

TROPICAL HIDEAWAY



Taken in 2001, a few weeks after completing our second Atlantic crossing on board our sailing yacht Rainbow Spirit. From left to right, Danielle aged 14, Julie (42), Corrie-Anne (12), Martin (45) and Samantha (16). Full of life and enthusiasm and eager to start.....
..... little did we know we would still be building 10 years later.

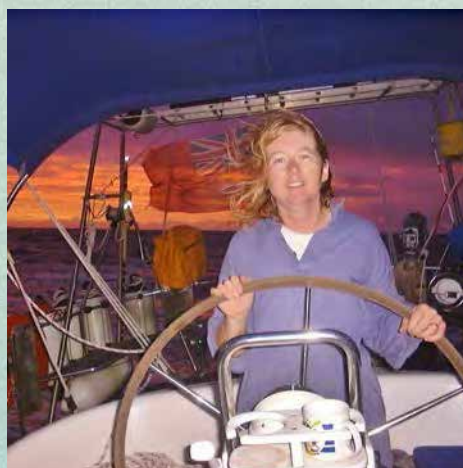
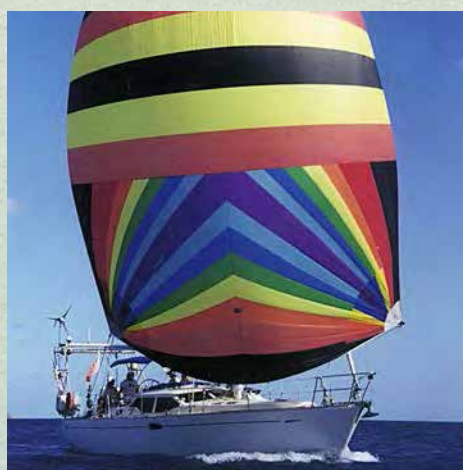


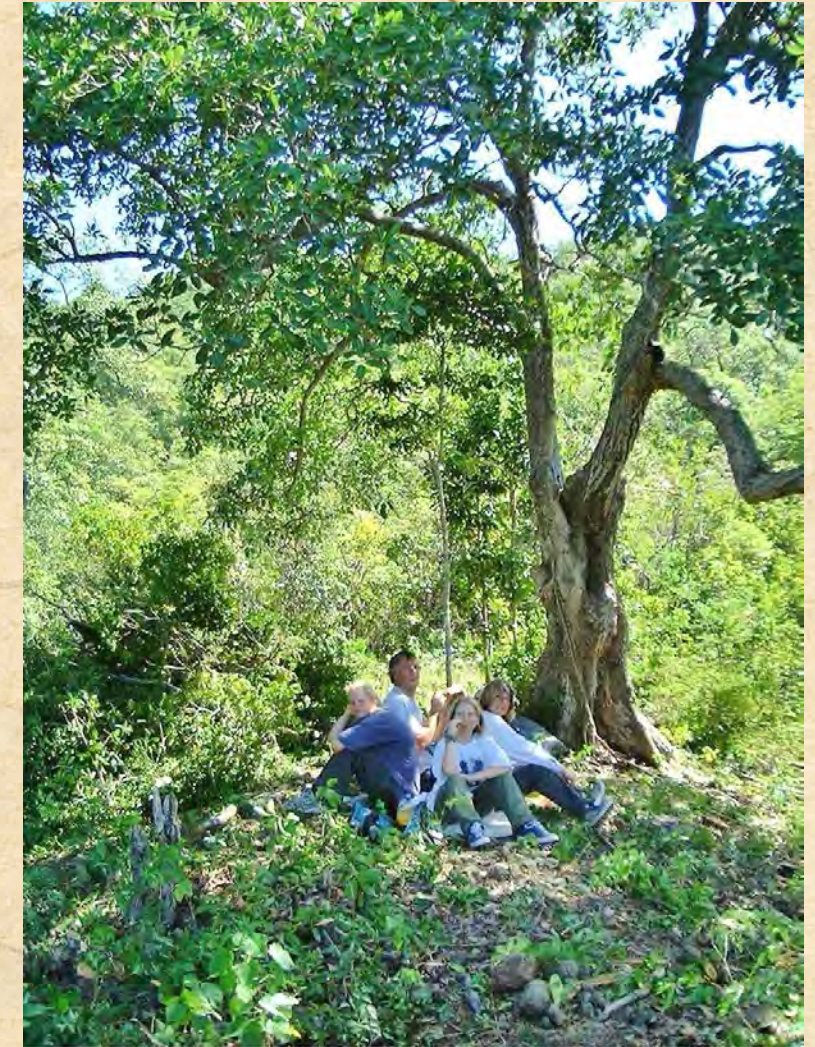
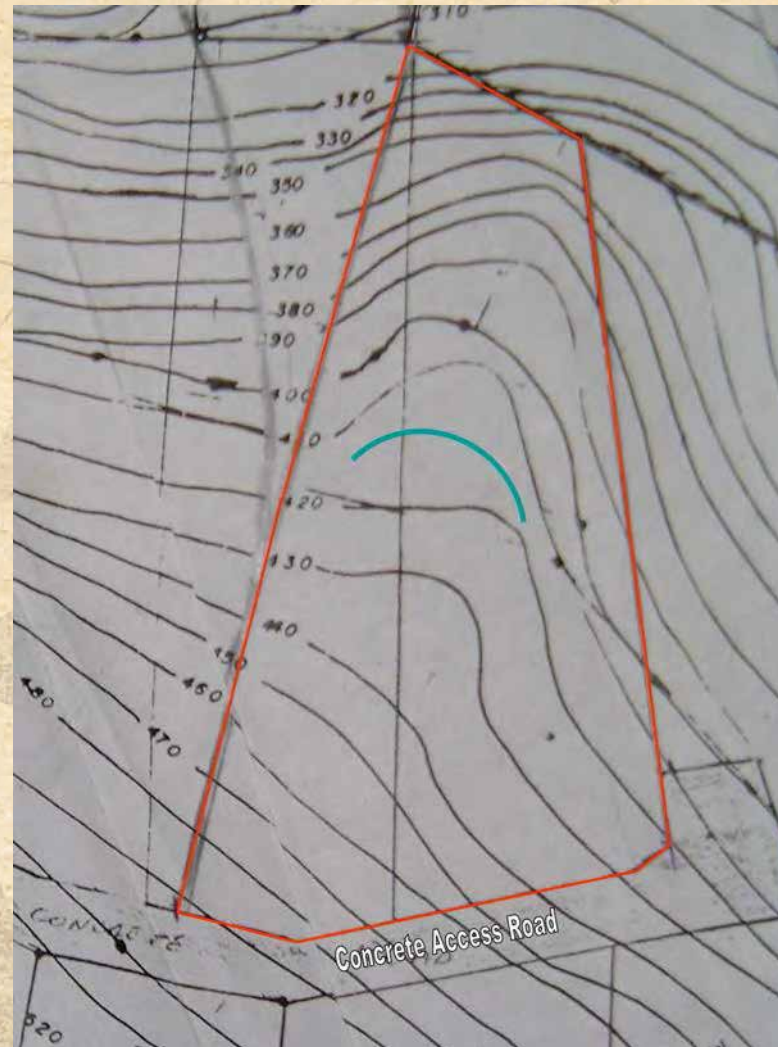
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We arrived in the Caribbean in 1996 after competing in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) . We made landfall in St Lucia a few days before Christmas, after spending 19 days and nights at sea onboard our Oyster 45' sailing yacht Rainbow Spirit. We cruised the Caribbean for two years, sailing from Antigua to Trinidad and finally succumbed to buying a piece of land in Bequia in 1998 and this where our building adventure begins.

From left to right, starting at the top

- 1) Rainbow Spirit as we leave Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. November 1996.
- 2) Rainbow Spirit wall painting. The artists, Dani, Corrie and Samie
- 3) Ocean sailing has many surprises and these wonderful dolphins were no exception. As seen off the port bow of Rainbow Spirit.
- 4) Rainbow Spirit with her "rainbow" multi coloured spinnaker flying.
- 5) Sometimes the weather can get rough. 40 knot winds and rough sea's make for an exhilarating but stressful few days.
- 6) We usually caught fish within a few hours of setting our line. This Mahi Mahi, also called Dorado or Dolphin fish (no relation to flipper) was nearly 4' long and kept us fed for several days.
- 7) Ocean sailing is a 24 hour responsibility and long, night time watches, can lead to extreme fatigue after several days. We operated a rotating watch system of 3 hours on and 6 hours off.
- 8) Ocean sailing is a roller coast ride of emotions. Fear and anxiety, fatigue and excitement make for an exhilarating but sometimes frightening journey.
- 9) After nineteen long days & nights and after travelling nearly 3000 miles across an ocean, making landfall was always a spectacular sight and an exciting time.





The Bush.

Uncleared and untouched. We couldn't see the view for the trees, but knew it had to be there somewhere.

The Contour Map.

We could quite clearly see the contours and this had to mean we had a relatively flat piece of land on a spur protruding out of the hillside.
Plot size 73,859 sq' - around 1.7 acres

The Tree

We slowly cleared the land leaving the mature and environmentally important trees alone. The tree we are sitting under is the large Cedar tree between the pool and the Infinity Studio.



Samie, Dani and Corrie on the hill. Dani with an indigenous 'land turtle'.

