

Britain's Best Selling Self-Build Magazine

Beginner's
Guide to Self-build

HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

September 2005 £3.80

www.homebuilding.co.uk

**Staircase
Design Guide**

**BUYER'S GUIDE:
Central
Heating**

**Plots
for
Sale**

**Get The Best
From Your
Builder**

**A Period House
Built for £180,000**

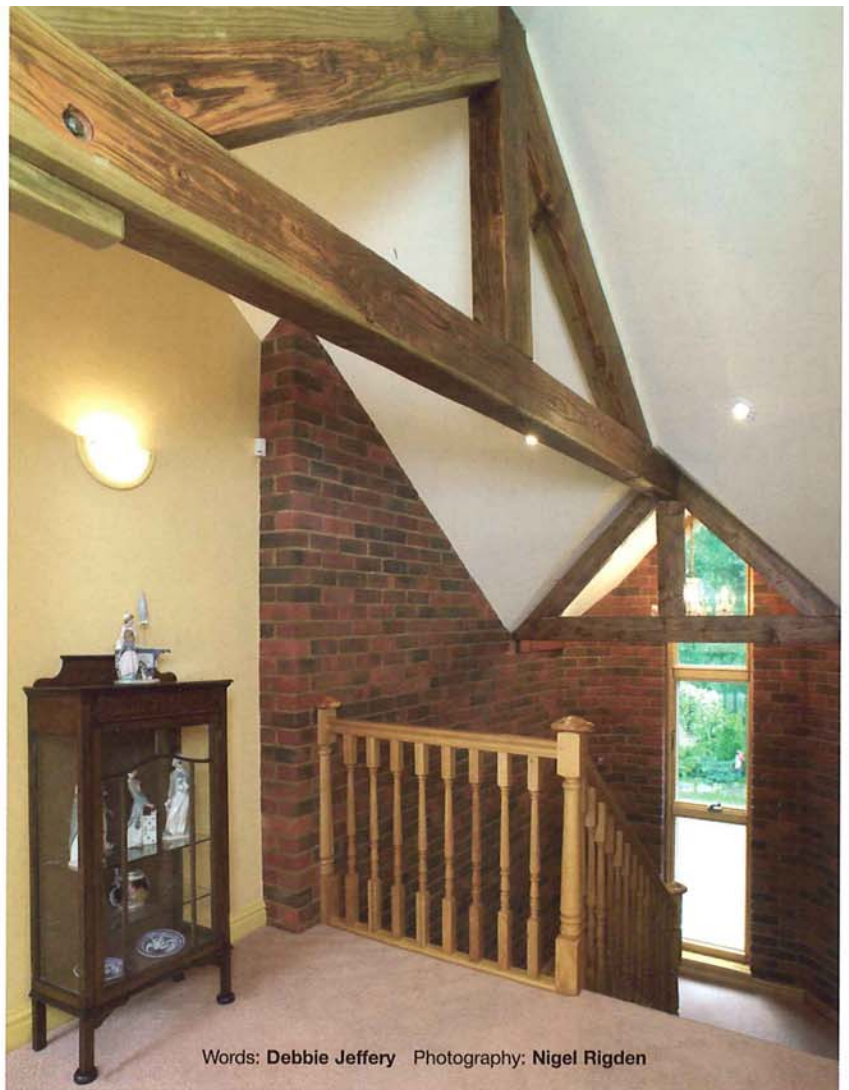
Renovation Opportunities for Sale

PLUS: Original Houseplan Ideas ■ Converting a Barn ■ Raising Finance
How to Assess Build Costs ■ Building Plots for Sale ■ Eco-Homebuilding





Teresa and Garry Elcock endured 13 years in an asbestos shack and a battle with the planners to fulfil their long-term ambition to build a new home in the New Forest.



Words: Debbie Jeffery Photography: Nigel Rigden

A Dream Come True

It was a relief when we were eventually able to demolish our home of 13 years," says Garry Elcock. "We had planned to replace it with a new house for so long and finally it was happening. Neither of us had any building experience, but we were both fully involved with every area of the project. Building our own home had been a lifelong dream, and we overcame all the pressures and difficulties to fulfil our ambition."

Garry and his wife, Teresa – known as Terry – are both police officers who purchased a run-down asbestos bungalow on a prime Dorset site with the sole intention of knocking it down. In 1990 the couple paid £140,000 for the property, where they lived for a number of years with their children – during which time they planned and saved for their first and only self-build project.

"Everyone referred to our bungalow as 'the shack', but we always knew that one day we would replace it with something far better," Terry explains. "Our one-and-a-half-acre site is elevated and the views are

The property, which replaced a former asbestos bungalow, was designed to meet height restrictions imposed by the planners, and is a single storey dwelling with rooms in the roof.

so spectacular that we were prepared to wait for as long as it took. We were never in a rush. Eventually, once our children had grown up, we were financially ready to begin. By then the shack was literally falling down around us and water was dripping through the kitchen ceiling."

The Elcocks were determined that their new house would be worthy of its spectacular location on the edge of a small village in the New Forest. They wanted a low maintenance, energy efficient property which would complement the site and take full advantage of the sunlight and far-reaching views across surrounding farmland towards Bournemouth.

They approached Dorset architect, David Underhill, at an exhibition and asked him to visit their site, finding him to be approachable and interested in their ideas. "We discovered that we would only be allowed to enlarge the footprint of the existing bungalow by 30%, and we were keen to build a two storey house for maximum space," Garry explains. "The planning authority insisted on a single storey ►



Building a new home to replace an old bungalow

A Dream Come True

property, so we had to go to appeal which we eventually won – allowing us to build rooms in the roof space. Some compromises had to be made. We would have liked a fourth bedroom and a basement, for example, and we wasted the opportunity to gain a better view from the master bedroom, but overall we are happy with the layout.”

