

Life's a BEACH

Rob Cameron has built a dramatic contemporary beach house on the site of a former Edwardian pavilion looking out to sea.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: ?

Rob Cameron was surfing in the bay at Coldingham Sands, on the coast of the Scottish Borders, when he spotted a derelict pavilion on the bank above him. Intrigued by the timber-clad building he climbed the path from the beach and stood in the ramshackle Edwardian structure looking out to sea.

"There was a for sale board outside, and planning permission had been granted to replace the old pavilion with a replica single-storey timber home on the same footprint," explains Rob. "Access was extremely limited and I knew that building there would be difficult and expensive, but finding such an amazing plot right on the

beach was a once in a lifetime opportunity, so I went ahead and bought it anyway."

Rob owns a brewery and has designed a series of cafes and bars which he owns, in addition to building his three previous homes. "When I was 25 I went back to university and took a building surveying degree," he says. "I then bought an old building on the quayside in Newcastle and developed that, which gave me the practical experience to take on more and more ambitious projects. The Pavilion has definitely been the most challenging build to date though."

Coldingham Bay is situated within the St Abb's and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve, part of the Berwickshire and North Northumberland

PICTURES: Building into the bank ensured that the new Pavilion has the same ridge height as its single-storey predecessor. Constructed around a steel frame, with a Schuco glazing system, the property overlooks the North Sea and the crescent-shaped bay at Coldingham Sands.





PICTURES: The open-plan living area on the upper ground floor features a suspended Focus fireplace, designed to face the sea, and bespoke storage which acts as a partial room divider. Wrap-around glazing opens onto a balcony beyond.

Coast Special Area of Conservation, and Rob’s plans to create a contemporary home on the one acre site above the bay met with some strong objection locally.

Demolishing the old single-storey wooden shed with its corrugated iron roof to make way for a prominent two-storey glass and steel structure was deemed insensitive by some locals, who were keen to preserve the quaint seaside scene with its gaggle of colourful beach huts, and the planning process took almost a year before permission was finally granted in 2010.

Rob worked with architect Stuart Palmer of Studio SP to design a passive solar house with four spacious en suite bedrooms dug into the sloping hillside – reducing the overall height of the building, which appears single-storey from the road. The upper ground floor is devoted to an open-plan living/dining/kitchen space, enjoying incredible wrap-around views out to sea.

“It was important to me that the view remained as unobstructed as possible, and the design of the gull-wing roof was crucial to this,” says Rob. “The idea was to build with a light touch – to almost drop the property in – and preparing to build took a further nine months after planning permission was granted.”

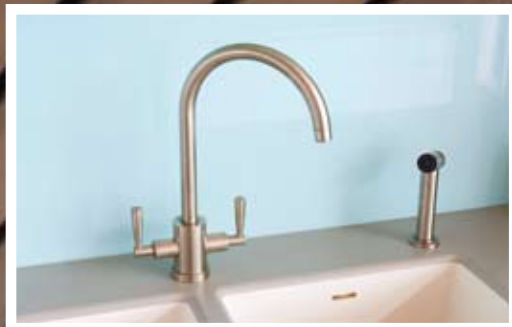
Rob and his architect explored various options for bringing materials onto the site, and decided that a crane would be positioned at the top of the slope with another mid-way down, but on day one of the cranes was unable to navigate the access road which meant that the build was further delayed until an alternative solution could be found.

“We even talked about using a helicopter to fly in the sections – which would have been quicker and easier than the way we actually did it,” says Rob, “In the end we created a chute and a slide, which everything came down hand. In my wildest dreams I couldn’t have imagined quite

“It was important to me that the view remained as unobstructed as possible...The idea was to build with a light touch...”



PICTURES: Glossy white Poggenpohl kitchen cabinets were fitted with thick Corian worktops coloured the same grey as the polished concrete floor.



ROB'S TOP TIP

"Be prepared for unexpected costs and delays and you won't be disappointed when they occur!"

A bespoke dining table was made to Rob's design from angle iron and lacquered MDF for £300. The curved cedar roof appears to float out through the glass to create a canopy above the balcony.

