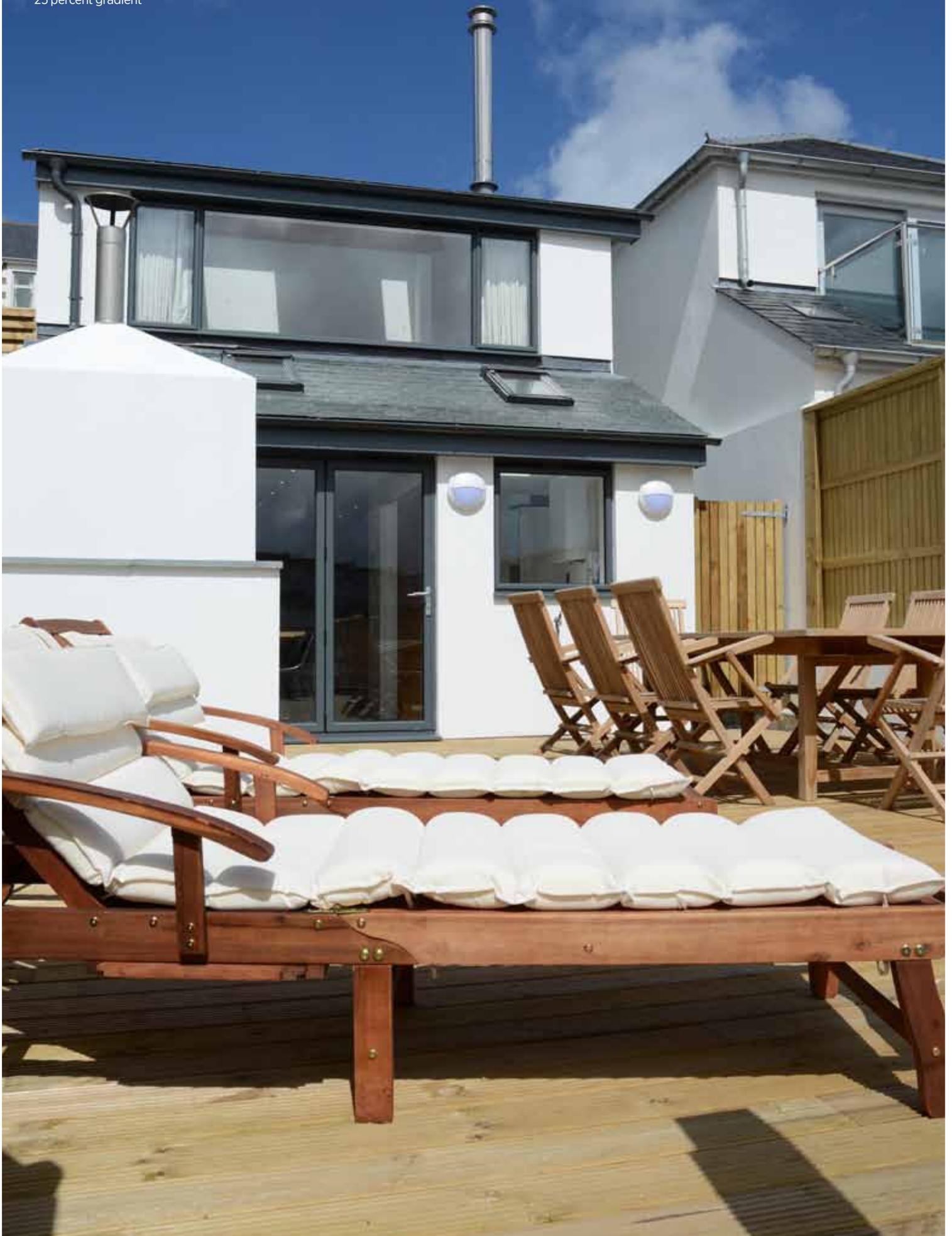


Trelas in St Ives has been created as a stepped three storey house in a narrow sloping plot - a road running parallel to the house boasts a 25 percent gradient



# STAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN

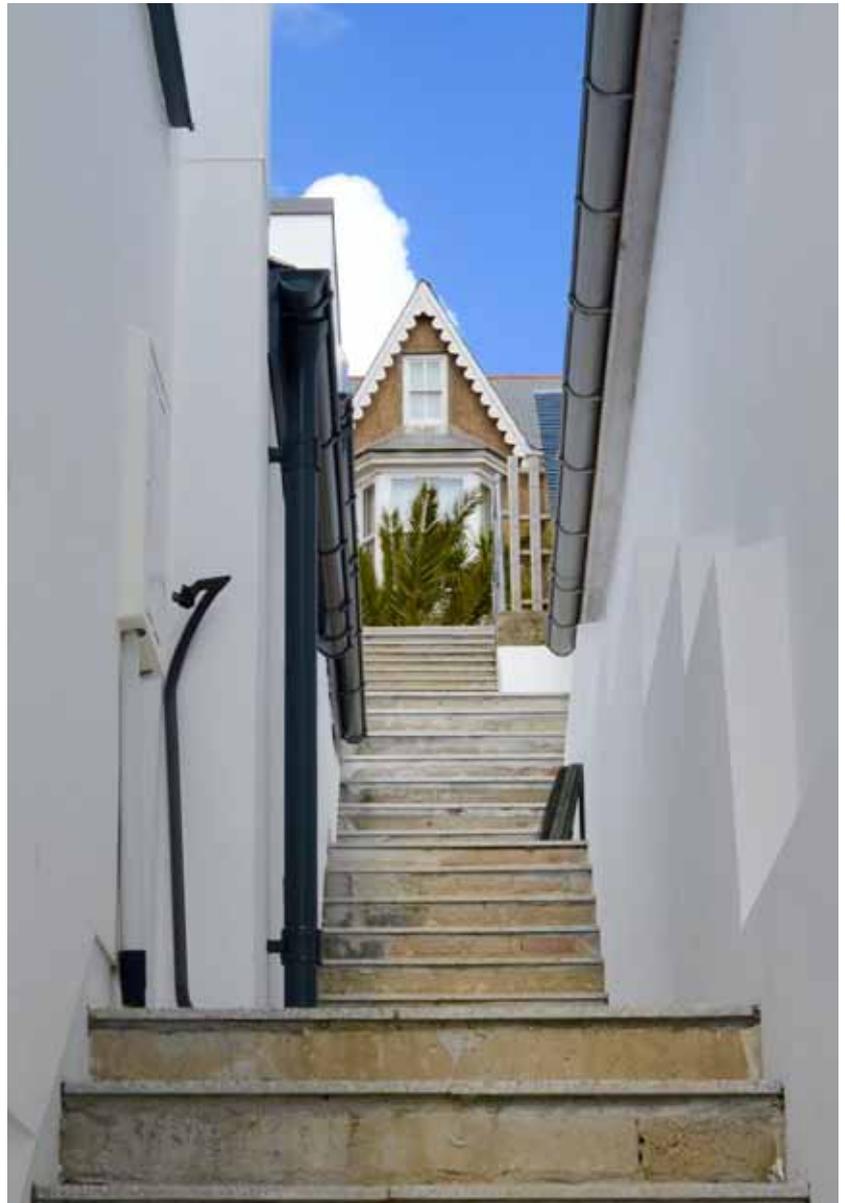
*Bathed in incredible natural light St Ives provides every room with a view - whether the golden stretches of sand, twinkling ocean or its ancient harbour - and its latest addition Trelas house makes the most of it all*

TUCKED away down one of the many old streets of St Ives harbour sits a gravel parking spot and a white painted curved wall with the word Trelas (meaning homestead) set next to a mysterious narrow stairway.

Follow the steps down and you come to the (future) home of Sara and Stuart Green and their five children: Alice, Tom, Joe, Sam and Jack. The family had always dreamed of leaving the fast-paced city life and moving down to where Sara's uncle had been evacuated during the war. 'He lived in Chy an Chy in St Ives harbour and always spoke fondly of it,' says Stuart. Coming from a family with brothers in construction, building his own home was Stuart's long term aim – but they admit this was all just a dream. But in 2012, Sara was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and the family rented a house in St Ives close to the town centre, beaches and the medical centre whilst she was undergoing chemotherapy. Looking out of the rear windows of the house Stuart spotted a plot of land with a 'for sale' sign. 'Emotions were running high and we knew we had to grab what life had to offer,' remembers Stuart. 'Some enquiries later, we discovered the plot already had planning permission and was waiting patiently for a buyer.'

Fast forward four years and they have created Trelas – freshly finished in April this year - which has made great use of the legendarily awkward spaces of St Ives which means houses rarely sit on level ground. Although currently living in Sheffield the aim is to move to Cornwall and live at the house full-time, but until then they are making their future home pay by renting it as a holiday home in what remains one of Cornwall's favourite tourist towns.

