

The simple pitched roof shape with gable ends clad in zinc allows the linear house to slot neatly into the narrow plot

The ground floor is constructed in cavity blockwork and clad in Techlam concrete in Cenzia

A JOURNEY INTO SPACE

This contemporary home has been built on a tricky narrow plot inside an enclosed garden, preserving a piece of history in the process

AT A GLANCE

Names Mike and Yve Cast
Location Totnes, Devon
Property Blockwork and timber-frame self-build
Bedrooms 3 **Bathrooms** 3
Project started July 2015
Project finished September 2016
Size of plot 616sqm
House size 275sqm
Build cost £2,400 per sqm

HOMES | Town centre modern house

An overgrown and neglected garden turned out to be the ideal building plot for Mike and Yve Cast, when the opportunity arose after they bought a former solicitor's office in Totnes as an investment. After turning the street-facing building into a shop and two flats, they became curious about the garden behind. 'We'd had the site cleared and discovered it was 73m long with a pedestrian gate at the far end,' says Mike. 'The garden was enclosed by an old stone wall and had been the typically long and narrow burgage plot for a merchant's house, which is where the shop now stands. Fruit and vegetables would have been grown in the garden to feed the household. The plot faces south and is hidden from the main street.'

At the time, Mike and Yve were happily living in a flat in nearby Kingswear having recently sold their holiday-let business. In early 2013 Mike began making enquiries about the possibility of building a home on the site. One of the immediate obstacles was vehicle access. A footpath ran down the side of the shop into the enclosed garden and the bottom end backed onto a block of flats. To the right was a boarded-up shippon (a milking parlour), and to the left, private car parking and garages for the flats. However, a new-build next door had gained access through the car park some years before, and Mike saw a glimmer of hope. 'I negotiated with the owners and we were given permission to construct our access,' he says. 'But we had to pay for the privilege and rebuild their walls.'

Mike also negotiated to buy the shippon. 'It's a lovely heritage building and it became a useful access point, >



above The kitchen is set at a lower level to allow for a higher ceiling

left Sliding doors by Harmony Architectural Aluminium fill the back wall and also open to the side

far left The table in American walnut and steel is a bespoke design by Simon Hampshire and seats 10 people



storage area and site office for the build,' he explains. 'Both purchases were essential to making our project work.'

The couple began talks with recommended local architect, Jon Capel, from the Harrison Sutton Partnership, who they knew had good contacts with local planners. 'Jon was very enthusiastic and we liked him straight away,' says Mike. 'He was great at the detail and produced some exciting, modern designs.'

Although the plot was long, it was neither wide nor evenly proportioned, measuring 7.5m at the top and widening to 9.4m. Capel embraced the narrow shape by setting the house against the west boundary, with a linear footprint following the staggered line of the wall. Inside, he responded to Yve and Mike's brief for a generous hallway with an impressive double-height glazed entrance. A hot rolled steel and American walnut staircase was designed by architectural designer, Simon Hampshire, who is the boyfriend of Lucie, the couple's daughter.

'This hallway concept is really something,' says Yve. 'We didn't want our visitors crushed into a small space and the flow to the rest of the house works beautifully.'

To the left, the utility room and cloakroom are followed by the kitchen-dining-living area. This is where the plot

'A lot of modern houses favour glass and steel. We like these raw elements but wanted warmth in our home'

widens and the house follows suit. Back in the entrance hall two en-suite bedrooms sit to the right, accessed across the transparent glass trapdoor over a spiral wine cellar. This is Mike's favourite feature. 'It's a great talking point, especially when the cellar is lit up at night,' he says.

Upstairs, the master bedroom faces north. A study and store room line the way to the pitched-roof living room with a south-facing balcony overlooking the garden. Fixed glazing along the west roof plane throws light down onto a glazed floor panel above the dining table. 'Sharing the light was another one of Jon's great ideas,' says Yve. 'Although the house is narrow, we don't have any dark spots.'

This approved design was the couple's second planning application, after they withdrew their first in December 2013. Final approval arrived in September 2014 and the following July building contractors Goulden & Sons – chosen as the couple had worked with them before – got started. A metre of excavation was necessary to achieve the level required, and much of the material removed was decades' worth of rubble and rubbish, carried by dumper across a piece of land the couple didn't own and needed permission to cross. The council insisted an archaeologist be present, too. 'They didn't find anything of note, but these extra stages were costly and time-consuming,' says Mike. 'We kept reminding >

above The sunny living room leads onto a balcony. Brise soleil louvres fit into the upper triangle of the window to shield the room from sunlight

right The 'infinity' lawn stretches out across the garden and conceals the parking courtyard, which is set lower down at the end

far right Blue sofas provide a contrast to the dark flooring, and an office takes advantage of the space beneath the sloping eaves



The steel and walnut staircase was designed by the couple's daughter's boyfriend; and the parquet flooring had been stored in a garage for many years



above Volume is maximised with a pitched ceiling in the master bedroom. The feature wall hides the dressing room and en suite

left The original parquet flooring was supplied by Jon's uncle, and the leather handrails were painstakingly hand-stitched by Lucie

right The guest en suite is completed with Tamarin graphite-polished grey-tiled walls

ourselves that this would be our last home and we wouldn't be moving again.'

Inside, the couple focused on the kitchen first, choosing a palette of browns and grey tones with walnut and steel, and adding a contrast of earthy blue in places. 'A lot of modern houses favour glass and steel. We like these raw elements but wanted warmth in our home,' Yve explains.

