

# Roderick James Architects LLP



.... magicians of space and light



Roderick James Architects LLP

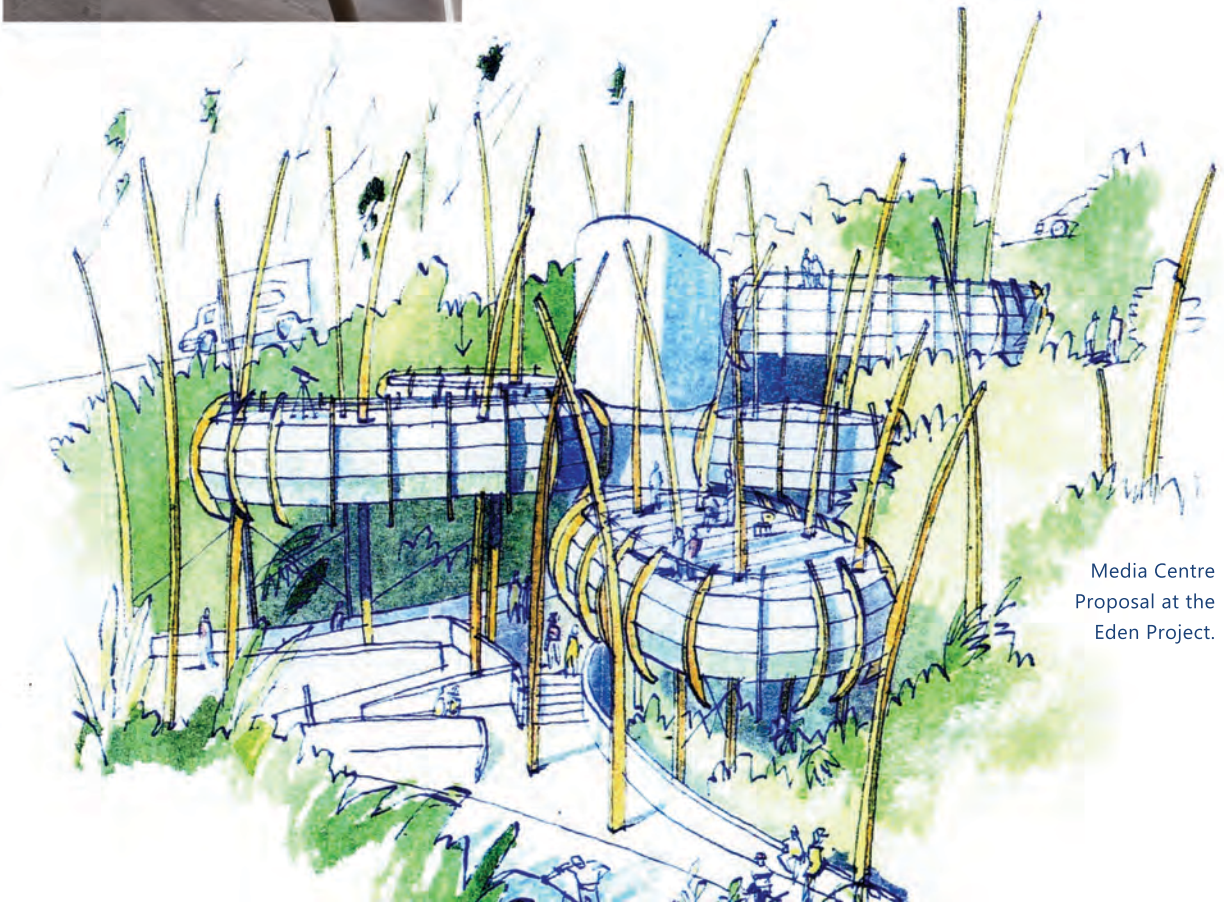
DEVON / HEAD OFFICE  
Discovery House  
Steamer Quay Road  
Totnes, Devon  
TQ9 5AL  
Tel: 01803 868 000

[www.roderickjamesarchitects.co.uk](http://www.roderickjamesarchitects.co.uk) · [enquiries@rjarchitects.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@rjarchitects.co.uk)



## Contents

- Background and foreground!
- Magicians of space and light
- Eco pragmatism
- Our people
- More about our approach to buildings
- Some thoughts on the design process



Media Centre  
Proposal at the  
Eden Project.



