



**In brief**

**PROJECT** New build  
**LOCATION** Dorset  
**COST** £540,000  
**SPENT** £513,000  
**WORTH** £1.1m+

# A stress-free build

Linda and Vaughn Steele's new single-storey house, close to the beach in Dorset, was inspired by military huts and built using local stone.

Story: **Debbie Jeffery** Photography: **Jonathan Gooding**

**W**hen Linda and Vaughn Steele decided to build a single-storey holiday home in Swanage, their inspiration came from the surrounding Ballard Estate military huts and distinctive local architecture. The nostalgic seaside town is located at the eastern end of the Jurassic Coast, a 95-mile stretch of outstanding geology in between Dorset and East Devon, which is a World Heritage Site.

"My sister always took holidays in Swanage, and I wondered why she kept going back," says Linda, who lives with Vaughn in Stoke-on-Trent. "Then she invited us to go along, and we fell in love with the town. It casts a spell on you, and I could see Vaughn completely relax when we were there."

The couple began taking regular holidays in the area, and eventually bought their own flat there nine years ago, which the whole family used. Then, in 2017, when Vaughn retired from his staircase business, he and Linda had the time and funds to buy a more substantial holiday home.

"We looked around Swanage, but there weren't many properties on the market and the houses are quite expensive," says Linda, who wanted to find a centrally located house, close enough to walk into town. "Then an estate agent told us about a run-down property he'd just valued up on the Ballard Estate, and asked if we'd be interested in taking on a project. We weren't

particularly enthusiastic but went that day to look, and it had a really a lovely feel and was very private."

What started as a tented military encampment in around 1907 evolved into barracks during the First World War, and Canadian lumber was used for building the huts, many of which still remain on the estate. The 1930s single-storey bungalow which Linda and Vaughn decided to buy was tatty, poorly laid out, and had been badly extended, but enjoyed sea glimpses.

"It's a private estate of bungalows, with strict covenants enforced, so we knew there could be problems making alterations or replacing our bungalow," says Linda.

"After attending our first meeting with the Ballard Estate Company we looked at each other and wondered whether we should just sell up before going any further."

Instead, the couple decided to apply to build a replacement bungalow on the plot, and approached Western Design Architects (WDA) to discuss their ideas. The Dorset practice had been recommended to them as accredited Conservation Architects, and many of their buildings have won design awards and media coverage.

The practice worked with Autodesk Revit building design software to generate floorplans, elevations, sections, schedules, 3D views and renders for the minimalist replacement house, bringing the design to life.

"We had a meeting with architects Phil Easton and Lucy Parkinson, and told them we had little imagination,"





**EXTERIOR**  
 Built using traditional Dorset materials, the replacement dwelling in Swanage is just a short distance from the beach. Extensive glazing provides a connection between the interior and rear garden.

## NEW BUILD



### BEFORE

The new single-storey dwelling replaces a tired 1930s house built on the site of a tennis court on the estate.



laughs Linda. "Our only real brief was for a light, bright house, and the practice was absolutely brilliant. We're in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the South West Coast Path, so people walk through the estate to reach it. Our bungalow wasn't one of the original wooden huts but was built on tennis courts in the 1930s."

The new three-bedroom house was designed to enjoy improved orientation on the site, with a more efficient layout than its predecessor. Two distinct blocks – one local stone, the other rendered – are linked by a recessed glass-fronted entrance with a lower roof, which serves to reduce the visual bulk of the building and avoid obstructing views of the existing stone garden wall.

"It's a different shape to the old bungalow but it echoes the form of the original huts on the estate, with all the living spaces located to the rear for privacy," says Linda. "The design evolved and met our brief for light rooms with the walls of glass. In fact, our plans for a glass roof changed as we were worried it could become too warm."

### ROOFING

Originally it had been planned to reuse the roof tiles from the old bungalow but there were not enough. New roof slates have been used instead, coupled with standing seam zinc for the glazed link. Traditional lead flashing joins the various roof sections.