By necessity the décor is simple and relatively neutral - but the design of the house is incredibly clever: set across three storeys of varying sizes to anchor it to the natural sloping landscape (a nearby road that runs parallel to the site indi- ▶



The house is hidden down a stepped alleyway in St Ives

PHOTOGRAPHY: EWEN MACDONALD

***'St Ives is famed for its fabulous light thanks to its peninsula position which allows light to reflect from the ocean that surrounds it and Trelas owners have made the most of the natural light.'***

cates a 25 per cent gradient). When the Green family finally bought the land, the plot was a long, thin strip on a very steep south-facing slope, overlooking the Stennack valley. 'We knew from the outset that this would require an ingenious design to make the most of the space available whilst working within challenging constraints due to covenants that restrict the height of any structure on the land,' says Stuart. 'We visualised a wonderful family home, buried into the hillside, with spectacular views across St Ives Bay, but couldn't be sure that this was feasible.'

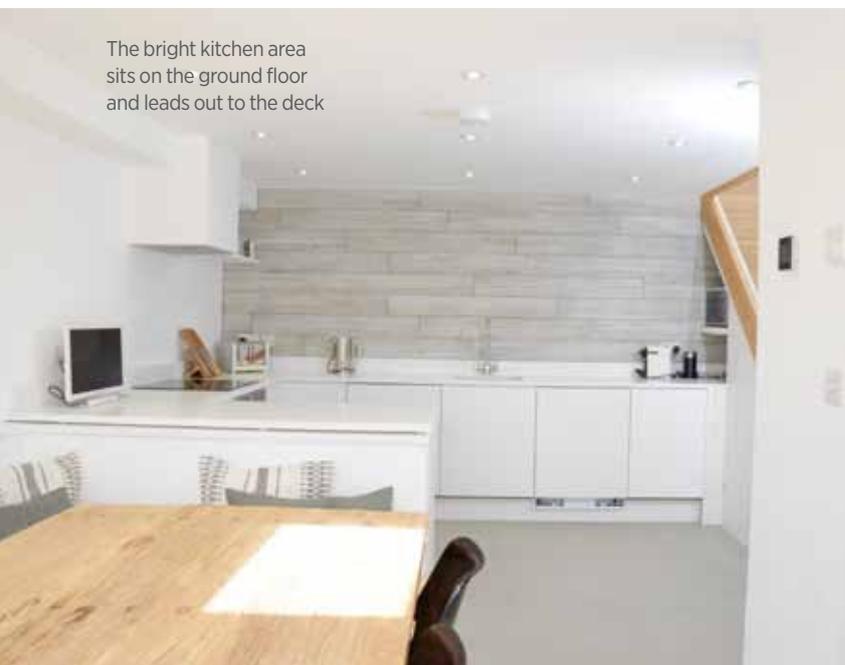
The family met with Chris Strike of St Ives-based RA Design with a wish list including four double bedrooms, two with en suites, parking for two cars and an outdoor living area - all constrained by height restrictions on the planning permission. 'And all on a modest budget - it was a big ask!' admits Stuart. So what about the house? 'Chris very cleverly came up with a design featuring sweeping curves, high ceilings and light wells that spill daylight into all corners of the living space,' says Stuart. Building work began early in 2015 by builders VA Construction, a small company based in Marazion who took up the challenge - which included the discovery of a badger set close to the site (which brought construction to a halt, required a survey by environmental experts but turned out to be abandoned) and landslides. Such was the interest in the project Stuart set up a website (trelas.co.uk) with regular updates and photos.

The end result? Parking is level with a green roof section that creates a pleasing, nature-friendly softening of the building when viewed from the top of the site, and we enter the house in a light-filled atrium on the top floor where a door leads to the first of two master bedrooms with an en suite. Simply and classically furnished the bedroom features textiles and carefully chosen pieces of

The main living room is the family's favourite space and is dominated by a charcoal grey modular corner sofa and picture window offering panoramic views of the famous harbour



The bright kitchen area sits on the ground floor and leads out to the deck



furniture and lighting.

Throughout the house there are engineered oak floors, while the living room on the second floor boasts an almost room-width picture window taking in a panoramic sweep of the town of St Ives from the water lapping into St Ives Bay to the top of the town. A charcoal grey corner modular sofa more than accommodates the large social gatherings a house like this will attract, while a modern fire, flatscreen TV and thick woollen rug (smaller ones of which can be found in the master bedrooms) provide home comforts during the darker winter months.

The living room - the family's favourite room - features a sloping ceiling rising to double height, with four Velux windows set into the beamed ceiling all with internal blinds. 'As the building



The kitchen and dining area is on the ground floor and features a stunning old wood dining table looking out of bi-fold doors onto the south-facing deck.



The first floor is the largest and features three bedrooms, a family bathroom and living area as well as space for books.