The original parquet flooring came from Jon's uncle, who had it stored in his garage for years. The blocks were covered in bitumen, which Simon and a colleague cleaned for hours so each piece would fit tightly back together. 'Our project was a family affair,' says Mike. 'Lucie designs and makes leather handbags and she spent ages stitching the leather handrail. Simon's father turned the wooden handrail newel posts.'

Mike and Yve's home is a finely tuned design from foundations to finish. Each detail has been considered in form and function, whether it's Simon's simple doorstep wedge finished with a brass bead, or Jon's sound advice to build a covered porch. 'It's great when visitors come for the first time as we appreciate our house all over again,' says Mike. 'We're delighted with everything – the walled garden keeps us hidden from the street and it's incredibly quiet.' **GD**

TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR PROJECT DETAILS »



Project details

Take a peek behind the scenes of this slimline design

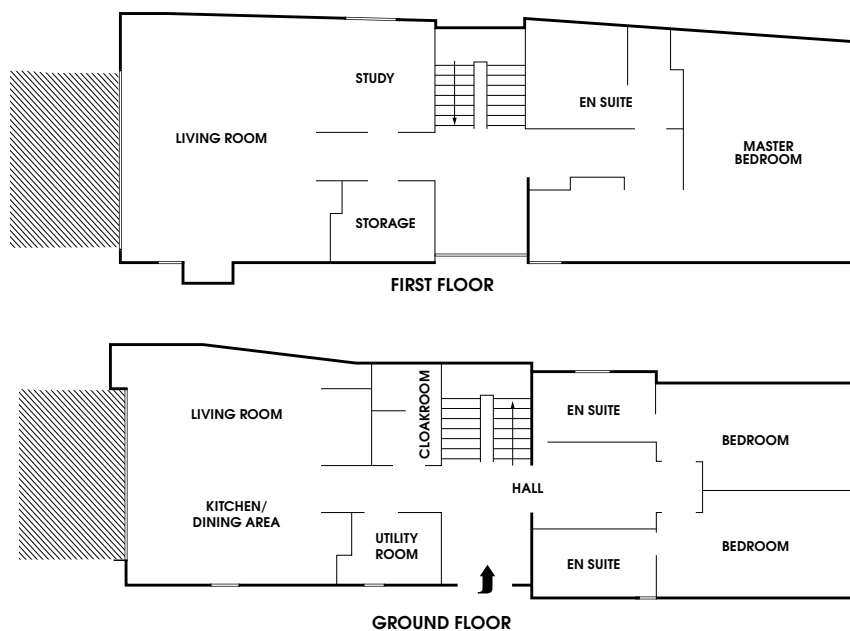


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A WORD FROM THE ARCHITECT

'Our approved plan moved the house back towards the main street to reflect the secondary line of development that's occurred as the town has evolved. The linear footprint hugs the western stone boundary wall with a narrow path on the other side, reflecting the historic pattern of houses. The varied heights in the ridge and eaves respond to the surrounding mixed roofscapes, with reclaimed slate to settle the property in context. Changing the location of the house was a good idea as it allows for a much bigger south-facing garden and introduced an "infinity" lawn to conceal the cars at the end of the garden.' **Jon Capel, Harrison Sutton**

FLOORPLAN



SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Harrison Sutton (01803 865 084; harrisonsutton.com)
Structural engineer Nicholls Basker Partners (01626 776 121; nichollsasker.co.uk) **Main contractor** Goulden & Sons (01803 867 359; gouldenandsons.co.uk)

STRUCTURE

Doors Build Point Joinery (01803 868 388; buildpoint.co.uk)
Windows, aluminium doors and brise soleil Harmony Architectural Aluminium (01392 202 295; harmonyprofiles.co.uk) **Rooflight glazing** Southfields Windows (01803 866 955; southfieldgroup.co.uk) **Zinc cladding** A&S Roofing (01837 810 287) **External tile cladding** Levantina (01256 336 619; uk.levantina.com) **Staircase and dining table** Simon Hampshire at Workshop Collaborative (07773 973 460; wocoltd.com) **Hand-stitched leather handrail** Lucie Cast (castmade.co.uk)

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen Sapphire Spaces (01392 879 320; sapphirespaces.co.uk)
Bathrooms Jeremy Wright (01548 856 379; jeremy-wright.co.uk) **Smoked oak flooring** Southern Timber (01803 813 803; southern-timber.co.uk)
Lighting Amos Lighting (01392 877 737; amoslighting.co.uk), Lightmaster Direct (01608 682 115; lightmaster-direct.co.uk), Collingwood Lighting (01604 495 151; collingwoodlighting.com) **Wood burner and Corten steel surround** Kernow Fires (01208 812 527; kernowfires.co.uk) **Awning** Markilux (01244 689 933; markilux.co.uk)
Underfloor heating Murch & Baker (01364 649 464; murchandbaker.com)

FURNITURE AND SOFT FURNISHINGS

Chairs Heal's (0333 212 1915; heals.com) **Banquette seat** Terry Manning Upholstery (01803 550 125; terrymanningupholstery.co.uk) **Kitchen pendant and living room lights** Tom Dixon (020 7400 0500; tomdixon.net) **Spiral wine cellar** The Stone Cellar Company (01903 815 262; stonecellar.co.uk)
Corner sofa Sofa Workshop (0808 231 0614; sofaworkshop.com)

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