

Ranch dressing

Remodelling a 1970s bungalow to create a dramatic ranch-style property, cloaked in grey, has given Linda Miller a dream home in an idyllic parkland setting.

STORY: DEBBIE JEFFERY PICTURES: VIVIEN BLAKEY PHOTOGRAPHY

“When we first started thinking about how to improve our bungalow, we were considering updating perhaps one or two rooms, but these things snowball and we ended up remodelling almost the entire building and landscaping the garden as well,” says Linda Miller of her impressive home.

She and her husband, Stuart, had been living in a detached bungalow in Surrey but wanted to find



REAR

To the rear, glass sliding doors now open onto the expansive terrace, with a brise soleil providing shade – one of Martin Swatton's trademarks.

somewhere with more land. Stuart enjoyed motocross and Linda ran her own company selling off-road motorcycle accessories, so buying a large bungalow with twenty-three acres in the greenbelt gave them the outdoor space they wanted for off-road motorbikes.

The brick-built bungalow had been constructed in the 1970s in the form of an American ranch. Two long rectangular wings are connected by a distinctive two-storey octagonal entrance tower, one wing containing the living accommodation and the other four bedrooms, a master en suite and a dressing room, together with a utility and WC.

Outside, in the extensive grounds, was a small kidney-shaped swimming pool, with outbuildings including stables, a summer house and pool room. "In its day it was quite ahead of its time, and had been a real party house," says Linda.



In brief

PROJECT Remodel
LOCATION Surrey
COST £1.2 million
SPENT £570,000
VALUE £2 million+



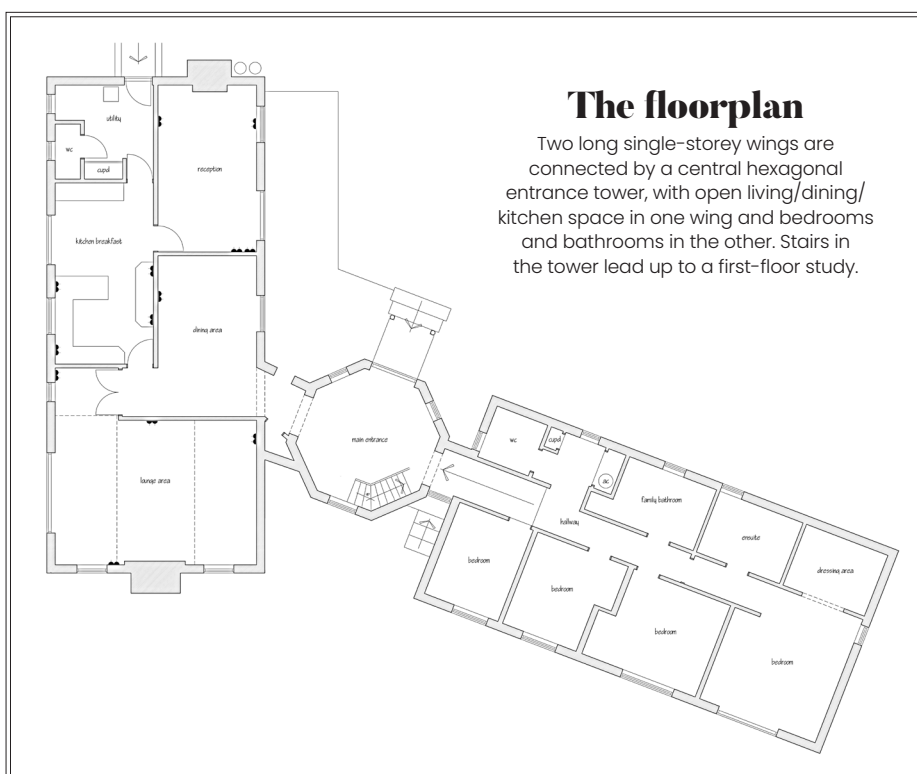
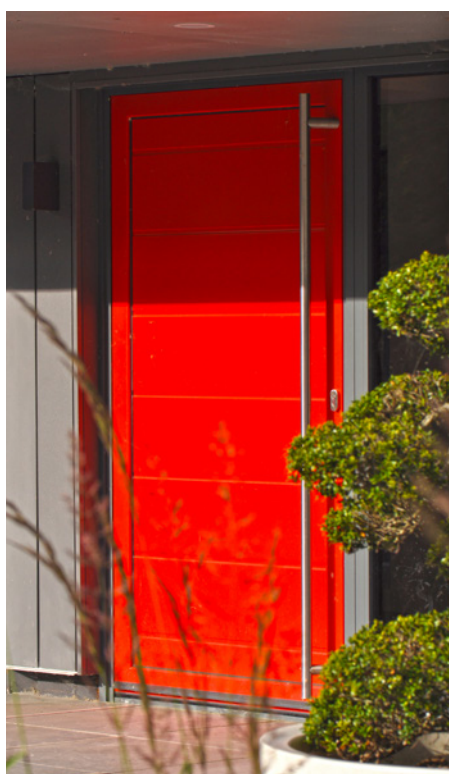
FRONT
The brick bungalow has been rendered, with a new roof and aluminium-framed windows. The entrance was redesigned to create a canopy above a new red front door leading into the tower.