Eagle Rock, Scotland

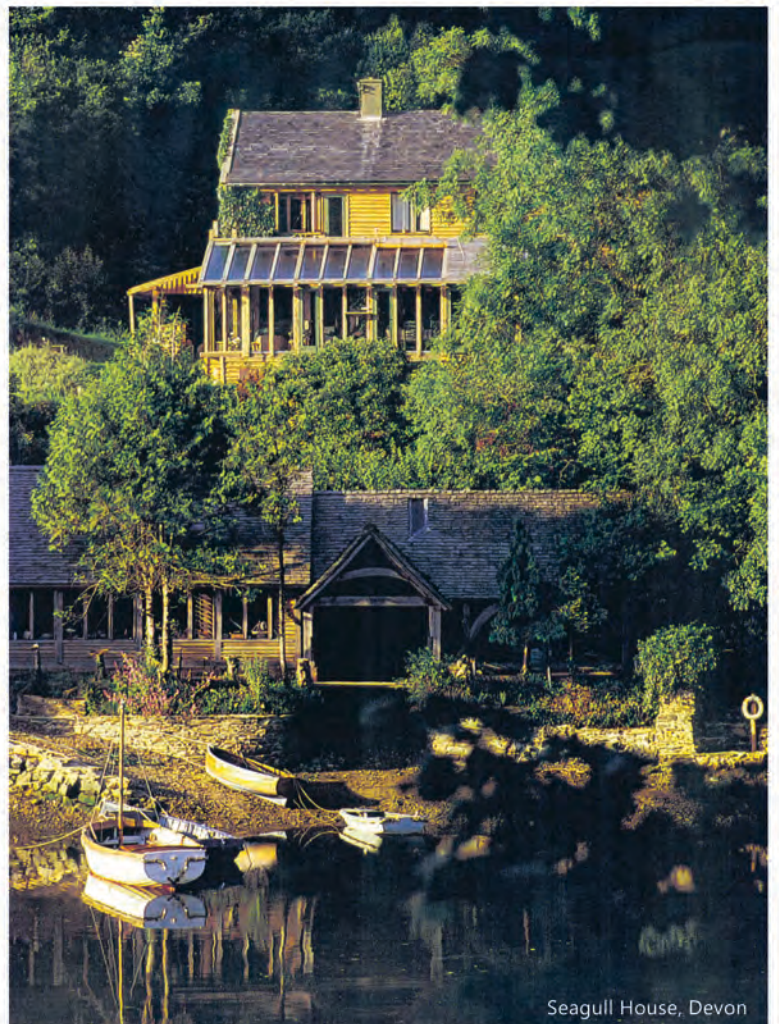
## Background and foreground

Over the last thirty years Roderick James Architects has become the leading architectural practice specialising in the design of structural timber frame buildings in the UK. The practice grew from Roderick's original idea for the 'Barn House' and the concept of 'Bungalow Eating', partly demonstrated at his former home, Seagull House in Devon.

Roderick established himself as a leading timber frame Architect in 1987 through the design of Seagull House and has been at the forefront of the timber frame industry since. He has been closely associated with several market leading carpentry companies in the past, although Roderick James Architects are now fully independent and work closely for clients on their designs to develop ideas to enable them to realise their maximum potential.

The practice is at present designing, detailing or completing over 60 individual new houses across the country in addition to several waterside buildings, school buildings, a country hotel, several visitor centres, restaurants, and around 50 substantial extensions.

The practice is also actively involved with affordable housing projects and BAARN timber-frame houses.



Seagull House, Devon



Roderick has renovated, converted and built countless of his own homes – see inside cover page for some examples. Throughout his professional career, he has actively encouraged people from all walks of life to be involved with building their own home.

