

ANDERTON HOUSE (FORMERLY KNOWN AS RIGGSIDE)

BASIC DETAILS

BUILT: 1970-1

LISTED: GRADE II* (1998)

COMMISSIONED BY: IAN & MAY ANDERTON

ARCHITECTS: PETER ALDINGTON & JOHN CRAIG
OF ALDINGTON & CRAIG

MAIN CONTRACTORS: GUNN CONSTRUCTION LTD.

**TIMBER FRAME CONSTRUCTION
& INTERNAL JOINERY:** G R PHIPPS & CO.

ACQUIRED BY LANDMARK: 2000

OPENED AS A LANDMARK: 2003

ARCHITECT: ALLAN KONYA

QUANTITY SURVEYOR: ADRIAN STENNING OF BARE
LEANING & BARE, BATH

CONTRACTORS: IAN HATCHER OF MEDDON,
HARTLAND

GROUNDWORKS: MIKE VANSTONE & SONS

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Anderton House

Summary

The Anderton House (formerly known as Riggside) is one of the best-known designs of Peter Aldington of Aldington & Craig, one of the most influential architectural practices of post-war domestic housing in Britain. The significance of the Anderton House is recognised by its Grade II* status and, in 2003, it is one of only seven buildings which date from the 1970s to be given this accolade.

Peter Aldington's work has echoes of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier in its willingness to blend the traditions of local vernacular with the austerity of the modern movement, which Aldington has expressed as 'listening to the past to make a building of the present that would serve for the future'. In the late nineteen fifties and sixties, architectural design was becoming ever bigger – new towns, power stations, factories, hospitals set the trend and drove architectural expertise and creativity. Such was the momentum that the more lowly qualities of human scale, for a while, went by the board. Concern grew that the sense of community and scale in small rural towns and villages especially was in danger of disappearing. In contrast to these large public works a few architects began to build for themselves or their friends houses that were at once self-effacing and more intimate. Such small houses were the perfect opportunity for architectural experimentation and free planning in a number of idioms.

Peter Aldington was one of the first to anticipate the increasing requirement for a return to greater humanism in housing. He returned to a more intimate and vernacular scale: his first private commission in 1961 at Askett Green in Buckinghamshire was to build 'a modern interpretation of a cottage.' In 1969, Ian and May Anderton, friends of the Aldingtons from Preston, commissioned a small family home in Goodleigh, North Devon for themselves and their daughter, Liz, then a student. Ian Anderton was a commercial pharmacist who was moving his premises to Barnstaple. He wanted the new house also to be suitable for his eventual retirement. A highly detailed brief was first drawn up with the clients by Peter Aldington's partner, John Craig, part of their practice's characteristic working method at the time. The brief asked for a house that made the most of the views across the valley, encouraged a main living areas that was open plan though with some demarcation and three private and acoustically insulated bedrooms. Finally, a study area was required for Ian Anderton – not secluded from daily activity but rather at the heart of it in the living area and of a form which would allow the inevitable clutter of papers and books to be concealed. The Andertons were delighted with the result and lived happily in the building for over twenty five years.

In 1998 the house came on the market, a remarkably intact example of carefully considered and coherent architecture from the early 1970s. It acquired its Grade II* listing around the same time, protection against any hasty 'improvement' by a new owner. However, like the rest of Goodleigh, the house had suffered flooding problems on its sloping site and did not sell. Peter Aldington contacted the Landmark Trust on Liz Anderton's behalf, who was keen that the architecture of her parents' house be preserved and offered us a generous reduction on its price to achieve this. The house met all our usual criteria for architectural and historical significance with a degree of genuine vulnerability and we were able to raise the balance needed to acquire it, Liz Anderton generously allowing us to phase our payments.

Its simple, almost barn-like form represents one of the simplest structural forms of shelter. As Peter Aldington himself expresses it, 'By using a frame and a tent-like roof we were able to make a living room on a small footprint into an apparently endless space.' Explicit expression of structure is an important aspect of Peter Aldington's work and gives the materials used an aesthetic as well as a structural role: in the Anderton House almost every brick and piece of timber used can be seen beneath a simple coat of paint or varnish.

The house's timber frame was pre-fabricated in Oxford so that Peter Aldington could oversee its detail. The roof is a simple structure, supported by posts and twin beams, which could be erected and tiled quickly and cost-efficiently. The roof appears to float above the walls through the clever use of a narrow clerestory which flows into the glazed gable ends, giving an effortless flow of space and an attractive confusion of inside and outside. The low roof pitch avoids any sense of heaviness and bracing has been deliberately avoided.

The passage of light through glass is used to accentuate different zones and moods through the house. This is most clearly seen in the living space, where large sheets of toughened and laminated glass allows the long views to be appreciated both inside and out. Its surface is set back from the building's edges and at an angle to avoid reflection and glare, while the lowered living room floor allows both internal and external spaces to be revealed invitingly. The sense of involvement with the landscape is further heightened by continuing the Wheatley Golden Brown quarry tiles used for the floor of the living space outside onto the terrace and by the lack of a definable edge to the glass corner of the living room. 'It was,' wrote Peter Aldington, 'perhaps the nearest we came to an integration of inside and outside spaces.'

By contrast, the entrance to the building on the north side and the bathroom windows use darker, textured glass so that the entrance draws the visitor into an almost burrow-like space before the bright openness of the open-plan living area. The interior has many complicated and boldly executed built-in cupboards and fittings, another typical feature of Aldington designs. The Anderton House is modern but far from minimalist and at times is almost playful, drawing warmth from varnished pine. The internal timber is found in a strongly horizontal plane and deliberately obtrusive. The use of concrete breezeblocks is honestly expressed throughout, albeit painted white. An innovative solution to the requirement for a central study area was found in the high-sided box that dominates the open-plan living area, christened the doghouse. The circular pod beside the entrance that contains the bathroom complements this cube. The bedrooms are functional sleeping spaces but here too there is warmth and practicality, with roomy built-in cupboards and carefully conceived diagonal panelling. Liz Anderton's bedroom was provided with an entirely functional and visually pleasing built-in desk and shelving lit by the clerestory.

The Andertons found themselves entirely happy with the end-result. It remains instantly evocative of the early 1970s. Here is a comfortable family home almost like so many others built across the countryside in the last decades – and yet lifted to a different level of experience by the mind of an architect who is a master of his chosen idiom.

Background

Perhaps entering the world of modernism and its architecture for the first time, you may be struck by how *analytical* we have become in how we create, reflect upon, categorise and dissect our architecture today. Our forebears created architecture less self-consciously: initially for practicality, then sheer enjoyment and ostentation, then according to the pattern book of the ancients – and of course in shifting combinations of all these. Now, philosophical, political and social agenda have become the ghosts in the machine of modern architecture, encountered at every turn, taxing our intellects and challenging our perceptions. The challenge is worth accepting: we take much of the architecture of the last hundred years rather for granted and are often ready to disparage ‘modern architecture’. Yet good modernist architecture carries a potential for elation ready to be unlocked by any willing to engage in its principles and preoccupations. The best of modern architecture ranks with that of the past and will equally stand the test of time.

‘Modern architecture’ was an invention of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, conceived in reaction to the supposed chaos and eclecticism of the various revivals of historical forms during the nineteenth century. Its basic tenet was that every age had had its own authentic style, until the mid-eighteenth century when the Renaissance tradition had faltered. The task was to discover an architecture suitable to the needs and aspirations of modern industrial societies. The approach was based on new means of construction and disciplined by the requirements of function, to provide forms that were purged of the paraphernalia of historical reminiscences and expressed meaning attuned to modern myths and experiences.

The aim was a new set of symbolic forms that directly reflected contemporary realities rather than a derivative ragbag of historical styles. By the 1920s, an apparent consensus had been reached in the so-called ‘International style’, but

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'AN ARCHITECTURE BORN OF MATERIALS AND STRUCTURE'

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'What matters most is that the
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detail.'

'In order to get on the road towards modernisation, is it necessary to jettison the old cultural past? ...every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilisation.'

'The composition is structured by the landscape'

'Every house worth considering as a work of art must have a grammar of its own ... The grammar is its manifest articulation of all its parts.'

'[Aldington's] best work has a substance derived from a strong muscular expression – a gutsy no-nonsense statement of constructional fact ... his attitude to structure is for him like justice – not only must it be done, it must be seen to be done.'

cracks began to appear almost immediately as practitioners discovered that the architect no less than the artist, philosopher or scientist is part of a specific tradition. There came a creeping realisation that the modernist project called not so much for the rejection of history *per se*, but rather against its facile and superficial reuse. After the war, there came a reaction against much of the formality and austerity of much modernist design and a desire to reinstate a more humane element. In the words of Peter Moro, 'It is the emotional aspect of design which raises a building to a work of architecture.' And the detached house served as a revealing index of a variety of post-war thinking about architecture.

Two giants of early- to mid-twentieth century architecture made this revision of pure modernism explicit in the domestic just as much as the public sphere: Frank Lloyd Wright and also Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, who preferred to be known as Le Corbusier. Echoes of both, and especially Wright, are found in Peter Aldington's work.

Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie-style houses



A P Johnson House, Delavan Lake, Wisconsin (1905)



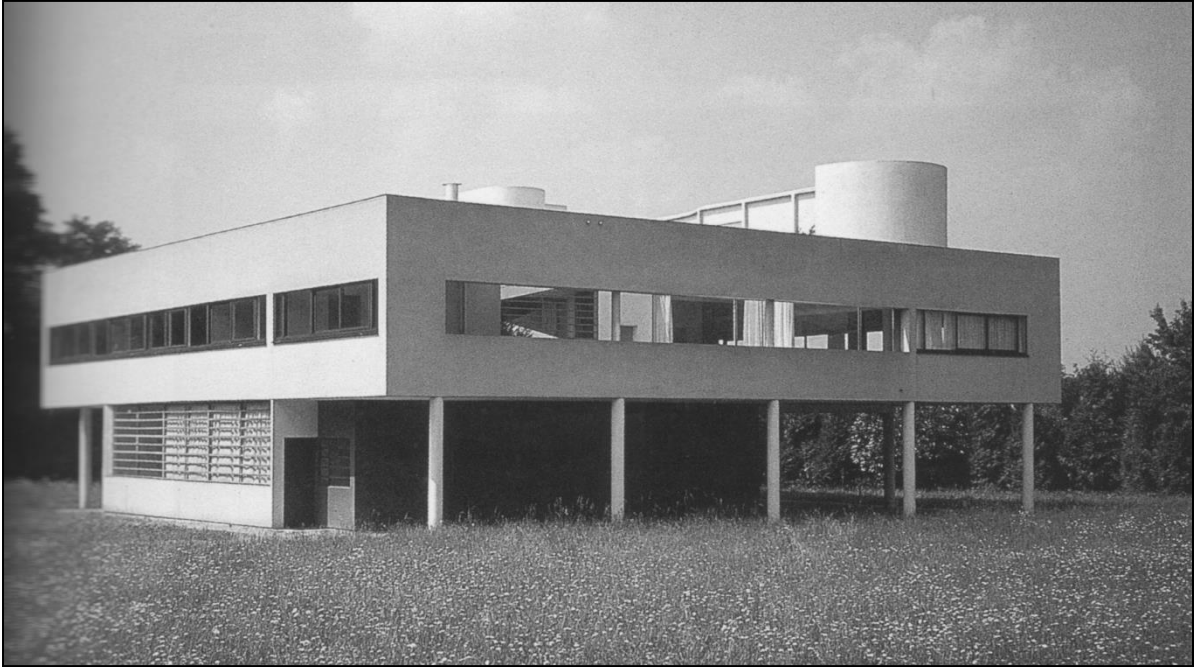
Ward W Willetts House, Highland Park, Illinois (1901)

Frank Lloyd Wright

American Frank Lloyd Wright's work ranged over sixty years, emerging initially from the USA's own Arts and Crafts tradition. While his work was always individual and never repetitive, his first trademark design was the so-called Prairie House – low, spreading, with rooms running into each other, terraces merging with gardens and overhanging eaves. Horizontality, open plans, functional (almost utilitarian) bedrooms and emphasis on the natural qualities of materials typified these buildings – all aspects of design apparent in the Anderton House.

The Prairie House combined influences yet transcended them, adopting but adapting traditional features of American colonial architecture like overhanging eaves and porches into a modernist idiom. Equally important is the house's relationship to its environment: it has as much right to its place and is as much a part of the site as a tree.

Wright sought a conscious coherence in his designs. 'Every house worth considering as a work of art must have a grammar of its own,' he wrote in *The Natural House* in 1954. 'The grammar is its manifest articulation of all its parts.' For Wright, the house, its furnishings and its surroundings should form an integrated whole, all stemming from the same concept. He prescribed no decoration or pictures on the walls; the ceilings should be relatively low and the windows in compact rows. Living space, kitchen and bedrooms should form part of an integrated group. He found the line of domesticity in the horizontal plane, avoiding unnecessary height. The horizontal form unites the house with its site; it was also the line of the prairie in the Mid-West (hence the collective name of this distinctive group of houses). Wright sought to make his houses as though cast in a single form rather than pieced together: only then was it 'worth considering as a work of art.' Many of these tenets can be traced in the work of Peter Aldington.



Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye near Poissy (1928-31). The use of simple geometric shapes, especially cylinders and cubes, is characteristic of much of Le Corbusier's work – and also used for the bathroom pod at the Anderton House.



The living room at Villa Savoye.

As Wright appreciated, the potential of light is integral to modern architecture, a process gradually enabled through the centuries as technology perfected glass as the means to admit light while also forming a barrier to the elements.

‘Glass has now a perfect visibility, thin sheets of air crystallised to keep air currents outside or inside...Shadows were the 'brush work' of the ancient architect. Let the Modern now work with light, light diffused, light reflected, light for its own sake, shadows gratuitous.’
(Frank Lloyd Wright, 1930 Kahn Lectures)

At the Anderton House, glass has become an almost virtual barrier, the quality of light in the living area equivalent to that outside.

Le Corbusier and the ‘language of the vernacular’

Le Corbusier, born some twenty years after Wright, was more closely integrated with the so-called International-Modern movement in Europe than Wright. He was probably the most influential and brilliant 20th century architect, working far more in the public sector than Wright. Appreciation of the underlying structures of nature and the beauty of simple geometrical forms lie at the heart of Le Corbusier’s work. And while the mass-production of housing and town planning were major preoccupations, Le Corbusier was also interested in a new type of private house, white and cubist with rooms flowing into each other.

Le Corbusier also came to recognise that even modernist design did not exist in a vacuum. ‘The composition is structured by the landscape’, he wrote of a holiday house he designed outside Toulon in 1931. Le Corbusier’s domestic architecture of the late 1920s developed a strong and self-conscious link with the natural environment as he lost faith in the *inevitably* beneficent workings of the civilisation of the machine age. He accepted the vernacular as a valid mode of expression, an approach which showed both in his use of rough hewn materials (in a so-called ‘expressive *bricolage*’) and in his willingness to revisit vernacular structural modes.

Peter Aldington and the building of Anderton House

Peter Aldington is one of the most significant British architects of domestic housing since the war and one of the first here to adopt Le Corbusier's willingness to blend the traditions of local vernacular with the austerity of the modern movement, which he has expressed as 'listening to the past to make a building of the present that would serve for the future'. In this, Peter Aldington anticipated the increasing requirement for greater humanism in housing as the 1970s progressed. Not unlike Pugin's work at the Grange, the approach adopted by Peter Aldington was to become so prevalent since that it is not always easy for us to appreciate how radical it was at the time.

In the late fifties and sixties, architectural design was becoming ever bigger – new towns, power stations, factories, hospitals set the trend and drove architectural expertise and creativity – and such was the momentum that the more lowly qualities of human scale, for a while, went by the board. Concern grew that the sense of community and scale in small rural towns and villages especially was in danger of annihilation. In counterpoint to these works of public scale in these years are certain self-effacing and intensely private houses built by certain architects for themselves or their friends. Such small houses were the perfect opportunity for architectural experimentation and free planning in a number of idioms.

Peter Aldington's very first private commission, the White House at Askett Green, Princes Risborough in 1961, was in explicit reaction to this trend. His clients the Whites asked him to design 'a modern interpretation of a cottage' and it is here that Peter Aldington's quiet revolution began.

Three years later, he began his own personal housing project with his wife Margaret in Haddenham, Buckinghamshire – the county with which he was to become most closely associated. Described by Elain Harwood as 'Peter

Aldington's answer to Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin' (which Wright established as both his spiritual home and a centre of excellence), construction of the Aldingtons' own home, Turn End, was enabled by the building of two more cottages, Middle Turn and the Turn. At Turn End, walls of the local wychert (kneaded clay and straw) are successfully combined with concrete block walls and varnished pine. Turn End sits in an important modern garden, which is occasionally open to the general public.

The events which led to the house at Goodleigh may be traced back to Ashton Baptist Church in Preston, attended by Peter Aldington's father and also by a couple called Ian and May Anderton. Mrs Anderton has been Mr Aldington senior's secretary for a number of years and Ian Anderton ran a pharmacy in Preston, where Peter Aldington remembers stopping off on his way home from school in the 1940s. Eventually, the Andertons and their student daughter Liz were forced to move when a road widening scheme required the demolition of their shop. They chose to move to Barnstaple, where Ian Anderton again set up his pharmacy at 16 Vicarage Street. For a while the family lived in a generous Georgian flat above the premises and this was to colour their views when they eventually came to commission a new house to serve as a base for retirement. For this, they remembered the schoolboy from Preston, by then an architect of growing reputation.

Their brief was that the house should be small but generous and make the most of the views across the valley to rolling hills beyond; that the main living areas could be open plan though with some kind of division; that the three bedrooms should be private and acoustically insulated; that the house be clean and easy to run. Finally, a study area was required for Ian Anderton – not secluded from daily activity but rather at the heart of it in the living area and of a form which would allow the inevitable clutter of papers and books to be concealed.

The arrival at such briefs was to become an important part of the working practice of Peter Aldington's partnership with John Craig. At the time the Anderton commission was raised, John Craig was the creative group editor of an advertising agency client. Peter Aldington realised that the highly detailed way in which Craig evolved the briefs for his advertising clients was a form of architectural design and he persuaded John Craig to join him forming a joint architectural practice. John Craig might spend a year developing the brief with their clients so that the house could be detailed around not just their requirements of function but might even take account of existing furniture. Peter Aldington would then draw up the design, often in a matter of weeks. Such thoroughness of approach made Aldington and Craig a highly successful partnership.

The Anderton House is Peter Aldington's most important house outside his home county of Buckinghamshire and he has written about it extensively himself (see the Landmark bookshelves). In its harmony with its landscape and the manner in which it taps into the local vernacular, it makes obeisance to both Wright and Le Corbusier. It is a modern interpretation of the traditional Devon longhouse, a low rectangular shell nestling into the hillside. With perhaps unconscious irony, at one end the animal byre has become instead a carport. Yet for all its modernity, the simple, almost barn-like form represents one of the most fundamental structural forms of shelter. As Peter Aldington himself expresses it, 'By using a frame and a tent-like roof we were able to make a living room on a small footprint into an apparently endless space.' The explicit expression of inherent structure is an important aspect of Aldington's signature. As the *Architect's Journal* expressed it in 1973, 'His best work has a substance derived from a gutsy, no-nonsense statement of constructional fact....his attitude to structure is for him like justice – not only must it be done, it must be seen to be done.' This gives the materials an aesthetic as well as a structural role: in the Anderton House almost every brick and piece of timber used can be seen beneath a simple coat of paint or varnish. The floor is a simple concrete

raft, which provided in a quickly and economically formed single entity a working platform that also serves as foundations, heating pad for underfloor heating and site leveller.

The house's timber frame was pre-fabricated in Oxford so that Peter Aldington could oversee its detail. The roof is a simple structure, supported by posts and twin beams, which was erected and tiled quickly and cost-efficiently. The roof appears to float above the walls through the cunning use of a narrow clerestory which flows into the glazed gable ends, giving an effortless flow of space and an attractive confusion of inside and outside. The low roof pitch avoids any sense of mass and bracing has been deliberately avoided. More than half of this 200 square metre roof is visible from the living area.

The flat sheen of glass is used to accentuate different zones and moods. This is most clearly seen in the living space, where large sheets of toughened and laminated glass allows the long views to be appreciated both inside and out. Glass set back from the perimeter and at an angle avoids reflection and glare; the lowering of the living room floor means that both internal and external spaces are revealed seductively. The curtains too play their part, introducing a layer of coloured light when drawn.

The sense of involvement with the landscape is further heightened by continuing the Wheatley Golden Brown quarry tiles used for the floor of the living space outside onto the terrace and by the lack of a definable edge to the glass corner of the living room. 'It was,' wrote Peter Aldington, 'perhaps the nearest we came to an integration of inside and outside spaces.'

By contrast, the entrance to the building on the north side and the bathroom windows use darker, textured glass so that the entrance draws the visitor into an almost burrow-like space before the bright openness of the open plan living area.

The lighting of the whole building is critical to its conception both during the hours of daylight and darkness. One of Peter Aldington's signature features is that the external light has no switch. Instead it is controlled by a timer (overridden by a light sensor), so that the building's moods are animated even *in absentia*.

The interior has many complicated and boldly executed built-in cupboards and fittings, another typical feature of Aldington designs, especially in his kitchens. In common with his other houses, the Anderton House is modern but far from minimalist and is at times almost playful, drawing warmth from varnished pine which is typically in a markedly horizontal plane and deliberately obtrusive. The use of concrete breezeblocks is honestly expressed throughout, albeit painted white. The innovative solution to the requirement for a central study area finds expression in a high-sided box that dominates the open-plan living area, christened the doghouse. This cube is complemented by the circular pod beside the entrance that contains the bathroom.

The bedrooms are primarily utilitarian, functional sleeping spaces with plain walls and stark alloy sash window frames. Yet here too there is warmth and practicality: roomy built-in cupboards and carefully conceived diagonal panelling. Liz Anderton's bedroom was provided with an entirely functional and just as satisfying length of built-in desk and shelving lit by the clerestory – horizontal joinery in its element.

The Andertons found themselves entirely happy with the end-result. At first glance the house seems little different from so many other 1970s houses which sprang up on estates across the country. The difference is in the attention to proportion and space, rigorously applied with a consistency of detail. A copy of Peter Aldington's original plans for the house are to be found in a large red box on the bookshelves in the house, which we felt would be of interest to visitors.

The Andertons at Riggside



Ian Anderton in the kitchen at Riggside, taken *c.* 1979 by Liz Anderton



May Anderton in the garden, taken by Peter Aldington *c.* 1983

Anderton House when acquired by Landmark



Acquisition and Refurbishment by Landmark

The Andertons lived at Riggside for over twenty five years, content to keep the house's form unchanged. This ensured an unusually complete survival of a unique house of the early 1970s: the odds of it continuing 'unimproved' under new owners were not good. This in itself was enough to bring it to Landmark's attention when it came on the market in 1999, by then with Grade II* status. There was a further and more pressing problem: the hillside village of Goodleigh is vulnerable to flooding and the Anderton House is no exception. The house had twice flooded to such an extent that the huge plate glass windows in the living room had shattered in reaction to the outward thrust of a metre of water, damaging the underfloor heating and leaving the usual mess to clear up. Without significant drainage works, the fabric of the house was threatened. Landmark neither targets nor excludes any period when choosing its buildings and we had been quietly keeping an eye on post-war buildings for some time, without finding one that was not just of architectural merit but also at risk, to justify taking it out of the housing stock.

We had put out feelers to the Twentieth Century Society, who in turn mentioned our interest to Peter Aldington, who then got in touch with us. Riggside was not selling, the risk of flooding apparently deterring potential purchasers. Liz Anderton, who wished to see the architecture of her parents' house preserved, was prepared to offer us a generous reduction in its price to achieve this. Liz was also very patient in allowing us to phase our payments as funds gradually became available. So while its modernity made the house something of a new departure for Landmark, we eventually acquired it for all our usual reasons: it was a building of great architectural merit worthy of preservation and one whose future was at risk without our help.

Consistent with the tradition that modern houses of merit come eventually to be known by reference to the enlightened clients who commissioned them, we

changed the name of the house from Riggside to the Anderton House. We were fortunate to have Peter Aldington as our first point of contact and he has been an invaluable source of advice and information. Allan Konya was appointed as architect and Ian Hatcher's team, who have done much work for us over the years at Coombe, were our contractors, ably assisted by Mike Vanstone for the groundworks.

The first task was to resolve the flooding problems. Goodleigh is due for an imminent flood relief scheme but we felt that we had to act sooner. This was a delicate exercise as we had to take care not to exacerbate our neighbours' similar problems or inundate the fields next door by default. We were reluctant to realign the driveway (which had acted as an unfortunate conduit into the house in the past) although its verges were stripped and remade to improve the detailing. We therefore enlarged the cattle grid at the entrance to form a huge sump and laid pipes around the side walls of the house to carry water away to seep naturally through soakaways installed beneath the south lawn. As further safety valves, grids were inserted into the lawn to allow for emergency overflow in case of really extreme conditions.

Externally, PVC gutters had sagged and it was decided to remove them. The building now looks even sleeker although we will monitor drippage carefully. Mortar joints across the whole house were found to need deeply raking out and repointing, natural wear having been exacerbated by plastic paint applied over the original, breathable paint finish.

