



# *A Beautiful Find*

Property developers David and Jane Evans weren't looking for a new home. But when they saw Pen y Clip, they knew they had found one of Anglesey's hidden treasures.

Words: Jennie Musgrove Images: Eleri Griffiths



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**On a hill overlooking** the quaint town of Menai Bridge and with views stretching across the Menai Straits and beyond towards Bangor and Snowdonia, stands Pen-y-Clip. From the home’s crisp white lines and clean, modernist architecture, you would be forgiven for thinking the house had been built recently. In fact, it dates back to the 1950s when philanthropist Gaynor Cemlyn-Jones commissioned it.

A great benefactor of the University of Wales’ School of Ocean Sciences, Gaynor was the granddaughter of Owen Owen, who founded the Liverpool department store of the same name. Gaynor never married or had children but was made High Sheriff of Anglesey in 1968 and used the home for many-a social gathering with the high society of North Wales.

When she died in 2003, Gaynor left her house to the National Trust. The building was in a poor state and remained unoccupied until 2007, when Manchester-based property developers David and Jane Evans chanced upon it while looking on [rightmove.co.uk](http://rightmove.co.uk). “We were just browsing,” said Jane. “We weren’t really looking for a house – well, no more than usual!”

The couple arranged a visit to see Pen y Clip and saw the property’s potential straight away. “There was something about what we saw that we really liked,” said Jane. David’s initial thoughts were of the space the house could provide for their five children – which would be much more than the holiday home the family had become accustomed to. “We’re a pretty big family, and previously we’d had a static caravan near Holyhead,” he said. “Although its beachfront location was wonderful, on a wet and windy March morning when you get up and there’s seven of you in that space, you feel like you’re in a prison cell!”

The couple bought the house in January 2008 and set about repairing and making several alterations to the layout. “It was actually an incredibly solid structure,” said Jane. “The building was in good nick, we just had it rewired, a new central heating fitted and a new kitchen and bathrooms. We didn’t change much because it’s been built for a purpose; someone’s thought about it as a place to live in. We wanted to bring it back to life.”

The first change David and Jane made was to the small kitchen; they transformed the room into a library complete with a beautiful oak bookcase and leather chairs from a club in Paris. The home’s new kitchen was handmade by German company Rempp and fitted into one end of the large dining room, to create a contemporary, open-plan kitchen/dining area. “It was obvious when we saw the empty space that the room lent itself to a modern kitchen,” said Jane. The new kitchen is a simple, modernist affair with Miele appliances and soft closing units. A French farmhouse table which David found on Ebay takes pride of place in the dining area, with 12 chrome and walnut moulded chairs creating a warm and inviting space. The room’s original riven slate floor, which Gaynor had made to order, remains completely intact and, surprisingly considering its age, complements perfectly the contemporary style of the room. The floor was not initially intended to be quite so textured, however, as David explained: “When the tiles had been cut and polished, Gaynor was so concerned that the floor would be slippery that, much to the disgruntlement of the architect, she had them placed the wrong way up.”

Gaynor’s strong design ethos for the house is evident throughout; from its quirky layout to the vast amounts of glazing on both floors, allowing natural light to flow through the home. “We can only guess what Gaynor »



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was like,” said Jane. “I think she was fairly forward-thinking from the fact that she commissioned this house. In a modern context it’s difficult to imagine how different it would have seemed when it was built.”

The second important alteration David and Jane made was to change the garage into a games room. “It’s a massive house but we made the games room to keep the children happy and maximise the use of the space,” said David. The room has been painted white but the brickwork and several pipes hint at its previous function as a garage. A folding table tennis table, television, Playstation and two wooden trunks of toys belonging to David and Jane’s son Dylan provide ample opportunity for entertainment. “It was always going to be the games room so it was always going to be a bit different,” said David. “It’s great for the kids but the adults tend to spend a lot of time there too – when we have friends round we sometimes stay up till three or four in the morning playing table tennis!”

If beautiful interior design is of less importance in the games room, the rest of the house certainly makes up for the oversight. David and Jane have used a neutral colour scheme throughout but added design classics and unusual, one-off pieces to create a sense of character. Being property developers with an impressive portfolio of award-winning homes in Manchester, the couple know a thing or two about design. “We kind of have a house style,” said David. “It’s not formulaic in a non-creative way; we just find that what works for us seems to work for others. We like to keep everything quite neutral and clean, and throw in a nice piece of old wood to create warmth.”