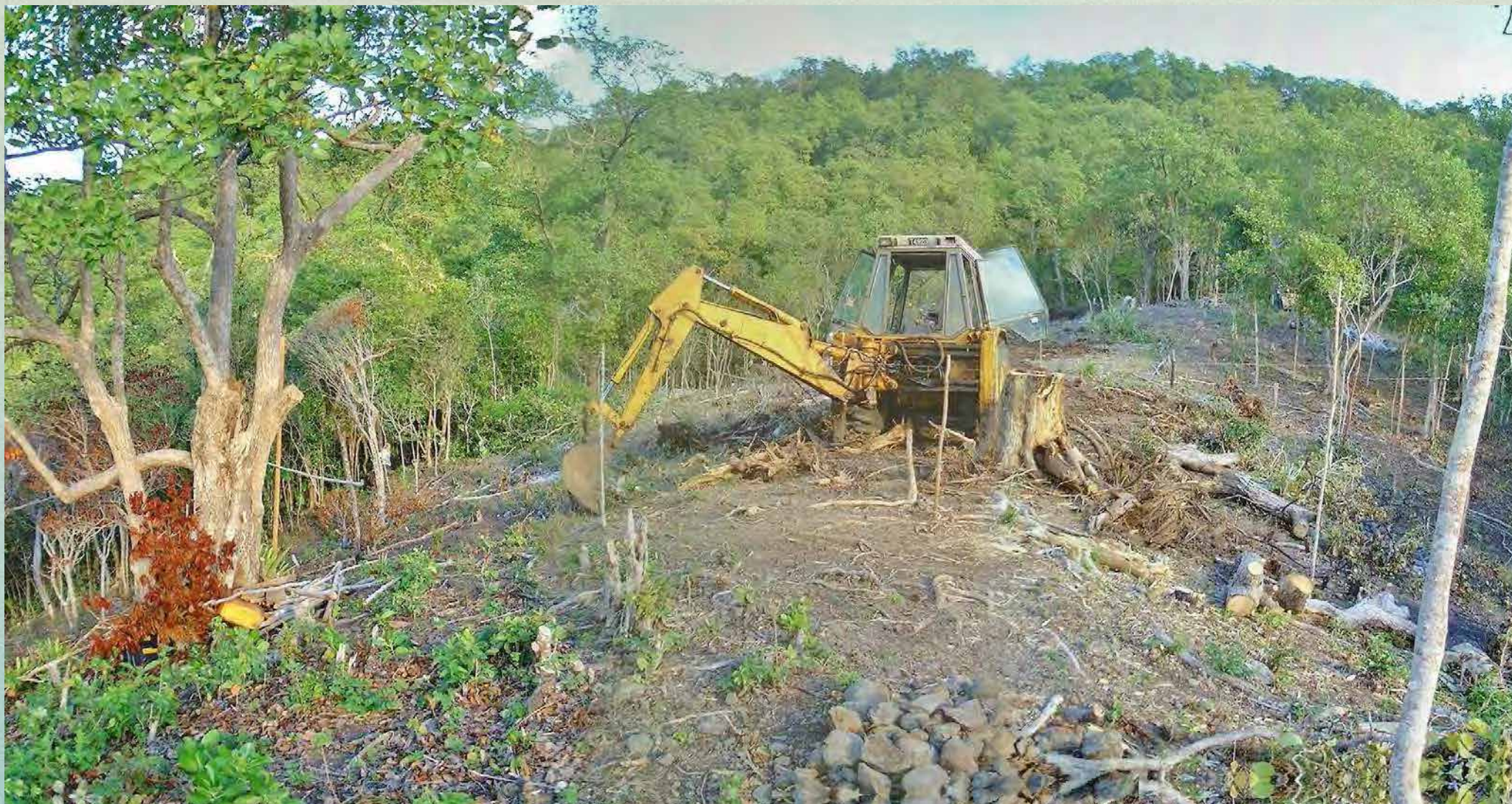


Clearing the land and keeping the large trees was a time consuming job that took several months to complete. We hired a machine to level part of the land whilst building work progressed with the roadside wall and the workshop.



It took several months to clear the land and we were very careful to leave certain trees alone and to only clear the land that had to be cleared. We did everything ourselves and having lived on a 100 acre hill farm in the Welsh hills we were accustomed to using a chainsaw and burning the branches. After clearing the land you could quite clearly see the relatively flat spur that protruded out of the hillside.

This unique feature allows us a truly panoramic view of both the beautiful Caribbean Sea and the surrounding, naturally forested hills.



Wanting to keep as many of the mature trees as possible, we designed the entire project around the large Cedar tree on the left.

This tree is now positioned outside the Infinity Studio, between the Infinity Pool and the main house.

All three photographs are taken from the Ocean side of the land, looking up towards the road.

March 2001.

The plan now was to build a large stone wall around the property, slice off the ridge and back fill to the top of the wall. This would allow Tropical Hideaway to be built on relatively flat land with only a slight slope going forward. The wall would also offer a level of security and keep out any unwanted visitors.



Sometimes we would just stand still and be silenced by the incredible panoramic views. The views were always changing as visiting ships and yachts passed by on their travels and adventures. The horizontal branch in the distance became the Infinity Pool top level.



Huge concrete and steel reinforced walls border the property and these were built using local stone. Some of these walls are so high that we had to build buttresses to strengthen the structure. Dani is standing at the bottom of the wall and that gives you a perspective on how high some of these walls are. The wall would vary in height from around 7' to 18' high and was a large project in itself.



Corrie our youngest daughter, now has to go to school in St Vincent, which means a 5am wake up call and a trip across the harbour on our dinghy to catch the 6.30am ferry.



The right hand photo show a very despondent me, as reality sets in about the huge undertaking and life changing decision we have committed ourselves and our children to.



A long awaited temporary electrical supply arrives. Now we can have hot cups of tea like a proper English family. We can also have a fridge, power tools and a light and are able to work even longer hours.



Levelling and marking out the site correctly was extremely important. We concreted in wooden posts to mark the perimeter of each villa then strung out horizontal lines for the height. The blue line shows the top of the steps, the red line the Infinity Pool.



Looking up at our land from Princess Margaret Beach. You can just see the site level, marking the edge and top of the Infinity Pool.



We never once bought water for our construction. We collected the run-off rainwater from the road and stored it in 1000 litre containers instead.



Above. Me and Julie making a panel for the workshop.



Above. Dani levelling in front of the workshop.



The Workshop.

Woodwork has always been a hobby of mine, so we were soon able to build ourselves a storeroom and workshop. The entrance to the road was finished, as were the boundary walls. We hired a digger to level the land and positioned marker posts to make sure the designs we had drawn would suit the size, shape and contours of the land and look aesthetically pleasing.



Palm Cottage.

Started in 2001, this was a difficult project as everything had to be done by hand. The forest was so dense it was difficult to mark out even the footings (see where Samie is standing-top right). Eventually the men dug out the base and built the 16' high water tank. The tank is so large it almost holds the entire Infinity Pool. Structural beams were then cast, the floor was laid and Palm Cottage was built on top of the tank.



Above. A brief shower won't dampen our enthusiasm.

Left to Right.

The complicated roof structure being assembled.

Samie at eaves height helping me with the beams.

Samie and Dean (Samie's boyfriend) putting on the Cedar shingles.

Samie and Dean fitting the intricate veranda railings.

The view over the bay.

Samie cutting out the 'whale and sailing boat' gingerbread.

Samie and Corrie cutting boards for the veranda.



Palm Cottage (July 2004)

Above. Nearing completion as we work on the gardens outside. The small green palms are now the large beautiful Golden Palms at the front of the cottage.

Left to right. Fitting the large sliding patio doors.

Wiring up the lighting and plug circuits.

Me and Dani building the steps down to Palm Cottage.

Samie and Dean placing rockery stones.

Dani tipping topsoil into the gardens.

Me and Dani casting the concrete drive.

A completion party with the guys after finishing the cottage July 2004.





Hibiscus Cottage

Above. Julie and Samie on the base. (November 2006)

Left. We started the groundworks early in 2004. Our first priority was just to get down there, so we literally built a staircase down the hill. Next were the deep footings (see Dani) and excavation, which all had to be done by hand again. We built a ramp so we could pour the concrete and slide the heavy blocks down. It was a labour intensive task and we finally cast the concrete floor with a water tank underneath later that year. The wooden cross on the bottom left photo marks the height of the Infinity Pool edge.



The photo above is taken from Rainbow Spirit and this is where we lived for the first few years of construction. Every morning we would row the dinghy ashore (thats our dinghy on the left) and walk up the hill with our food and water. The walk would take just 25 minutes. Everything at Hibiscus is a mirror image of Palm, the only difference being that everything had to be carried 4 times as far and down 100 steps. We must have walked up and down 20 times every day. Slowly but surely the work progressed and we finally finished Hibiscus Cottage late in 2007.





The Infinity Pool (June 2007)

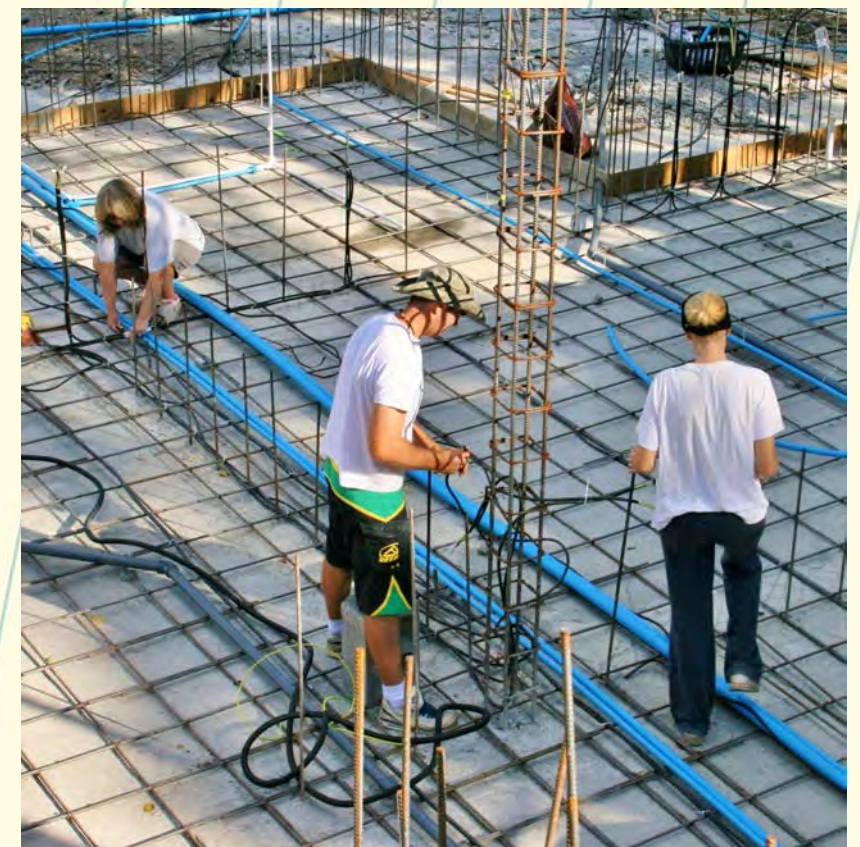
The main photograph shows the Infinity Pool and Pool House dug out to the correct levels. The wooden scaffolding around the perimeter allows us to accurately work out floor heights and wall positions. We then had to dig out by hand the footings for the walls and lay any larger pipes that may compromise the structure of the concrete floor in the ground.