Terry and Garry both love to cook, and a large kitchen with a relaxed dining area was high on their list of priorities. They also wanted a formal dining room on the ground floor, and this has been achieved by creating a spacious dining hall which leads down two steps into the separate sitting room. A study is located to the other end of the house, with three additional bedrooms and two bathrooms tucked into the roof space.

With the nearest property over one mile away privacy was not an issue, and the couple wanted to introduce as much glass into the design as possible, with panels of floor-to-ceiling glazing leading out onto a large paved patio. Upstairs, rooflights and triangular dormer windows combine with glazed gable ends to create bright, airy interiors.

The Elcocks remained living in their old bungalow throughout the build, with the new house literally abutting the existing property. “We realised early on that building the house was not going to be as straightforward as we had imagined,” says Garry. “Most suppliers did not even respond to our letters and calls, and we had real problems finding suitable materials in this country. We found it was actually cheaper to import items from abroad.”

The Elcocks wanted to project manage individual subcontractors rather than employ a single contractor, and believed that paying their tradesmen a day rate would offer them the best value for money. Apart from the bricklayer and landscape gardener, however, every one of the tradesmen let the couple down.

The design would have been complex and ambitious for an experienced builder, but for self-builders with no previous knowledge, it was a minefield of problems. Undeterred, Garry and Terry spent every spare moment on site and – apart from the facing



The Elcocks love to cook, and wanted a practical kitchen with an informal breakfast room overlooking the garden.

brickwork – were physically involved in all parts of the build, from digging the foundations to laying the underfloor heating and fitting the kitchen.

Substantial oak trees border the site and necessitated sinking the sitting room down into the ground – enabling views out beneath the canopy of branches which would otherwise have blocked out the light. This involved tanking much of the ground floor to prevent the ingress of water. Brick and block external walls have a 100mm cavity, and the entire structure has been highly insulated to compensate for heat losses through the numerous steel-framed windows, which were installed by the Elcocks with the help of friends.

Replacing Bungalows

In much the same way as buying plots with outline planning permission can be a risk in terms of getting the exact design of house you want, so buying up bungalows with a view to replacing them with a larger dwelling is not a guaranteed way of getting your dream house. Policies on replacement vary from council to council and in some instances planning officers will insist on a similar footprint to the existing dwelling. Do the research before purchasing.



"We engaged carpenters who came with excellent references, but were still unable to construct the complex, overhanging roof structure according to our plans," says Terry. "In the end we dismissed them, took down their work and started from scratch. Garry and I had no experience, and it was definitely the most challenging part of the entire build but we did it ourselves while still working full time. It was the one thing that really got us down and took months to complete, but financially we had no other choice."

Once the new house was finished, Terry and Garry decided to undertake the demolition of the old

"The taps were chosen because of their smooth design, but they could not be fully turned off with wet hands..."

bungalow themselves, taking great care when dealing with the asbestos. They took out licenses with the local authority, which was involved in removing the asbestos from site, and found this final stage of the project a huge relief. When the bungalow had been removed, the new house could finally open up to the full vista of light and views which had previously been blocked by the neighbouring building. ►



"We dismissed the original carpenters, took down their work and started from scratch. Garry and I had no experience... but we did it ourselves while still working full time. We had no other choice."



FLOORPLAN: The L-shaped building has a ground floor kitchen and informal breakfast room. Upstairs, three bedrooms and two bathrooms are built into the roof space, creating unusually shaped rooms with sloping ceilings.

"We do have one or two regrets about the finished house," says Garry. "The taps were chosen because of their attractive smooth design, but we soon realised that they could not be fully turned off with wet hands. It was also unnecessary to install underfloor heating upstairs, because the overall energy efficiency of the house means that we only ever use the bathroom towel rails."

"We are frequently asked whether we will build again, but why should we when we have such an idyllic site?" says Terry. "It was Garry's lifelong ambition to build his own home, and we thoroughly enjoyed the process." ■

Fact File

NAMES: Teresa and Garry Elcock

PROFESSIONS: Police officers

AREA: Dorset

HOUSE TYPE: Three bedroom house

HOUSE SIZE: 170m²

BUILD ROUTE:

Selves and subcontractors

CONSTRUCTION:

Brick and block, clay roof tiles

WARRANTY: NHBC Solo for Self Build

FINANCE: Private

BUILD TIME: Jan '00 – Dec '02

LAND COST: £140,000

BUILD COST: £173,000

TOTAL COST: £313,000

HOUSE VALUE: £800,000

COST/m²: £1,018

**61%
COST
SAVING**

Cost Breakdown:

Demolition and landscaping £32,000

Materials, VAT and labour .£123,661

Labour£17,800

TOTAL£173,461

USEFUL CONTACTS: **Architect** – David Underhill, DUA Architecture LLP: 01425 278252; **Bricks and roof tiles** – Michelmersh Brick & Tile Co. Ltd: 01794 368506; **Andersen Windows** – Meon Developments: 01730 825032; **Worktops** – Cobb Bros Ltd: 01202 631007; **Staircase** – Dibben Joinery: 01425 652807; **Plumbing and heating supplies** – Plumb Center: 01202 493344; **Timber** – Sydenhams Timber Merchants: 01202 674461; **Wall, floor and roof insulation** – Sheffield Insulation: 02380 740074; **Plumbing and heating** – Paul Yeatman: 01258 857834; **Landscaping, patio and driveway** – Steve Blake, Landscaping & Building Contractor: 01202 822845; **Fixing, electrics and lighting** – Screwfix Direct: 0500 414141