RIBA AWARDS

THE QUEST

Approximately 18 months since its completion, a private house in Swanage continues to turn heads and receive industry acclaim. The Quest, designed by Strom Architects, is a single storey replacement dwelling on the site of an old quarry overlooking Durlston Country Park to the south.

The Quest received national recognition towards the end of last year when it was shortlisted for the RIBA House of the Year 2017. This meant it was one of a series of properties to be featured on Channel 4's Grand Designs: House of the Year television programme. The Quest enjoyed success at a regional level when it won the 'Residential' category at the RICS South West Awards. This success rolled into 2018 when The Quest was shortlisted for a WAN Award.

Premier Construction had initially caught up with Magnus Ström, Director at Strom Architects, to find out about The Quest:

"Initially we went to look at the site with the client, a retired couple, and gave them some advice. A couple of weeks later they called us back saying they'd bought the site and would like to start working with us straightaway.

"They used to live on the other side of the valley and could see the plot from their old house. The couple wanted a house for their retirement that was light and airy. The old house they lived in was stone and a bit dark and cold.

"The site has a noticeable slope and all surrounding trees are under Tree Preservation Orders. When we first started working it was quite a messy site and access to it was only possible from the southern edge. It was therefore important to us that there was a distinction between vehicular access and the private

garden. To do this we created a retaining wall made of stone that split the site in half."

The house is cantilevered over this retaining wall through the use of two concrete planes – the floor and roof acting together like a space beam. The concrete structure is then in-filled with timber dry-lining.

The construction of The Quest was not without its difficulties, with the unique site proving to be one of the biggest challenges. An old, underground mine shaft in particular caused a few headaches and had to be filled in using foamed concrete before slab was cast over it. Recently reflecting on the subsequent success of the project, Magnus added:

"This project has been very important to us. It has allowed us to test architectural ideas and it is a pleasure that it has been so well received. In 2017 we won 7 awards and were been shortlisted for another 4 or 5. As such it has given us a lot of publicity and new project enquiries, which is fantastic!

"Whilst we do not set out to design projects that will garner awards, we appreciate the recognition and understand that these accolades can be reassuring for clients. Clients can have confidence that working with an award-winning practice offers assurance as to their professionalism and desire to excel."

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