The purlin ends beneath the roof had decayed and needed replacing in certain areas. The Douglas fir faced soffit boards beneath the eaves display the wonderful ceiling inside and out, but externally the varnish had become discoloured and stained with mould. These we stripped to recover the grain of the wood and then revarnished. The timber frame and gable glazing screens are

deliberately stained a darker colour to allow the frame to be read against the paler internal joinery.

The huge picture windows in the living room are one of the building's chief glories but also require careful maintenance. They rest upon a buried sill below floor level which had rotted, distorting the tracks. The sill was carefully repaired, using concrete where the decay had progressed too far and the tracks realigned. The sheets of glass weigh close to six hundredweight and took six men to lift into place. The curtains in the sitting area are the originals and Peter Aldington gave us the sideboard. The abstract paintings are originals of the day. The Milanese design of the dining chairs was awarded Chair of the Year in 1968 and the sofa is a Gordon Russell design.

The bedroom windows also had rotted sills; their frames were overhauled and the spring balances replaced. The splendid curtains in the bedrooms were donated by Mr & Mrs Hughes, loyal Landmarkers over many years. The kitchen was adjusted very slightly to take standard modern appliances; the bathroom needed very little attention. Our electricians found that the underfloor heating had, after all, survived the floods and, after being gradually 'fired up' through increasing voltages, this is once again working.

The whole refurbishment was completed through the summer of 2003.



Installing improved drainage. The grid now to be seen in the middle of the lawn is a last resort overflow in case even the new soakaways prove inadequate.





The whole of the outside was repointed. Analysis of the mortar at English Heritage's behest revealed that a local pink sand had been used in the original mix, which we then matched as far as possible.





Water penetration had resulted in decay along the southwest corner at eaves level, which faces into the prevailing southwest wind. The roof was stripped back and battens and decayed timber replaced as necessary.

When the Anderton House was completed in 1972, Peter Aldington commissioned photography of it by the late Richard Einzig. These photographs have acquired an almost iconic status in relation to the building and a selection follow here. In some, Peter Aldington had brought in modernist furniture that he felt both displayed the building and is displayed by it to mutual advantage. In others, the Andertons' own, more traditional furniture is seen.

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Post War Listing in Britain

The post-war era in Britain as elsewhere was a time of experiment and new directions. The first post-war listing came in 1987; at the time of writing, over 500 buildings dating from 1940 onwards have been listed. A building can be listed if it is more than thirty years old and – exceptionally – if it is more than ten years old, providing it is both ‘outstanding’ and under threat.

Listing is a product of the Second World War. While legislation to protect Ancient Monuments dates back to 1882, it took the Blitz to bring home the urgent need for a means of identifying historic buildings deemed worthy of saving. The fact that the implementation of this system of protection coincided with the post-war rebuilding programme at first coloured views against more recent buildings.

In any case, a little distance is always required to appreciate the long-term significance of the truly novel. It was the destruction of the Firestone Factory on the eve of its listing that prompted a comprehensive survey of post-war buildings. In 1987 the first post-war listing (of Sir Albert Richardson’s Bracken House in the City of London, built 1957-9) established the principle that a building must be at least thirty years old before it can be listed. (In fact, Peter Aldington’s listings have tended to fall a few years short of this time limit.)

What makes a building listable? The secretary of state is required to consider only a building’s special architectural or historic interest. A building must be designed with flair, sensitivity and attention to detail. Technological innovation in use of materials or construction method may be a factor, though it must be coupled with design finesse. What matters most is that the building demonstrates a clear idea worked through all the way with a consistency of quality applied to every last detail.

Grade 1 is reserved for buildings of international stature: from the 1970s, only the Wills Corroon Building in Ipswich has this distinction at the time of writing (2003).

Again, at the time of writing the Anderton House is one of only seven Grade II* listings from the 1970s (deemed of 'outstanding' interest). The other six are:

Julius Gottlieb Boathouse, Wallingford, by Sir Basil Spence, 1969-70.
De Breyne & Hayward Buildings, Keble College, Oxford, ARK, 1971-6
Branksome Conference Centre, Haslemere, James Stirling, 1970-2
Trellick Tower, Westbourne Park, London, by Erno Glodfinger (1968-72)
Alexandra Road Estate, Camden, Camden Architects Department (1972-8)
Royal National Theatre, South Bank, London, by Sir Denys Lasdun &
Partners

(1969-76)

Only two of these are housing, Trellick Tower and Alexandra Road, and both these arguably represent the monumental scale and austerity of material and design against which Peter Aldington was reacting.

The following buildings designed by Peter Aldington have been listed to date:

Anderton House, Goodleigh, Devon (formerly known as Rigg Side), in collaboration with John Craig, 1970-1 Grade II*(listed 1998)

Askett Green, Princes Risborough, Bucks 1961-2, Grade II (listed 1999) and his first house which 'established the philosophy of an architecture born of materials and structure that informed the practice's subsequent work.'

Clayton House, Prestwood, Bucks , in collaboration with John Craig, 1965-6, Grade II (listed in 1999).

Turn End, The Turn and Middle Turn, Haddenham. (1964-7), Grade II (listed 1998). The architect's answer to Frank Lloyd Wright's community at Taliesin, a complex mix of modern and vernacular sources, big pan-tiled roofs and high dormers.

Apart from the Anderton House, there are thirteen other post-war listed buildings in south western England. Of these, the Severn Bridge is Grade I, Devon County is Grade II*, the remainder are Grade II. All except the Anderton House date from the 1950s and 60s, making the former the only 1970s II* building in the South West as well as the most modern listing in the area.

Meanwhile, we continue to feel much of our modern architecture is disposable: Exeter City Centre Redevelopment (1946-62 and including Britain's first planned pedestrian street and several good buildings) is now due for demolition to make way for a new shopping centre.

A LIST OF OTHER SIGNIFICANT 20th CENTURY BUILDINGS IN
DEVON (compiled by local architect, Jeremy Gould)

Around Barnstaple:

- John Belcher Tapeley Park and Gardens, Westleigh (west of Barnstaple
on Northam road A39).
1898-1916
Pevsner/Cherry p.778
Gardens open to the public.
- Oliver Hill Cock Rock, Croyde
1925-26
Original *cottage orné* by Hill was destroyed by fire in the
1940s and what you see now is the altered rebuilding by Hill
in the late 40s. Pretty gardens based on Hill's design.
Now a B&B.
- W.H. Watkins Astor Cinema, Barnstaple
1931
Listed Grade II
Built for British Gaumont.
- Alwyn Underdown Saunton Sands Hotel, Saunton
1937
What you see is a great ocean liner above the dunes but the
windows and all the interior have been altered and it is now
a bit sad. There is a good collection of black-and-white
photographs of the original along the corridors.
Pevsner/Cherry p.721
Access OK.
- Oliver Hill Higher Trayne, Berrynabor, Ilfracombe
1941
Conversion of earlier farmhouse with long single storey
music room with murals by Hans Tisdall (now lost).
Somewhat altered with tiled, not thatch, roof. Pretty
gardens by Hill.
Access difficult.
- Anthony Hudson House and swimming pool at Baggy Point, Croyde
1980s
Extraordinary over-the-top, on-the-edge modernism.
Ask Anthony Hudson about access. 0207 490 3411
anthony@hudsonarchitects.co.uk

Tim Ronalds Theatre, Ilfracombe
1998
Architecture Today No.93 November 1998 pp.64-73
Based on two white brick tapering cones – known locally as
'Madonna's bra'.

Further away (in date order):

C.F.A. Voysey Winsford Cottage Hospital, Halwill, Oakhampton
1899
A3079 Oakhampton to Holsworthy
Made redundant some years ago and was owned by a
Trust.

E. Lutyens Castle Drogo, Drewsteignton
1910-30
Famous gardens and site. Owned by the National Trust.

The Drum Inn, Cockington, nr. Paignton
1933-35
For the Mallock family of Cockington, designed with
Lutyens' son, Robert.

Louis de Soissons Housing at Huxhams Cross and Broom Park, Week,
Dartington
Both 1932
Cheap housing for the Elmhirsts of Dartington by the
architect of Welwyn Garden City.

St. James' Priory Estate, Topsham Road, Exeter
1933+.
Middle class housing for Staverton Builders, the building
arm of the Dartington Estate. Now somewhat altered but
still looking like a little bit of Welwyn brought to the west
country.

William Lescaze High Cross House, Dartington Hall
1931
The headmaster's house for Dartington Hall School by a
Swiss-American architect. Now open as an art gallery and
Dartington's fascinating archive. The first important white
modernism in Devon and the most important group of
school buildings in the country. Other buildings at
Dartington include the restoration of the Hall by William

Weir (1925) and the Theatre interior by Walter Gropius (1937).

- Boarding houses, Dartington Hall
1933-35
- Houses in The Warren, Dartington Hall.
1935 and later
The larger, end house for Kurt Joos, the ballet dancer.
Designed in conjunction with Robert Hening.
- Central Offices, Dartington Village
1935
Steel frame, smooth white render, flat roof and metal windows.
- Gerald Saunders Tivoli Cinema, Tiverton
1932
Tiny little 'thirties cinema by a local architect who designed the only 'modern' house in Tiverton, 'Shrinkhills' in 1934. Still going strong.
- Matthew Dawson Burgh Island Hotel, Burgh Island, Bigbury-on-Sea
1929 and 1932.
Designed as a house for Archibald Nettlefold, the industrialist but altered by his widow in the early 'thirties to a hotel. The best Art Deco interior in Devon. Much loved of the London theatre set in the 'thirties including Agatha Christie.
- P.W. Ladmore Electric House (Electricity Show Rooms) and Public Library, Torquay
1935 and 1938
Extension to the Edwardian Baroque Town Hall (Thomas Davidson 1906-13) by the Borough Architect but in a swish 'thirties style. Electric House has a great interior of Birmabrite steel and green and black Vitrolite glass (now the Borough Planning Department).
- E. Vincent Harris Washington Singer Laboratories (1931), Mardon Hall (1933), Roborough Reading Room (1938-40) and Hatherly Laboratories (1948-52), Exeter University, Exeter.
- Harris' adaptation of the Lutyens' red brick style adopted for specific buildings types. The plan of Exeter University is by Harris and Sydney Greenslade, from 1931.
- Harris Memorial Chapel, Exeter University
1956

Harris in Lutyens' mode again but this is a fine building in its own right. The building is across the axis to the distant Cathedral. Ceiling by Tom Monnington, abstract and ethereal.

Harold Rowe,
City Architect

Exeter City Centre Redevelopment
1946-1962

The areas east and west of the Cathedral were badly blitzed and Thomas Sharp, the town planner, prepared his plan for Exeter, *Exeter Phoenix*, in 1946. The plan was developed by the city engineer and city architect. The best of it is the east side centred on Princesshay (the first planned pedestrian street in Britain), High Street and Bedford Street. Various architects designed the separate buildings – the best being Curtis Green's Barclay's Bank (1952-56), Lucas Roberts & Brown's Westminster Bank (1950-55), Charles E. Ware's Lloyd's Bank (1950-53) and the Norwich Union by Donald Hamilton Wakeford & Partners (1954-56) but Pricesshay itself is well worth looking at.

But visit soon – it is all due to be demolished for a new shopping centre.

William Holford

Queen's Building, Exeter University
1956-58

The first building at Exeter by the newly appointed planner who superseded Harris. Based loosely on Aarhus University. The University Hall is also by Holford.