“Considering we didn’t extend at all, the whole living space feels so much larger and brighter than before.”

“Everything had grown quite dated and rundown, though, and it was the broken-up living areas we hoped to improve. Space wasn’t the issue, but the layout made each room so cut off from the next that we wanted to take down walls to make everything much more open plan.”

The couple had never undertaken any major building work before and were keen to secure the services of a knowledgeable designer who could guide them. “I saw one of Martin Swatton’s projects featured in a magazine and he’d done amazing things to a bungalow,” says Linda.



SITTING AREA

A slate-clad chimney breast and wood-burner serves as a focal point in the sitting area, where bespoke storage was made by the builder.



“When I rang to ask if he would meet us, he was already over-booked, so I waited a year and contacted him again. He must have realised I wasn’t going to give up, and when I sent some pictures of our bungalow he agreed to visit.”

Martin Swatton is a multi-award-winning architectural and interior designer, whose projects are frequently published in the national press. He has worked with a range of clients who share his passion for beautifully simple, contemporary, functional design, and provides a complete service from concept through planning to the finishing touches.

Martin spent time talking to the Millers and looking around the property on numerous occasions, taking in the atmosphere and location before producing drawings. The twenty-three acre site was previously used by a local farmer, but now Linda rents the land to a horse rescue which means that ponies and donkeys roam freely outside.

“Originally, we thought about bi-folds to open up the house to the view, but Martin suggested sliding doors instead, as they don’t need space to stack,” says Linda.

The design also involved covering dark external brickwork in a grey through-coloured render, and





KITCHEN
Strips of lighting inset into the ceiling help to zone the kitchen space from the rest of the open plan living area. Installing a long bifold window in the kitchen, with a suspended bar outside, further connects the indoor and outdoor spaces.



LINDA'S TOP TIP...
"Find a designer and builder who you like, because you'll be spending an awful lot of time together!"

replacing the old roof with sleek grey through-coloured fibre cement tiles and discrete photovoltaic solar panels for generating electricity. The entrance porch would be remodelled, and windows replaced, with enlarged openings for the sections of glass doors.

Internally, the living wing has been entirely remodelled, with walls removed, new wiring and plumbing. Underfloor heating was laid, and a new kitchen and wide engineered oak flooring installed. Even the furniture has been updated, all under the watchful eye of Martin Swatton, who offered advice throughout the project.

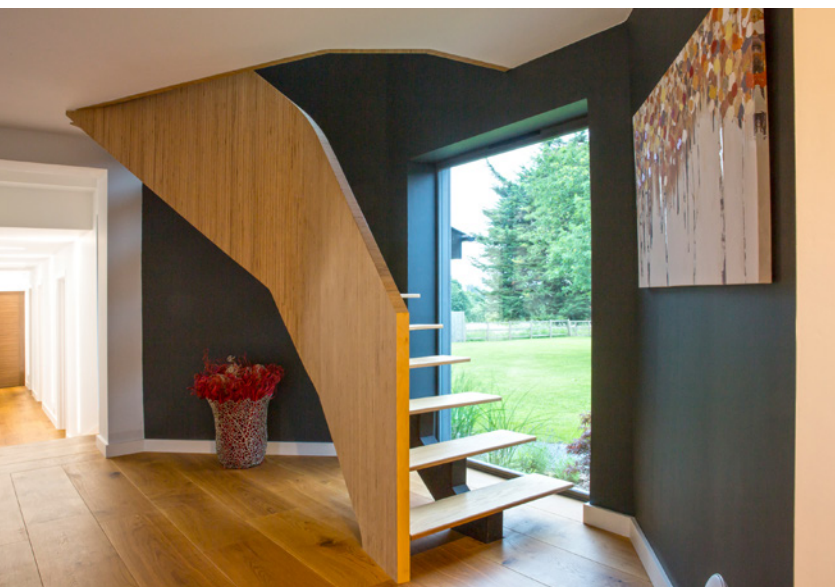
Outside, the garden has also been given an extensive makeover, and a covered terrace was created to swoop around, with inbuilt seating and a louvered canopy. The original pool was also updated and enlarged to create a heated, rectangular tiled pool, with every detail carefully considered.

