



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

What better reason to build a retreat on the Isle of Wight than a widescreen view of the Solent?

WRT Dominic Bradbury PHOTOGRAPHS Rachael Smith



Home!



The dining area, with Heal's table and chairs by Hans Wegner and Fritz Hansen. Opposite, from top: the exterior; Amy and James O'Callaghan

The kitchen, with Big Kitchen Company island and units and Caesarstone worktops. Below: the courtyard garden



The framed panorama of the Solent has to be the greatest prize at James and Amy O'Callaghan's home. With the constant traffic of ships, sailing boats and ferries, it's a mesmerising vista. No wonder the O'Callaghans and their three children feel as though they are on a permanent holiday when spending time at "Island Rest".

"The idea of getting on a ferry and going to an island never fails to delight me," says James. "It's so cathartic in the way that you leave everything behind you. We still get excited about it every time we make the trip."

Fittingly for a family with a love of sailing, the very first glimpse of the spot where the O'Callaghans would build their second home was from the water. The Isle of Wight had long been a source of curiosity, so on a sailing trip James decided to pull into the yacht club and happened to notice an overgrown garden nearby as he was coming in.

"I got off the boat, walked along the sea wall and at the edge of the boundary was this small, decrepit 'For sale' sign," says James. "I poked my head through the hedge and



Home!

...w this magical, overgrown wilderness with a
fifties bungalow at the top. It was beautiful in
own way, but felt like the party had ended
ong time ago."

With the family's main home two hours
way in Winchester, the island offered the
portunity to build a sustainable retreat and
place where their children – George, 12,
arry, 9, and Rose, 7 – could also enjoy the
edom of being by the sea.

"We wanted to do something new and
ntemporary, but it was really important that
sat well within the environment," says Amy,
ho has a background in art history. "If you
e living on the coast, people will see the
use, so it was important that we fitted in.
om the start we recognised that the hero
ature of the house would be the view, so we
anted to keep everything quite pared down
d focus on where the eye goes. We enjoy
e calmness of the house itself and the
syness that we can see out on the water."

As the founding partner of his own
uctural engineering firm, Eckersley

**'I love looking at the
water and seeing what's
going on. There's always
something to watch'**

Callaghan, which works around the world
clients such as Apple and Bulgari, James
ersaw the replacement of the old bungalow
th a new single-storey steel and timber-
med house himself. The couple asked
mpshire architect Magnus Ström to sit the
use at the top of the gentle hill on almost
e same spot as the bungalow.

Ström designed a flat-roofed building
at slots into the land and works around
ven mature oak trees. Clad in larch that
s been stained black, the house is arranged
a single level with the master bedroom
one end and the children's bedrooms plus
quest room at the other, where the house
ats out over a natural dip in the landscape.
e main living spaces are in the centre of
e house, where the open-plan seating area
s alongside the kitchen and dining zone.
por-to-ceiling glass frames the view, but
o slides away to connect with the adjoining
race. To the rear, Amy has created a more
eltered and private courtyard garden with
ining table.

"It's not an ostentatious building," says
ny, "but in terms of space for us as a family,
eels just right. We do feel so lucky. And we
n't have any objections at planning. Lots
people have told us that it's a fantastic
ce of architecture."



View of the house from
the garden. Below: one
of the bedrooms



As well as preserving the existing oak
trees, which help the house blend into its
surroundings, the family opted for rainwater
harvesting, solar panels on the roof and
an air source heat pump to reduce the
environmental impact of the new building.

Amy's favourite spots are the freshly
planted courtyard garden and the kitchen
island, where she likes to stand behind the
counter and look out at the water. James likes
the hobby room-turned-study alongside the
boathouse, close to the water's edge, which has

come into its own over the past six months.
It's an idyllic spot for working from home.

"It might well be my new favourite space,"
says James. "But I also love sitting at the
dining table looking out at the view and
seeing what's going on. Whether I'm working
or having a cup of coffee, I find myself in one
of those chairs looking at the water. It's like
having a natural widescreen cinema. There's
always something to see out there." ■

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