

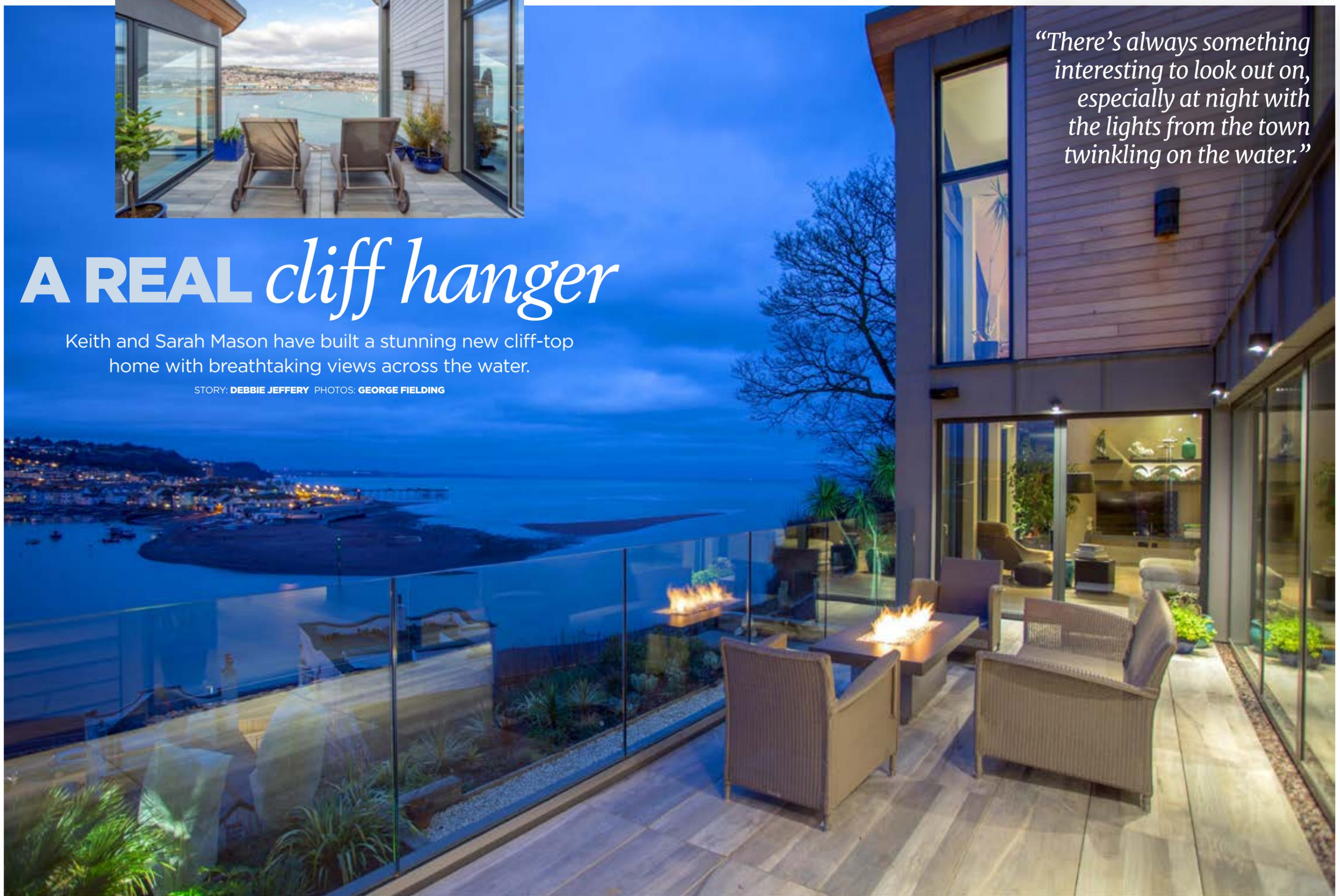


A REAL *cliff hanger*

Keith and Sarah Mason have built a stunning new cliff-top home with breathtaking views across the water.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PHOTOS: **GEORGE FIELDING**

“There’s always something interesting to look out on, especially at night with the lights from the town twinkling on the water.”





When Sarah and Keith Mason decided to build a new house they didn't have far to move. "We bought the plot next door but one, because we didn't want to lose the beautiful views our old home enjoyed," says Sarah. "There was a long thin bungalow on the site, and we applied to replace it with a three-storey house with walls of glass overlooking the coast."

The tucked-away plot stands high on a cliff in the pretty Devon village of Shaldon, on the bank of the River Teign, taking in impressive sea, harbour and estuary views. Businessman Keith had built his previous award-winning five-bedroom home in the late 1990s, but as Sarah and Keith's blended family grew up and left home they decided that the time was right to build again.