Footings are filled with concrete after structural box sections of steel have been placed in them. Vertical steels coming out of the footings are where reinforced concrete or block walls will eventually be built. A thin screed of concrete is laid on the ground to keep all of the work areas clean and free from mud. Shuttering is put in place to suit the height of the finished floor level and a mesh of crisscrossing steels are placed at 9" intervals and wired together to form a grid. An extremely complicated network of plumbing, electrical & communications pipework is tied in place before the final cast of concrete is laid for the floor.



The cage of structural steel is raised off the floor and will be cast midway in the concrete.

Walking on the raised mesh of steels was uncomfortable and potentially very dangerous as you could easily trip and fall onto a vertical piece of steel causing serious injury.



Above. Me, Julie, Samantha and Dean laying the pipes to be cast into the concrete floor.



Below. Infinity Pool footings with structural vertical steels cast into the concrete.



November 2007.

The Pool House floor is finally cast and work begins on the Infinity Pool walls. Reinforced plywood shuttering is erected to the exact shape of the pool and a structural grid of steel is positioned into the void before the concrete is cast.



From left to right.
Piping the concrete to the
required area.

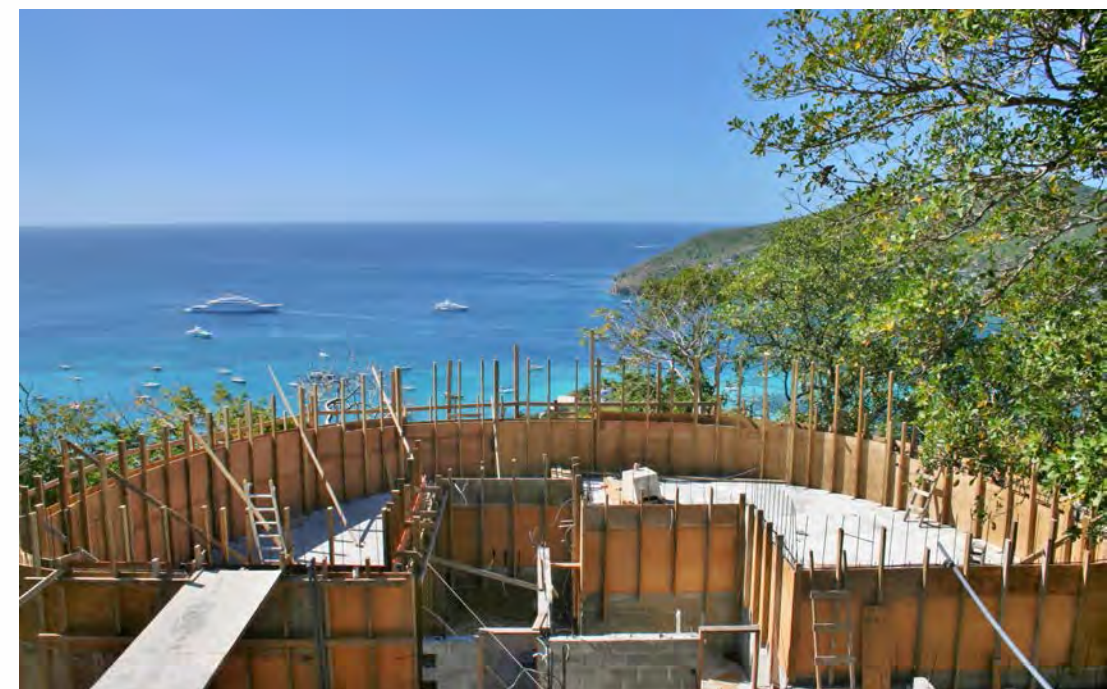
Steel steel everywhere. The floor
had 2 floating layers 6" apart.
Forming the steel to the correct
shape and slope was a time
consuming and difficult task.

Magnus, our foreman, was a
perfectionist and was on site for
over 5 years.



The concrete was 12" thick and
was a huge job. Once you start
pouring, the job has to be
finished in one cast, even if it
means working to 2am in the
morning.

Checking we still had the view
after casting the Infinity edge
wall. Note the Russian ship
'Eclipse', one of the largest
private yachts in the world.





The Pool House.

We started laying the blocks in October 2007. The curved wall on the left is being built around the Cedar Tree which is between the pool patio and the Infinity Studio.



Top left is a birthday party for one of the guys. Our treat would be a crate of Guinness and a banana cake. You just had to make sure they didn't have more than one birthday each per year. Forming an arch requires a detailed plan from me, a lot of formwork / steel and a mix of concrete, cast in one go. The steps lead to the mezzanine bedroom with the pool expansion tank underneath. The bottom photo looks towards the expansion tank where the Pool House kitchen will eventually be.

We cast the Pool House ceiling (pool patio floor) in April 2008. It was a complicated pour and it was nice to have a level surface the same height as the rest of the site. There were hundreds of pipes and conduits and everything had to come back towards the main house for connection later. It was also nice to have a dry, shady area, away from the burning, midday sun.



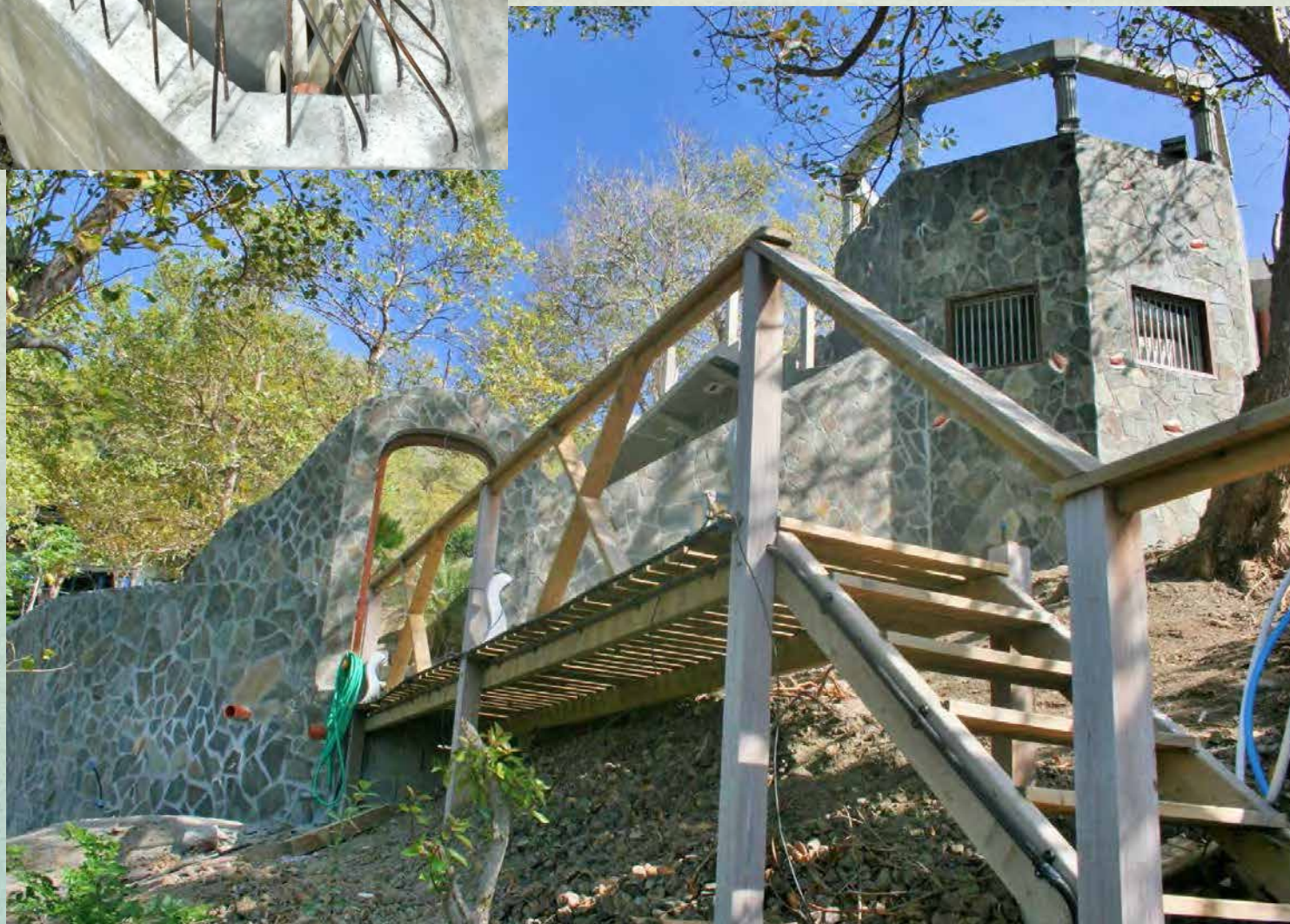
Looking towards the Pool House bedroom. Timber supports had to be left in place for 6 weeks for the concrete to cure properly. Hats of all shapes and sizes are being worn as the cast is being done in the heat of the midday sun and will last until late evening.

June 2008. We were not able to cast the infinity edge overflow with the casting of the pool wall, so we left structural steels protruding from the wall, constructed a very complicated plywood structure and poured the concrete to form the Infinity edge overflow. The bottom right photo shows Tropical Hideaway slowly taking shape. You can see Hibiscus Cottage on the lower right, Palm Cottage hidden on the left and the Infinity pool wall rising above the trees.