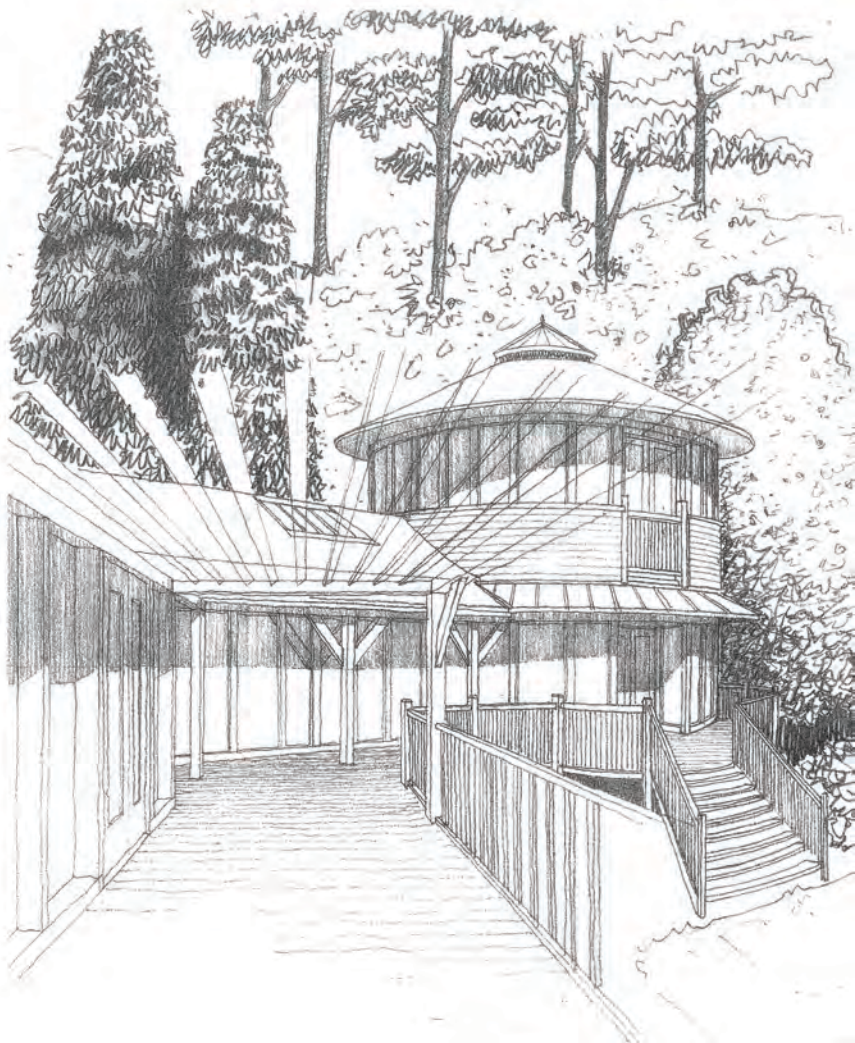
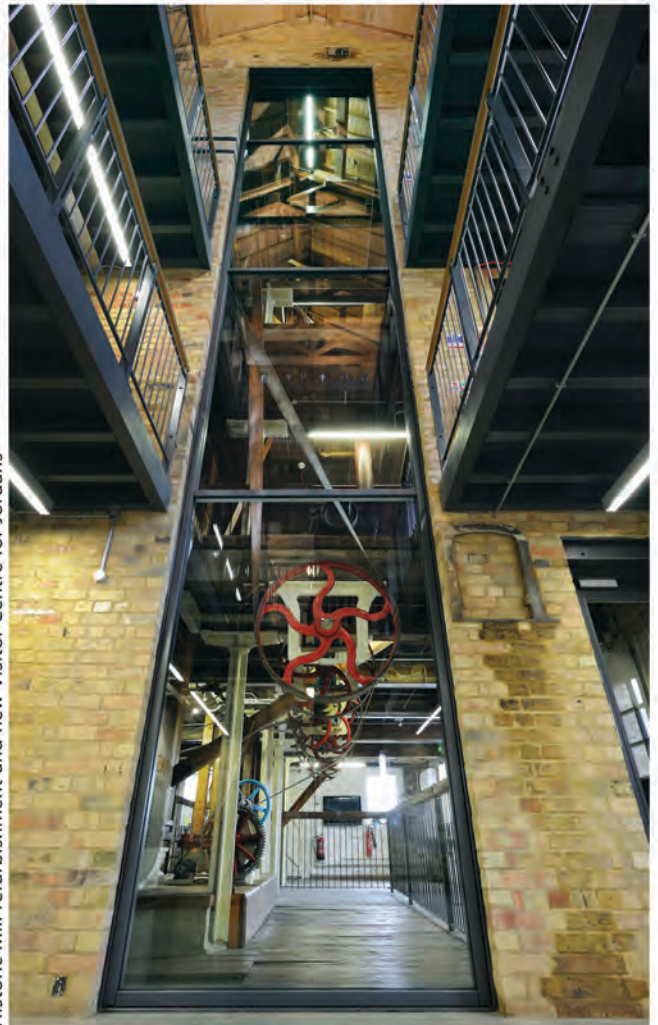
In 2002 Roderick James Architects became a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP). Mike Hope has been acting as Managing Partner since then and has been working with Roderick to develop the business.

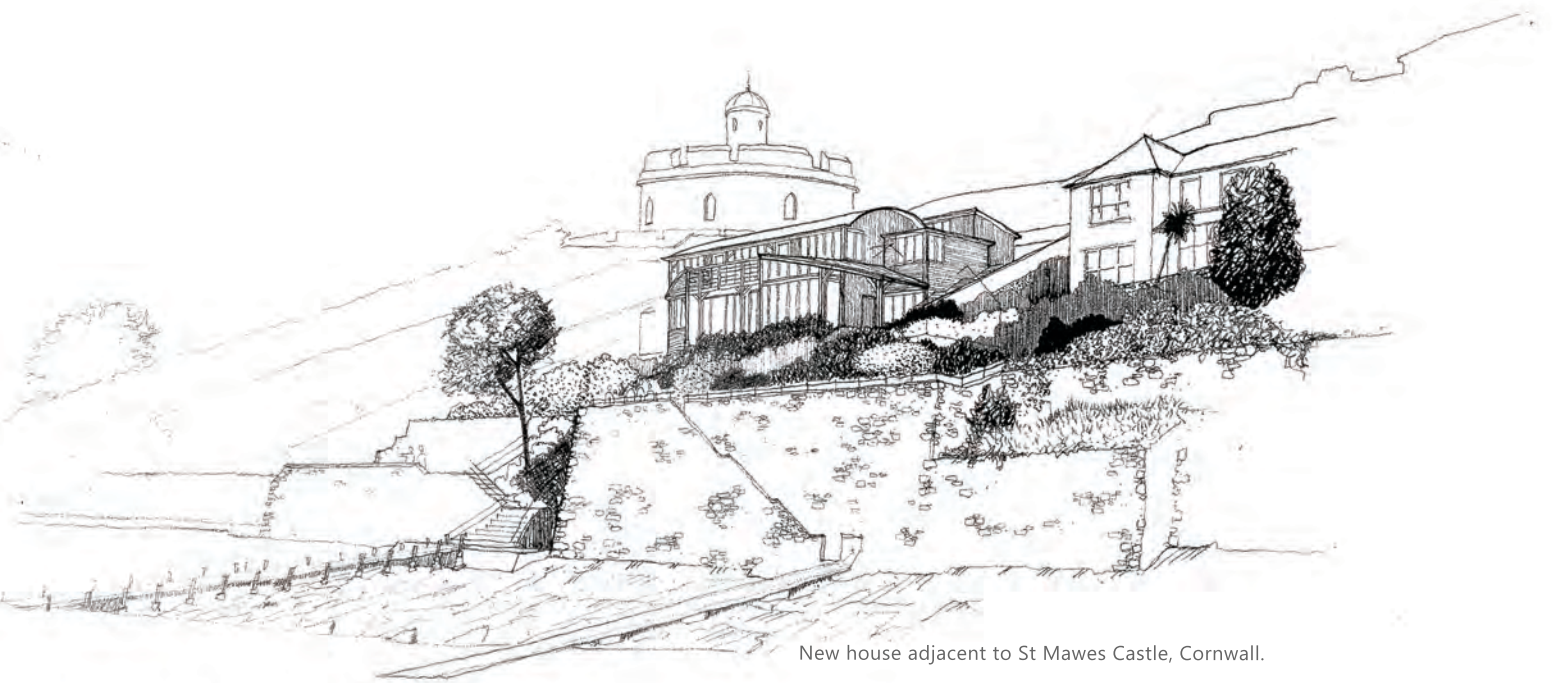
We are designing award winning contemporary buildings in addition to our established traditional timber framed houses, and offer our bespoke design services throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. We now have fully staffed, permanent offices in Devon, Wiltshire and Scotland.

