpets, which can give off fumes and harbour dust mites, while an air source heat pump provides hot water and underfloor heating. Fresh filtered air is circulated by a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, with filters regularly replaced.

To add character, Jane sourced and had reupholstered some mid-century antique furnishings which suit the relaxed family vibe. Unable to find what she wanted locally, the striking black kitchen was imported from Denmark, after Jane flew out to Copenhagen to view it in the company's showroom. "I saw one of their kitchens on Instagram," she explains. "It did blow my budget, and was my most extravagant purchase, but I love the quality and it's so tactile and easy to clean. Even the stainless-steel worktops have their own patina."

The garden was created by local landscape designer, Selma Klophaus, who was inspired by the subtropical planting in Roseland, especially around the church and estuary. She sourced granite stones from a local quarry, and planted shrubs and healing herbs, such as manuka.



IN DETAIL

PROJECT

Architect Märraum: marraum.co.uk
Landscape design Selma Klophaus
Garden Design: selmaklophaus.com

STRUCTURE

Composite cladding and decking
 Millboard: millboard.co.uk
Paint Benjamin Moore: bejaminmoore.com
Venetian plaster Bespoke Surface
 Design: bespokesurface.com

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen VIPP: vip.com

Sanitaryware CP Hart: cphart.co.uk

Stone resin baths and sinks

Indigenous: indigenous.co.uk

Music system Sonos: sonos.com

Wood-fired hot tub Kernow

Springs: kernowsprings.co.uk

Pendant light (stairs) Tom

Raffield: tomraffield.com

Oven Miele: miele.co.uk

Mesmire is available for holiday rentals from Unique Homes Stays: uniquehomestays.com

"I wanted internal spaces to blend with the surroundings as much as possible."



“As a trained botanical artist, I wanted internal spaces to blend with the outside surroundings as much as possible. Everything has been thought out, with a hot tub in a splendid position to enjoy the sunsets,” explains Jane, who used savings and pensions to fund the build.

Although the house was designed for her own family, she also knew that renting it out to holidaymakers would help to repay some of the outlay, as well as offering a peaceful retreat for others to enjoy.

“It’s been proven that having a project is actually good for improving the health, and building this house has given me so much in terms of creativity and purpose,” explains Jane.

“The building is a reflection and extension of my personality, and it needed to be open and calming - not in-your-face or fussy. Quality over quantity has been the mantra throughout the build, to create a house which feels like a space to heal, relax, and get away from it all.”

FINAL WORD

What was the high point of the project?

The fulfilment of a dream and enjoying the calming restorative nature of the house.

...and the low point?

Unexpected issues and living in Kent while building in Cornwall – it was far harder than I’d expected.

Your best buy?

The hot tub, which was built on site.

Your biggest extravagance?

Importing a kitchen from Denmark.



Any top tips?

Keep a 10 per cent contingency and learn to compromise, but also splash out on at least one thing that you love!



BEDROOMS

There are three bedrooms on the lower-ground floor, each with access onto the deck; the master has a super-kingsize bed, dressing room and en suite shower.