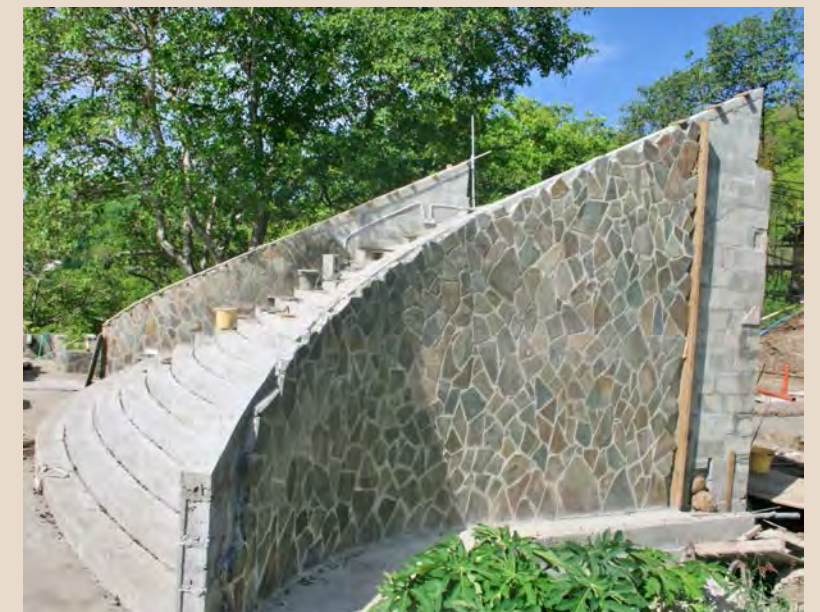
Casting the ledges, seats and curved steps in the pool. Our concrete work was always admired by everyone. Maggie the foreman, insisted on the best and although it cost a little more and took longer, the end results were always worth it. We spent weeks working out the heights for everything, the depth of water, height of the seats, footrests, serving areas etc and this was usually done by sitting on a chair, holding a glass and measuring the height.

Casting the water tank under the Gazebo. We built a storeroom above that and finally the grand Gazebo with an octagonal shaped roof overlapping the pool. This provided a lovely shaded area for four of our ornate, coral stone seats.



Above. The Infinity Pool wall, the Gazebo and archway have now been connected to the large perimeter stone wall (see photo on page 5) and this huge stone wall will eventually surround most of Tropical Hideaway.

Above right. The Gazebo formwork (Maggie) to casting (me) to the roof (Samie & Dean).



Our preference would have been to construct the main villa first with the surrounding cottages and pool etc being built at a later date. Unfortunately access to the site and the contours of the land meant we had to build from the front coming backwards with the cottages being built first and the Infinity Pool and Pool House being built after that. The photos above show the complicated structure of the grand staircase which will eventually connect the pool patio area to the main Villa. The builders said this was one of the most complicated formwork and casting jobs they had ever undertaken.



STONE STONE EVERY WHERE



We designed Tropical Hideaway to blend in with the surrounding forest and natural landscape, to have buildings that flowed with the contours of the land and to have incredible views, yet be hidden from view.

We wanted to use local materials wherever possible and natural stone seemed ideal. It would blend in with the landscape, be comforting to the eye and also be maintenance free.

Most of our stone came from a landslip that had fallen into the ocean on the northern part of Bequia. A local boat would travel to the site and free divers would dive down and bring the stone to the surface. It was then taken to a local beach and we would truck it up our steep hill. The stone was beautiful, came in a variety of colours and was ideal for building.

It was a costly operation and we had around 40 lorry loads to complete the project.



18th MAY 2008.

We left Bequia early May, flying back to the UK to organise and load one of our containers being shipped out to Bequia. On the evening of the 18th we received a phone call to say that Tropical Hideaway was on fire and everyone was trying to prevent the fire from spreading to the other buildings. We had no idea as to the extent of the fire and feared the worst. It was a devastating blow to us and cost us around \$120,000 US. It could have been much worse and fortunately nobody was injured. Palm Cottage and the timber store were saved and only suffered melted guttering and some minor burning on the roof. The cause of the fire was never discovered, but was probably due to a shorting extension lead that had partially worked loose from a plug.

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We were absolutely devastated, mentally exhausted, physically burnt out and financially defeated.



The workshop and main store had gone with \$50,000 US of patio doors and all our machinery. The car exploded as did several gas cylinders. Due to the swift action of Laun Leslie our building contractor (below) the nearby cottage and buildings survived. It could have been so much worse.





April 2009. Julie and myself at the top of the steps with a wonderful sunset and the realisation that our money had almost gone. Tropical Hideaway Villa hadn't even been started yet.



Left. Christmas party for the guys in December 2008. Centre. Landscaping and designing the garden was a job I always enjoyed. Right. Plastering and tiling the Pool House. For structural reasons the timber supports had to be left in situ for 6 weeks after casting the Pool House ceiling.



The Geestline Shipping Company would have regular sailings from Portsmouth to St Vincent. We would then charter a local ship and bring the container and freight into Bequia. We would always "stuff" the containers in the UK ourselves as we could utilise every sq' of space available. Here I am in Portsmouth packing the boxes in tight and reversing a Jeep into an already full container.





Building a new workshop and storage building was a priority. Every piece of machinery had to be replaced as did all the doors and windows, the tools, the packs of timber and numerous other items. Import duties are very high in the Grenadines and as a rule of thumb, by the time you ship it in and pay the duties, the item will have doubled in cost compared to it's original value.



February 2009.

We hired a machine to excavate the site to the correct levels. We had to use a back hoe with a percussion chisel to get through the rock. This was a solid foundation for the footings, but expensive to excavate.



Right Page.

The cleared area looked huge. Surely our house wasn't going to be that big! The wall at the front is the top of the steps which will eventually join the main Villa. The orange lines mark where the water tank walls will be. Excavation of these footings would have to be done by hand.





There will be four separate water tanks, the height of which will be same as the top of the steps and the ground level on the opposite side.

Right. This will eventually be the Infinity Studio.





Top Left. Digging out the intricate network of footings and large pipes that have to be buried under the main concrete slab.

Top Right. Using a pipe to pour the wet concrete into the hard to reach footings.

Left. Constructing the box sections of steel to be placed into the footings.

Centre. Out of the footings are vertical steels that will be used in the columns and walls.

Right. All of the footings have structural box sections of steel as these footings will ultimately support the entire house.



May 2009.

The footings have been dug and the concrete is being poured over the steel cage sections. The upright columns of steel will become structural vertical columns of reinforced concrete that will support the house. The area to the left will be one of two long water tanks and the area at the bottom right will also be a water tank.



These vertical steels will eventually be encased in concrete and will become water tank walls



Maggie the foreman checking the work. Some foremen refuse to do manual work, but Maggie was always in the thick of it and enjoyed the day to day challenges that inevitably came with a project of this size.



Every pipe was precisely positioned. The larger pipes were laid under the concrete floors to avoid any structural weakness.



We were always amazed by the amount of steel that went into everything. It looked like they were preparing to build a 10 storey building not a 3 storey house. The attention to detail was always there, with everything being level, upright and in square.



Everywhere and everything was always kept immaculately clean.



Above. The Pump room with the two main water tanks above. There were so many pipes here and everything had to be pressure tested before the floor was cast.
Top Right. This large 10" diameter pipe runs through the entire length of property.



Above. Three pumps for the drinking water, pool and gardens. Pipes buried in concrete
Left. The sand filter and heat exchanger used for filtering and heating the pool.





Four water tanks 10' high with the Infinity Studio on the left and the Ocean View room on the right. An incredible undertaking. It looks more like a boatyard constructing Noah's Ark than a building site constructing a house.



Months of work went into the formwork which eventually would be filled with concrete. Everything is supported and braced as the forces can be huge when you pour concrete.



This is going to be a long day. All the concrete has to be cast in one go so there are no joins that may structurally weaken the concrete. Each long tank holds 25,000 imperial gallons.



Curved wall of concrete for the spiral stairs.



Now that the water tanks have been cast we can start work on the adjoining Infinity Studio. The first job was to construct the columns and build the lintels over the patio doors. We then had to construct and cast the intricate archways that would become the colonial style covered veranda's providing shade, shelter and privacy for the room.





The concrete castings for the archways were complicated as the concrete had to project out from the wall by 4". The surrounding stonework could then be built flush with the arches. Garden paths are built, a cartwheel is built into a wall and stonemasons spend weeks laying stone. The bathroom is tiled using natural coral stone, giving a beautiful and stunning effect.





On the 9th February 2010 we dragged the famous stone bathtub into the room. Weighing over 3 tons and having been stored outside for over 3 years it was nice to see it finally come home. It's history... hand carved from a very large rock on the mountain slopes of a small Philippine Island. The rock was cut in half and roughly gauged out by local villagers using the most basic of tools. Some small round trees were cut down and the tub was roped and slowly dragged, pushed and lowered down the mountain to the local village. Here it was meticulously chiselled, sanded and finished with local villagers spending 1000's of man hours in its creation. It was shipped to the UK and finally brought to Bequia in one of our containers.





Being the privileged owners of this lovely stone bath now meant we had an obligation to show the bath at it's best and in as natural a setting as possible. The bath was basically one very large rock, so using natural stone on the floor and around the bath would be the obvious choice. Corrie was the first person to try out the bath with water in.



