

## THE HORSMAN FILE

**NAMES** Howard & Denise Horsman  
**OCCUPATIONS** Retired  
**LOCATION** Devon  
**TYPE OF BUILD** Renovation & extension  
**STYLE** Georgian with contemporary addition  
**CONSTRUCTION METHOD** Brick & block extension  
**PROPERTY SIZE** 3.75 acres  
**LAND COST** £800,000  
**BOUGHT** 2013  
**HOUSE SIZE** 420m<sup>2</sup> (incl. 100m<sup>2</sup> extension)  
**PROJECT COST** £650,000  
**PROJECT COST PER M<sup>2</sup>** £1,548  
**TOTAL COST** £1,450,000  
**BUILDING WORK COMMENCED** February 2014  
**BUILDING WORK TOOK** 15 months (main construction work)  
**CURRENT VALUE** £1,500,000

When Howard Horsman retired from his job overseas in the oil industry, he and Denise (his wife) had the pick of the country in choosing where to live. "We had a home in Surrey, but we weren't tied to this area or anywhere else," he says. "Primarily we wanted a large dwelling with uninterrupted views." The move was to be a new beginning for the Horsmans, who in many ways were putting down roots after years of living in a mix of rented and owned properties. Now that they had time on their hands, they were keen to find a project that they could both sink their teeth into.

As they had no limitations on where they might start this new chapter, the couple spent a year on the hunt for the perfect abode, considering houses across the country. They eventually earmarked 10 dwellings to view in Devon. "We drove down and saw this one first," says Howard. "The views across the open countryside towards Dartmoor were fantastic and the building was secluded, yet close to the town. It had masses of potential, so we put in an offer a couple of days later and it was accepted as we drove back to Surrey."

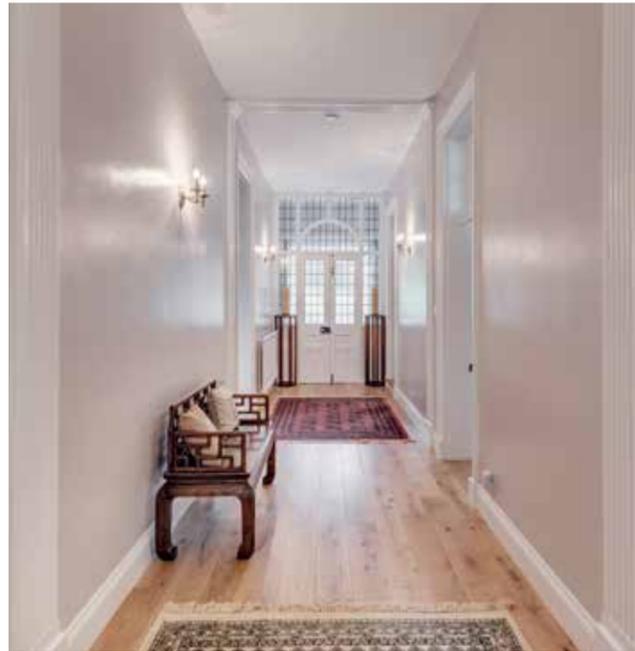
The Georgian property was built in 1842 and stands within a stunning 3.75 acres of garden and woodland. However, it was in a poor state, with single glazing, no insulation and old electrics and plumbing.

# New beginnings

Howard and Denise Horsman relished the challenge of renovating and extending their Georgian house in Devon after years of living abroad

WORDS JANE CRITTENDEN PHOTOS RICHARD DOWNER





The surroundings were completely overgrown and the second floor was virtually derelict, with asbestos internal walls, no carpets and spaces open to the rafters – which delighted the Horsmans. “The rooms have large proportions, with ceilings over 3m high,” he says. “We knew we could make the house our home, but we didn’t realise quite how much ripping apart we’d have to do along the way.”

