

HOME

House #2

Attwood house

who David Attwood and Jane Tranter with four-year-old twins Maddy and Joseph
what Cherry Eyot, a remodelled and extended riverside retreat raised on stilts
where Wargrave, Berkshire

high point 'Sitting in the kitchen on the third stool from the right having a cold beer is my favourite thing to do in my favourite place,' says David. 'I used to dream of doing this during the build and now I can'

low point 'When our first set of builders gave us trouble,' Jane says. 'We were financially out of control. The house was almost completely demolished so we couldn't even sell. I thought, I'm living in a Barratt home in Twyford with twins and no garden, for nothing'

tip 'Get a good architect, and then be flexible,' David says. 'Go with your gut instinct and don't overfuss'

budget £350,000



TAKE TWO

THIS REMODELLED SIXTIES
RIVERSIDE HOME CAPTURED
OUR IMAGINATIONS AND A
GRAND DESIGNS MAGAZINE
AWARD. IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY...

WORDS JOANNA BOOTH
PHOTOGRAPHY JEFFERSON SMITH



The raised modernist
box design enables this
family home to be sited
safely on a flood plain
with enviable river views

HOME

House #2

Attwood house

David Attwood and Jane Tranter's remodelled Sixties home is best viewed from the river, where its beautifully proportioned glass and brick façades appear to hover above the lush green banks. Luckily the house was sold with a small boat, or it would only be the local fishermen who could appreciate the view. As it is, David, Jane and their four-year-old twins Maddy and Joe can potter up and down the river to their hearts content.

The village of Wargrave is on the Loddon, a smaller, quieter river than the Thames with overhanging willow trees and dragonflies darting above the water – a change from their previous location, Bow in east London. Both David, a freelance film director, and Jane, head of drama for the BBC, enjoyed being in the heart of the city with a hectic lifestyle. 'Then London started to feel a bit flat,' Jane says. 'We wanted a lifestyle change.'

In Bow, their Victorian house was by Regent's Canal. 'Never live by water,' Jane advises. 'It's a curse. You fall in love with it and then you always

have to live near it, which becomes really expensive!'

They discovered Cherry Eyot on a property website. Built in 1965, the original structure is square and flat-roofed and built from blue engineering brick. It was too small to fit new arrivals Maddy and Joe and needed a lot of work. They wanted to leave their socialising lifestyle behind and take on a big practical project, so it fitted the bill. Trees surround the house – not only cherry, but also crab apple, medlar, walnut and a swamp cyprus. The river borders the house on two sides – Eyot comes from the Anglo-Saxon for island – making the location ideal.

But the river can be cruel as well as kind when you live on a flood plain. They moved in during one of the worst floods the area had seen for 100 years. Removal men struggled to deliver their furniture in wellingtons. At one point they had to be rescued in a rowing boat. Amazingly they were not put off – and their bravery has been rewarded with a stunning home.

The couple are the first to admit they aren't self-build experts by any means, and can't heap ___



this picture The dining area flows through to the balcony and overlooks the double-height living area

left Two fully-glazed walls in this first floor living space allow views out over the River Loddon



'NEVER LIVE BY WATER,' ADVISES JANE. 'IT'S A CURSE. YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH IT AND THEN YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO LIVE NEAR IT, WHICH BECOMES REALLY EXPENSIVE!'

HOME

House #2

Attwood house



Case Study Houses

Architect John Pardey took his inspiration from the Case Study Houses designed and built in post-war California. John Entenza, champion of Modernism and editor of avant-garde magazine *Arts & Architecture*, was the driving force behind the programme, inviting up-and-coming architects like Charles and Ray Eames and Pierre Koenig to design prototypes for homes of the future. The houses were groundbreaking in their use of industrial materials and construction systems. The results now look quite familiar - steel and wood-framed homes with large glazed expanses. But this is because the Case Study Houses have inspired and informed so many architects, including John. 'The appeal is a very open form of living in touch with the landscape,' he explains. 'Cherry Eyot was very much in that tradition already, and with the river and the views and the sun just begging to be made use of - the site made the design decision for me.'



enough praise on their architect, John Pardey. 'It seemed like fate,' Jane explains. She'd ripped an article on one of his houses from a magazine, and her mother had sent them another article. 'I bought a book of top 100 young British architects and there he was again,' David says. 'We met him and knew. When you're making a film you rely a lot on gut instinct, and we had that about John.'

John introduced the couple to Case Study Houses, built in the Sixties in Los Angeles, and they used those aesthetics as the basis for the new designs. The ugly Seventies extension would be removed, and the house comprehensively stripped down and rebuilt so that modern insulation and vapour barriers could bring it up to building regulation standards. Two extra wings would provide more floorspace and transform the look of the house.

The original square brick building remains the central hub. Now reconfigured, it contains the only ground floor area of the house, the double-height living room. Off the hall, at first floor level, a wing clad in western red cedar houses the bedrooms and bathrooms. Opposite this 'sleeping' wing, the glazed 'living' wing stretches off from the kitchen towards the river, optimising the best views. These wings are supported on slender steel columns

resting on sunken concrete supports that beef up the load-bearing potential of the soft ground.

The couple say they got the best out of the house by giving John a clear brief, then standing back and giving him free reign. 'You don't get the best out of people by over-managing,' Jane says. 'You cast an actor for what they bring to the role, instead of forever telling them how to say their lines.'