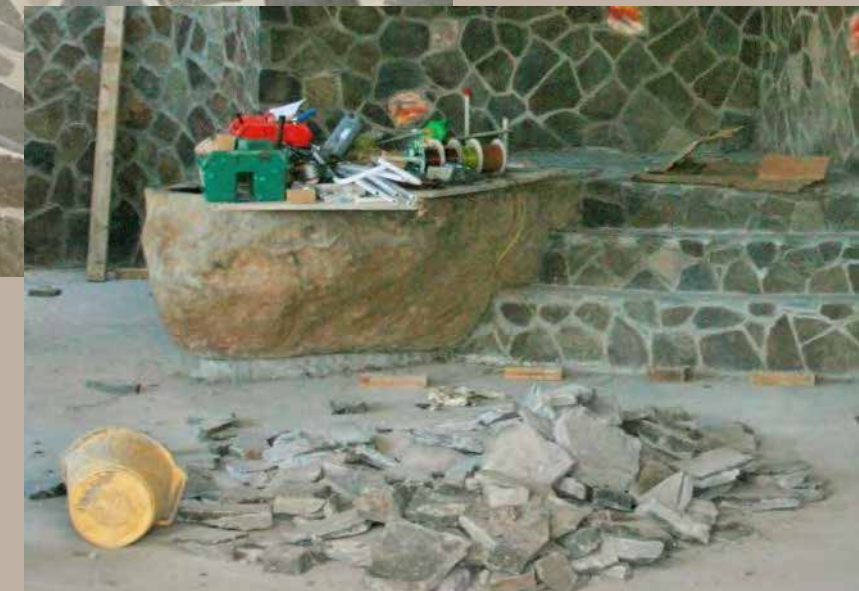
Above.
Now the bath was in place we had to build steps and an area where you could safely climb down into the bath. One of the most difficult things we had to do, was aligning up and lowering down, the 3 ton bath tub onto the drainpipe.



Above, below and below left. Stonemasons spent weeks laying stone on the floor and walls. Building the stone steps in a curve gave them practice for building the curved stone wall around the spiral staircase.



Bequia is a dry Island and we have to be careful with water especially in the dry season. We do try and accommodate most of our guests with a bathtub "experience", but if we are low on water this may not always be possible.





Above. Shows the Ocean View bedroom together with the laundry room and the curved wall where a spiral staircase will eventually connect up to the kitchen level. Other photos clockwise, pouring the concrete for the Ocean View bedroom floor, removing the plywood casings from the columns, building the internal walls, putting the pipework into the ring beam and preparing the arches before pouring the concrete.





Ocean View bedroom and the laundry room. 6th December 2009.

Above. For structural reasons the timber supports for the arches had to be left in place for 6 weeks before removing them. Other photos anti-clockwise. Constructing the cantilever path to the bedroom, steelwork being put in the path, getting ready for the large patio doors, the stonework in the room and finally, the beautiful sunset view from the Ocean View bedroom.





Top left. Julie and Corrie at the top of the steps which for so long led to nowhere. Now they connect to the main living area and another phase of the project is about to start.

Top right. Working 7 days a week has been normal for a couple of years now. There is always so much to do. Even when the builders are not there we still have to prepare plans and drawings for them.

Bottom left. The view from inside the pool.

Bottom centre. Me looking despondent. There is so much work to do and so many pipes to put in.

Bottom right. Julie tying the pipes up.

November 2009. Casting the living area and kitchen floor.



The steelwork is now finished and we will spend the next two weeks putting all the conduits and pipes in place ready for laying the floor. If we make a mistake or forget to put one in, the consequences can be serious. The curved shape on the left is for the kitchen spiral staircase to rise through the ceiling.

From left to right, top to bottom. The kitchen spiral staircase.

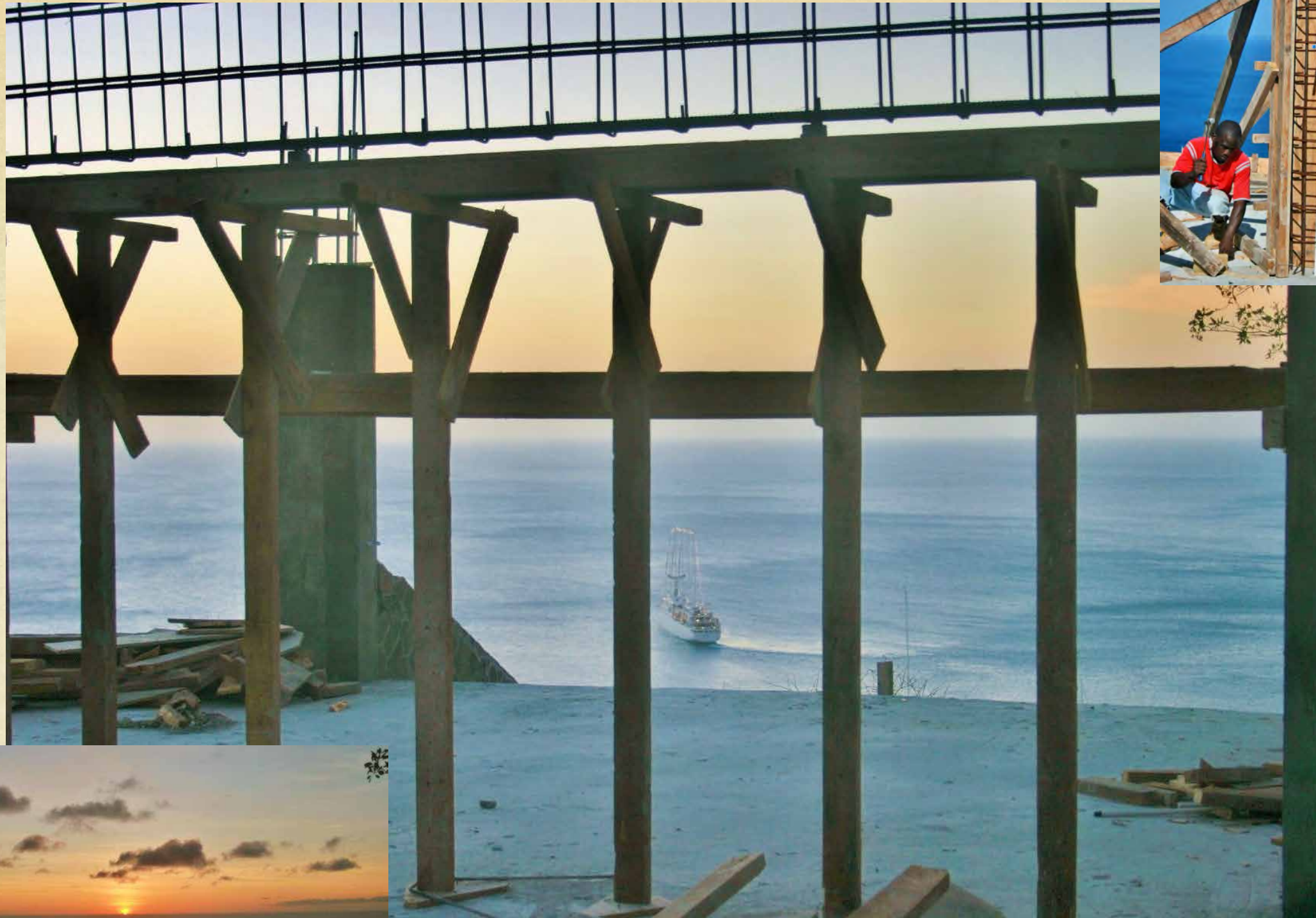
The Infinity Room spiral staircase

White pipes are electrics, security and communications, blue pipes are water, large white pipes are drainage and brown pipes are sewage.

Starting to lay the floor with concrete. The concrete is carefully poured around the staircase. For structural integrity the entire floor will be cast in one day.



February 2010. Having the first floor of the Villa finished was a huge moral boost for us. It was just incredible to simply stand on the deck and enjoy the beautiful views. After everyone had gone we would grab a couple of cold beers, sit on an old wooden bench and enjoy the views. After 2 or 3 beers we would be suitably relaxed and would then think about food for the evening. It would often be 9 o'clock by the time we ate and before we knew it, we would be tucked up in bed ready to face "The Building of Tropical Hideaway" for another day.



Above.
A perfect
blue sky
with a
perfect
blue sea.
A column
is built,
the pipes
are in and
soon we
will pour
the
concrete.



Watching the sun go down was always an amazing sight and on some evenings we would even see the famous "Green Flash".
Sailing ships would often leave just before dark ready for another days adventure.

3 photos below. Formwork and steelwork for the kitchen / living room arches and lintels.



Centre. Conduits and pipes in the lintels and arches. Bottom. Everything had to be supported by a maze of timbers

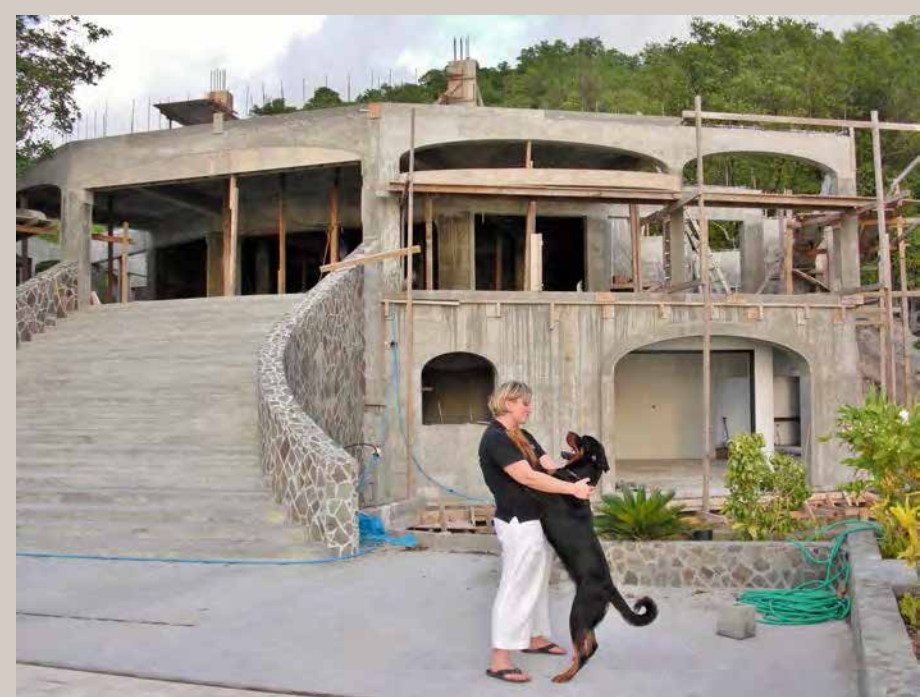


Slowly but surely the building work continues. The walls are built and the window / door openings, lintels and arches are cast.





