

# MILLMOUNT NEWS AUTUMN 2022



**The start of  
a new era as  
JDDK becomes an  
Employee Ownership Trust**



# COAST & COUNTRY



The rear of the house has also been remodelled and extended.



The front of the house before the refurbishment works began.

## A TALE OF TWO HOMES...

Commissions for individual homes are never the same, bringing individual design aspirations from homeowners as well as varied settings for our designs to respond to.

Two very different homes in very different locations, gave the team the opportunity to produce two very different solutions to the challenges and opportunities of the respective briefs.

Whilst enjoying a stunning setting on the Northumberland coast, our clients felt their 1930's detached property neither suited their lifestyles nor made the best of the wonderful views. Our proposals significantly altered the internal layout to improve the flow of movement between spaces and floors and provided contrasts between the rural-facing rear and front coastal-facing aspects. We worked closely with our client to understand their lifestyle, going on to create a home that was a perfect match with how they wished to live in the house.



The oak cruk frame creates a lovely double height space with stunning views over the countryside.

Works included a new extension to the rear and replanning the external setting of the building to provide usable outside spaces that complemented the views from, and orientation of the gardens. Whilst the house already had generous window openings which were retained in key locations, we incorporated new large areas of glazing with the addition of a two-storey bay window with 'frameless' glazing to reflect the new contemporary style of the design and maximise the coastal and heritage views.

The second, rural house is a new build which replaces a previous property on the site. Set in a woodland location, the design incorporates an oak cruk frame which our client had rescued from a previous building project and which gave us the opportunity to create a stunning interior with views over the surrounding countryside from the full height glazed elevation.

Clad in timber and copper, the forms of the house reflect the natural setting and ensure that it sits modestly within the woodland. The ground floor and timber deck are raised above the woodland floor, built off timber clad posts which ensure that the structure sits lightly on the site without damage to the adjacent tree roots.



The house is nestled amongst the trees, the materials reflecting its natural setting.



The JDDK team at our recent well-being day at Gosforth Nature Reserve.

## ALL CHANGE BUT BUSINESS AS USUAL!

In September we undertook a 100% share transfer to an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT), which now exists for the benefit of JDDK employees.

EOT's were introduced in the UK in 2014 after a government review identified that employee-owned companies were often more resilient and sustainable. John Lewis is probably the most well-known employee-owned company where the EOT model provides for each employee to benefit from the EOT's ownership of the company.

For ourselves, the practice is still run by the current management team whilst the company is owned by the EOT with its trustees making decisions which are in the best interests of the employees who are the beneficiaries of the trust.

Nicky Watson, JDDK Director, commented, "Like many forward-looking organisations, we are aware of the challenges of not only increasing employee engagement but also opportunities for succession and have taken advice from many sources, including our accountants, Haines Watts, who have helped set up the EOT alongside our solicitors, Muckle LLP."

"As a very close-knit, collaborative team of creative people, this felt a natural progression for us and continues in the spirit of equality and professional innovation which is already embedded in our practice. The EOT splits ownership from management which removes potential barriers to succession, ensures retention of our business ethos and values, increases the influence employees can have on the business and creates opportunities for greater reward for their skills and efforts."

"Importantly, to our clients, contractors and fellow consultants, it will be very much business as usual, dealing with the same individuals and teams as before and we've actually received a very positive reaction from those we have informed."

Jonathan Scott, Tax Partner at Haines Watts, added, "The move to an employee ownership trust is a really exciting next step for JDDK. Our tax team and the directors at JDDK reviewed various options regarding the future structure of the firm, and as a people focused business the evolution to an EOT seemed like the natural next step. We're all very much looking forward to seeing what the future holds for everyone at JDDK and will continue to support them on their journey."

## FOUR DAY WORKING WEEK PROVES A SUCCESS

Having started an initial six-month trial of a reduced working week in September 2021, with the results judged by surveying both staff, external clients and business finances, we have been convinced to continue the working pattern moving forwards.