David and Jane loved John's design, but the local planners were less keen. Despite the fact the site is 2.5 acres, they thought the slight increase in the footprint of the house was 'creeping urbanisation'. Luckily their judgement was overturned at appeal.

This was the first of many delays. 'It would have made a terrible episode of *Grand Designs* - they'd come back from an ad-break and say "Still, Jane and David have no house,"' David says, mimicking the TV voiceover. The build period was especially stressful for Jane. David was away filming, so she had to cope with a full-time job, new-born twins and supervising the project.

'Our first builders just weren't up to the job,' she says. 'The work they did was good, but they weren't properly supervised. Then they retracted their first quote and asked to be paid weekly, which we wouldn't agree to.' ___

below David wanted orange units in the kitchen, but Jane won the battle to have pink **centre** The key feature in the living space is this central fireplace, a signature design by architect John Pardey **far left** Jane and David with the twins



HOME

House #2


Attwood house

The crunch point came when David was filming in the middle of the North Sea, when the builders threatened to walk. The house was almost totally demolished, and Jane was commuting to London from a Barratt home in Twyford. 'I couldn't bear feeling out of control, but we were,' Jane says. 'Only driving fury and strength of personality pulled the builders back to negotiate.' When David returned, they all sat down for a meeting. 'Jane was amazing,' David says. 'I was really terrified of her until I remembered we were on the same side.'

The couple negotiated a settlement and the firm completed work up until the basic structure was finished. But they realised they needed someone on site permanently. Luckily, they found the answer a few doors down the road. Neighbour and new friend Clive became their project manager, bringing in trusted local labour to finish the job. 'Clive put the romance back into the build for us,' Jane says.

In the summer of 2004, the family could finally move in. 'The house suits us perfectly,' David says. 'It's simple and functional - John understood that we didn't want anything pointlessly showy.'

The house manages to be simultaneously chic and child-friendly. The open-plan layout suits the modernist feel, but also creates an interconnecting



this picture Joe and Maddy play with their grandmother in the deck area below the house - it's a shaded, floorproof space, which uses waterproof yacht lighting

top right Slatted blinds control light into Joe's bedroom

bottom right The main bedroom has a bold but simple scheme

maze which the twins can tear around on rainy days. The sunken, double height living room is overlooked by the kitchen, meaning the adults can cook or relax while keeping a detached but watchful eye as Joe and Maddy play.

Colours are a mixture of subdued and bold. The bedrooms and living rooms are simple and white, but the dining room is a striking slate grey colour. This is mirrored in the next-door kitchen, where the grey is twinned with bright pink. The couple spent on permanent fixtures like Gaggenau appliances and a Welsh slate worktop, but they bought their units from MFI. 'That way, we can replace them in five years and it won't matter too much,' David says.

The couple are disarmingly modest. 'We didn't think we were doing anything special,' David says. However, few would agree with that verdict. The judges of the *Grand Designs Magazine Awards* certainly didn't – they awarded Cherry Eyot the prize for best remodelled house earlier this year. 'We were completely stunned, but absolutely thrilled,' Jane says. The couple may be used to working behind the scenes in their day jobs, but for building this beautiful home they deserve to step into the limelight and take a bow. ★



SUPPLIERS

Architect

John Pardey Architects
(01590 626 465;
johnpardeyarchitects.com)

Project manager

Clive Hicks
(07756 132 826)

Structural engineers

Barton Engineers
(020 7631 0348;
bartonengineers.co.uk)

Steelwork

Thomas Hirst & Son
(01252 545 081)

Windows

Kindlelight
(01462 684 011; kindlelight.com)

Single ply roofing

Sika Trocal
(01707 394 444; sika.co.uk)

Stone worktops

Kirkstone
(01539 433 296; kirkstone.com)

Oven and hob

Gaggenau
(0870 840 2003; gaggenau.com)

Bathroom ware

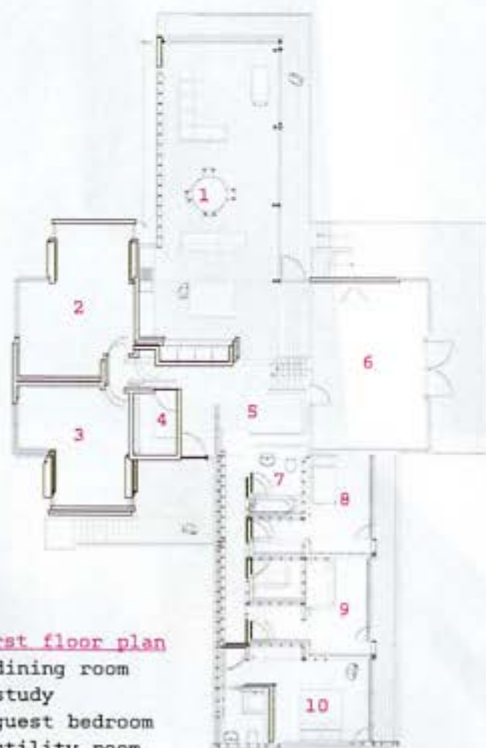
Armitage Shanks
(01543 490 253;
armitage-shanks.co.uk)

Aston Matthews

(020 7226 7220;
astonmatthews.co.uk)

Bette

(01789 262 262; bette.de)



first floor plan

- 1 dining room
- 2 study
- 3 guest bedroom
- 4 utility room
- 5 entrance hall
- 6 living room
- 7 bathroom
- 8 kid's bedroom
- 9 kid's bedroom
- 10 main bedroom