Excavating the sandy bank to sink the rear of the lower ground floor into the ground generated tonnes of spoil, which needed to be removed up the hill. Retaining walls were built around three sides of a massively engineered raft foundation and the site has been extensively reshaped, with the narrow

pathway temporarily replaced by a more serviceable access road suitable for a small dumper.

"Originally an unmade path led down from the hotel at the top of the hill to the bathing pavilion, and one of the planning

conditions was that the new house could only be reached by foot, so we shrank the road back to a pathway once building work was complete," Rob explains. "The steps down to the beach needed to be moved, and permission was granted to relocate the coastal path down one side of the site."

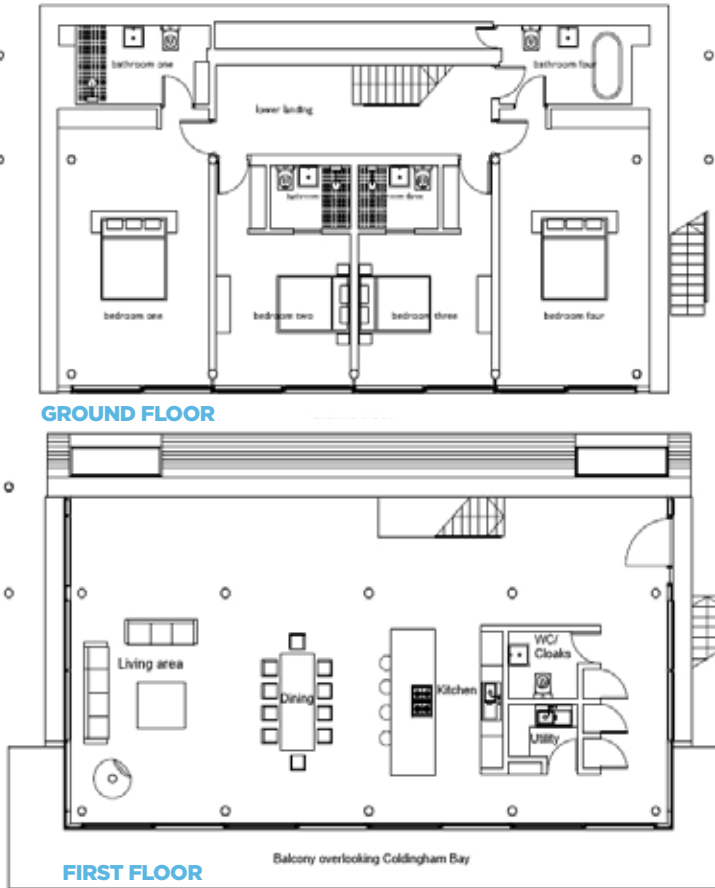


PICTURES: The four bedrooms, all with en suites, are situated on the ground floor, with glazed doors leading out onto a terrace overlooking the ocean,

“It’s just as I’d envisaged, and now I’m getting a chance to benefit from it after years of planning and building.”

The floorplan

The upper floor accommodation includes open-plan kitchen, dining and living areas, as well as storage space, a utility and a cloakroom/WC. Four en suite bedrooms are located on the lower ground floor, facing out to sea, with sliding doors leading onto a terrace.



Services also needed to be brought to the plot, including mains water and electricity, with a sewage treatment tank buried below the house. Rainwater is collected in soakaways and LPG gas is used for cooking. “It was costly to install the LPG tank, and I’d spent around £200,000 on site before I even starting building the house,” says Rob.

Lengths of steelwork, some as long as 18 metres, were delivered down the chute and lifted into position using a small hoist to construct the frame. The roof structure was clad externally in zinc, and walls were formed from blockwork and huge panels of glazing.

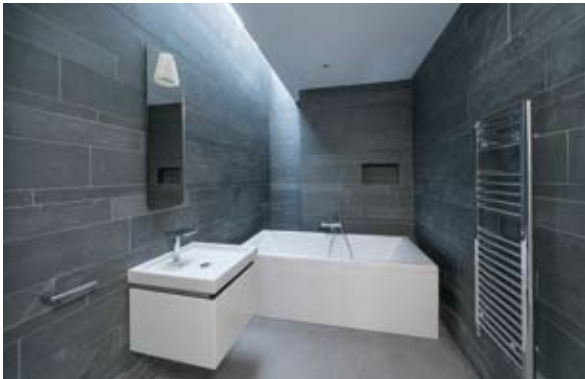
“We built a timber frame, and fixed it to our small dumper truck at the correct angle to carry the glazing panels without them tipping off,” explains Rob, who took on the role of project manager, working in conjunction with his architect, and visiting the site several times each week from his home in Newcastle.