### Clear vision

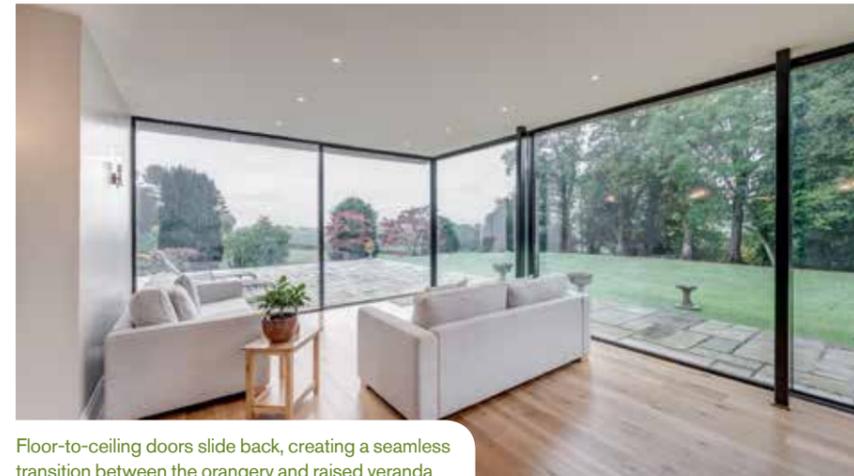
Howard and Denise moved into the property in March 2013 and started the design process straight away. The experience of residing in a variety of dwellings over the years helped them to pin down the changes they wanted to make. Opening up the kitchen, improving the living areas and adding ensembles to all the bedrooms were on the list, as was a wraparound terrace and a new orangery that would maximise daylight and the stunning views.

The couple sought out a local designer to draw up plans for the new extension. An online search highlighted Van Ellen + Sheryn Architects and soon the couple were chatting to the firm’s team about their plans. “The company have worked on some interesting projects and we got a good feeling about them,” says Howard. “We briefed architect David Glasscock to remodel our home and design a modern addition with natural light and a connection to outside.”

The team removed a second staircase and doubled the size of the kitchen. The cupboards are a bespoke design from Sparkworld and the slate floor is from Mandarin Stone



The Horsmans retained period features where they could, including the cornices and fireplaces



Floor-to-ceiling doors slide back, creating a seamless transition between the orangery and raised veranda



*“We sometimes had 15 people working in the house and they were all friendly and extremely knowledgeable”*

David came back with drawings based around a monolithic masonry extension with hints of Modernist design. Another of the firm’s architects, Eilir Sheryn, suggested handmade Dutch bricks – inspired by the Victorian garden wall. The narrow red units define the structure and the scale is appropriately balanced with the Georgian house. “This was a very good idea,” says Howard. “The stock is much sleeker and thinner than British bricks and is in complete contrast to the original architecture; we’re really pleased.”

The extension has added 100m<sup>2</sup> of extra space, which stretches to the rear and side of the dwelling. Inside, the layout is cleverly divided into an orangery on one side and a separate services area for a garden room, tool storage, utility, shower room and garage.

The Horsmans weren’t prescriptive with their project budget, but imagined (having done no actual number crunching) the cost might be around £500,000. So when the outline estimate came back around £850,000 (including fees), the couple were shocked. David suggested they consult with a quantity surveyor (QS) for a detailed breakdown, which Howard says was the best £1,000 he spent.

“Our QS laid out the figures in finite detail. This gave me a much better understanding of the costs and, crucially, I could see where to save money,” says Howard. “As Eilir explained, it was all down to the size of the house. For example, rooms with high ceilings need more plastering; even if we bought more affordable tiles for £30 per m<sup>2</sup> for the bathrooms, we still needed around 150m<sup>2</sup>.”

### Close call

The Horsmans’ plans were submitted in October 2013 and by December they had planning approval. However, first they had to do a bat survey to see if the creatures were roosting in the eaves of any of the buildings. This needed to be carried out in the active season between May and September and time was not on their side. “Fortunately we found out about this in September, so we still had a small window for an ecologist to come and carry out the work,” says Howard. The results were sent to Natural England, who advised that it would be 45 days before the outcome would be known.