We have also worked in the Channel Islands, France, Germany, Netherlands, USA, South Africa and the Caribbean and we are enthusiastic about working anywhere in the world for the right people.

Within the last ten years our practice has achieved over four hundred successful planning consents for both contemporary and traditional buildings for our clients.

Historic Mill refurbishment and new Visitor Centre for Jordans





New house adjacent to St Mawes Castle, Cornwall.

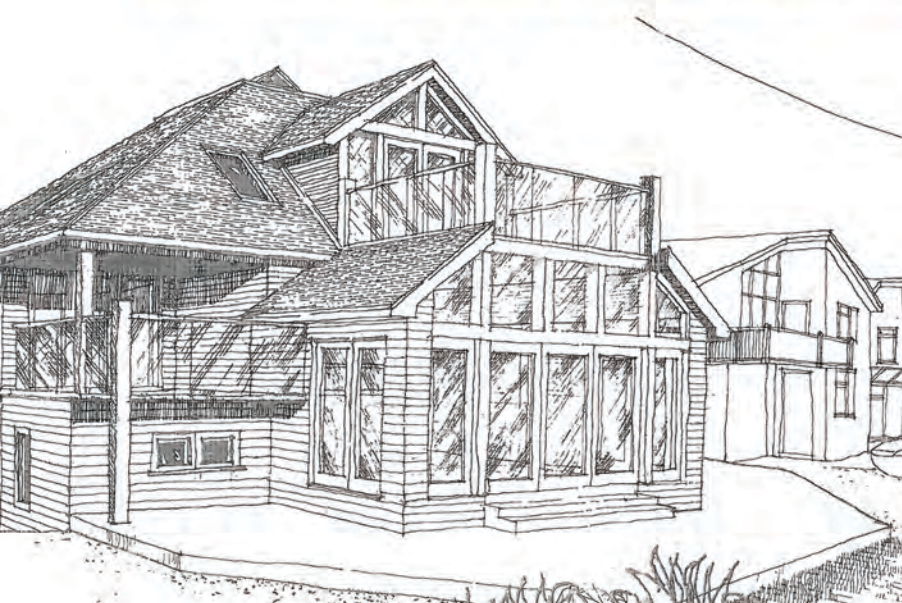
## Magicians of space and light

We design warm, friendly, light, textural buildings with dramatic spaces. Although our practice is rooted in the traditions of the past we also use contemporary materials in innovative and exciting ways.

We look for simple, cost-effective solutions that combine quality with local craftsmanship, resisting expensive purpose made components wherever possible.

We want everyone working on our buildings to be fully committed to working as a team and we expect the process to be fun, enjoyable and efficient. We want the end result to be something with which everyone is proud to have been involved.





## Eco-pragmatism

We believe in maximising the potential for a building to have a positive impact on people's lives, the surrounding landscape and the wider environment. These issues have to be balanced and achieved within a client's project budget and to do this; we apply the principle of Eco-pragmatism.

We have successfully applied this approach to new buildings in the most sensitive locations including; waterside sites, extensions to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Coastal Areas, AONBs and National Parks.

We have successfully designed projects from affordable houses with breathing construction in Scotland (built for £120k each), up to a 700m<sup>2</sup> carbon-positive eco-house in the Cotswolds with battered stone walls.

We have great experience of working with specialist suppliers of timber frames, structurally insulated panel systems, breathing construction and renewable energy systems and can advise you accordingly on your project.



Alterations to historic Jersey Cottage.

## Our people

Roderick James has been in architectural practice for over forty years and is the founding partner. He was the first director of the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Wales, from its start in 1973 for seven years and a trustee for a further seven years. He has considerable experience in sustainable building and is now responsible for practice strategy, special projects and concept design. He was also the founder/chairman of Carpenter Oak & Woodland Co Ltd, Carpenter Oak Ltd, and a number of other companies. Roderick has been actively involved recently with the Burlington Danes Schoolhouse project and our new 'R-Affordables' prefabricated affordable house kit.