EXTERIOR

The new house has been built to abut an existing stone garden wall and appears two storey from the front.



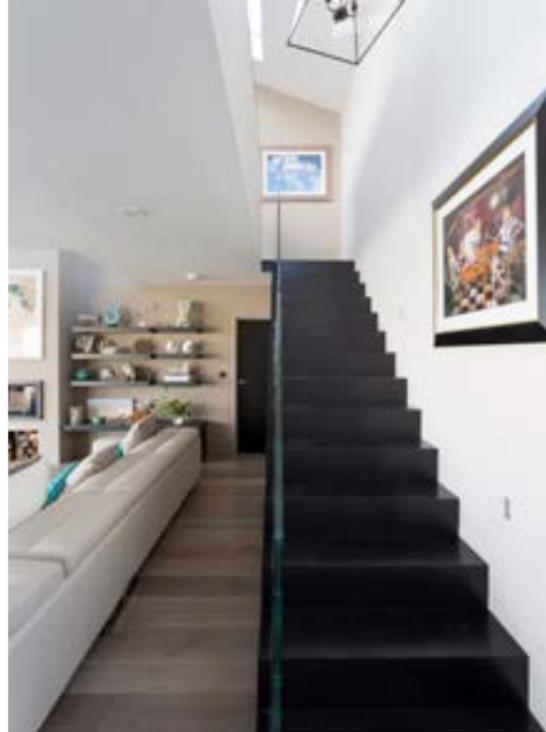
VIEWS

The back of the house is highly glazed and enjoys panoramic views of the estuary across to the town of Teignmouth and its pier.

"The plan was to downsize to three bedrooms and we looked everywhere, but couldn't match either the location or the house," says Sarah. "When the 1960s chalet bungalow further along the lane came onto the market we decided to buy it, and at first considered renovating the bungalow, but the layout was so awkward that we just couldn't make it work. Saving the 20 per cent VAT on a new build project was an added incentive."

The prominent plot stands in a Conservation Area, and gaining planning permission for the replacement house took the best part of a year to secure. Sarah and Keith sold their previous home and moved into ➔





THE *project*

LOCATION Shaldon, Devon

PROPERTY Luxury three-storey house overlooking the coast

OWNERS Keith and Sarah Mason

AT A GLANCE

House cost (Jan 2012)	£725,000
Spent	£1m
Worth	£2m+

CONTACTS

PROJECT

Architects Chris Cunningham and Dan Stewart, Harrison Sutton Partnership: harrisonsutton.com

Project manager Bernard Howard, Penlee Development Ltd: 07884 335298

Structural engineer Nicholls Basker Partnership: nichollsbasker.co.uk

Mechanical installation and underfloor heating Murch and Baker: murchandbaker.com

Electrical installation ACM Electrical: acmelectricaltd.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Windows and doors Velfac: velfac.co.uk

Main entrance door FI Joinery: fijoinery.co.uk

Swimming pool Harris Pools: harrisools.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen Touchwood: touchdesigngroup.com

Lighting Amos Lighting: amoslighting.co.uk

Sanitaryware Mayflower Bathrooms: mayflowerbathrooms.co.uk

Kitchen pendant lights Tom Dixon: tomixon.net

Internal and external stone tiles Mandarin Stone: mandarinstone.com



rented accommodation in the village while they liaised with project architect Chris Cunningham, of Harrison Sutton Partnership, over the design. The Totnes-based practice has considerable experience of developing in Shaldon's small community and on other waterside sites around Devon and Cornwall. "Keith was happy for me to design the house with Chris without any input himself, which made things much simpler," says Sarah, who works in, and part owns, local family campsite Leadstone Camping.

"I knew that open-plan living suited us, but we also needed a separate sitting room retreat, which we've positioned on a mezzanine at the top of the

LIVING AREA

A separate sitting room has been located on a first-floor mezzanine and features an inset log-burning stove.

STAIRS

A steel, glass and timber staircase connects the three levels.

house. Part of living on such an exposed coastal site is the noise of seagulls, crashing waves and the wind battering the house, so we decided to position our bedroom on the lower ground floor, which helps with sound insulation and means we don't hear a thing."

Also on the lower ground floor is an impressive indoor swimming pool, inspired by a holiday in Turkey when Keith enjoyed using a plunge pool every day. This is overlooked by a dedicated gym, which is separated from the pool by a glass screen.

Creating sheltered outdoor seating areas on the north-facing site was a priority, and interrupting the slope of the roof forms an external first-floor terrace,

"It's a large house, but it's designed so that you always feel connected to the rest of the family, and there really is nothing we would change."

accessed from the sitting room, which is protected from the elements by walls and glazing on either side.