The time came and went, and then the company asked for more information because Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats were discovered in the eaves of the old garage. After a long series of phone calls, Howard had a response, and agreed to build a void above the tool storage room to give the creatures continued access. “The

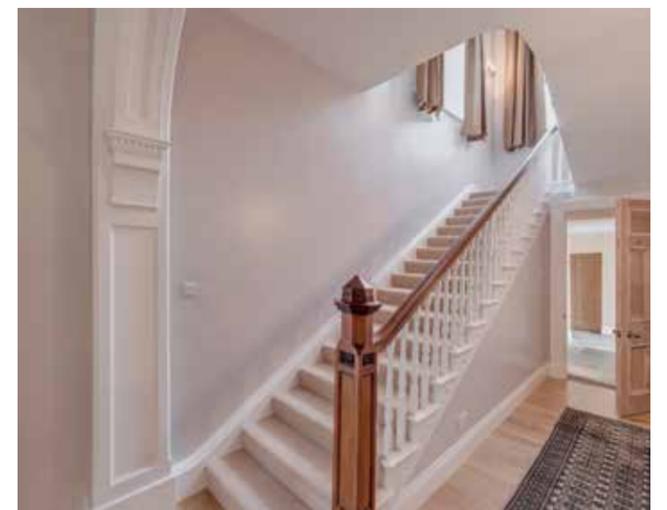
process was just bureaucracy, but it could’ve delayed us from starting our project,” says Howard. “We only ended up getting the decision the day before the builders started in February 2014.”

While they were waiting for the survey results, Howard used this time to start the tender process, choosing to package off the garage and services area for the initial works. “I was wary about committing our whole project to a builder without seeing how they operated first,” says Howard. “I wanted to project manage and needed to establish a good relationship with the trades, so this time provided a chance for us both to get to know each other.”

The Horsmans selected Kesterbrooke Construction and they began work in February 2014. “The company’s director, Graham Hannaford came highly recommended by Eilir as they’d built his own house,” says Howard. “The firm did a good job of the garage, so we asked them to take on the renovation.”

### Life on site

Howard and Denise decided to sleep away from the dust and move into a caravan pitched in the garden. They kept one room going in the property, with a TV and woodburner, and managed to carry on using the kitchen. They covered up their belongings and stored everything in three rooms, moving bits around when necessary.