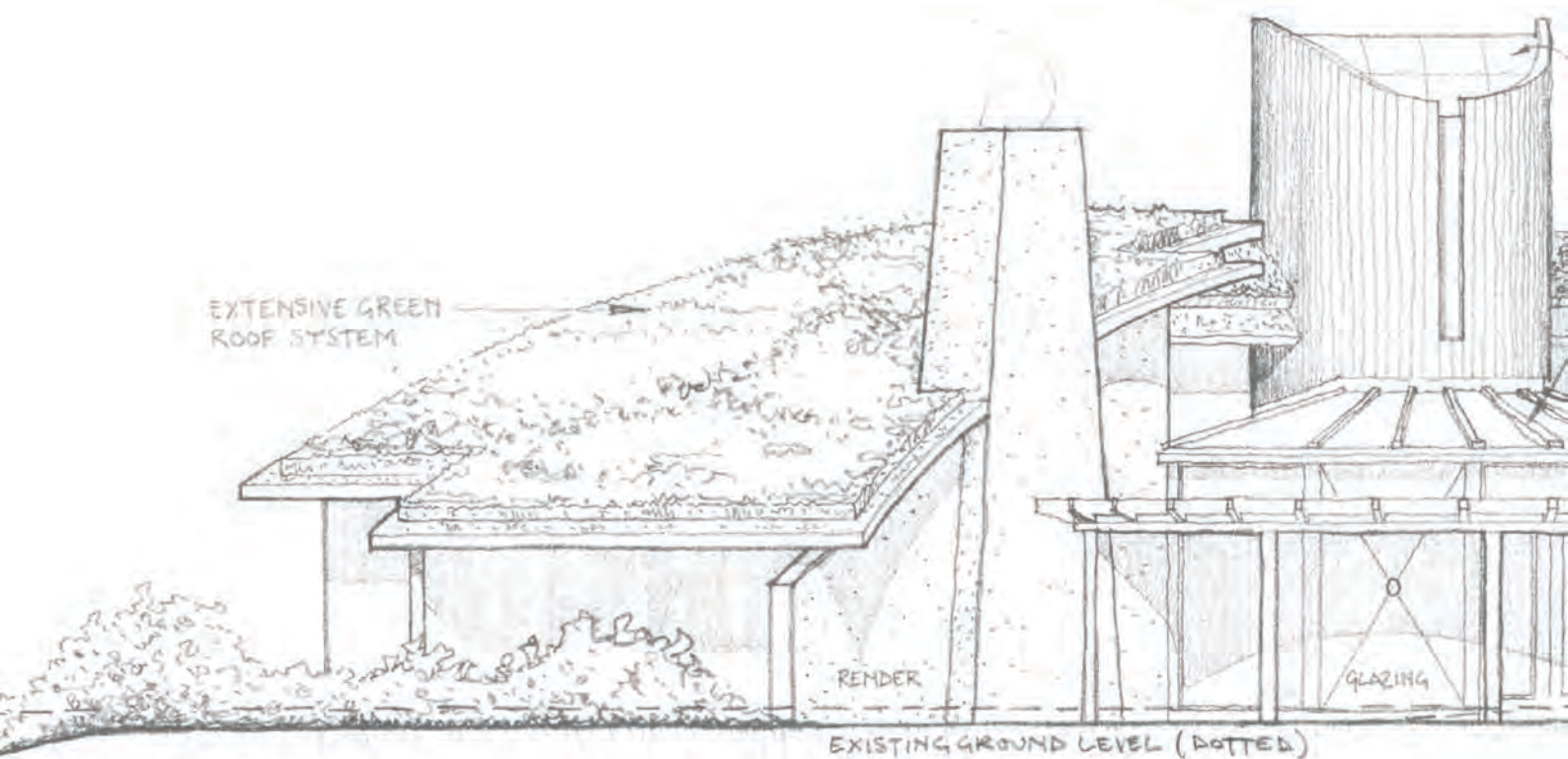
Mike Hope is a chartered architect and is the managing partner to the practice. He has been working with Roderick James Architects for over twenty years and has worked on some of the practice's most well-known houses, including the house in Sidmouth, which won an RIBA Town and Country Design Award. He has also dealt with larger commercial projects including the eco-houses for the Forestry Commission in the New Forest National Park, the eco-houses, visitor building and refurbishment of the historic mill for Jordans in Bedfordshire, and more recently the concept design for the Lostwithiel Golf Club project for Tim Smit.





The practice now benefits from three design studios, with Partner Nicholas Wordie leading the Wiltshire Office in Salisbury. The Devon Office is led by Partner James Lock acting as one team leader and Associate Peter Brodbelt leading the second Devon team. Our new Scottish Office is led by Associate Peter Smith. We have a total of 15 or more fully qualified Architects with necessary assistants at these offices.

The practice has won over 25 regional and national awards, including The Best Oak Frame House Award in 2015, The Daily Telegraph's Best Eco-Home Award 2010 and our Barrington House was voted Britain's Best Home on the Channel 5 television programme in 2009. Our projects have featured in more than 15 television programmes on BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4 (including twice on Grand Designs), Channel 5 and the Discovery Channel. Our buildings have been photographed in 20 or more books and appeared in literally hundreds of magazines and newspaper articles (many of which have been front page or cover stories).