In addition, a larger terrace and projecting deck with glazed balustrades connects to the open-plan kitchen/dining/living space on the ground floor through sliding glass doors. This visually extends the accommodation and blurs the divide between indoors and out.

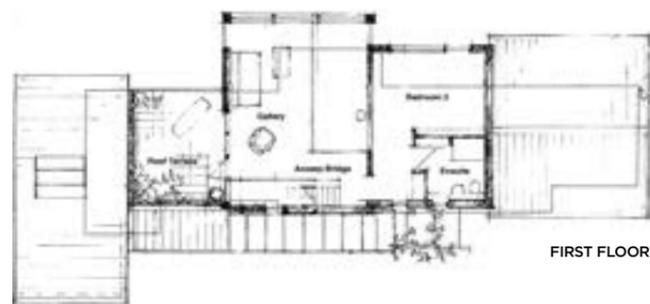
Hard-wearing materials were carefully chosen for the prominent seaside setting, and include zinc roofing, cedar cladding, local stonework and aluminium-framed windows. "Our architect designed the house so that it virtually disappears into the cliff," says Sarah. "The wood cladding blends into the surroundings and the glass becomes almost invisible when viewed from below."

The planners suggested a few tweaks and the design was amended accordingly, with both Teignbridge District Council and Shaldon Parish Council ultimately giving their approval. A number of builders were then invited to tender for the project. "Quotes were coming back far higher than expected, and we were seriously considering reducing the size of the house to cut costs," ➔

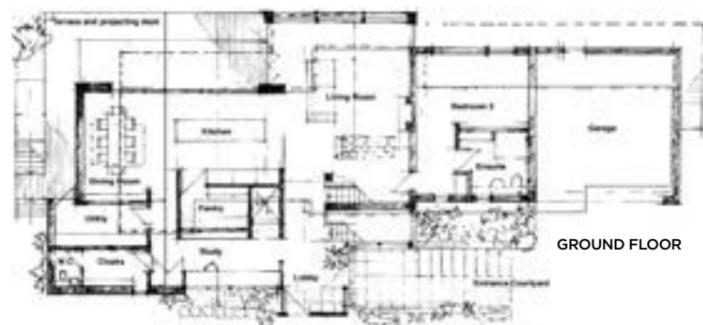


KITCHEN

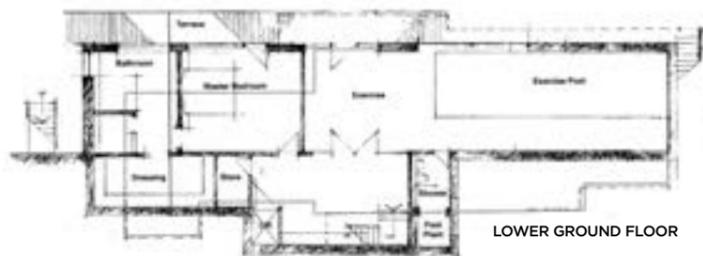
A bespoke black island with a granite worktop was chosen for the open-plan kitchen on the ground floor, where sliding glass doors open onto a decked terrace.



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



LOWER GROUND FLOOR

THE FLOORPLAN

The house has been designed over three storeys to follow the sloping contours of the site. The master bedroom suite is situated on the lower ground floor, together with a gym and an indoor pool. Open-plan living/dining/kitchen space takes up much of the ground floor, in addition to a guest suite and study. On the top floor is a mezzanine sitting room and a bedroom for Sarah's son Harry.

SARAH'S top tips

Start collecting ideas from magazines and websites early on, so that when you come to design the house you have a guide for both yourself and your architect.



says Sarah. "Then Keith bumped into local man Bernard Howard in the village – a developer who recently built five luxury beach huts in Shaldon. When Bernard heard of our predicament he offered to project manage the build for us, using local trades wherever possible."

Work began in January 2013 when the existing bungalow was demolished and the site cleared. Stabilisation work to the garden bank below the new house was required, which took a month to complete, and existing plants and palm trees were preserved on the site. Access along the narrow country lane proved a problem for deliveries of materials, and the shell of the evolving building was scaffolded and covered – allowing work to continue beneath the weatherproof shelter during bad weather.

The house follows the contours of the sloping site, appearing two storey from the road but dropping

DECOR

Black internal doors, joinery, furniture and lighting create a unified theme throughout the house.

BASEMENT

The lower ground floor swimming pool features stone walling and black mirror-effect fabric, and is overlooked by the neighbouring gym through walls of glass.



down to three full storeys at the rear. Concrete, stone and masses of structural steelwork anchor the building into the plot, with the house built to abut an existing stone boundary wall. Steps, water features and lighting ensure that the exterior landscaping is just as stunning as the house itself.