Donald McMorran

Devon County Council, Topsham Road, Exeter
1955-64

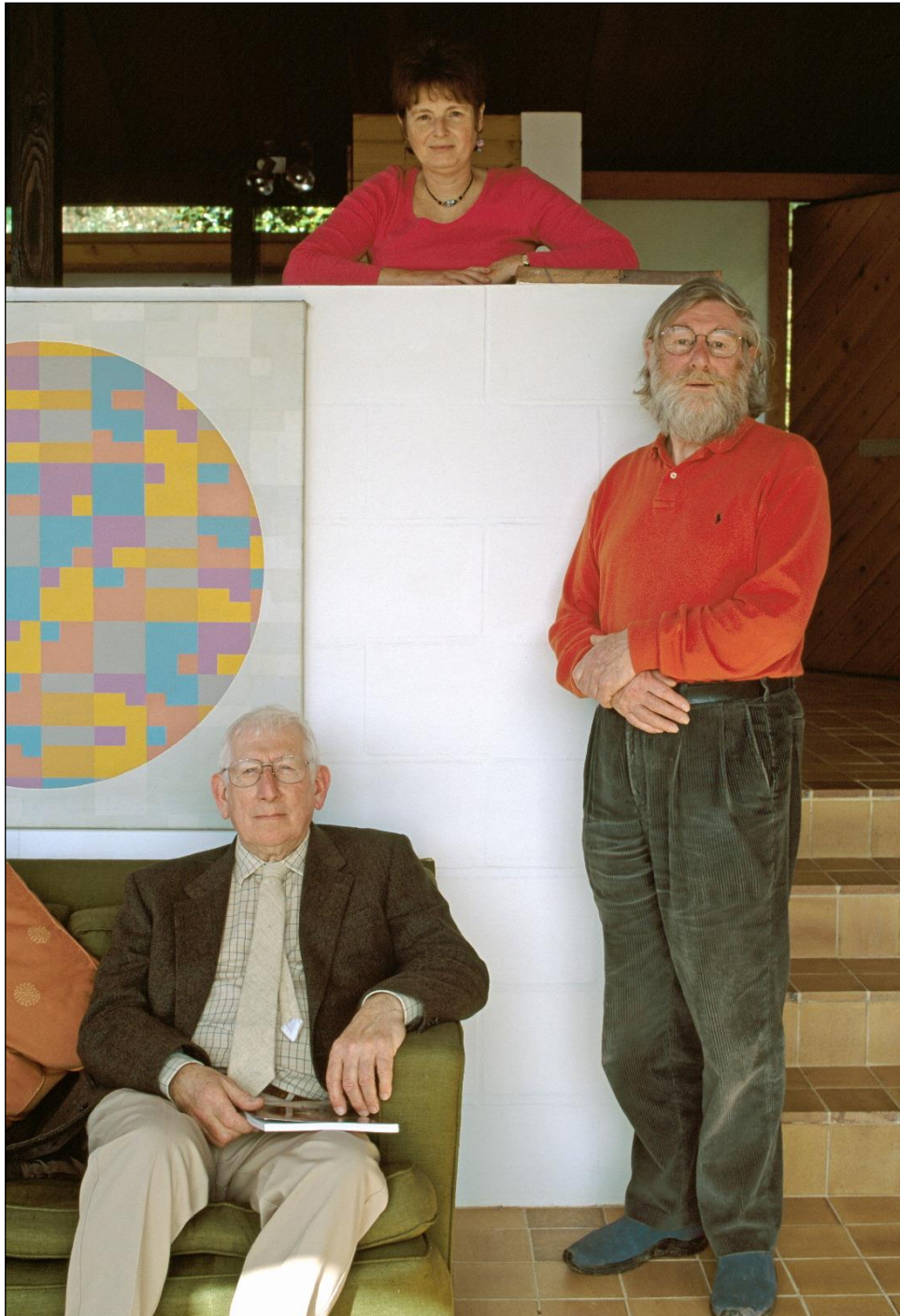
This and Holford's Queen's building are the best of the 'fifties in Devon, excluding Plymouth. McMorran's is a fluent reinterpretation of Georgian and Scandinavian classical. Listed Grade II*.

Mervyn Seal

Parkham Wood House, Brixham, Devon
1960-3

Set above a cliff, it is an example of English modern domestic architecture. Its butterfly roof was a design concept further developed by the architect. Listed Grade II.

- MWT (Marshman,
Warren & Taylor) Local authority housing, Great Shilhay, Commercial Road,
Exeter (next to Exe bridges)
1970s
Dense brick and tile hung housing in courtyards with radial
wings going down to the river park and focussed on the
distant Cathedral. First of the more diverse, humanised
architecture of the 70s before it got too eclectic or post-
modern.
- Van Heyningen
& Hayward Visitor Centre, Clovelly
1980s
West from Barnstaple on the A39
The 'shed' that marks the entrance to the village. Well
thought of at the time and got various awards.
- Burrell Foley Fischer Picture House Cinema, 51 Bartholomew Street West, off
Fore Street, Exeter
1990s
Conversion of a redundant garage into a cinema, bar and
restaurant. Bright, giltzy and trendy, like it should be.



Liz Anderton together with Peter Aldington and John Craig, seated, during a visit to Anderton House in 2004. Photo: Richard Bryant

The Architect's Journal, 28 February 1973

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The Architects' Journal 28 February 1973

AJ Information Library

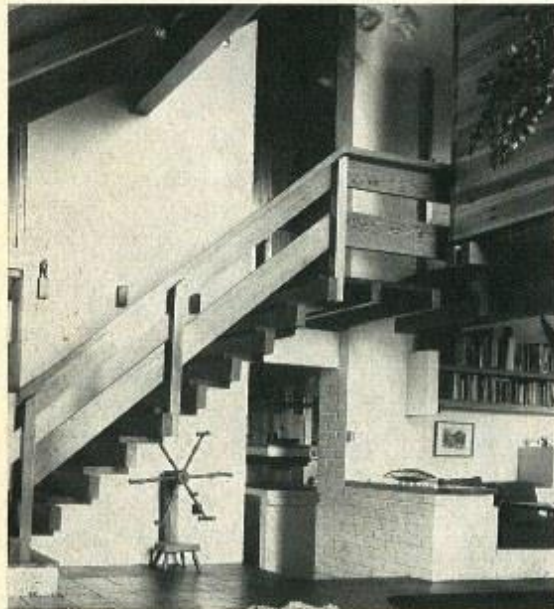
Introduction

Peter Coe prefaces his appraisal of the house near Barnstaple with an assessment of Peter Aldington's previous work.*

'Every house worth considering as a work of art must have a grammar of its own. . . . The grammar is its manifest articulation of all its parts.' (*The natural house* Frank Lloyd Wright, 1954.) It is to Peter Aldington's credit that his houses generally have this kind of integrity. The influences on any architect practising today are obviously many; but in this case the influence of Wright can be singled out. It informs much of Aldington's work, particularly the later houses where often the plan embodies an allusion to Wright's houses.

From the earliest work, it is clear that Aldington limited his range of materials in order to exploit them thoroughly in a way that can only come from an ingrained understanding of their nature. He has consistently used only brick (or block); quarries, timber and glass, materials that are joined together in traditional (and therefore generally familiar) ways.

Using them, he has concentrated upon displaying the intrinsic constructional system. This concern for order and explicit structure underlines the best work. At times this preoccupation has taken him beyond the explicit, the game has become overcomplicated and obsessively fussy, the result no longer relaxed. The fascination when over-indulged has thrown up an embroidered, too conscious style. His best work has a substance derived from a strong muscular expression—a gutsy no-nonsense statement of constructional fact.



1 Living room in house at Askett

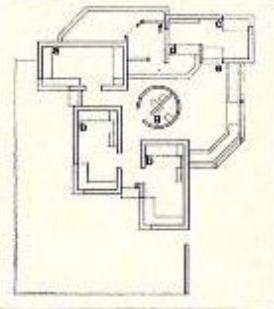
This is true of his first house (at Askett) that appeared in AJ 10 years ago (AJ 12.7.63 p1237). This house 1 was an exciting and refreshing breakout from the gentility of much that was being produced at the time. It is firmly in the farmhouse tradition and is conceived in many ways like a canal boat with seats doubling up as lockers, cast-in storage units etc. Aldington stated that he used 'the simplest visual answer to each structural problem. Almost every brick and every piece of timber used can be seen.' Here his attitude to structure is evident, it is for him like justice—not only must it be done, but it must be seen to be done. The constructional roles of

*The author is an architect and lecturer at Bristol University

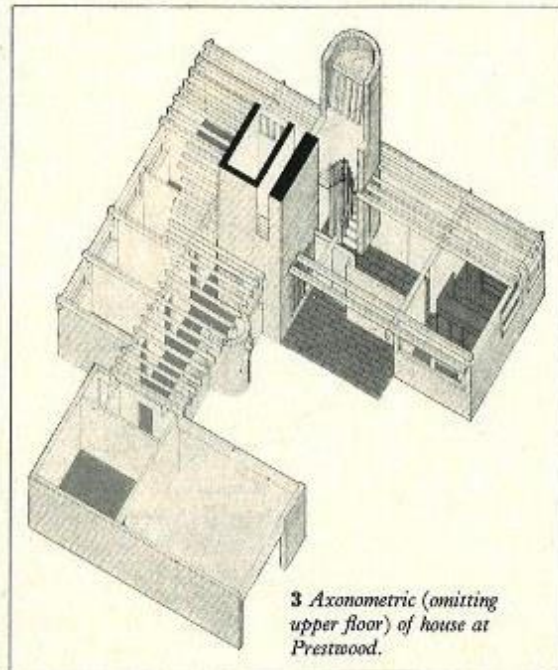
the materials are emphatically stated, white painted brick, quarries and scaled-up timber play against one another in full-bodied counterpoint.

2 Plan of group practice surgeries at Chinnor.

key
 a Treatment
 b Consulting and Examination
 c Secretary
 d Reception
 e Waiting
 f Entrance
 g Service core



In the group practice surgeries at Chinnor (*The Architectural Review* July 1968) another theme becomes evident—Aldington's taste for basic geometrical forms, containing tightly planned single-function rooms, used to control freer spaces about them 2. Here the consulting rooms spin off the nodal service core and its encompassed 'free' waiting space.



3 Axonometric (omitting upper floor) of house at Prestwood.

The idea is more fully developed in the house at Prestwood, Bucks, 3 (*The Architectural Review*, August 1971) where, as in the Goodleigh House, there is a crown level for the brickwork which is used only to support concrete upper floor beams, which in their turn carry generously sized timber beams. Above this level, timber and glass are used for the external walls. The whole is strictly regulated—all the structural elements keep their denoted station, reiterating their relationship as they decrease in size. There are two forms that are allowed to break through: the square service stack and the semi-circular stair. These thrust up beyond roof level, proclaiming their simplicity in juxtaposition with the elaborately expressed structure. As at Goodleigh again later, the main living space is released on the diagonal generated by these two controlling fixes.

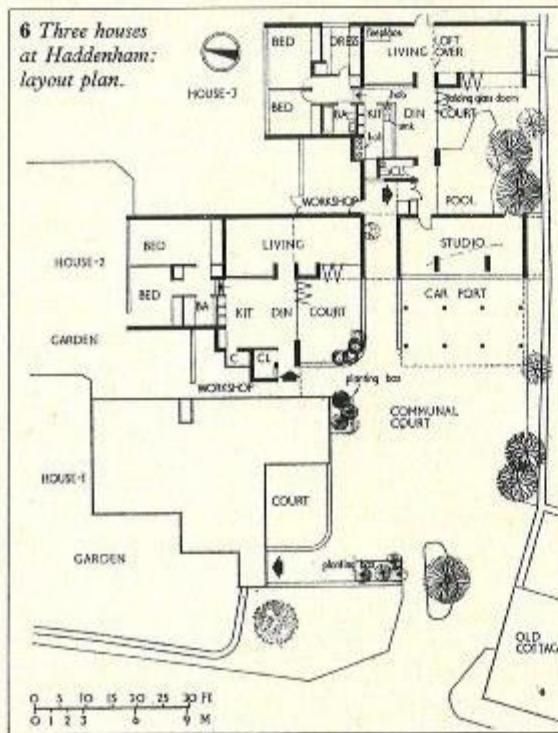
The balanced tension between the opened and contained spaces is more intricately asserted in the group of three houses



4 Entrance to main court, Haddenham



5 Private court

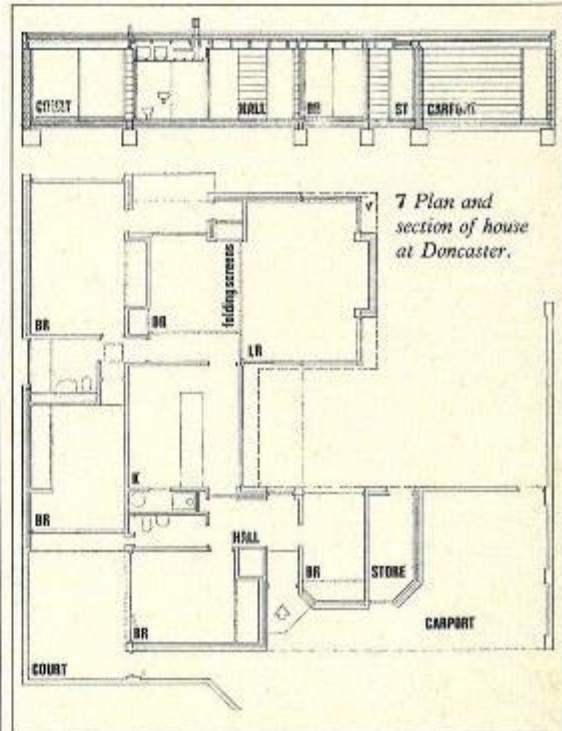


at Haddenham, Bucks (AJ 2.9.70 p532) 4, 5, 6. The cues from the character of the village have been devotedly taken up. The sequential arrangement: entrance—communal court—studio—architect's own house (the sanctum) gives the impression of a tranquil seclusion, a sort of northern hacienda, which is reinforced by the lean-to carport and the traditional tile capping to the courtyard walls.

Aldington's own house has a contained entrance area leading to kitchen/dining and living room, both with expansive glazing through which they are related to the captive court. There is, in spite of the large amount of glazing, a clear distinction between inside and outside which is emphasised by the pool.