## In detail

### PROJECT

**Architects** Western Design Architects: [westerndesignarchitects.com](http://westerndesignarchitects.com)  
**Builder** Matrod Frampton: [matrod-frampton.co.uk](http://matrod-frampton.co.uk)  
**Asbestos removal** Astech Environmental Ltd: [aesgroup.uk.net](http://aesgroup.uk.net)  
**Groundworks** Chris Baxter Contractors Ltd: 01202 841468  
**Electrics** EC Electricals Ltd: [ecelectricals.co.uk](http://ecelectricals.co.uk)  
**Landscaping** Land Products Ltd: [landproducts.co.uk](http://landproducts.co.uk)  
**Plastering** Merrick Plasterers Ltd: 01929 427011

### STRUCTURE

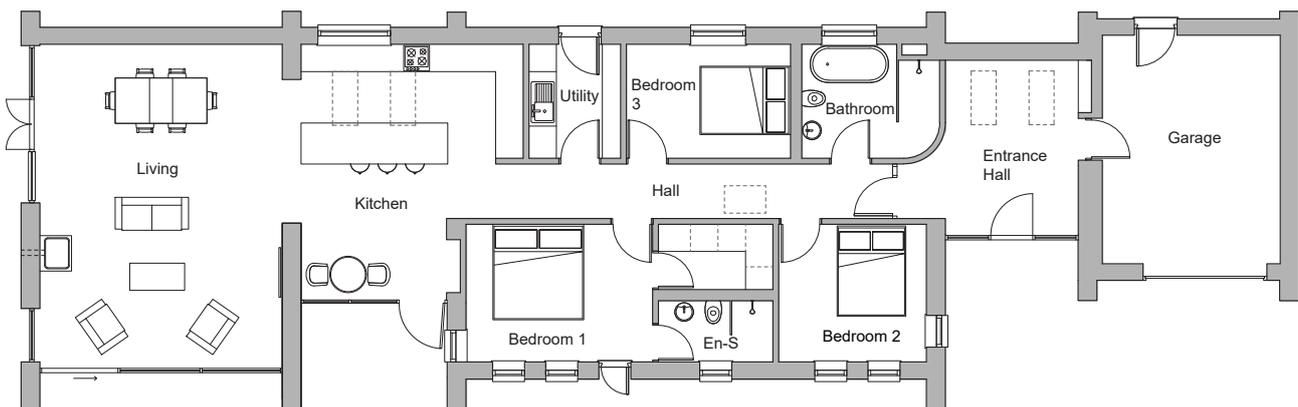
**Quoins, wall copings, stonework** HF Bonfield and Son: [naturalpurbeckstone.co.uk](http://naturalpurbeckstone.co.uk)  
**Parapet coping stone restraint** Ancon Ltd: [ancon.co.uk](http://ancon.co.uk)  
**Timber** Absolute Building Supplies: [absolutebuildingsupplies.co.uk](http://absolutebuildingsupplies.co.uk)  
**Internal doors** Bradfords Building Supplies: [bradfords.co.uk](http://bradfords.co.uk)  
**Keylite roof windows, hardwood** Buildbase: [buildbase.co.uk](http://buildbase.co.uk)  
**Idigbo gate** Haroys Ltd: [haroys.co.uk](http://haroys.co.uk)  
**Engineered bricks** Jewson: [jewson.co.uk](http://jewson.co.uk)  
**Cavity trays, concrete padstones** Strukta: 01202 716969  
**Roofing works, Spanish slates** AS Beale: 01425 672796  
**Zinc roofing works** Guttering Services Ltd: 01794 324433  
**Windows and doors** ODC Glass Systems Ltd: [odcglass.co.uk](http://odcglass.co.uk)  
**Tarmac resin-bonded drive** Resin Excellence Ltd: 07971 262777

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

**Painting** Decorative Solutions: [decorativesolutionsuk.com](http://decorativesolutionsuk.com)  
**Kitchen** Wren Kitchens: [wrenkitchens.com](http://wrenkitchens.com)  
**Lighting** John Lewis: [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)  
**Sanitaryware, tiles** Bathroom Elegance: [bathroomelegance.uk.com](http://bathroomelegance.uk.com)  
**Floor tiles** Tim's Tiles: [timstiles.co.uk](http://timstiles.co.uk)  
**Underfloor heating** Underfloor Heating Now: 01202 894976  
**Chesney gas fire** Low Carbon Energy Centre: [lcec.co.uk](http://lcec.co.uk)

## The floorplan

The single-storey property has a large living room, kitchen and utility to one end, with three bedrooms, a bathroom, en suite and dressing room to the other. A glazed entrance link connects the two blocks.



## NEW BUILD

### KITCHEN/ DINING

A wall of exposed Purbeck stonework creates a feature in the double-height kitchen, where grey Shaker-style cabinets have been teamed with an island. A wide opening connects the kitchen to the vaulted sitting/dining room.