## More about our approach to buildings

### Traditional or Contemporary?

We want to put more fun and informality back into buildings and try to avoid stereotypes but provide efficient thermal 'envelopes' with dramatic spaces. Versatility is a key advantage of timber framing; flexibility over window positions, cladding material, wall, floor and roof.

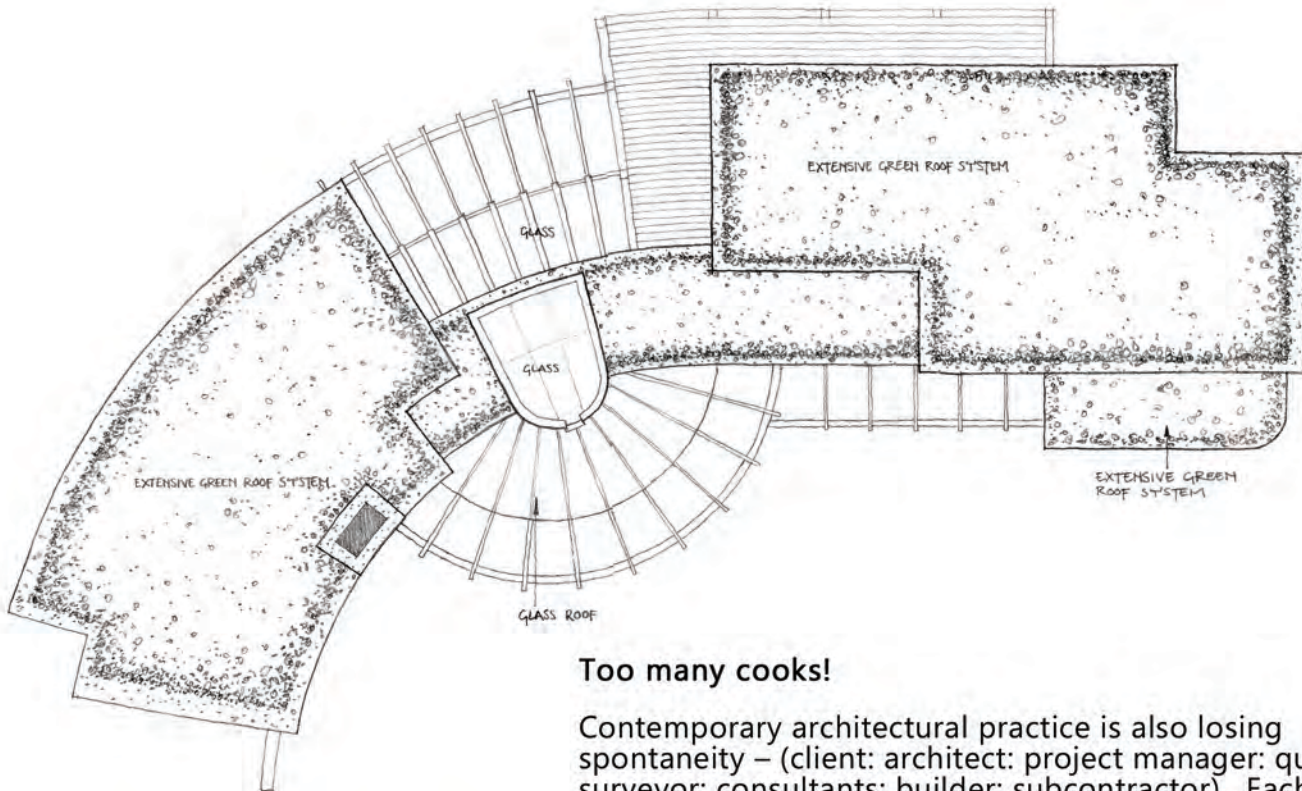
Timber frame is ideal for extensions or separate outbuildings and with a covered link to the main house it is often possible to make buildings fit in less obtrusively with their surroundings whilst following the strong outbuilding tradition of rural vernacular architecture. The structure can have a traditional barn feel or be finished to far smoother specification; the aim is often to combine the two so that the feeling of barn predominates.

We are also involved in many more contemporary designs, using stainless steel, simpler framing, marine architecture, 'loft' style homes, curved roofs and so on. This is in addition to embracing modern construction techniques and creating cleaner, crisper, more contemporary interiors. We would be delighted to discuss your ideas with you.



Evolution Housing proposal.





### Too many cooks!

Contemporary architectural practice is also losing spontaneity – (client: architect: project manager: quantity surveyor: consultants: builder: subcontractor). Each link has the potential for losing creative and personal aspects of a building, some things have to be carefully designed, some can be left entirely to personal choice.

We will work closely with you to establish the best route to completion for your project based on your experience, confidence and abilities. Where possible we prefer to work with you in assembling a team which can work together based on trust and that will pull together to find solutions to the inevitable issues that arise during your self-build journey. The aim is to create a fair and equitable relationship with a trusted builder so that you can be involved with on site decisions to personalise your home without being penalised for the changes.

Some clients are self-builders and just need an architect; others have plans and need us to point them in the right direction. Some only need an erected shell. Try and be realistic about the time it takes to construct a building. It can be a mistake to try and compress the process and pressurise all concerned. Having to be 'in by Christmas' is the tyranny of every builder!



Best oak frame award 2015



Restaurant at Westonbirt Arboretum.





