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WORLD'S MOST AMAZING HOME

AWARDS
World's Most Amazing Home

Low-Maintenance Living

This contemporary single-storey house has been designed as a low-maintenance home, with simple landscaped gardens.

FUTURE VISION

Light, space and modern open plan living were just as important for Charles and Pennie Denton as low maintenance, level access and energy efficiency

Words **Alison Wall** Photography **Michael Sinclair and Martin Gardner**

PROJECT NOTES

Homeowners
Pennie and Charles Denton
Project Contemporary self-build
Location Dorset
Build time
Oct 2014 – Dec 2015
Size 205m²
Cost per m² £3,660
Construction Waterproof concrete structure

Project Timeline

Plot purchased Apr 2013
Planning submitted
Dec 2013
Planning approved
Feb 2014
Start on site Oct 2014
Foundations completed
Feb 2015
Watertight shell
Oct 2015
First fix Oct 2015
Second fix Nov 2015
Final decoration Dec 2015
Date occupied Dec 2015

Suppliers

Architects
Strom Architects: stromarchitects.com
Main contractor
Matrod Frampton: matrod-frampton.co.uk
Structural engineer
Barton Engineers: bartonengineers.co.uk; Calcinotto Consulting Engineers: calcinotto.co.uk
Groundworks and Pudlo waterproof concrete
MCB Civil Engineering: mcb-civils.co.uk
Cost consultant
Stockdale: stockdaleuk.com

Stone suppliers
Landers Quarries (stone flooring and fireplace surround): purbeckstone.co.uk
H F Bonfield & Son (exterior stone wall): naturalpurbeckstone.co.uk
Kitchen design
Harvey Jones: harveyjones.com
Kitchen table design and fabrication
Whetstone Oak: whetstoneoak.co.uk
Landscaping
C P Brown: 07970 982935

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The Floorplan

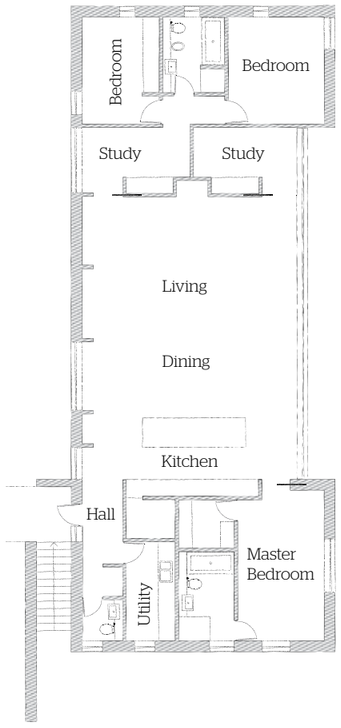
The simple floorplan allows for a generous open plan living space for entertaining, with more private spaces at either end. The single-storey plan, with level access from the rear, also offers accessible space for the couple in the future, should they need it.

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

"The level of care over not only the overall innovative form of the house, but the craftsmanship and attention to detail, means that this has to be the worthy winner of World's Most Amazing Home. For me, this is an outstanding project on every level. The dwelling sits beautifully with a very light touch in the landscape.

"The engineering and detailing is sublime and is the perfect lesson in restraint. So many architects get carried away with too much texture and materiality, but this is an excellent example of knowing when silence is enough."
Darren Bray, architect

Ground Floor



Reinforced Cantilever

The reinforced concrete cantilever, which houses the master bedroom, brings a sense of drama to the property. The cantilever also follows the natural contours of the land and offers protected car parking. The low-profile single-storey building sits comfortably within the surrounding countryside.

Exterior Materials

The exterior surfaces comprise exposed waterproof concrete, which forms the shell of the house, untreated larch cladding and Purbeck stone. None of these materials require any maintenance or treatment. "The materials were chosen for their natural aesthetic as well as for their ease of care," says architect Magnus Strom.

AWARDS
World's Most Amazing Home

Natural Daylight

Sliding doors, 2.8m high and 3m wide, offer views over the valley as well as generous amounts of daylight. "Teenagers can happily live in a cave for 18 hours a day but as we grow older, the need for light increases," says architect Magnus Strom.