Rob’s attention to detail is apparent throughout the stunning property, which took just over two years to build using a local contractor together with a series of specialist subcontractors. “We had a close working relationship and all pulled together, despite the challenges,” says Rob. “The local builder got to know my ways and did an amazing job on the finishing details such as shadow gaps.”

One of the most prominent features is the curved, wing-shaped timber ceiling, which sails out above the house and ensures that the views remain uninterrupted while visually connecting indoor and outdoor spaces. Internally, the fire-treated Western Red cedar is interspaced with a black felt for soundproofing, and externally a powder black metal infill was chosen for durability and to prevent damage from wildlife.

The ceiling carrier system was curved to the architect’s design and delivered to site ready to install, together with matching timber wall cladding for both gable ends and the front door.

Materials have been carefully chosen throughout, and include polished concrete floors over underfloor heating, a bespoke concrete staircase and a feature wall of Welsh slate, which wraps around the rear elevation and took three months for two local stonemasons to complete.



Light, white bedrooms contrast with dark-tiled wet-rooms, and finishes have been kept sparse and simple to allow the view to dominate in all rooms. Natural light permeates throughout the building – despite the fact that the eight-metre deep structure is sunk into the hillside – thanks to sections of high level glazing to the rear.

These glass panels have been used to dramatic effect to drop shards of light into stairwells and bathrooms, and will open and close automatically once a designated temperature has been reached internally. “The house is fairly future-proof,” says Rob, who admits to exceeding his original budget by around £50,000.

The lighting, which is supported by intelligent wiring throughout the house, can be remotely controlled by phone or laptop – as can the underfloor heating, security system and even the curtains. The property is wired for Cat-5 cabling and the majority of sockets may also be remotely controlled through the internet.

Family and friends, including Rob’s 13-year-old son Joseph, love to spend time at the new beach house, which was completed in 2012. “It’s just as I’d envisaged, and now I’m getting a chance to benefit from it after years of planning and building,” says Rob, who enjoys running along the coastal path and cooling off with a dip in the sea. “It may sound strange, but I relish the challenge of a

Contacts

PROJECT
Architect Studio SP: studiosp.co.uk

STRUCTURE
Structural glazing system Schüco: schueco.com

Zinc roof system Rheinzink: rheinzink.co.uk

Timber ceiling system Hunter Douglas:
hunterdouglascontract.com

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen Poggenpohl: poggenpohl.com

Sanitaryware Villeroy & Boch: villeroy-boch.co.uk

Gyrofocuss suspended fire Focus: focus-creation.com



TOP: The house has been designed to maximise its position overlooking the beach, with a terrace on the ground floor and a wrap around balcony.

ABOVE: The original timber-clad Edwardian bathing pavilion which had previously stood on the site.

project, so now I’m selling The Pavilion and building a house for myself in Newcastle using the same building contractor. It’s another difficult design, but nothing compared to building on a coastal slope. Part of me is secretly hoping that The Pavilion doesn’t sell though, so I can carry on enjoying life beside the sea.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

Rob paid £375,000 for the original pavilion and spent around £600,000 building a 300 sq m replacement house. The Pavilion is currently on the market for £1.25m with Sanderson Young: sandersonyoung.co.uk

Home truths

What was the high point of the project?

Finding the plot and standing in the old pavilion looking out to sea was a major high point, and then standing in the new house once it was finally finished was another high.

...and the low point?

Everything took much longer than expected, including getting planning permission, so the house was four years in the making with lots of delays. There have definitely been a few stressful moments along the way.

Your best buy?

Designing bespoke furniture actually saved me thousands of pounds, and I was able to have exactly what I wanted. All four beds, the desks, dining table and storage were made to order.

...and the biggest extravagance?

Building on this site in the first place was an extravagance, and I have a love of Philippe Starck light fittings, which aren’t particularly cheap.