## Make your house a home

We believe we must return to a more responsive style of building. It is quite clear that people need to change their living space from time to time, but these events should be relatively straightforward and simple. With a timber frame they can be. Virtually all our projects are one-off designs for individual clients and we rarely seem to duplicate work we have already done. If you are building from scratch you may as well have what you want, so we need to see your scrapbook of ideas and understand how you like to live.





### Loosen up!

One of the reasons for the charm of old buildings is their idiosyncrasies; the gaps, the joints, the odd corners and spaces, the blocked up doorways, nooks, nails and old empty mortices. We have been conditioned to expect a sterile, smooth, uniform building type whether or not that is really what we want. Over the past twenty-five years we have built up a language and building style which is more subtle than might appear at first glance but seems to give our buildings a lived-in feel even when they have only just been built.

We have found builders across the country who can provide the finishes we require without appearing either contrived or scrappy. Through this network of builders, specialist suppliers and sub-contractors, we can ensure the quality of our buildings without you having to be present on site at all times. We ensure that our buildings have a strong emphasis on soft colouring, texture and shadow and quality of light both inside and out.





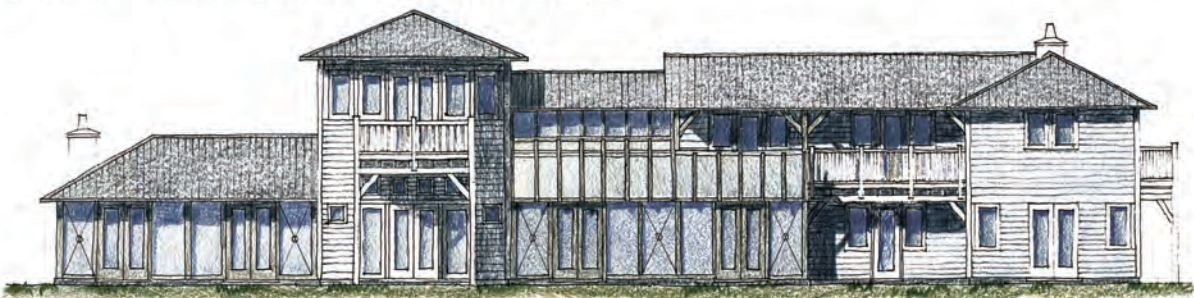
## We can help

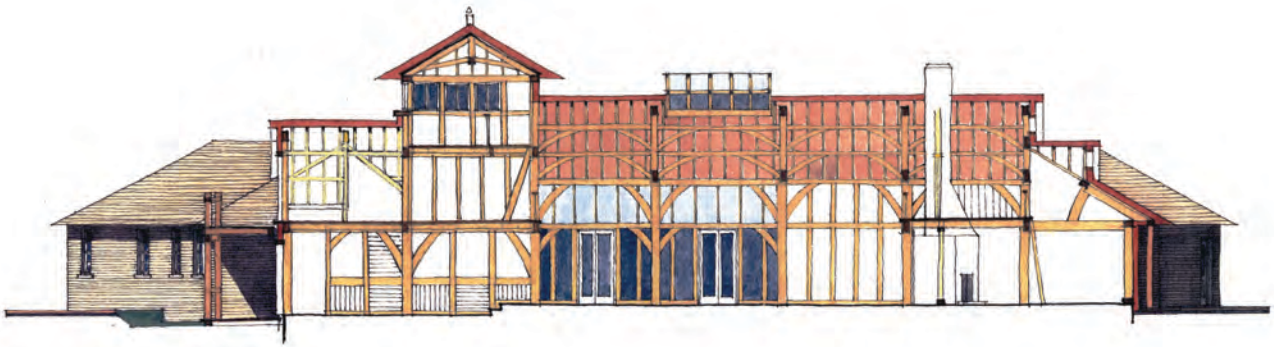
We are able to provide full or partial architectural services designing a barnhouse, contemporary house, or extension for you. We occasionally work with like-minded commercial clients who understand and appreciate our ethos and buildings.

We offer our services throughout the UK and with our offices in Devon, Wiltshire and Scotland, have successfully managed projects of every size from inception through to completion.

Throughout the design and build process we will be doing our very best to carefully understand your needs and deliver your dream. But it needs you, too, to play your part in understanding the hurdles, complexities and frustrations of planning, building regulations and construction.

Although we will try and protect you from the stresses of the process as far as possible it is important to realise we are in it together. We are not just supplying a product from a catalogue but developing a one-off design with you. Working in partnership will allow your dream to evolve.





So, you have talked to one of us on the telephone and we will have built up a rough idea of what you are trying to achieve and how little you want to spend.

The next step will be a free meeting for an hour or so in Devon, Wiltshire or Scotland with one of our architects. We can arrange for you to visit one of our completed buildings if you wish. Ideally you will bring photographs, drawings, ideas and scrapbooks and we will try and define what you really want: traditional or contemporary; oak or douglas fir; sawn or engineered timber, brick, concrete or straw? We are prepared to tackle anything and are excited by new challenges.



We will establish the level of service you want from us, whether it is our normal service of sketch scheme, design, planning and building regulations; or maybe full working drawings and architects' certificate. We are very flexible in our approach and will provide the minimum service that meets your needs, to keep the fees down.

We will show you many photographs of completed projects and carefully establish what we feel you warm to. We will discuss the feasibility of your timescales, budget and expectations, and maybe suggest which of our architects will be most suited to your needs. Sometimes an outline design will begin to emerge.