We had to build a ramp to the top of the ring beam and a plywood boardwalk to wheelbarrow the concrete to the right area.



May 2010. Casting the Penthouse Suite floor.

The ring beams, arches and lintels have been cast and the complicated plywood structure to support the concrete floor is in place and supported below by hundreds of vertical timbers.



As
always
the
views
are
simply
amazing.



A structural grid of steel reinforcement is in place, together with hundreds of pipes servicing water and drainage, electrical, security and communication cables.





19th July 2010.

Celebrating in style. We now have a ceiling and it is also Maggie's birthday. We toast Maggie's birthday and our success in now having a roof, with a local Guinness and a slice of birthday cake in hand.



Small photos clockwise.

The conduits have to terminate in a hidden void allowing access to pull the cables through. The dining table view. A circle of stone for the round dining table. Coral tiles being laid on the veranda.





The living room area is huge.



25th December 2010



Coral tiles on the Villa steps.



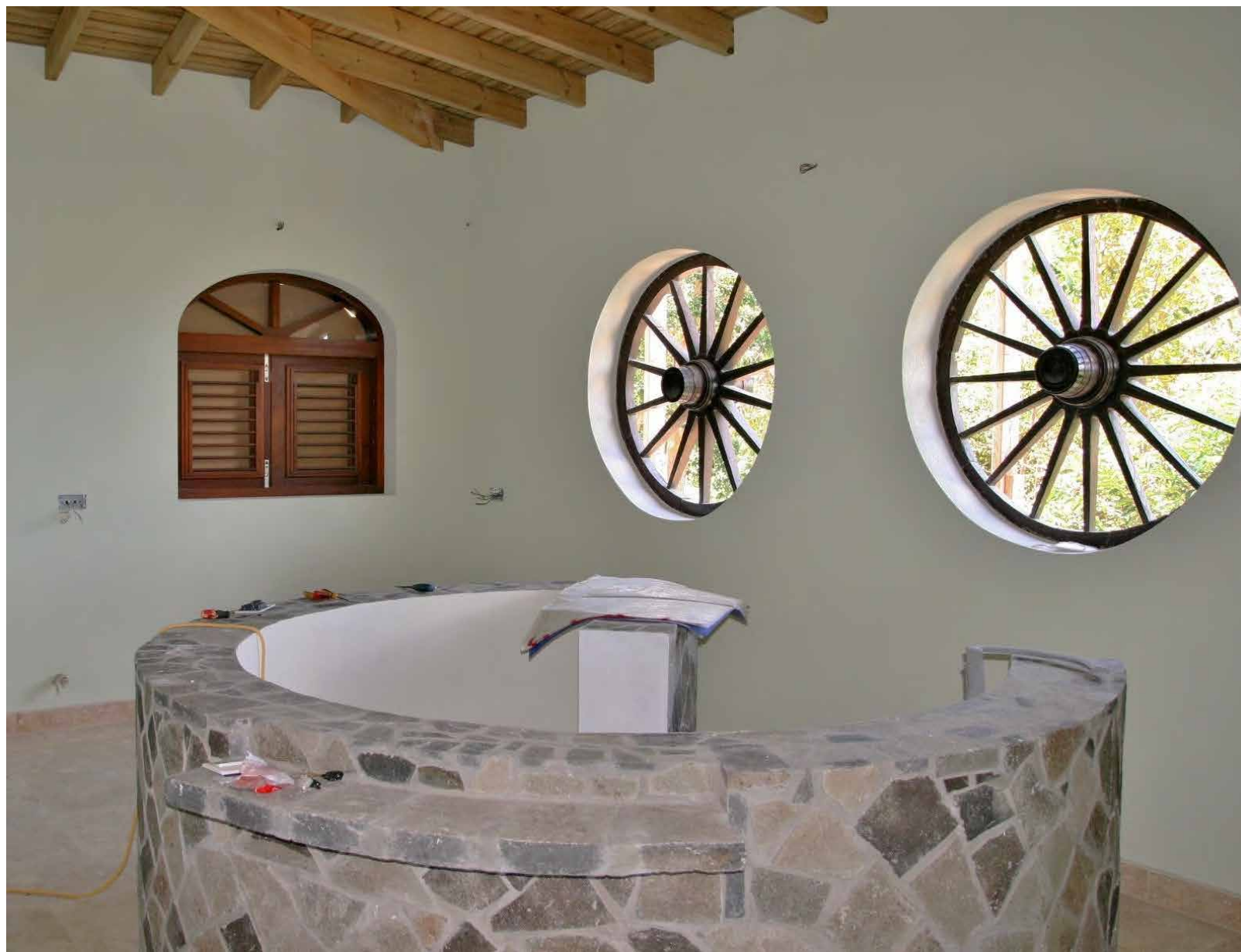
The lovely view from the dining table.

The living area and snooker table floor.

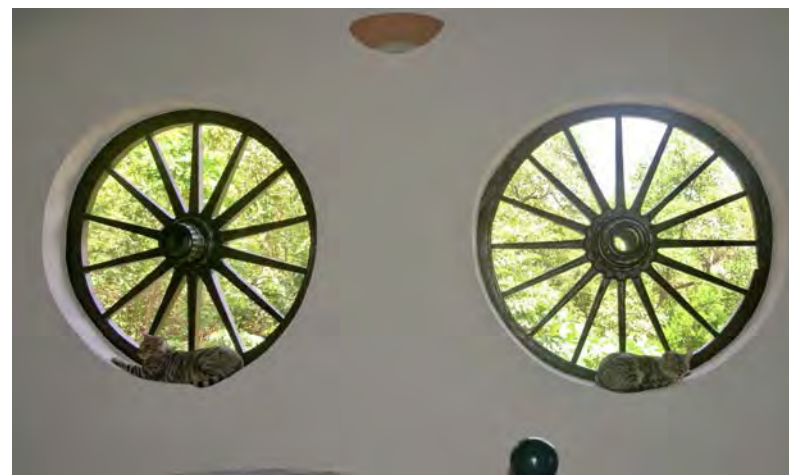


Who says you can't have Christmas dinner on a building site. Two plywood sheets, a few bottles of wine and some good friends. We had lobster salad for starter, a full traditional Christmas dinner and Jamie Oliver Christmas pudding to finish us off.





The kitchen finally gets a staircase. For several months we had been using a ladder to get from the laundry room to the kitchen and really appreciated the spiral staircase.



These genuine cartwheels came from Thailand and only a few months earlier would have been used by farmers to move their produce around. They make a great Caribbean window and a lovely ledge for our Bengal cats.



With each level of the Villa, the views just got better and better.



August 2010. The Penthouse Suite.

The columns rise out of the floor ready for the final phase. Sunsets from here were always amazing.



Plywood surrounds are constructed on 3 sides of the vertical steels. We then put our pipes and conduits in. The fourth side is boarded up and the column is filled with concrete. Diagonal timbers support the columns to ensure they do not move.



Having a rest in the Penthouse Suite. What more could I want? I have a chair to sit on, shade from the sun, a fantastic view and Julie will be up with a cold beer soon.



Above.
Constructing the walls, door / window openings and the lintels for the Penthouse Suite.

Left & Right. The Penthouse outdoor area has open windows with arches.

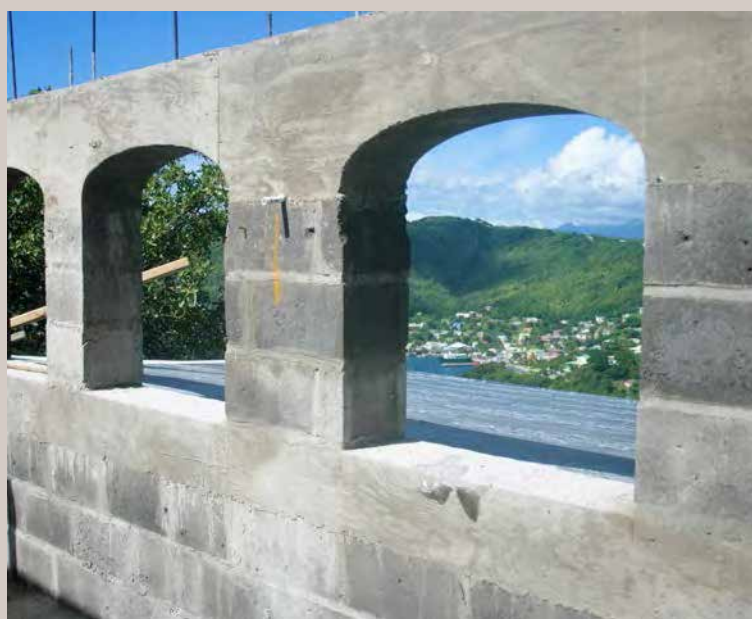
Below.
Constructing the arches and lintels, with vertical timbers supporting the main structural support beams which run the full length of the house.



Sometimes there would be so many timbers you couldn't walk through the room.



November 2010. We used hundreds of plywood sheets for the formwork. Each time we removed them from the cured concrete they would have to be used for something smaller. Eventually we ended up with literally, a small mountain of small plywood offcuts. 4" x 2" timbers were used for the vertical supports and these gradually decreased in length until they also became unusable. The above photo shows one of the three main Penthouse roof support beams being constructed.



Above. The bay window in the Penthouse Suite.

Top left. Azza and Marlon. Azza did most of the steelwork at Tropical Hideaway.

Below centre. Salo laying the 1" thick T & G boarding on the adjacent roof.

Below right. Michael Brown (red T shirt) was brought in after Maggie our foreman had an accident with his eye. Brown was an excellent replacement foreman and finished most of Tropical Hideaway in time for my family's forthcoming visit in April 2011. Maggie, thankfully, made a full recovery.



March 2011. We were getting somewhat nervous as my entire family were coming out at Easter. The Villa should have been finished 2 years ago and my family were due to arrive in just 5 weeks.
Below. The front of Tropical Hideaway Villa slowly takes shape.