The materials used throughout are the now familiar ones. The tiled roof looks, as it is, a fairly heavy lid and points up the hefty supporting members. The exploration of rustic timber detailing (as at Askett), with its overtones of pre-industrial

technology, awakens an almost primitive response. One realises that one can physically build these houses without resort to additional organised skills (and Aldington largely built this one himself). The constructional system is absolutely explicit.



7 Plan and section of house at Doncaster.

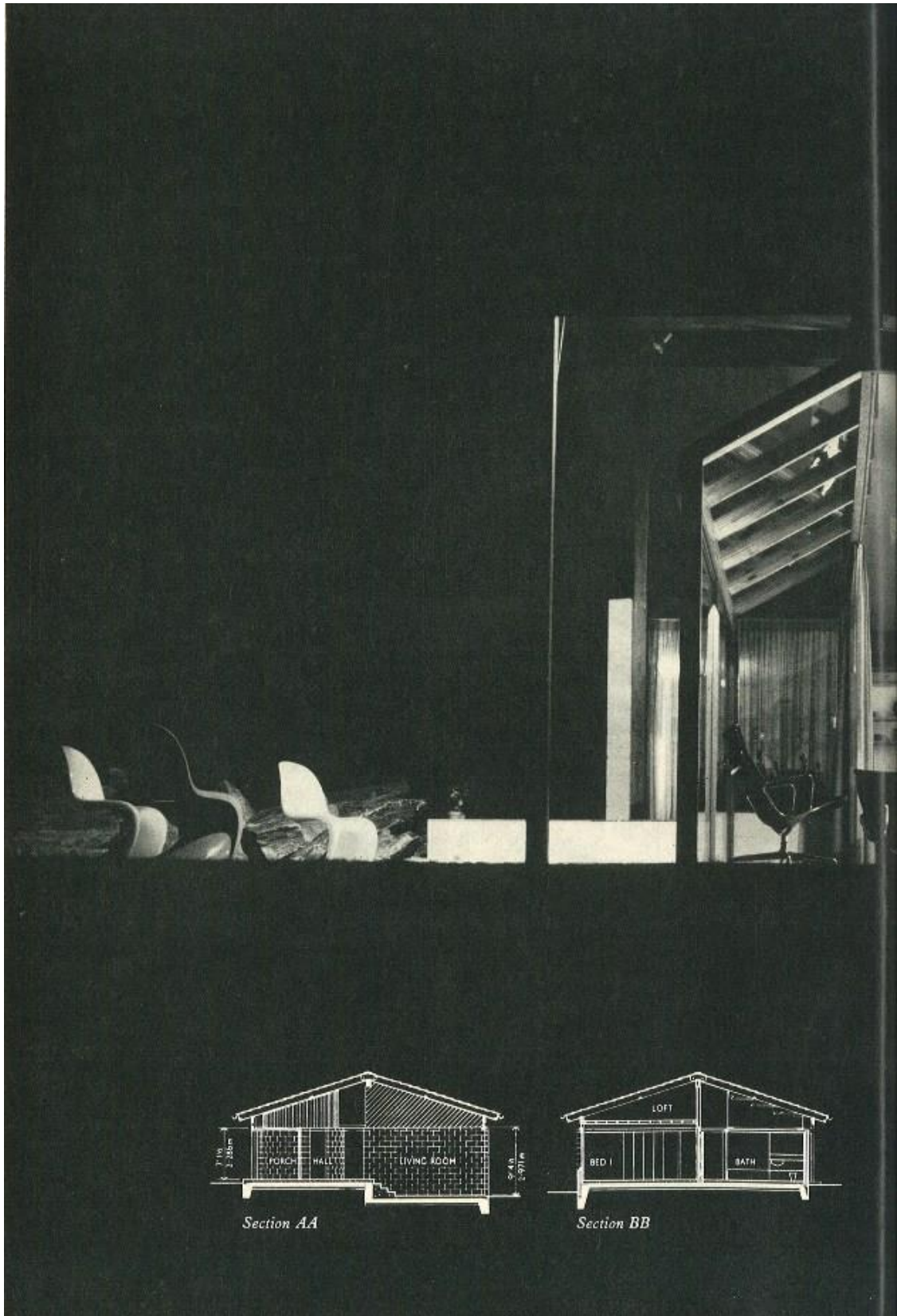
This kind of revealed simplicity doesn't pervade the Doncaster house (*The Architectural Review* September 1972). It has an intricate, even tortuous, plan 7 and the house seems to be too small to wear its complications. This, together with the sheathed (t&g ceiling throughout) flat roof, gives the impression that this house is rather too genteelly groomed and over manicured.

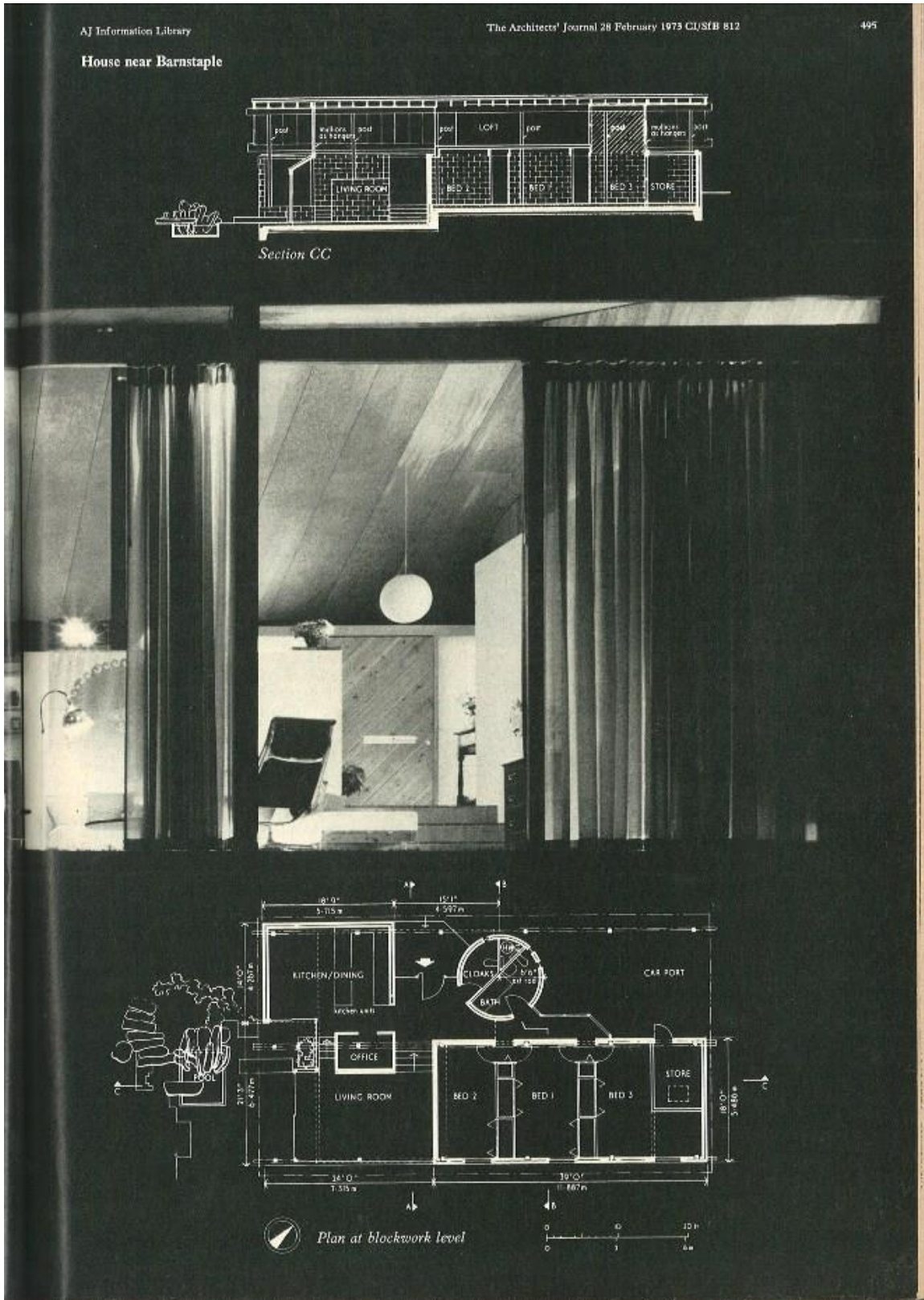


8 Extension to house at Kenley

Before examining the Goodleigh house in detail, it is important to look at an extension to a house in Kenley, Surrey, 8 finished in 1965. This has served as a prototype for the Devon house in that the prefabricated constructional system of beefy timber columns and double beams (bolted connections) with non-loadbearing concrete block walls, was used again at Goodleigh. It has other features too that have been taken up at Goodleigh. The blockwork runs up to the line of a clerestory glazing band which separates the roof deck from the edge beam. The little building is altogether rather elegant with the self-conscious propriety of its elevations.

This brief, retrospective introduction should have marked out some of the themes that run through Aldington's work. The house at Goodleigh can then be examined in this context.





Building study

House near Barnstaple

At Goodleigh, Devon for Mr and Mrs Anderton by Aldington & Craig partner in charge Peter J. Aldington surveyor (local supervision and advice) A. M. Evans of Drew Gibbins & Pearce structural engineer V. C. Johnson heating design SWEB

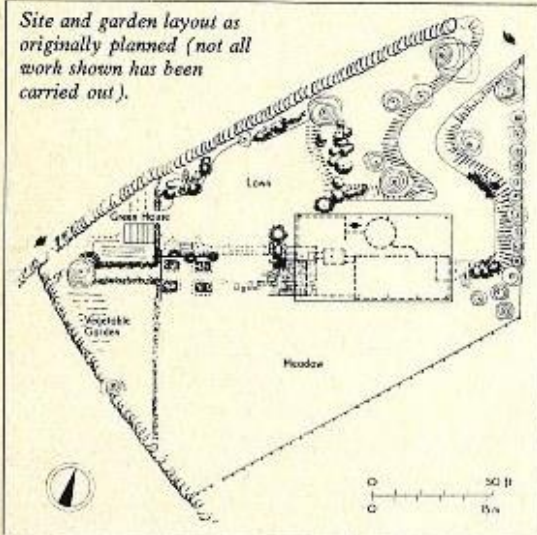
Pages 494-495: living room and terrace at night.

Facing page

9 Setting from south: a landscape of gentle undulations.

The house is built on the south-eastern edge of the village of Goodleigh and its garden merges into farmland.

10 Steep northern approach with cattle grid at entrance.



Site and garden layout as originally planned (not all work shown has been carried out).

Architect's account

Brief

A house was required for a professional man and his wife, with one daughter mostly away at university. The site is a hillside on the outskirts of a tiny Devon village 9. The site was chosen because of its secluded position and for its view, and the house was to take full advantage of this. Living and kitchen areas were to be grouped with an entrance hall, all to be as spacious as possible; the dining area was to be small and cosy without being cramped. The master, guest, and daughter's bedroom to be private and cut off acoustically. The husband wished to have some form of study area which

was not cut off, as most studies are, from the living part of the house. He felt he would never use it if it was, and so he needed somewhere to sit and work in the middle of the living area without the rest of the house being aware of the clutter of papers and books.

The house was to be easy to run and clean, as both husband and wife would be away at work during the day.

Solution

The house is placed low down on the site and has been dug well in so that the living room floor is level with the grass of the field outside and seems to be part of it (p491). This kind of siting is apparent in many of the local farm buildings which have slated roofs set low in the landscape or hugging the side of a hill.

As the site was some distance from the architect's office, it was considered that a building system that was easy to supervise was essential, and this brought about the decision to use a simple hip roof supported by posts and twin beams fixed down to a concrete raft. The roof was tiled right away so that the rest of the building operation was completed under cover and all the setting out could be related to the posts already in position. The complete wooden structure was made in Oxford under the architect's supervision and then transported to Devon for erection by the local builder.

The posts and beams establish a grid completely covered by the roof 10. The accommodation is defined below by free-form rectilinear or circular areas of block or glass which pierce or run with the grid. Wherever they do pierce the grid, internally or externally, they have a subroof which returns, glazed 15 or decked 16, to a clerestory glazed 7ft 2in (2.18 m) datum line rigidly controlled by the grid. This discipline is adhered to in all but one important exception—in the centre of the house—and produces a peculiarly pleasant inside/outside confusion, which increases the involvement with the landscape 20.

Internally, the open kitchen, living, dining and entrance areas are arranged around a tiny central open 'study' 17 used by the husband, which seems to answer the somewhat conflicting requirements of the brief, as well as providing visual boundaries and a partial, but important, sense of enclosure to these areas (see drawings p494 and 495).

The dining area, although basically open, is under one of the low subroofs, which gives the cosiness and intimacy the client required.

The whole of the roof plane, inside and out, apart from that over the bedrooms, can be seen from the kitchen, living and dining areas, which gives an impression of an even larger space, as one area borrows from another.

