

HOLDING COURT

Martin and Carol Druce took a derelict outhouse where squash was once played and gave it a striking new look, both inside and out

WORDS JULIET BAWDEN PHOTOGRAPHY JOHNNY BOUCHIER





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DECORATING TIP
'Keep it simple – we painted the entire house in just one shade, so the rooms flow seamlessly together'

1 KITCHEN Thyme for Kitchens (01483 203737) designed the cabinetry, and installed the stainless-steel Smeg (0870 990 9907) range cooker and hood. At the breakfast bar are stools bought from Heal's (020 7636 1666)
2 DINING AREA A Habitat (0844 499 1111) dining suite sits comfortably in this huge open-plan space
3 & 4 SITTING ROOM Carol made the coffee table by painting two wooden Ikea (0845 358 3364) laundry baskets and placing a piece of glass on top. SofaSofa (01495 244226) sells similar seating. Open to the bedroom above, the atrium lets in plenty of natural sunlight



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MEET THE OWNERS



Martin and Carol Druce, who are both retired, and their children Nick (shown left) and Sarah
PREVIOUS HOMES 'After emigrating from north London to South Africa, we built a house in Johannesburg,' says Martin. 'We then did the same

when we moved to this part of Surrey.'
CURRENT PROPERTY Converted squash court in Surrey, built in 1920
ROOMS Open-plan sitting/dining room/kitchen, garden room, utility room, cloakroom, two bedrooms, bathroom
PURCHASED 1985

As soon as you turn down the pretty drive that leads to Martin and Carol Druce's Surrey home, you are aware of being somewhere special. Flanked by apple trees and a neat row of hedges, the path twists round until a converted squash court comes into view, with a façade reminiscent of the weatherboarded homes on America's east coast.
 The property dates back to the 1920s, when the middle classes developed a passion for squash, and many country residents had purpose-built courts built in their grounds. This outbuilding came as part of a larger residence that the Druces bought in 1985. But as the main house needed a radical overhaul when the couple first arrived here, the squash court was left as it was.
 Before long, the outhouse became a playground for the couple's children Nick and Sarah and their young friends. 'We had some amazing parties here,'

Nick remembers. For many years the family also used the building to hold charity fêtes and jumble sales. 'By the late 1990s, a tree had grown through the structure, so we knew that if we wanted to rescue the place, we had to do it soon,' says Martin.
 Both Martin and Carol were keen to reuse as many materials as they could, partly to save money but also for aesthetic reasons. So they started with the roof, carefully removing its cladding of Welsh slate tiles. These were later put back, and any broken ones were substituted with near-identical examples from a reclamation yard.
 As one of the benefits of the squash court was its impressive height, the couple took full advantage. 'When we decided to convert this place for domestic use, we opted to add a second level,' recalls Martin. 'Then, rather than split each floor into lots of small rooms, we kept them both open-plan. This, ►



1 MASTER BEDROOM

A roomy double bed – try John Lewis (08456 049049) for similar – is dressed with throws from Habitat (0844 499 1111). The ceiling joists are stained with Trip-Trap lyes and oils from Eva Johnson (01638 731362). Wilton Carpets (01722 742733) offers a large selection of neutral floorcoverings

2 BATHROOM Wilky Bathroom Centre (01483 537131) supplied the Jacuzzi, while Shutterly Fabulous (0845 644 2873) is a good source of plantation shutters

BEST BUY 'Because we bought our Jacuzzi bath on the last day of the Ideal Home Exhibition, we got it at a bargain price'

combined with multiple skylights, would give the place a bright, modern feel.'

The property's most spectacular feature, the glass atrium in the sitting room, also functions as an oversized coffee table in the bedroom above. 'When we put in the new floor upstairs, we wanted a glazed area left near the French windows,' says Martin. 'But this failed to meet planning requirements, so we decided on this table option instead, which has proved a great success.'

Once the building work was complete, the walls were lined with bead-and-butt MDF boards, which again lend a New England flavour to the property, and the entire space was painted in a neutral colour. 'With so much sunshine flooding into the house, we tried out lots of options before choosing this shade,' says Carol. 'We settled on a pale cream, which contrasts beautifully with both the kitchen units and the dark hardwood windows and doors.'

Carol then filled the house with a mix of pieces brought back from South Africa and some new upholstered furniture to create a cosy bolthole, which the couple's grown-up children use when they come to stay. 'We're absolutely thrilled with the result,' Carol enthuses. 'What set out purely as a way of getting rid of a decrepit eyesore at the end of the garden has resulted in this lovely building, which makes the perfect secluded retreat.' **BH**



INSPIRED BUYS

A white butler's tray next to the Druces' Jacuzzi is a pretty place to store their bathroom accessories. These designs are just as attractive



▲ Buttermilk tray and folding stand, £176, Oka (0844 815 7380, okadirect.com)



▲ Dewchurch Butler's table, £98, Gardeniron (0800 032 9850, gardeniron.co.uk)



▲ Butler's tray in matt cream, £38.95, Melody Maison (01302 863666, melodymaison.co.uk)