"I would have regular meetings with Chris and Bernard throughout the build, but Keith wasn't involved in the planning stages and was quite shocked to visit the site one day and see the zinc roofing," says Sarah. "He had assumed that the roof was going to be slated, but soon grew to like the metal."

Sarah was keen that the house should be finished before the campsite opened for the summer season in May 2014, and told Bernard that they would be moving in regardless. "I don't think he believed me, but I knew that once I was working 12-hour days I wouldn't have time to organise the move," Sarah explains. "As it was there was quite a bit of finishing off still to do after we moved in, including laying the flooring in the sitting room because the company hadn't sent enough."

Engineered grey smoked-oak flooring has been laid over underfloor heating throughout much of the house, there is an Aga in the kitchen and a wood-burning stove in the sitting room. "There were too many trees around the house to have solar panels and we did look into ground source heating, but the costs simply didn't add up," says Sarah.

Design features include the cantilevered black timber staircase, which appears to float unsupported through the house and is matched by black internal doors



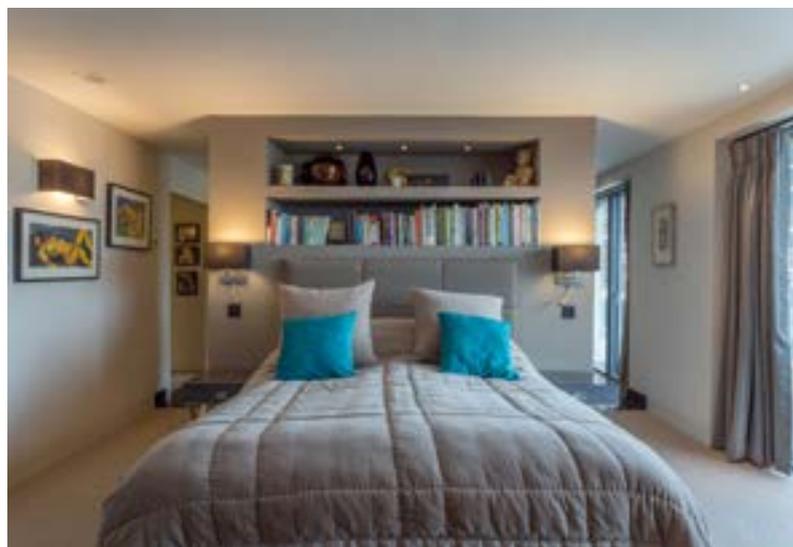
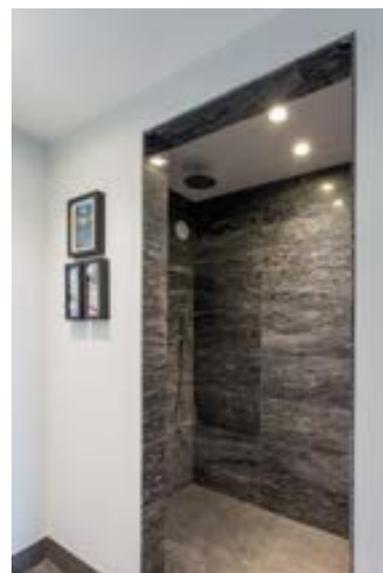
BEDROOMS/ BATHROOMS

Located on the lower ground floor, the master bedroom suite enjoys sea views through glass doors, with an open-plan en suite hidden behind the headboard wall. There are no baths in the house and wet rooms incorporate expansive walk-in showers.

throughout. “When in doubt about a colour I chose black – including the black kitchen with matt granite worktops, which was inspired by a design I’d seen at a London show but was made locally in Exeter,” says Sarah, who enjoys interior design and had collected a file of ideas prior to the build, which she found extremely useful.

“I made scaled cut-outs of our furniture to place on the plans, to be sure that everything would fit, and even knew where the pictures were going to hang,” she says. “I just loved the whole process and would do it all again next week given the chance, although Keith wouldn’t be too pleased.

“It’s a large house, but it’s designed so that you always feel connected to the rest of the family, and there really is nothing we would change. The view is outstanding, and there’s always something interesting to look out on, especially at night with the lights from the town twinkling on the water. We’ve been very fortunate to have a fantastic team of people working to make the house such an amazing place to live.”



ASK Sarah

What was the high point of the project?

Seeing everything coming together and realising how amazing the views were going to be once the glazing was installed.

...and the low point?

The length of the project was a low, as we lived in rented accommodation for two-and-a-half years during the planning and building stages.

Your favourite feature?

There are so many things – the folded staircase, the glass floor panel in the hallway and the kitchen.

...and your biggest extravagance?

Probably the basement swimming pool, but we do use it several times every week.