Apart from the large areas of fixed glazing and glass doors which look out and open on to the sloping garden, the gable ends are also completely glazed and there is a thin clerestory strip running the whole length of the building so that the roof appears to float above the non-loadbearing walls, giving the house a light and airy feeling.

The bedrooms are enclosed in a rectangle of blockwork. They have low ceilings above which is loft storage space. A small subdivided blockwork cylinder contains bathroom, cloakroom, cisterns and storage tanks. Blockwork stops at the 7ft 2in datum, and walls continue in redwood up to the roof.

Externally there is a store for garden tools etc and next door to this a carport which is simply part of the tent-like roof spanning the whole building 13.

Finishes are fairfaced concrete block painted white and stud walls clad in Swedish redwood sealed with polyurethane varnish. Doors are flush, white painted. The posts and beams are Douglas fir and pitch-pine respectively. The underside of the roof is clad in sealed Douglas fir 9 mm ply, and it is tiled with grey interlocking concrete tiles. Floor finish in open areas is golden brown quarries; in bedrooms, carpet.



9



10

Appraisal

by Peter Coe

House near Barnstaple

Goodleigh Village is four miles out of Barnstaple. Separated from the town's worst sprawl, it seems now to be operating an effective check on its own further growth. The village rides the hillside 9, with the ubiquitous Devonian retiral bungalows (that have sidled in over the years), jostling around the older nucleus dominated by the church. This Aldington house is built on the edge of the village and its garden merges into farming land. The landscape is one of gentle undulations, with, from this site, long distance views down the valley.

Siting and landscaping

The house itself, though by no means rude within this landscape context, is less sensitively sited than one has come to expect from the designer of the Haddenham group. It doesn't, through its form, celebrate the markedly (south) sloping site and the broad views (p491).

There is little exploitation of levels within the house. The

clients declare that they are happy with basically a one level house, but would not have precluded alternative arrangements. Clearly the house needed to be low to avoid the overhead high voltage cables crossing the site. But the main form determinant was undoubtedly the decision to make a simple roof over a compact plan in response to the local rural tradition, and then to prefabricate the structure. However justified this decision may have been for the actual construction and supervision of the house, it seems to have squandered some of the inherent potential of the site. There is no doubt that the opened up corner of the house allows the views to be enjoyed, but this in a rather obvious way, there are no tantalising glimpses of framed landscape, the range is simply total view or no view. The landscaping about the house is essentially plain—mown grass with some shrub-planting now under way. This is appropriate to the surrounding landscape.

The terrace to the sitting room is simply detailed with an extension of the floor finish from the interior of the house. A couple of planting troughs and a small pool are let into the terrace. The upper levels of the garden literally spill onto the terrace with man-sized boulders strewn into the pool as if by some natural cataclysm 20.

Around this part of the house the relationship with the site is at its most worked—the play of outside-inside is teasing and intricate where the terrace runs into the two interior levels. The terrace itself feathers off into the grass in a tantalisingly ambiguous way.

Planning

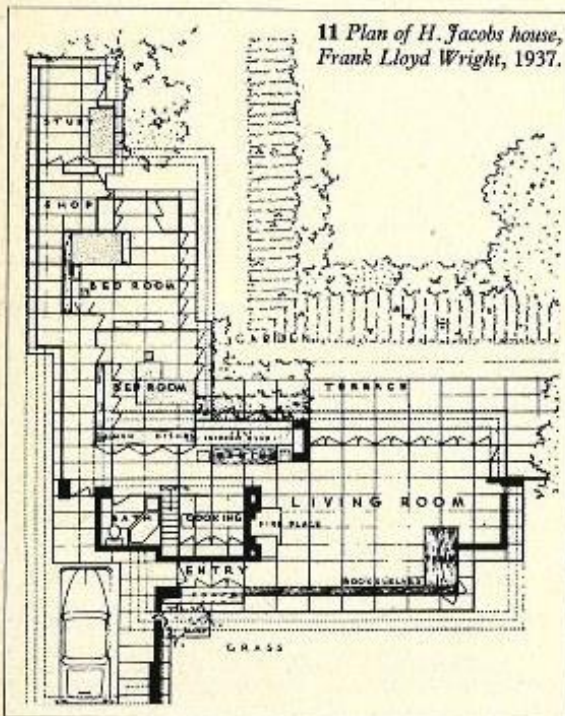
The plan seems to contain marked similarities to two Lloyd Wright houses. It combines the idea of a pivotal entrance (1937 H. Jacobs house 11, but swing the bedroom wing through 90°) with the workspace/living area relationship of the 1939 Winkler-Goetsch house 12. There is further reference to this later house in the clerestory strip, separating walls from the oversailing roof.

Aldington has again used the device of two basic solids (the bathroom/cloakroom cylinder and the study cube) to control the spaces disposed about them. Again, as in the Prestwood house 3, the opened up space of the living room breaks out on the diagonal.

The approach to the house is alongside the carport (where the oversailing tent roof is made explicit) and round the pivot of the service tube 10, 13.

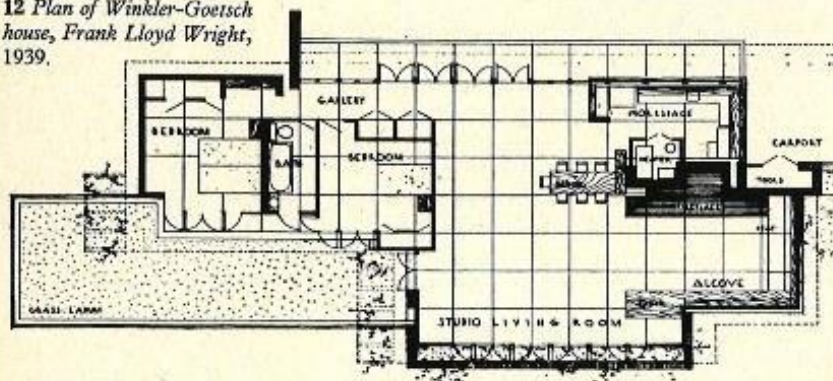
Once inside the house 15 the pivotal importance of the service tube recedes and a new focus is established: the study. This is a good bit of theatre within the house with its distinctly nautical flavour of a poop-deck with a mast rising from its midst 14. Sitting at the desk one can see out to the distant views and remain in contact with all that is going on in the house. It is a most pleasing nook to be in.

The change in level down to the sitting area occurs at each side of the study, emphasising its importance as one of the



11 Plan of H. Jacobs house, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1937.

12 Plan of Winkler-Goetsch house, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1939.



13 East front with oversailing tent roof, carport and service tube beyond.

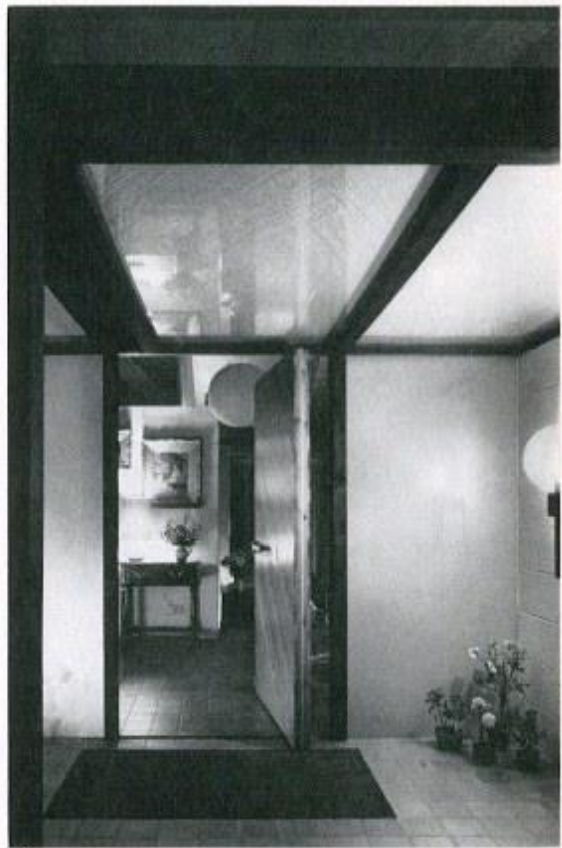
14 Living room flanked (left) by study reminiscent, with its low enclosing walls and 'mast', of poop deck.