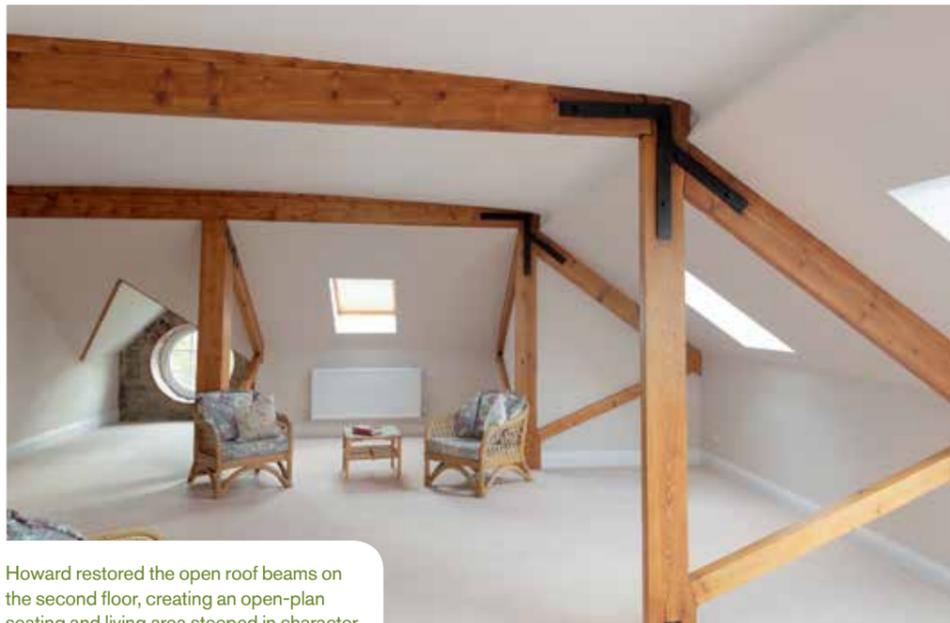


**WE LEARNED...**

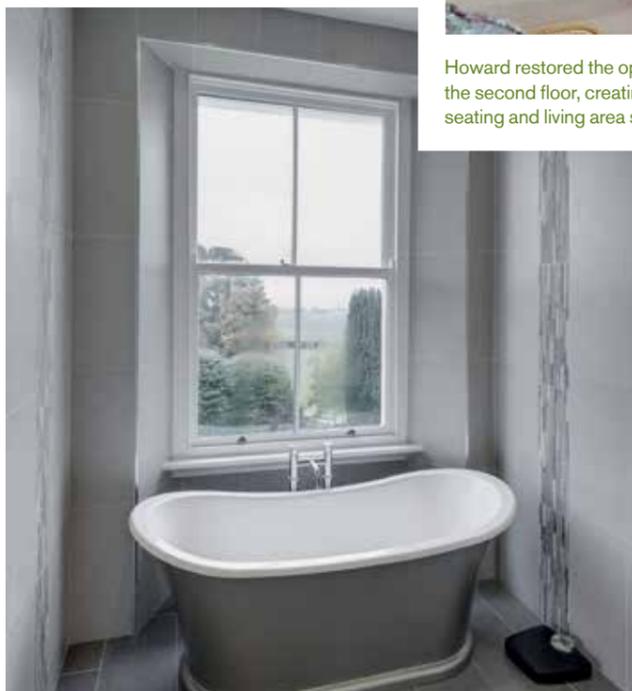
**HAVING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP** with the builder and his contractors was a key aspect to the project's success.

**SPENDING LESS MONEY ON DETAILED DRAWINGS** might have saved us some pennies in the long run; we had such skilled and knowledgeable trades and craftsmen who probably didn't need the level of information we provided.

**A QUANTITY SURVEYOR** priced our project and this was invaluable. The detail helps you understand the costs and allows you to see where you can save.



Howard restored the open roof beams on the second floor, creating an open-plan seating and living area steeped in character

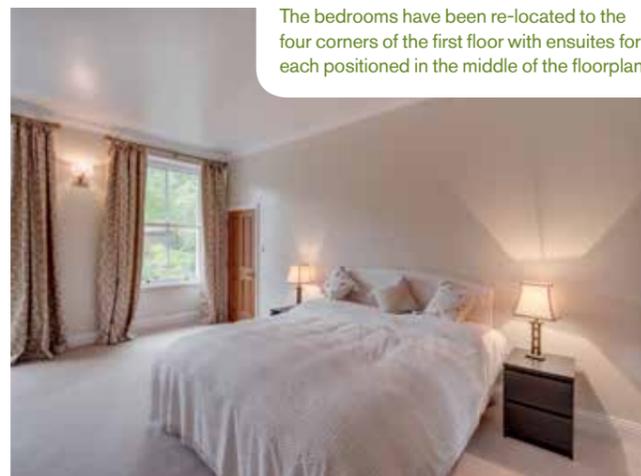


the labouring for the build, which saved a lot over the 15 months," adds Howard. "We also decorated the entire house ourselves to save some more money, which took a year; I almost lost count of how many litres of paint I bought."

**Great experience**

The project progressed with few problems, but took longer than the Horsmans expected. They thought the property would be finished by Christmas 2014; however, the builders didn't leave until the following Easter. "This was largely down to the sheer size of the building" says Howard. "We didn't expect 90% of the walls to need re-plastering, for instance. Graham offered to bring in more labour, but we declined because we had a close-knit team and weren't under pressure to finish by a certain date."

Once the builders had gone, Howard and Denise took on the gargantuan task of decorating and in summer 2016 their new home was complete. They are thoroughly satisfied with the results and found the venture a hugely enjoyable experience. "We sometimes had 15 people working in the house and they were all friendly and extremely knowledgeable," says Howard. "We had a good relationship with them all; they became like family. The project was a complete contrast to what I used to do as a job and it kept us fit and healthy – we'd love to repeat the experience again one day."