Top right. Laying the steelwork for the front porch area.
Centre right. The concrete is poured for the porch.
Bottom right. The reception area with an opening for the grand spiral staircase.



We 'lime pickled' the Scandinavian Redwood boarding on the Penthouse roof to great effect. The entire outdoor living area looked stunning and gave the ambiance, privacy and sense of space exactly how we had designed and envisaged it. The room was simply amazing and the views just incredible.



Right centre. Laun Leslie (main contractor) inspecting the stonework on the floor.





Seeing the baluster rails being cast was fascinating and the finished job was superb.

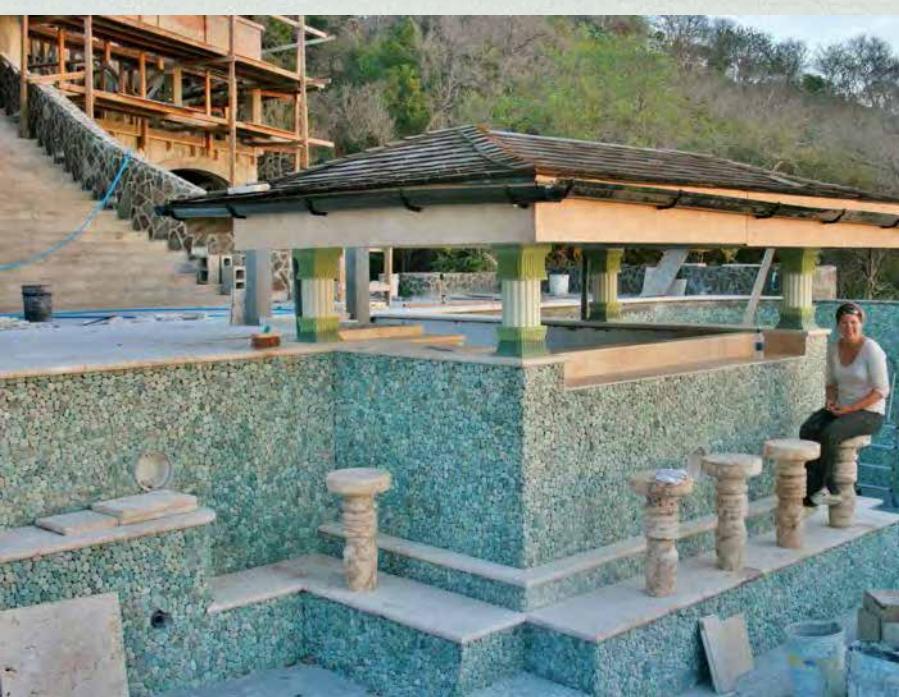
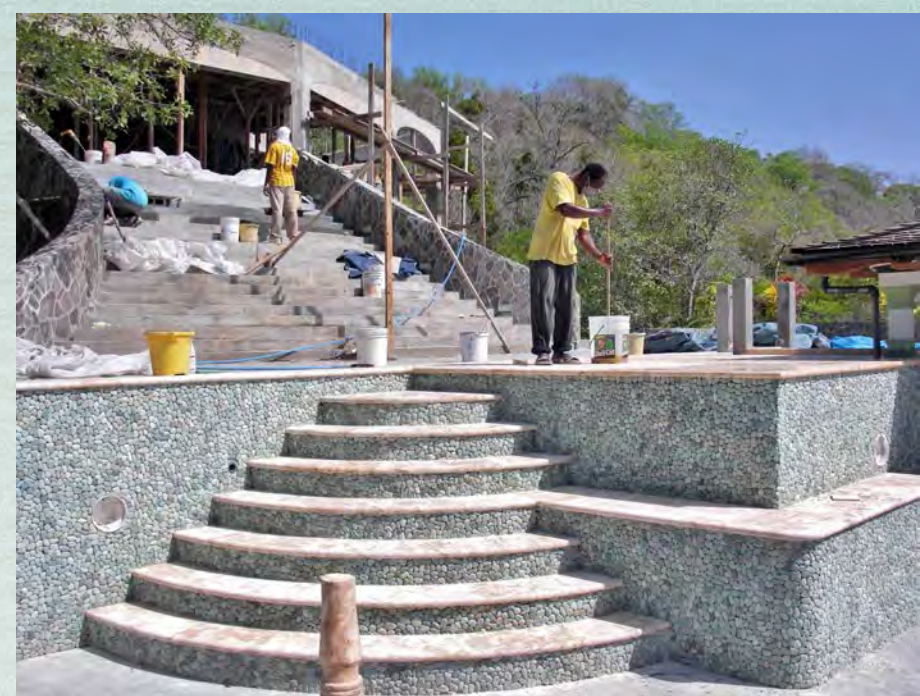


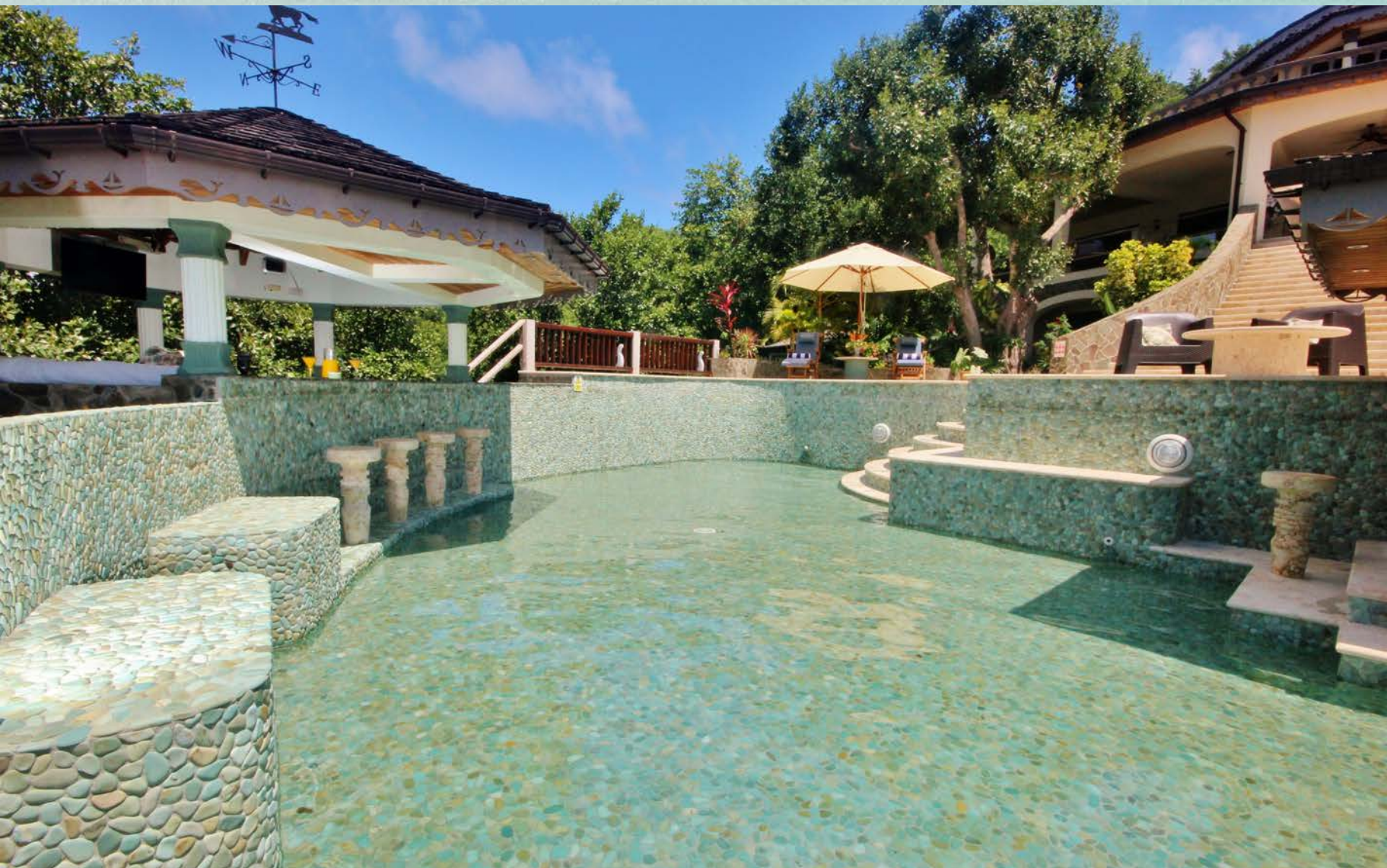
Corrie, myself and Tonga with an amazing sunset behind. Typically this was the time of day we would stop work. The stone had been laid in the outdoor living area, the tiling was nearly complete and soon it would be time to remove the ladder and start the complicated task of installing the ornate spiral staircase.





Tiling the pool took around 3 months for 4 men. The tiler (he did an excellent job) didn't enjoy the pebbles and said he would never return again.





Filling the pool was a momentous occasion. We were so excited we just couldn't wait so me, Julie and Corrie went in with only 12" of water. The pool held around 60,000 gallons and took a few days to fill. After everything had been finished we had a pool party and barbecue for the guys. I served the drinks from behind the bar and they all thoroughly enjoyed it. For many, it was the first time they had been allowed in a homeowners pool.