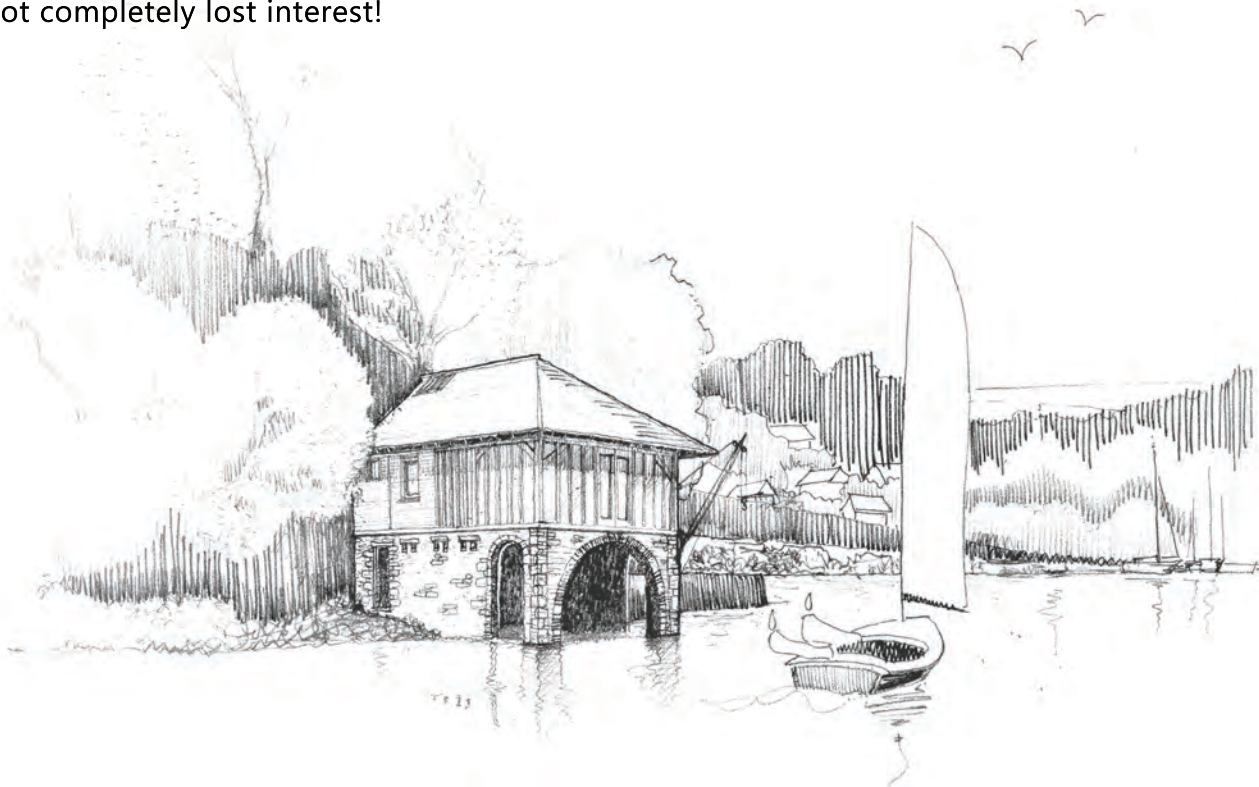
You can then reflect on what we have discussed and decide whether you want to engage us as your architects and move to the next stage. This will involve a site visit, possibly a land or building survey and then the preparation of some sketch ideas.



Britains Best Home 2009

These sketch proposals will be developed with outline plans and elevations and begin to show how a structural timber frame could fit into your design.

After discussion of these preliminary ideas with you, we will start to prepare planning drawings which are submitted to the Planning Department. They will take at least two months to give their decision and assuming, through our expertise and persuasion, we gain approval we can start to think about builders and move to the boring but essential building regulation drawings, structural and heat loss calculations, and all the other technical details involved in building a house. This will take at least three months. Once we have gained approval from Building Control and found a suitably like-minded builder, you can start building - if you have not completely lost interest!





Boat house on the River Thames

During this process we try and keep you enthusiastic and expect you to do the same for us!

There are several ways of managing the build and we will talk over the options once we have a better idea of how much you want to be involved. We also need to assess whether you are litigious or relaxed as all of these factors have a bearing on whether we recommend a contract, or build on trust. Our most successful buildings have developed from trusting relationships between members of the team and the client.

Understanding the reasons for the inevitable problems and delays which occur during building and discussing them with your builder is more likely to create a positive atmosphere which will make the build go faster in the long run.

Building a house will have moments of frustration but it can also be one of the most exciting and fulfilling projects you will ever undertake.

We will be there to help you achieve it.

Roderick James Architects LLP - February 2017.





Over the last thirty years, we have designed over  
one thousand timber frame homes.



*Roderick James Architects LLP*

DEVON / HEAD OFFICE  
Discovery House  
Steamer Quay Road  
Totnes  
Devon TQ9 5AL  
Tel: 01803 868 000

[www.roderickjamesarchitects.co.uk](http://www.roderickjamesarchitects.co.uk) · [enquiries@rjarchitects.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@rjarchitects.co.uk)