The front door opens onto the second floor which houses the first of two en suite master bedrooms

took shape during construction we wanted to keep an open plan feel and we're really pleased we did that,' says Stuart. 'The lounge has the height and brightness of an art gallery with amazing windows and a fabulous view while at the same time having the potential, on winter nights, to be cosy with surround sound home cinema, wood-burning stove and snuggly sofas. Quirky reclaimed timber tables and stylish pendant lights add a golden glow to a fabulous space. We really love it.'

Here sitting against the modern flooring is a stunning coffee table and bench created from old reclaimed wood - a recurring theme through the house - and evidence that its owners were looking for a contrasting sense of character amongst the white walled modernity. The result is a far from stark home that is stylish and comfortable. The sitting room is also home to a large framed abstract artwork of the sea - sitting opposite the picture window which offers a very different view of the same thing. A long light-filled hallway connects the top of the houses and is broken up by light-up bookshelves that are built into the stairs and hold a plentiful supply of books and DVDs for guests when the house is used as a holiday let.

The first floor features the second master bedroom and two further bedrooms all making clever use of the natural light with Velux windows. The master bedroom here has a partial double height ceiling giving access to a roof light and taking advantage of the natural light from the frosted glass window on the light-filled upper floor. Each room has touchpad controls for the Velux windows allowing you to control their opening and internal blinds from any room. There are walk-in showers in the en suite bathrooms while



**above** The second master bedroom sits on the first floor and has a partial double height ceiling to let in natural light from the floor above.

**right** The family bathroom is simple and functional.

the family bathroom on the middle floor boasts a tub.

On the ground floor the kitchen provides access to a sun deck. The tactile dining table created from reclaimed wood mirrors the coffee table upstairs. Its be-cushioned fitted bench offers a perfect match.

A simple colour scheme throughout ties the three floors together with white walls oak floors and varying tones of grey from the black chairs of the kitchen and charcoal sofa and cushions, grey feature walls in the bedrooms through to the



light grey sheepskin rugs in the bedrooms, wool throws on the bed to the silver-grey tiling floors of the family bathroom and around the kitchen.

St Ives is famed for its fabulous light thanks to its peninsula position which allows light to reflect from the ocean that surrounds it and making the most of the natural light is clearly a major factor, for the design - but there is also attention to detail shown in the lighting. Bedrooms feature long drop pendants, the shades made from a range of industrial materials including moulded concrete.

'Our daughter Alice, who has a great eye for interior design, created a Pinterest board on the internet using photos to illustrate the look and feel that we wanted. We then worked with Caroline and Louise at Mint House Interiors who took Alice's ideas and came up with an interior design and décor for the whole house. We are thrilled with the result.'

Carefully chosen artworks adorn the white pristine walls which offer a mere hint to the location of the house bringing attention to the seaside position of the house with a whisper rather than the shout of blue stripes and a beach huts motif. Bedrooms have storage hidden behind handle-free near invisible built in wardrobes and pieces of old wood furniture and textiles including wool throws and sheepskin rugs are used to bring warmth to the rooms.

The owners of this awkward space, which anywhere else in the country may have struggled to find a buyer has made the most of a tight space and found room for that all important outside area which is accessed via patio doors in the kitchen. You can also access the back door in the utility room down further steps which end at a wooden gate opening on to the south-facing sun deck. Despite the extreme gradient of the ground, the landscapers cleverly used wire cages filled with local granite to retain earth while providing a natural look and feel. A grander entrance to the generously sized decked area is offered by the full wall sized patio doors which can be opened out



**above** Grey is the signature colour throughout the house with furniture, tiling, textiles and this feature wall on one of the smaller bedrooms.

**below** Bedroom four features velux windows which have touch controls.

onto the sun deck which boasts an outdoor kitchen complete with wood-fired pizza oven which Stuart describes as their one indulgence. 'Our family has a long tradition of homemade pizzas every Sunday and there is really nothing like cooking with an open fire and dining *al fresco*,' he adds. Close to the glass panelling, a gate leads down to the second storey garden where an outdoor shower is perfect for washing away the day's sand next to two handy storage areas for your surfboards. Here there is also a secret entrance to the home from an alleyway that leads straight to St Ives harbour. Handy when lugging your long board home after a day's hard surf.

Heading back outside to the car port, it is only by looking at the narrow strip of steeply sloping land on the right which houses a small wooden summer house and deck, that you get a sense of the architectural imagination and engineering feat that turned this slender and steep piece of land into a four bedroom luxury home.

'Despite stresses along the way, Trelas is our beautiful home in magical St Ives, a place we hope to enjoy with our family for many years to come,' adds Stuart. ♦

*Trelas is available to rent through Cornish Gems. Find out more at [cornishgems.com](http://cornishgems.com)*

