

Classically Inspired

David and Margie Edwards left no stone unturned in their quest to build a luxurious individual home in Cheshire

Refined Detail

The beautiful elliptical staircase (based around a steel frame) features a glorious handrail from Emanuel Whitaker. Despite its classical appearance, the home is constructed in Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF), giving an external wall value of just 0.19.





Cheshire businessman David Edwards is not a man to do things by halves. So when he and wife Margie – this was very much a team effort – decided to build their own home, they threw themselves into every aspect of the project in just the same way he would conduct himself in business. Few self-builders would not only attend HB&R Shows – (“I wore a suit. It made the suppliers I was talking to aware that they needed to take me seriously”) – but also go to the bother of trekking across Europe to the large continental building exhibitions in order to get a flavour of what was going on elsewhere and find some perspective on homebuilding in the UK. David has his views on that, too, but more of that later...

It all started with the site – a one acre backland plot on which a 1960s bungalow sat, on one of the best streets on the edge of town. For David and Margie, it faced the wrong way – looking directly at its closer-to-the-street neighbour – and so the first thing that they wanted to do was turn the whole thing around. Secondly, they wanted something bigger in terms of floor area than the existing but, owing to planning restrictions, not adding much in terms of footprint.

“We opted to dig down,” explains David, “in order to address these two issues – but as you can imagine, it was quite a challenge. We ended up getting rid of over 200 trucks of earth to

A Truly Grand Design
ICF blocks were chosen for the structure as they were good at creating curves. The stonework for the house is all wet-cast from Wolseley, chosen because it “looked just as good in the rain,” according to David

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create the space. It was absolutely the best thing to do, though. Not only did it help to get us the space we wanted, but we completed that first and used it as a bit of a base during the rest of the project.”

David and Margie worked with a couple of architects to come up with the Classically-inspired design scheme for the new home, and experienced both extremes of the design world. “The first was excellent at the concept, coming up with beautiful hand-drawn illustrations which it proved difficult to get any practical use out of,” says David. “The second was just too straight, too simple.” That notwithstanding, the result is awesome – a new Classical home with great big windows and an abundance of stonework.



Planning having been achieved, it was something altogether more prosaic that threatened the early progress on site. “Bats,” says David. “The council insisted on sending a bat officer out before the demolition of the existing bungalow and found one pipistrelle holding out. We wanted to demolish in the spring but thanks to that one bat we ended up having to wait almost a year.”

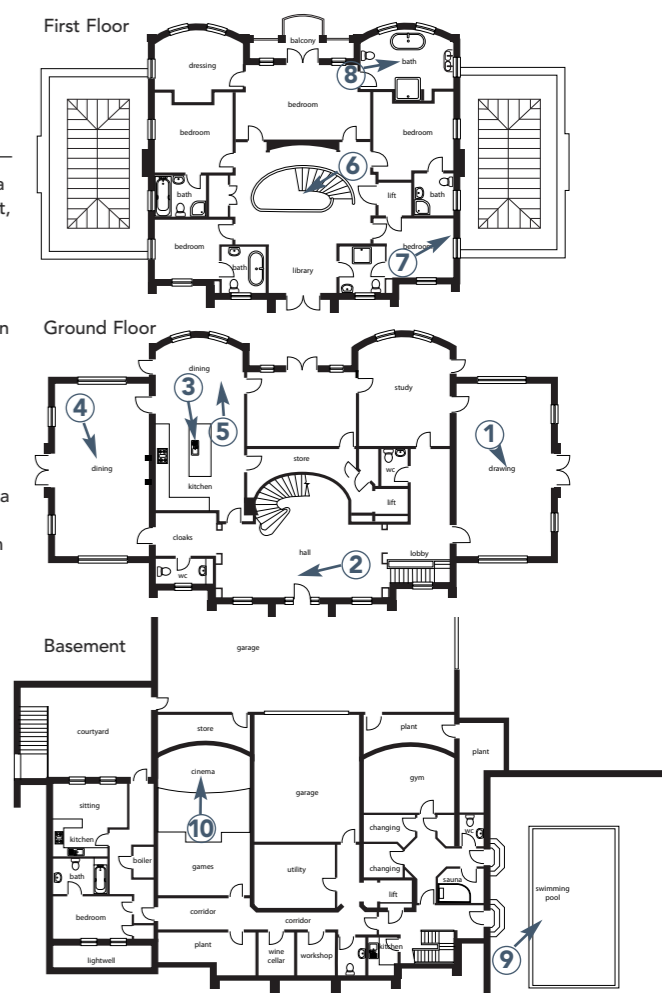
The house is quite an achievement — ambitious in scale (it comes in at a whopping 1,300m²), design and construction, as well as innovative in its use of features. Having done lots of research, David set his heart on using Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF — effectively a hollow polystyrene block filled on site with concrete) from PolarWall for the external walls due in part to its sensible construction principles but also its high insulative properties — the achieved U-value is just 0.19. The outer face of the block was then covered in a through-coloured render — meaning it wouldn’t need painting again.