"Commissioning the house was the best decision that we have made in more than 50 years of marriage"

If you are wondering whether a minimalist-inspired contemporary design can provide ultra-low maintenance living suitable for every stage of retirement, look no further. Dorset-based Pennie and Charles Denton have not only created a stunning home for their later years that wowed all of our judges and scooped the title of 'World's Most Amazing Home' but meets their requirements for easy living both now and well into the future.

The well-travelled couple were holidaying in Italy when the subject of moving from their converted barn (coincidentally, just a few hundred metres from their current home) cropped up. "Originally we weren't thinking of building something, but it was difficult to find a house we liked," says Pennie, a researcher and writer (husband Charles is a former television and film producer). She remembers telling Charles: "I've been thinking — our house is a bit dark and a bit big: do you think we have another project in us?" "Of course!" replied Charles — and the project was officially born.

The couple jotted down their brief, which found its way to Strom Architects: low-maintenance living; energy efficient; a big space for entertaining; a study each ("Pennie and Charles say it's the secret of a successful marriage," laughs Magnus Strom). They didn't specify an architectural style, but after years of living in a period property, and with a love of abstract and modern art, they were attracted to modern

light-filled spaces with a good connection to the outdoors. The result, The Quest, is a three bedroom, single-storey house with an internal area of 205m². A large open plan kitchen/dining/living area occupies the centre of the plan, with a covered terrace spanning its length and giving a sheltered outdoor area overlooking the southern views. To the eastern end of the house sits the guest accommodation and two studies, with the master suite positioned within the cantilevered western end of the house. Star of the show internally is, without doubt, the open plan kitchen/dining/living area, ➤

Focal Point

A large open fireplace (OPPOSITE, ABOVE) provides the focal point in the main living space and partially hides the two studies directly behind. The slim columns (TO RIGHT OF IMAGE) were prefabricated in Italy from ultra-high performance concrete, reinforced with metal fibres. Underfloor heating sits below the local Purbeck stone flooring, while the home's insulation, orientation and deep overhangs keep the home cool during summer months.

AWARDS
World's Most Amazing Home

Open Plan Storage

The open plan kitchen (LEFT) was commissioned by Pennie and Charles. A larder is hidden off the kitchen and is accessed through a kitchen cupboard. "When you have an open plan space, it's very important to consider built-in storage," says architect Magnus Strom. "With flat-roofed houses you don't necessarily have the attic space or the basement that older houses might have."

which is a generous eight metres wide (six metres would be more normal). "When you have got a beautiful space like this, keep what you put in it to the minimum," suggests Charles. "We have just three items here [kitchen, table and sofa], although they are all pretty large. I also had to resist the temptation to put some of our paintings over the fireplace."

Construction was straightforward, despite the discovery of a large old stone mine, which needed to be partially infilled and slabbed over before works could begin. There was already a building on the site: a World War I prefab for convalescing soldiers gifted to the UK from the Canadian government. That was quickly demolished, helped along by a complete lack of foundations. Once out of the ground, construction of the exposed waterproof concrete shell, clad with open-jointed larch and insulated internally, could proceed without delay.

Sustainability was another important part of the project. The orientation of the house allows for passive solar gain, while hidden photovoltaic panels on the roof offset the energy used by the air source heat pump situated in the chimney breast — with Feed-in Tariff payments, electricity bills are around £1,000 a year. Overhangs create shading in the summer, removing the need for air conditioning. A large rainwater harvesting tank is buried on site and provides automated irrigation of the gardens — another time-saving device for Pennie and Charles.

Architect Magnus is clear about why he thinks this house is so successful: "It's very easy to understand the house — you kind of see it and you get it. It's not complicated, but it's not simplistic either."

He also applauds Pennie and Charles' confident brief. "Lots of people today don't see why they should change their way of life massively because they are growing older," he says. "There's a lot to be said for having a contemporary design that offers a really modern way of living. That can bring a lot of joy to people."

Charles agrees. "The house has been better than we ever thought — for me, the best things are the light and the peace. Commissioning the house was the best decision that we have made in more than 50 years of marriage. We should have done it earlier – I am 80 at Christmas – but we will get a lot of fun from it while we are here."

Sociable Space

The bespoke kitchen table, commissioned from a furniture maker in Kent, provides ample space for entertaining the couple's friends and large family. "We moved in on 21 December 2015 and on Christmas day we had 13 visitors," remembers Pennie.