15 Entrance porch with glazed subroof and diagonal-boarded, pivoted front door.

16 Kitchen, with dining alcove on left, is very compact for amount of equipment it contains.



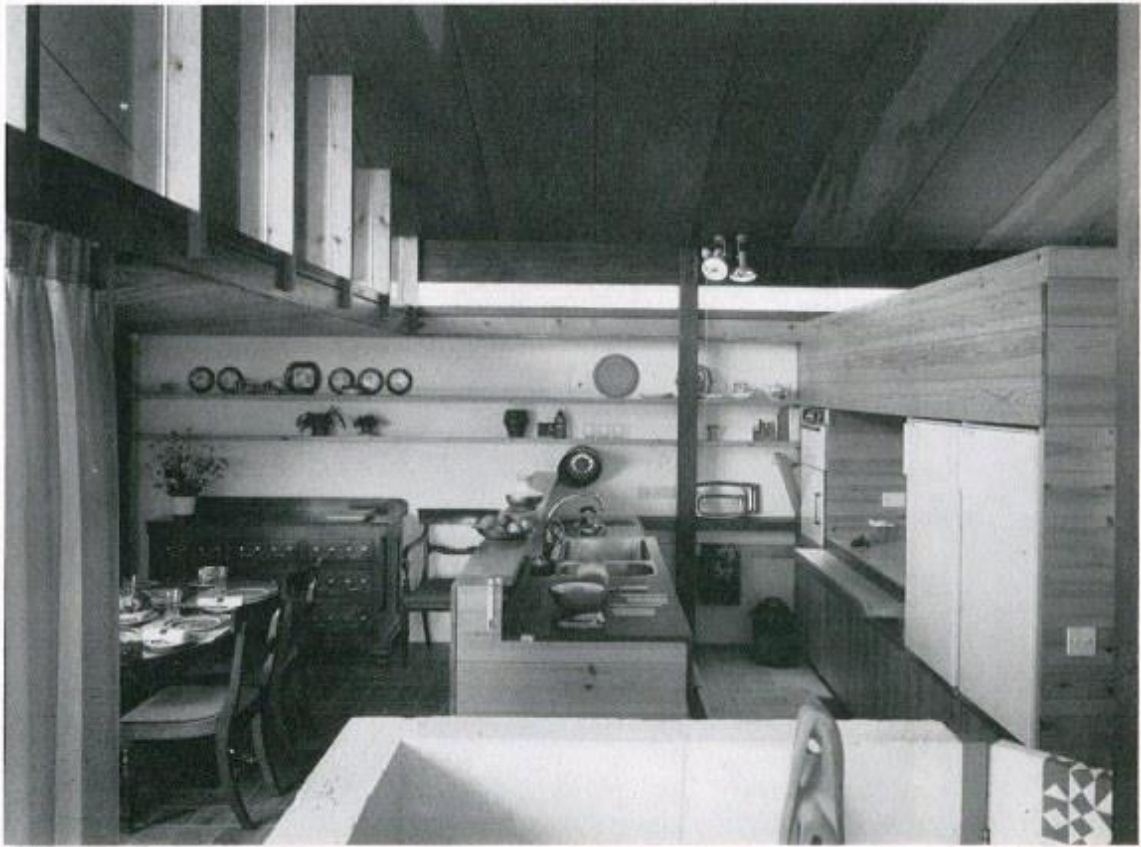
13



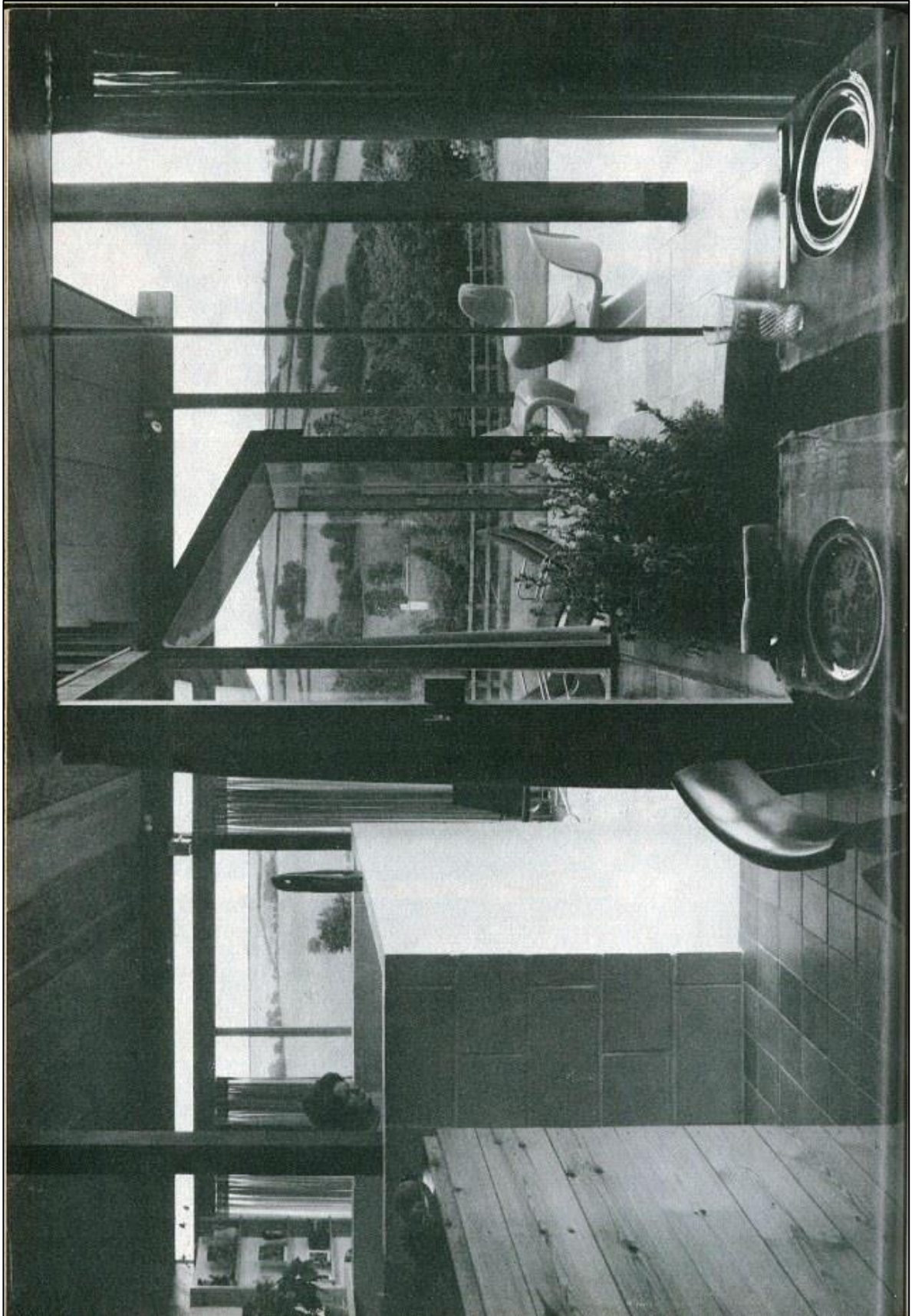
15



14



16



controlling notions for the house.

The kitchen is compact considering the amount of equipment it contains, and as in the earlier Askett house 1, there is some ingenious doubling up in use of space and surface; the analogy of a boat is again appropriate 16. Tongued and grooved boarding predominates and is used for all cupboard doors.

The arrangement for refuse disposal is hopper straight into dust bin which can be collected from outside. The extract, appropriately looking like a jet engine cowl, works in an exemplary way.

The dining alcove is 'snug'—as the clients desired—yet not at all cut off from the rest of the house 17. The alcove is glazed on one side as a late refinement on the original plan. This has compromised the strict purity of the first concept of the alcove, with its own roof protruding from the main structure, as a contained, intimate space. On the other hand the original scheme would have denied one of the best views from the kitchen—surely an overriding consideration. The success of this open planning in the living areas is borne out by the clients' comment that they now feel less comfortable in a 'conventional' house, with rooms specifically allocated to 'talking', 'cooking', 'eating', etc.

It is clear, however, that the clients would only have been happy with the more private functions—sleeping, washing, dressing—compartmented in a conventional way. The bathroom/cloakroom cylinder marks the boundary between open and private zones. The bathroom and cloakroom are surprisingly spacious 18. In their detailing they are less successful. The difficulty of marrying regular square materials to a circular plan has not been resolved, although an enthusiastic tile-cutter has attempted to blend in the quarry tiles. There is a heavy reliance on timber and this works in a bit more easily, though the rogue directional emphasis of the ceiling is disturbing.

But much of the potential of the chosen form seems to have been wasted. The tube seems to want to be carried on up to the roof instead of being cut off with a subsidiary ceiling. The imposed structural regime could have been pointed up by the contrast of so emphatic an exception.

The bedrooms form a neatly packaged wing. The two middle bedrooms are tightly contained with low timber ceilings (the volume above provides loft storage), while the end one is opened up to the roof to mirror the spatial device used in the work area on the opposite diagonal of the house 19. The middle bedrooms make a nice play with the timber boarding idiom, with the direction of the boarding given to the walls and ceilings in the rest of the house being reversed. These rooms are comfortable and workmanlike with more than adequate storage, and well made built-in desks and dressing tables.

The structural idea

The primary structural idea of a two aisle grid of posts and beams with a tent roof is clearly expressed both inside and out. The substantial structural members are separated from the perimeter walls by a glazed clerestory above the blockwork crown level. The structure is further expressed by the timber posts being half-proud of the wall plane and structural members being dark stained throughout the house. This consequence of the building sequence (frame and roof first) makes the way the house was built absolutely explicit. It is the sort of clarity that has informed most of Aldington's work. The clerestory device running the length of the building doesn't in itself give the house a 'light and airy feeling', but works in fragile contrast with the massive beams to achieve this. The great sense of airiness comes where the house is opened up, where the clerestory combines with the additional impact of the glazed gables 20.

The structural discipline is strict throughout—the blockwork walls are stopped at 7ft 2in (2.18 m) and the remaining height



18



19

17 Dining alcove with low roof is snug yet not cut off from rest of house. Glazed south wall may compromise purity of original concept, but does afford one of best views.

18 Bathroom is surprisingly spacious, but does not quite resolve problem of marrying square materials to

cylindrical volume. 19 Third bedroom, with clerestory between two roofs, repeats spatial device used on opposite diagonal of house.



is made up with diagonal timber-boarding or glass. But while the validity of stopping the walls to produce the clerestory is obvious, the decision to take the top of the blockwork up to this same level everywhere (except in the study) looks a little pedantic. It is least successful in the slope-sliced drum of timber above the blockwork in the bathroom/cloakroom core. This could indeed have been the breathing space with complete blockwork construction as a change from the prevailing hybrid. The prevailing idea is modified at the gables where the line of the crown of the blockwork is continued around a rail 13. Where this rail passes into the kitchen area the top to the dining alcove is extended out from it to form a roof within a roof 16. There is a further sophistication in the living area where the discipline is again modified with a sloping 'cold-frame' extended from the rail. This delineates a change in level both internally and externally 20.

But these deviations appear rather waywardly eccentric. They don't relate to the whole with the directness to be found in some of the earlier houses. All the individual ideas are good, yet they lack a convincing unity.

Materials and finishes

The range of materials and finishes is characteristically restricted. Aldington's love for timber is by now evident; it dominates here with expansive relieving areas of white painted blockwork.

What is surprising is that with such reliance upon timber both externally and internally, the architect has allowed the ends of t&g boarding to appear unmasked in so many situations. This inevitably means that the warps and uneven joint gaps show. The fault is not yet serious, but it may prove to be an annoying price to pay for constructional frankness.

The mellowness of the boarding is complemented by the brown quarry tile floor throughout the house. The range of browns and the offsetting white are enhanced by carefully considered lighting, cleverly integrated with the structure and mainly indirect. A good example of the subtle lighting can be seen at the entrance to the house. The external screen wall is double-glazed with glass-fibre weave in the cavity. This has a shimmering quality when seen in daylight and transmits a warm opaque glow when the house is lit at night 15.

The electric underfloor heating is efficient and economic, according to the client.

Conclusion

In the several years separating the design of this house from the previous group, Aldington has moved away from an uncompromised directness of expression to explore a more sophisticated idiom. Structure and constructional method are still given the regulating role but the muscular simplicity has been supplanted by a greater ingenuity. Yet this small house doesn't quite manage to wear its complications with total conviction—it belongs with the Doncaster house in being that bit overwrought.

Nevertheless, the Goodleigh house clearly shows its pedigree and it must be understood that criticisms are made in the context of relating this house to the best of Aldington's work. If it doesn't measure up to this, its flaws could be indicative of the designer's evident vitality.

It has obviously made a very satisfactory home. The clients are constant in their praise and say that Aldington has given them what they now recognise they wanted all along. And one can't quarrel with that tribute.

← 20 West gable, with terrace and pool extending from living room and 'cold frame' bay projected from all-important horizontal rail.

Building summary

Ground floor area: 1405 sq ft
 Total floor area: 1405 sq ft
 Type of contract: RIBA without quantities
 Tender date: 14 April 1970
 Work began: 1 June 1970
 Work finished: 31 January 1971
 Price of foundation, superstructure, installation and finishes including drainage to septic tank and soakaways: £12 871
 Price of external works: £982

Cost analysis

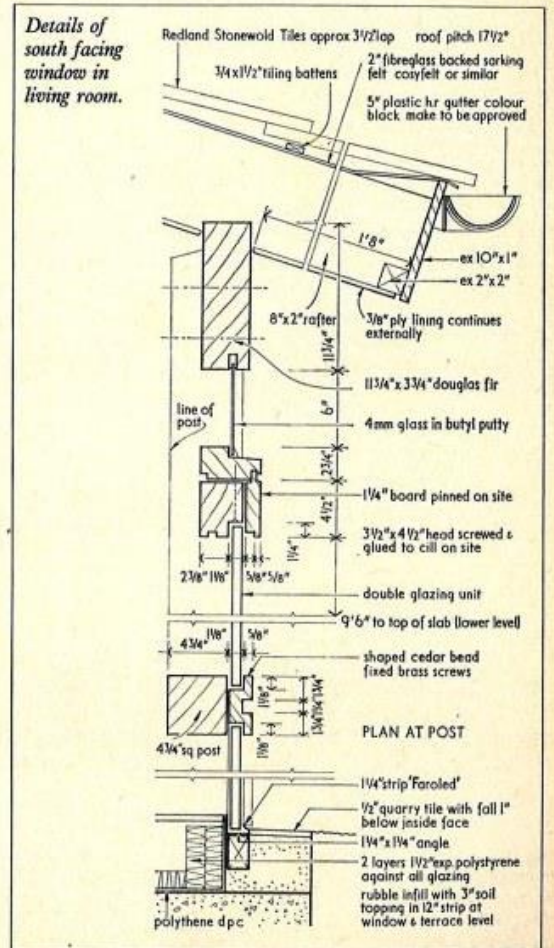
All costs per sq ft
 Based on final account
Preliminaries, insurances and contingencies
 Included in each element

Work below lowest floor level £0·58
 Stepped 6in concrete raft foundation with downstand beams at edges and thickened reinforced pads under columns, all on 4in hardcore. Site excavated to levels with ramped banking on dug-in side. 500 grade polythene damp-proof membrane.

Structural elements

Frame £1·08
 Ex 5in x 5in Douglas fir posts carrying ex 12in x 4in pitch pine eaves and ridge beams fixed with bolts and timber connectors.
 Ex 7in x 2in rafters at 24in centres, nailed to beams and connected at ridge with plywood gaskets. Posts are bolted to steel shoes cast in floor slab.

Roof £0·66
 Main roof structure included in frame. Glazed gable ends. Internal walls above eaves board level framed ex 3in x 2in studs with diagonal t & g boarding.



Concrete interlocking tiles on battens on glass-fibre backed felt; black plastic gutters and rain water pipes discharging on to flat roof: 268 sq yd. £0.31 per sq yd (£0.37/m²). Flat roof, 3in x 2in joists at 16in centres with fillets and plywood decking weathered with single layer neoprene roofing with flashings and internal plastic rainwater pipes: 28 sq yd, £0.30 per sq yd (£0.36/m²).

Rooflights £0.02
Square plastic rooflight over store.

External walls £0.57
Non-loadbearing cavity walls consisting of 4in outer leaf and 3in inner leaf acting as lateral stabilisers for the frame. Walls fairfaced internally and externally and finished three coats white emulsion paint. Sand and cement sills weathered with neoprene. Three coats vertical dip to walls below external ground level.

Windows £0.68
Stained softwood frames erected at same time as and forming part of structural frame. Double-glazing direct to frames, roof members and blockwork. Double hung aluminium sashes in softwood frames to bedrooms. Horizontal sliding windows, 1/2in polished plate. Continuous eaves glazing strip glazed direct into groove on underside of beams. Corridor and porch ceilings softwood framed with white diffusing plyglass. Total window area: 738 sq ft, £1.29 per sq ft (£13.88/m²).

External doors £0.27
Frameless full height windows to living and dining. Hardboard faced floor to store in softwood frame. No architraves. Softwood framed and diagonally boarded pivoted front door as part of glazed entrance screen. Total door area: 50 sq ft, £7.48 per sq ft (£80.48/m²).