Sumptuous Interiors

The interiors, designed by Margie with help from her friend Carol and designer Tim Barnetti, are exceptionally well detailed. One of the two orangeries is used as a formal sitting room. The large entrance hall features fabulous architrave and cornicing — all from Orac, a high quality polyurethane solution that is as easy to apply as polystyrene but has the look and feel of real plaster

Grand Formality

The basement features a self-contained apartment, home cinema and complete leisure suite, including changing rooms. The two orangeries flank the main house, which offers a generous entrance hall and landing. There’s informal and formal dining areas as well as two options for living rooms. Upstairs, there’s a huge master bedroom suite with dressing room and bathroom, in addition to four more bedrooms





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This house also has a lot of stonework — there are copings, quoins, surrounds, cills, heads and balustrading too numerous to mention, all of it from Wolseley. A lot of it was wet-cast (when putting the mix into the moulds the mix can either be semi-dry which speeds up the curing and therefore production process or wet-cast, which allows finer detailing and reinforcements to be added but, naturally, adds to the time and therefore the cost) and was chosen because — this being the North-West — “it looked good when rained on,” as David explains. “A lot of the stone I saw looked too drab when wet.”

The interiors are a remarkable achievement, with great proportions and an elegant style that marries contemporary and traditional perfectly. Margie took responsibility for these and made the most of sterling help from her friend Carol — “she has a great eye for style,” says Margie — and also used the services of Tim Barnetti. “Tim’s what I would call a ‘visualist’ in that he can take your own ideas and using his excellent illustrative skills, help you realise what you wanted. That makes it so much easier when you’re looking to specify the whole thing,” she explains.

Where to start? Well, the highlights include two brilliant orangeries and a sleek, modern Bontempi

A Minimal Approach in the Kitchen

The Bontempi kitchen is unashamedly sleek and modern, eschewing open hinges and handles in favour of simple lines and smart Kupperbusch appliances. There’s a great mirror splashback and an induction wok, in addition to hob

DAVID & MARGIE'S SELF-BUILD

Construction ICF
Size 1,300m²
Dates April '07 – July '08
Build Route Main Contractor
Plot Cost £2m
Build Cost £3m (£2,307/m²)
Value on Completion £10m



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kitchen that opens out onto the large patio, complete with not only induction hobs but an induction wok and a sumptuous mirrored splashback.

“Contemporary works best with kitchens,” says Margie, “it helps to keep it simple.” Taller-than-average ceiling heights help with the feeling of grandeur and the rooms are dotted with well-chosen light fittings and statement pieces. Much of the basement has been turned into a leisure area with home cinema, changing rooms and one of the largest indoor swimming

pools you could hope to see, situated in place of the existing home’s original garage.

Having researched the project to within an inch of its life, David and Margie are, quite rightly, delighted with the result. It’s a mix of high quality traditional design and innovative construction methods and features – a testament to the effort the couple went to during the process. “We are so happy with it,” says David. “It’s everything we wanted, and we love living here.”

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The Grass Drive

Partly to deal with the slope of the driveway to the front of the house (the old rear elevation) and partly to combine the simple charm of grass with a practical

The First Floor is All About Luxury
There’s an informal reading/study area off the first floor landing (to the left of image 6) — as well as a lift for future accessibility. 8. All the sanitaryware is from Laufen.



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use, David opted for a grass driveway. Thing is, it's the best one we've ever seen – the grass is simply perfect and the sensation of driving on it, particularly up the slope, not a little disconcerting. Green driveways consist of an extruded polymer mesh to reinforce the ground (such as Hexapath), the cells of which are filled with grass seed. In addition to providing a permeable surface (now required for hard landscaping areas as part of some planning permissions) it is also a pretty good value alternative to block paving – a 3mm deep mesh will cost around £3-5/m².

A Complete Lifestyle

The incredible formal garden was designed by Rory McVeigh — the Grecian urns look and feel like stone but are actually GRP. The basement level features a huge swimming pool (on the site of the former home's garage) from Polypool. There's a complete leisure suite with gym, and an impressive home cinema from Chris Brookes Audio. All of it is wired into a home management/security system from Jung/KMX

USEFUL CONTACTS: Designers /Architectural Services Barnetti & Co: 0161 613 1573; ARC Architectural: 0161 928 4433 Main contractors Peers Construction: 07725 882983 Groundwork /Structure Sutton & Taylor: 01942 602263 Render Westland: 07666 103097 Insulated Concrete Formwork Polarwall: 0845 8382181 Exterior stone Wolseley: wolseleyselfbuild.co.uk Window/Exterior Door Manufacture Bereco UK: 01706 848797 Staircase/handrails Emanuel Whittaker: 0161 785 5517 Ironwork & Structural Steel B Rourke: 01282 422841 Elliptical stair structural steel F&J Haulk: 01706 848797 Joinery/Polishing/Finishing Paul Taylor: 07787 534772 Timber Flooring John Garner: 07779 796556 Joinery Finishing Services Frank Donlan: 07801 794809; Jack Lyons: 07792 157652 Ceramic flooring Plunkett Floor and Wall Installation Contractors Ltd: 01661 836960; Keith Caldwell: 07985 626212 Kitchen units, worktop, appliances, induction hob Bontempi (Contact Richard Shiels): 07737 597381 Appliances Kuppersbusch: 01235 821288 Bathrooms/ sanitaryware Laufen from Mills & Toon: 0151 480 4911 Home cinema Chris Brookes Audio: 01925 261212 Smart Home Technology (Lighting, Heating, Air Con Install and tech interface all M & E services) Jung/KNX: gb.jung.de; M&E Installation Ellesmere Engineering: 0161 799 7626 Swimming pool Install / Management Polypool: 01489 890800; H2O Plus: 08450 063063 Wall finishes Tektura: 0161 876 5300; Spa Laminates: 0113 271 8311 Mouldings ORAC: 01483 271211 Glazing/Mirror detailing Vogue Glass: 0161 282 0169 Architectural Hardware Merlin: 0161 927 9292 Landscaping Rory McVeigh Design: 07974 026791; Mahood Growers: 01704 895014