The bedrooms have been re-located to the four corners of the first floor with ensuites for each positioned in the middle of the floorplan

**closer look**

**Sliding doors...**

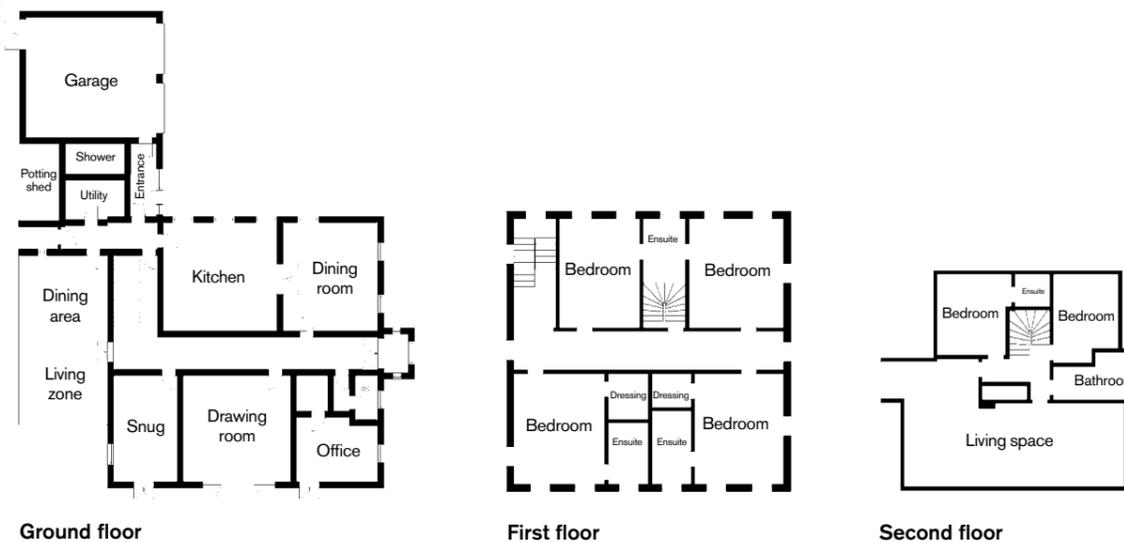
A key goal for the extension was to enable views out across the surrounding landscape, so the use of expansive glazing was crucial to the design's success. The couple chose to include wide sliding doors that open back from the corner to fully expose the edge of the room to the outside. While bifolds are a popular addition to many extension projects, sliders with large glazing spans offer more of an uninterrupted view from inside when shut. They also provide more flexibility when it comes to how wide you want them to be open at any given point.



Exposed corner



**Floor plans**



House plans re-created using Build It 3D Home Designer software. [www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware](http://www.buildit.co.uk/3dsoftware)



**TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN**

Elements	Cost m <sup>2</sup>	Cost %	Total cost
Fees	£131	8%	£55,000
Main contractor package (incl. demolition, construction & materials)	£1,107	72%	£465,000
Glazing	£143	9%	£60,000
Electrics	£60	4%	£25,000
Plumbing & heating	£107	7%	£45,000
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>£650,000</b>

**Useful contacts**

ARCHITECTS **Van Ellen + Sheryn Architects** 01364 653503 [www.vanellenshern.com](http://www.vanellenshern.com) BUILDING CONTRACTOR **Kesterbrooke Construction** 01364 643562 [www.kesterbrookconstruction.co.uk](http://www.kesterbrookconstruction.co.uk) WINDOWS **Heritage Windows** 07581055868 EXTERNAL RENDER **Chris Frediani** 07788180250 ELECTRICS **MG Electrical** 07794258167 PLUMBING **Mike Ruth Plumbing** 07971681612 CARPENTER **Steve Lintern** 07813320114 KITCHEN **Sparkworld** 01626 834666 [www.sparkworld.co.uk](http://www.sparkworld.co.uk) BATHROOMS **Bathstore** 0330 053 5661 [www.bathstore.com](http://www.bathstore.com) TILES **Mandarin Stone** 01600 715444 [www.mandarinstone.com](http://www.mandarinstone.com) ORIGINAL STYLE 01392 473004 [www.originalstyle.com](http://www.originalstyle.com) TILER **Rob Carpenter** 07748867136