"Martin designed a window in the kitchen, which serves as a garden bar with stools - he really did think of everything, right down to planting and cushions," says Linda. "The only thing we needed planning permission for was the brise soleil canopy, but everything else came under permitted development because we haven't extended the living space."

A builder who had previously worked with Martin Swatton was chosen to complete the work and proved to be a perfectionist. Linda and Stuart moved everything into the bedroom wing and lived there while the builders worked on the other wing and exterior.

"They built a big door to keep the dust out, and every morning we'd go through and find them all working away," says Linda, who recently retired. "I was worried that having such an open plan space would feel too





big and cavernous, but Martin cleverly zoned the different areas and used lighting to define them, which means that it feels surprisingly cosy.”

Everything was designed to be extremely low maintenance, which was part of the brief, and wooden and tiled floors have been laid, with aluminium window and door frames installed.

The existing staircase in the two-storey octagonal tower has been replaced with a stunning bespoke design by Martin and constructed by the builder on site, which curves up to the first-floor study on timber treads supported on a steel spine. Even the front door has been replaced with a bold red one and creates a grand entrance, sheltering beneath the new porch canopy.

Slate tiles were used to clad the chimney breast in the sitting room, where a log-burner has been installed, and the predominantly grey colour scheme has been lifted with pops of colour in furniture and fabrics.

“Martin helped to choose the kitchen, and the builder also came on shopping trips with us and to a home building exhibition, which was good fun,” says Linda. “We all became really good friends, and I was so glad I waited until Martin was able to work with us, as he took away all the stress and guided every decision.”

The entire scheme stretched over two years, and sadly Stuart never saw the result, as he died part way through the project, leaving Linda to carry out the final stages.

“We were having the swimming pool refurbished at the time, and after a break I realised that the last thing

STAIRS

A bespoke staircase has been constructed in the entrance tower, with treads cantilevering from a steel support.



In detail

PROJECT

Architect Martin Swatton
Design: martinswatton.com

Builder Will Loch

Construction:

willlochconstruction.com

Structural engineer Roger

Bunney: earsheppard.co.uk

Landscape contractor

Urban Jungle Plants:

urbanjungleplants.co.uk

STRUCTURE

Windows and doors, entrance doors

Bowalker Windows:
bowalkerwindows.co.uk

Roof tiles Eternit Thrutone

Cedral: cedral.world/en-gb/roofing

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Kitchen xxxxxxxxxxxx:

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Kitchen xxxxxxxxxxxx:

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Timber flooring, decking

Roundwood of Mayfield:
roundwood.com

Large planters

The Pot Company:
thepotco.com

Paving London Stone:
londonstone.co.uk



OUTSIDE
A covered terrace was created to swoop around, with inbuilt seating and a louvered canopy.



I wanted was to sit in a half-finished house," she recalls. "After so much upheaval I decided not to tackle the bedrooms, although the bathrooms were replaced."

Now Linda can enjoy living in the redesigning house, looking out onto her private parkland, with various trees including willows and copper beech. "I could never have dreamed of owning such an amazing place," she says.

"I tell people that I live in a four-bedroom bungalow, so they are always shocked when they visit for the first time. Considering we didn't extend at all, the whole living space feels so much larger and brighter than before. Opening the sliding doors onto the terrace in summer and being able to entertain by the pool feels like I'm on a holiday abroad, and I absolutely love living here."



POOL
The former kidney-shaped pool had a leaking liner and has been replaced by a larger rectangular heated pool, which is used almost daily in summer, and was tiled in purple to complement lavender planting.

Final word

What was the high point of the project?

Seeing Martin's original designs was exciting, and then watching everything come to life.

...and the low points?

I had a few low points during the build, because of the sheer scale of the project, but generally I enjoyed the whole process.

Your best buy?

The amazing staircase and storage, which the builder made.



... and your biggest extravagance?

There was no expense spared on the kitchen and we have gadgets like a boiling water tap.