When he says ‘piece of old wood’, David is referring to the beautiful antique pieces of furniture that have been placed around the home. Standing

*An Eye For Design*

David and Jane are huge fans of iconic 20th century furniture and strongly believe that less is more. “I’d rather buy a few iconic pieces that aren’t cheap,” said David. “But you’ve got to have an eye and taste to get it right. Too many people try to over indulge and end up cluttering a room.”

So where is their favourite place for sourcing one-off pieces? “I trawl the internet and find weird and wonderful things on Ebay,” said David. “It’s generally not that expensive either – and it makes a much more interesting focus than going to Ikea or Habitat. It’s about picking out iconic pieces that set the scene.”

That said, you’ve got to have a good deal of patience to search out the best buys, as David explained: “You can’t just click on sofas and find what you want – you’ve got to be prepared to look. I go on German, Dutch and French Ebay.”



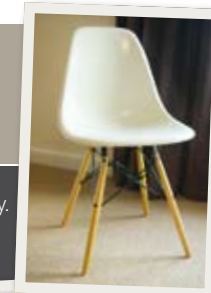
*Get the look*

David found the iconic Eames shell chairs on Ebay. “I told the trader they were for a really modernist kitchen and they asked me to send them photos of the chairs in situ. They’re all just furniture nuts on Ebay!”

David found a pair of 1930s Parisian club chairs on Ebay and had them shipped over from France. “They give the library some gravitas,” he said. “I wanted it to be a soothing library type of room. One of them is really firm and one is really soft – I imagine the couple who owned them liked different types of chairs!”

A distinctive cantilever chrome and black leather sofa was found on German Ebay and placed in the home’s spacious first floor landing.

A couple of old cinema chairs with hand carved rosettes came from an old cinema in Liverpool and have been placed in two of the homes five bedrooms to add historic charm.



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in the living room is an unusual wooden cupboard from Bali, Indonesia. “I got that cupboard years ago when I used to have a shop – I traded it for a cash register,” said David. “It’s from an old temple in Bali. A friend of mine brought it back and it’s something that I’ve carried around everywhere.”

A pine chest in the master bedroom, on which stands a flat screen TV, is another piece which always attracts attention, as David explained: “Do you know, I’ve carried that chest around for 25 years. There used to be an antiques fair in Levenshulme and I bought it there for 20 quid. It was an unloved treasure really, just a simple piece of wood – but whichever house I take it to, people always comment.”

David and Jane intend to eventually live permanently in Pen y Clip; but until they move in, they use the house as a holiday home and let it out to guests. “The idea of having a second home doesn’t sit comfortably with me,” said David. “The fact that others use it is important. I don’t like the thought of it sitting empty when we aren’t there; owning it purely for our own purpose would be way too decadent.”

Guests who stay at Pen y Clip often comment on the homeliness of the building and its sense of character: this was the deliberate intention of David and Jane, who wanted to ensure that the house wasn’t cold or unwelcoming. “We were getting bits together three or four months before moving in,” said David. “We consciously didn’t want to go and buy loads of new stuff; we thought it would be soulless.”

Having returned the home to its former glory, David and Jane plan to spend Christmas at Pen y Clip. Although it may be a bit ambitious to hope for snow, there’s no doubt that the family will continue to enjoy the house for many Christmases to come. “We see the house as a place that will stand the test of time,” said Jane. “I do feel like we’ve got a little treasure. I think what we’ve done has been very complementary to the original building – hopefully in 20 years time it will still look fantastic.”

**ADDRESS BOOK:**

The rug in the living room is from Habitat. **Log onto:** [www.habitat.co.uk](http://www.habitat.co.uk)

To book a stay at Pen y Clip visit: [www.penyclip.co.uk](http://www.penyclip.co.uk), email: [lettings@penyclip.co.uk](mailto:lettings@penyclip.co.uk) or tel. 0161 610 7007

David and Jane own Home, a house-building company based in Manchester. **To find out more about their properties visit:** [www.home-mcr.co.uk](http://www.home-mcr.co.uk)

The wooden flooring is from Edwards Cheshire.

**Visit:** [www.edwardscheshire.co.uk](http://www.edwardscheshire.co.uk), **email:** [sales@edwardscheshire.co.uk](mailto:sales@edwardscheshire.co.uk) or tel. 01925 283 000

The kitchen is by German company Rempp.

**Visit:** [www.rempp.cz/a\\_english](http://www.rempp.cz/a_english) or **email:** [info@modernikuchyne.cz](mailto:info@modernikuchyne.cz)

Many of the iconic pieces of furniture were sourced on Ebay.

**Visit:** [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)

The sofas in the living room are from Dwell. **Visit:** [www.dwell.co.uk](http://www.dwell.co.uk)