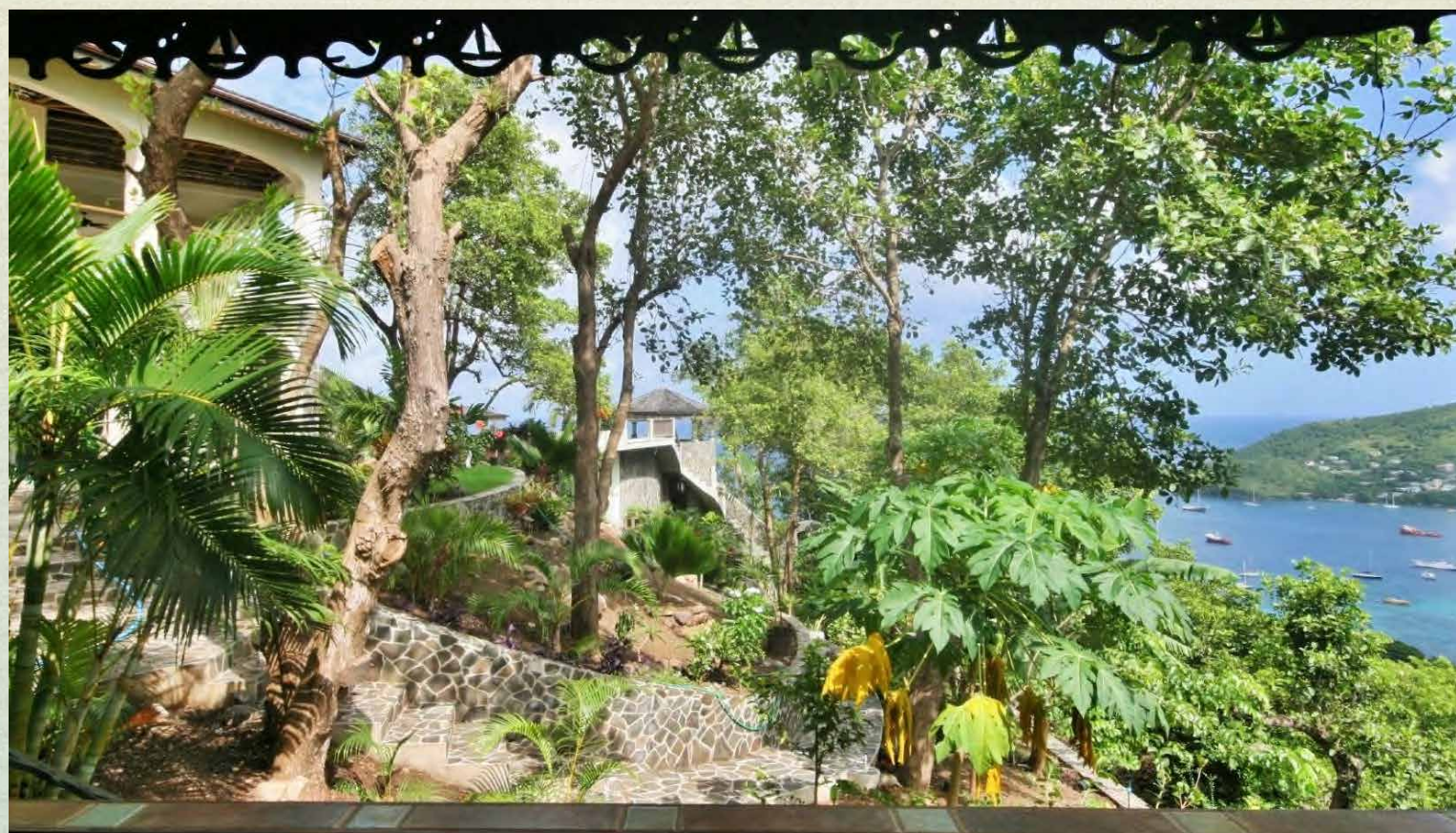


Tropical Hideaway was nearing completion, but we still had a considerable amount of work to do around the house. A garage / store shed had to be finished, as did the entrance drive, the landscaping and the gardens. We managed to design an island garden in front of the Villa and to our knowledge this was the only island on Bequia you could drive around..... Remember to give way to the right please. We're British !



We had to remove a vast amount of rock and dirt to make way for the garage.





The ground at Tropical Hideaway consisted of mainly rock and wouldn't support the kind of gardens I wanted. We had around 80 truck loads of top soil delivered and this allowed me to design and plant a tropical garden I could have only dreamt about a few months earlier. Gardening was a hobby and a great pleasure for me and I thoroughly enjoyed the design, the choosing and the planting of the gardens.



A Triangle Palm named after it's shape. The cartwheel with Bougainvillea would be stunning.



Tropical Hideaway (December 2013)

Tropical Hideaway was finally completed in January 2012 and the properties are now surrounded by mature and vibrant tropical gardens. We spend our time maintaining the properties and gardens, enjoying the views and interacting with our guests who are always interested in our adventures. We feel very lucky to be living in such a beautiful place, with such interesting people passing through our lives.



Above.
The entrance to Tropical Hideaway complimented by lovely gardens and the vivid colours of a Bougainvillea bush.

Tobago's 10" pipe bed.



Tonga's mischievous face.



Tobago's big cat walk.



Tahiti, Tonga, Trini and Tobago.



Missy our friendly Rottweiler.



Tonga on his sunset walk.



Missy with her wedding bow.

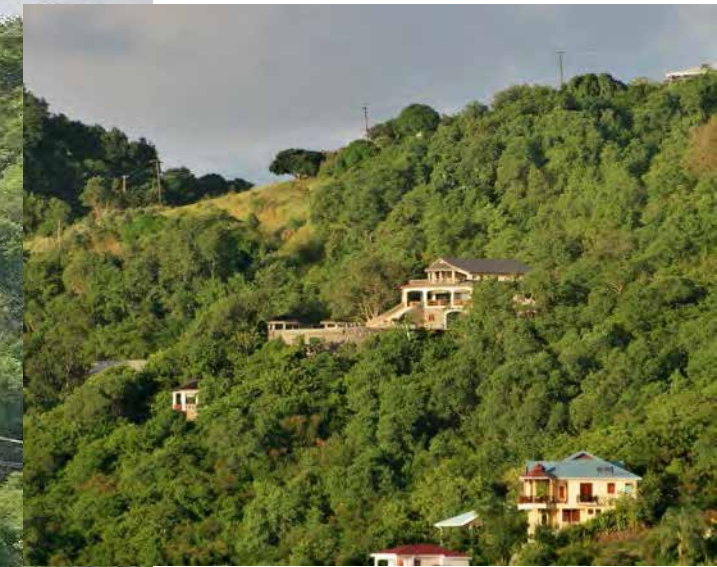


Our stray cats, Mini, Tommy, Coco, Tabs & Momcat.



A local Manicou enjoying the cat food.

Situated by itself and enjoying panoramic views of the Caribbean Sea, Tropical Hideaway is surrounded by natural forest and enjoys a peaceful and very private location. The photo below was taken from Admiralty Bay in April 2011.



Top Right. Tropical Hideaway as seen from Peggy's Rock.
Centre Right. Taken from high up in Lower Bay.
Bottom Right. Kindly taken by some guests as they fly in Bob's plane.



Where is everyone now ?

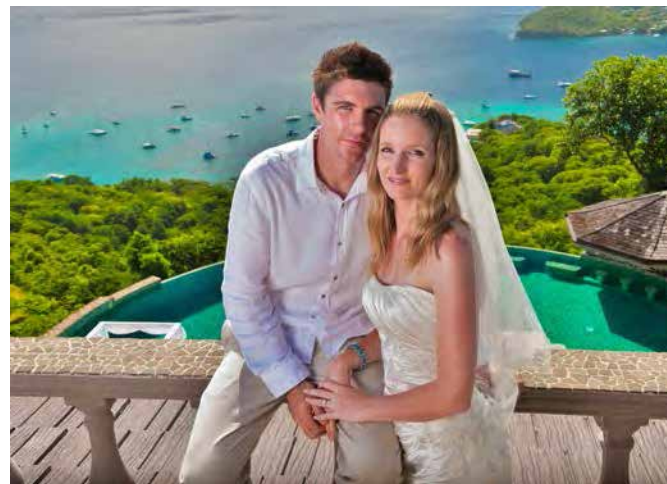
in 2014

Corrie our youngest is now 'Front of House' at Lion Camp, a remote safari lodge in the pristine South Luanga National Park, Zambia. She is also a trained massage therapist and practises both in Zambia and at Tropical Hideaway when she visits. We have visited Lion Camp twice and thoroughly recommend it.



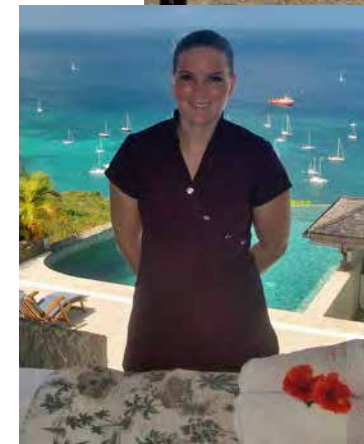
When people ask how are you today Martin? My usual reply is, "I woke up this morning" which is always a good thing, "when I opened my eyes my wife was still there", which is another good thing "and when I went outside and saw the view Wow ! I was speechless". We truly are very fortunate to be living in such a beautiful place.

What can we expect
We travelled the world and our girls continue the adventure.....



Dani is a highly experienced, world renowned, massage therapist offering a full range of

treatments. She has worked for many high profile clients ranging from famous celebrities and the Russian elite, to well known football club owners. She is often flown to exotic destinations in the owners private jet.



Samie and Dean helped us build the Cottages, the Pool House and the Infinity pool. They left in 2008 to start their own life and adventures in New Zealand and returned in 2012 to get married at

Tropical Hideaway. Samie is an experienced web site designer and designed our lovely website.



Tropical Hideaway Wedding

We went through a financial crisis, were forced to sell our home of 25 years in the UK. We had to sell our sailing yacht Rainbow Spirit, our lifeline to explore other Islands. We endured extreme physical hardship, mental exhaustion, depression and quite easily could have ruined our 33 year old marriage.... We are survivors, it made us stronger, we appreciate everthing we have and every day we look outside and realise how fortunate we are to live on this beautiful Caribbean Island.

Was it all worth it ? "Yes I think so"
Would I do it again ? "Probably not"



My special thanks to Julie for enduring 8 years of living on a building site.
Not an easy task for anyone.

Jan 2013 - Admiralty Bay, Bequia as seen from Peggy's Rock.... Can you see Tropical Hideaway ?



Photographs, storyline, layout and design by Martin Mansfield - January 2014.
www.tropicalhideawaybequia.com

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