The sitting room to one end is highly glazed, providing a connection between the interior and rear garden, while the front of the house offers privacy from the road with a parapet, which continues to form a garden wall. The garage also provides a further buffer from the street.

"It's ironic that Vaughn's business was in staircases and this house doesn't have one," says Linda. "Everyone was anxious about the idea of a new build on the estate, and how we would get materials onto the site, but eventually permission was passed, and we were able to demolish the old bungalow."

Building contractor Matrod Frampton was recommended to the Steeles by Western Design Architects, who had worked with them on other projects. Based in Dorset, the company undertakes all types of building work, including listed buildings, churches, and residential projects, and proved to be experienced and sympathetic builders.

"They were just amazing and managed to win round all the neighbours, who were understandably reticent at the start and were watching closely," says Linda. "Everyone on the estate spoke so highly of them and said how hard they worked. It made all the difference dealing with people who were respectful, careful and professional."

Once the old bungalow had been demolished the new house was positioned to face south, moving it away from the neighbour's boundary and maximising garden space. Part of the stone garden wall needed to be demolished to improve access for the builders and machinery, and this was later rebuilt.

"The builders had to take care when they were digging the concrete strip foundations and needed to lay them in sections, to avoid disturbing the boundary wall," Vaughn explains.

"We actually visited the local quarry, just four miles from the site, and hand-picked the stone colours we wanted, including dark blues and reds. This was then cut and laid randomly by the stonemasons with recessed mortar joints to resemble a drystone wall. The quarry also produced our coping stones and sills, with exposed stonework internally, which adds warmth and texture."





## NEW BUILD



### LIVING AREA

A full-height ceiling and asymmetrical glazing in the gable end, to either side of the fireplace, create a real wow factor in the living area.

### CURVED WALL

A curved wall in the entrance leads through a Crittall-style internal door to the corridor, which opens into a light-filled kitchen.

The bedroom block and north facade were constructed in white-painted rendered blockwork, and aluminium-framed doors and windows were installed throughout the house, with tall, angled glazing in the gable end of the living/dining space.

“Our original build time was 39 weeks, but the window company went bankrupt which meant the builders couldn’t finish plastering,” says Linda. “They had to work around that while another company produced the windows, but it only delayed the project by a few weeks overall.”

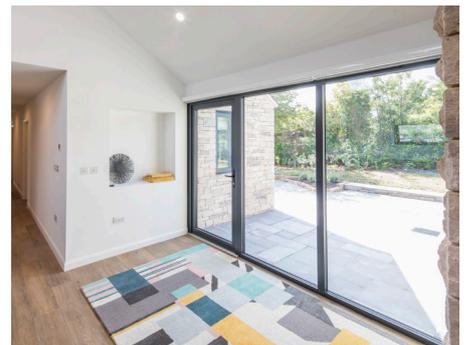
The couple had originally planned to reuse roof tiles from the old bungalow but could not salvage enough, and so chose new roof slates instead, coupled with standing seam zinc for the glazed link. Traditional lead flashing then joins the various sections.

“We still had our apartment in Swanage, so could divide our time between there and our home in Stoke-on-Trent during the build,” says Vaughn. “We didn’t get hands on with anything, but gave input throughout, including attending regular contract site meetings. Our interaction with the architects was tremendous, and they instantly understood what we needed. A few minor tweaks made a big difference to the finished house.”

Underfloor heating, connected to a combi boiler, was installed beneath plank-effect floor tiles laid with dark grout, which complement the white painted internal walls and exposed Purbeck stonework.

“We tried Pinterest and looked in magazines for interior ideas, and we also went to some local places in Poole for our kitchen and bathrooms,” says Linda. “Our architects and builders all had suggestions, too, which was really helpful as we live so far away.”

“Sadly, although we got the keys on Valentine’s Day, we went into lockdown shortly after so weren’t able to sleep there until much later. It means we’re still planning deliveries of furniture to finish the rooms, but now we feel we can take our time to get everything just right, and we’re very much looking forward to spending more time there.”



## Final word

### What were the high points?

It’s been such an adventure and very stress free, which we weren’t expecting.

### ...and the low point?

Not being able to go to the house because of lockdown was frustrating.

### Your best buy?

Having our architect

administer the contract. It cost a little more, but they organised everything with the builders and the communication was excellent.

### And your biggest extravagance?

The Purbeck stone for our feature walls, but it looks



lovely and works both inside and out.

### Your top tip?

Find a reliable builder and architect who are willing to listen and go the extra mile.