Partitions £0.69
9in x 4in hollow blocks, fairfaced and painted both sides. Timber stud and boarded partitions forming cupboards between bedrooms and enclosing store.

Internal doors £0.18
Painted hardboard faced flush doors in rebated softwood frames. Painted hardboard faced bifold doors to cupboards. Ledged and boarded doors to lobbies and office. Area 293 sq ft, average £0.98 per sq ft (£10.54/m²).

No of single doors: 7
No of bifold doors: 5 sets.

Ironmongery £0.08
Knobs and circular roses, fixed pull handles, matching letter plate and door knocker on front door.

Finishes and fittings

Wall finishes £0.24
Block walls fairfaced and finished with one mist and two full coats white emulsion paint throughout. Timber boarded walls sanded and finished with two coats eggshell finish two-ton polyurethane lacquer.

Floor finishes £0.47
Electric underfloor heating throughout. Flooring consists of 6in x 6in golden brown quarry tiles on 1/2in expanded polystyrene insulation. Bedrooms 1 and 2 have fitted carpet on floated screen in lieu of quarry tiles. No skirtings.

Ceiling finishes £0.60
Main roof where exposed lined with 1/2in Douglas fir ply in 2ft wide panels. Joints centred on rafters and expressed, 1/2in wide. Flat ceilings to flat roofs and areas with lofts over are ex 6in x 3in t & g softwood boarding fixed diagonally. All ceilings finishes with two coats eggshell finish, two-ton polyurethane lacquer.

Fittings £0.89
Purpose made kitchen units including built-in oven, hot plates, fridge, freezer and washing machine. Built-in bench and shelving in office. Built-in bench in bedroom 3.

Services

Sanitary fittings £0.43
Type No
Vitreous china wc 2
Vitreous china basin 2
Cast iron bath 1
Stainless steel sink bowl 2

Waste, soil and overflow pipes £3.04
Plastic waste and soil pipes to common stack in service duct from bathroom and cloakroom appliances. Plastic waste pipes to gully in kitchen serving sinks and washing machine.

Cold water services £0.07
1/2in and 3/4in copper cold water services. 50 gal glass-fibre tank. No of cold draw-off points: 9

Hot water services £0.07
1/2in and 3/4in copper hot water services with 30 gal copper cylinder lagged with 4in of glass-fibre and heated by electric immersion heater. No of hot draw-off points: 5

Heating services £0.35
Off-peak electric underfloor heating controlled by consumer's own time clock and indoor/outdoor thermostat.

Ventilation services
Extract fan in kitchen included with electrical installation.

Electrical services £0.37
Pvc insulated cables to 13 amp ring main. Lighting points which terminate in 3 amp socket outlets on walls and beams. Cables run inside hollow timber walls, hollow roof space and cupboards.

Drainage £0.22
Four drains to septic tank and rain water to soakways.

Total per sq ft of floor area £9.16
£12 871 (net cost excluding external works)
1405 sq ft (measured inside external walls)

External walls £0.70
Concrete and gravel drive-ways with cattle grid at entrance. Quarry tiles paving outside living room with small pool, steps and artificial rock outcrop.

Contractors

Main contractor: Gunn Construction Ltd. Nominated subcontractors: Timber frame construction G. R. Phipps & Co. Internal joinery, kitchen fittings, some furniture G. R. Phipps & Co. Heating installation SWBB. Electrical H.R.M. Electric Ltd. Sash windows Archital Luxfer Ltd. Floor tiles Whentley & Co Ltd. Double-glazing units Plyglass Ltd. Sliding windows Allday Ltd. Sanitary ware Admesex Ltd. Blocks Lignacore Group Sales. Roof—Redland grey Stonewold concrete tiles Rolland Ltd. Stainless steel sinks W. & G. Sisson Ltd. Light fittings Rotaflex Lighting Ltd.

Photographs

All photos by Brecht-Blinzig Ltd

Summary of elemental costs

	Cost per sq ft	Cost per m ²	Per cent of total
	£	£	
Work below lowest floor finish	0.58	6.28	6.36

Structural elements

Frame	1.98	21.28	21.58
Roof	0.66	7.12	7.22
Rooflights	0.02	0.20	0.21
External walls	0.67	6.12	6.21
Windows	0.68	7.32	7.42
External doors	0.27	2.86	2.90
Partitions	0.69	7.46	7.56
Internal doors	0.18	1.91	1.93
Ironmongery	0.08	0.91	0.93

Total of structural elements 5.33 55.18 56.96

Finishes and fittings

Wall finishes	0.24	2.62	2.65
Floor finishes	0.47	4.99	5.06
Ceiling finishes	0.60	6.43	6.52
Fittings	0.89	9.61	9.75

Total of finishes and fittings 2.20 23.65 23.98

Services

Sanitary appliances	0.43	1.43	1.45
Waste, soil and overflow pipes	0.04	0.46	0.47
Cold water services	0.07	0.70	0.71
Hot water services	0.07	0.70	0.71
Heating services	0.35	3.60	3.85
Electrical services	0.37	4.02	4.08
Drainage	0.22	2.40	2.43

Total of services 1.25 13.51 13.70

Total 9.16 98.62 100.00

External works 0.70 7.51

Cost comment

The individually designed house, carefully thought out and executed as planned, can provide great pleasure to both architect and client. The cost depends on the individual design, materials chosen and vagaries of the tender.

This scheme was based on a lump sum tender in April 1970 with the building work completed in January 1971—a reasonable time scale for this special construction and type of building. The analysis is a fair representation of the cost allocation between elements, but somewhat scanty in detailed unit rates. Note that preliminaries are spread throughout the analysis.

The overall cost of £12 871 for the building amounts to some £9.16 per sq ft for a floor area of 1405 sq ft. However, the basic design concept of the 'floating roof' covering about 1760 sq ft plus 250 sq ft of flat roof is considerably more than the net floor area. Taking roof and other elements affected (ie frame, ceilings) these element costs are somewhat inflated. The roof also has a boarded loft with extra size joists and insulated lining to side walls.

The timber structural frame is interesting in its design approach, its execution 'off site' by a specialist firm and transporting in sections to the site. This frame is also the largest cost item in the scheme at 21.58 per cent of the total cost, but is skilfully exposed and performs the dual function of roof structure and surround to high level glazing.

Expression of the main materials is also a major design consideration and can be seen threading through other elements as the inner leaf of external walls and partitions in regular pattern blockwork, fairfaced and decorated. Ceilings are also important, with their modular ply panels to sloping soffits and diagonal boarding to horizontal and vertical surfaces.

This emphasis on dimensional relationship has also played an important part in the plan concept. The pre-planning of the scheme, with the building sequence of foundation bases, frame and roof, together with the consistently high demand of good workmanship, could have severely influenced tender costs; but there is no evidence available on this point.

The kitchen fittings at £1260 includes kitchen equipment such as hotplates, cooker, refrigerator, freezer and washing machine all designed in as a planned concept. Other cupboard fittings in the bedroom are costed with internal partitions and doors. The services section seems the least expensive, with plumbing kept to a functional minimum in bathroom and kitchen. Underfloor electric heating at £0.35 per sq ft shows economy in installation, without loss of floor and wall space.

With house prices escalating, the demand for such quality building will show that the first capital costs of this project are more than amply compensated by the current 'market value' of the property.

Extracts from Peter Aldington's writings

The 11th Commandment

It is rumoured that among the graffiti in the toilets of the Mackintosh School of Architecture is this commandment:

"Do not prostitute your architecture or you will catch vernacular disease."

HEADS OF
SCHOOL

I wonder if that is one of the commandments of God as revealed through Macmillan, for it is sound advice and should, like the earlier Commandments on the tablets of stone, be taught widely and heeded for its wisdom.

The currently fashionable use of the word 'vernacular' is symptomatic of a misunderstanding about the nature of architecture which is all too prevalent, not only among laymen but regrettably within the profession.

Architecture, at least as practised by this partnership, is something far deeper than the mere whimsical application of a 'style' - be it 'vernacular' or otherwise.

We have been accused of being 'exponents of the vernacular style'. Our approach to architecture has, however, always been (and I trust always will be) one of analysing and then trying to understand the problem clearly before designing. In many early examples the problem was to build for, and in, the 20th century in the context of much older and simpler buildings. We tried therefore to learn from the simple way builders in the past had put parts and materials together and in so doing had unconsciously created a local language - or vernacular. Their vocabulary and technology was limited - not through conscious choice but by economic, technological and social circumstances. We consciously chose a similar limited vocabulary and used modern technology in an equally simple visual manner to create new forms as answers to new problems.

But that is all, there has never been in this Practice any attempt to copy or emulate traditional external forms. That is 'styling' - a superficial and regrettably all too common answer to the present day conservationists and planners misunderstanding of what architecture, both old and new, springs from.

Mies Van der Rohe summed this up very succinctly when he said "Form is not the object of our work, only the result." I believe that also.

The common denominator in architecture of all ages is people; their needs, the social conditions and available technology determine the built forms. 'Vernacular' or 'common language' as applied to building, ceases to be a viable description when technological choice becomes a reality, and conscious designing exercises that choice. Architects today have a wide range of materials and many technologies at their command. This availability of choice increases responsibility enormously. We should not lightly indulge ourselves in whimsy - nor devalue by apery that which has grown out of the circumstances of the past. The wealth of available materials and technical knowledge enables new forms to emerge as answers to new problems.

If Architecture is to survive as a live art in this century, we must use the products and knowledge of the age and move forward, showing respect for the past but not constantly looking back over our sentimental shoulders.

I suggest that the greatly misused and overworked word 'vernacular' is dropped from the descriptive language applied to architecture. Just plain 'architecture' is good enough.

*Written for
R.I.B.A. Journal Feb 1980*

Modern Architecture

We view the modern movement as a rejection of style. We tend towards the dictionary definition of modernism which refers to religious belief. Architecture is very akin to religion. To define modern as a style and to suggest that that style has now passed and been superseded by post-modern, whatever that is supposed to be, demonstrates in our view, a very basic misunderstanding of what modern architecture is about.

As far as we are concerned, the modern movement is alive and well. Being alive and well, it is axiomatic therefore that there can be no such thing as post-modernism which is, we believe, a figment of the imaginations of 'intellectual' critics whose reasoning we don't understand, or is at its worst - to quote our good friend Michael Manser - 'an excuse for lousy architecture.'

In describing ourselves as 'modern' architects we are not describing a stylistic image, but rather, a method of approach which rejects style and substitutes for it a careful and rational understanding of the needs of our client, controlled and modified by circumstance and place. The form is generated by a reaction to these needs and the place where we are building, and is developed out of what we see as an appropriate technology. If there is any theme running through our work it is one of a structure-oriented nature and certainly not a stylistic one.

We are describing an inherently flexible approach, an approach which can produce different forms for different buildings to answer different needs. We live in a rapidly changing technological age. Human needs in terms of building requirements must inevitably change rapidly also. To impose a stylistic image on the built form which purports to answer those needs is an anachronism.

The modern movement is not dead, it is changing. It is, by definition, a changing movement. To discuss it in terms of style is, we suggest, an irrelevance.

We reject 'Style' as belonging to the architectures of the past, whereas we see 'Modern' as a philosophical approach and method of working. The possibilities are limitless. As technology advances, so will differing expressions in terms of built form develop. We agree wholeheartedly with Mies van der Rohe that "Form is not the object of our work, only the result."

To develop this theme in visual terms I have selected 10 pairs of slides of different projects. Each pair illustrates a similar problem solved in a different visual manner according to the circumstances in which the problem was set. You could I suppose, call this set of slides a kaleidoscope of styles. We would prefer you to call it a demonstration of a consistent philosophy applied to a number of similar and yet different problems producing widely differing built forms.

*An undated lecture introduction
in the 'Philosophy' file. Used
on a number of occasions*

An English Tradition

Is there an English tradition?

Yes, because the handing down of an unwritten belief or 'tradition' through generations is inescapable, but there are two elements in this. There is the need, and there is the result. 'Traditionally' as needs have changed, ways have been found of dealing with them, resulting in the changing appearance of things.

So tradition is different according to the way you view it; look backwards, you see the results; look forwards you see needs and problems. We try to live in the present and look forwards, listening to people, and then design something using skill, experience and sensitivity to make a thing that will answer their needs. In this way we are traditional.

To many people in this country, what a thing is does not necessarily have to be what it looks like. This allows them to face in both directions - backwards and forwards - at the same time. This is seeing tradition in a stylistic way, where you apply something from another age onto a present or future problem.

There is something wrong with this attitude. It is skin deep, lacking depth and integrity; and so for us the contemplation of some old buildings is unpleasant, because this 'tradition' of covering up one kind of building with another kind of style has been going on for some time.

It is a question of responsible choice. We believe that tradition is not an appearance but a way of dealing responsibly with the future.

*Written for
Architectural Review May 1984*