For some time we have been developing working patterns that support the well-being of our staff while still meeting the needs of our clients. We have had flexible working arrangements for a while but more recently have been interested in and researching the possible benefits of a reduced hours working week.

There are proven benefits for employees (better work-life balance, reduced stress etc) and for the business

(increased productivity, staff retention etc) as well as wider societal benefits (supporting gender equality, strengthened communities, reduced carbon footprint etc). In September 2021 we discussed the theories as well as the pros and the cons with all our staff, and with everyone's agreement began trialling reduced working hours based on the principles of a "4-day week". We made a small reduction to our full-time hours with no change to salaries or benefits, and for most people these have been worked over four days whilst a small number of people have chosen to split their hours over five days, to suit their own personal circumstances.

The crucial factor, of course, was to ensure we retained the high level of service to clients on which the practice has built its reputation - the positives would be of little overall value if the service we provide to our clients, or the working relationships with other members of design and construction teams, was negatively affected.

We surveyed a group of key clients and contacts with whom we had been working during the trial period and the responses were almost unanimously positive with most clients unaware of any change in our

working patterns whilst the challenges that one or two responses mentioned have now been addressed. We are very much still a five days a week business, but now one with more productive, happier and healthier staff.

### Typical of the client feedback was:-

"The service has remained as good as it was previously, I had no idea that you have all gone down to four days so that's definitely a good sign. You have still been very responsive when required as usual."

### Another response was:-

"It has seemed pretty seamless to me and I haven't noticed any difference in service."

Nicky Watson commented, "We are committed at JDDK Architects to giving the best service we can to our clients, to have positive working relationships with our fellow design team members, and to continue to make our business a happy and healthy place to work. We will continue to monitor how our 4-day week gets on...but we are delighted to say, so far so good!"



# SAVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The importance of the heritage significance of the UK's historic built environment is becoming increasingly recognised with more than one in five buildings in Britain pre-dating 1919. To safeguard this rich heritage for future generations requires the specialist skills of conservation architects who are experienced in not only preserving historic buildings but also giving them new life and added value by refurbishing or re-purposing them to meet modern needs, using appropriate research, construction methods and materials.



Samantha Dixon, JDDK Project Architect, has recently gained accreditation as an RIBA Conservation Architect, one of just over 350 accredited architects nationally. She explains what value a conservation architect can bring to projects.

"It's taken me six years of additional specialist training, including research, study, courses and project experience to complete the requirements to become an RIBA Conservation Architect – the training is rigorous, but it does give clients the reassurance that their unique structures are in safe hands when it comes to work on them and that any work will not harm the building or its heritage significance. It's not just about protecting structures but also about providing clients with the right advice to achieve their objectives, mitigating risk and adding value to their heritage asset. We need to ask the right questions and understand the client's objective whilst also safeguarding the historic integrity of the building."

"From such discussions will come an assessment of opportunities and constraints based on both on and off-site research and analysis of the buildings or site's history. A proposal of repairs and sensitive alterations or interventions will follow. The delivery process of this proposal is equally important to choose and manage a suitably skilled team of consultants and craftsmen that understand the sensitive nature of the work – all building professionals are trained in and understand 21st Century materials and technology, but few are trained to understand their older equivalents."

"Each project will present its own unique challenges, of course, but Conservation Architects understand and have demonstrated competency through the accreditation process in the 14 specialist skill areas detailed in the ICOMOS



The refurbishment of Elliott House included the restoration of the stunning plaster ceiling details...

(International Council on Monuments and Sites) Guidelines. These cover everything from initially identifying a structure or site's emotional, cultural and use significance, its setting and its history, understanding the materials and technology originally used in its construction, diagnosing the causes of any decay, creating sensitive design proposals in accordance with planning regulations that recognise and respect the unique qualities of the building and its setting, to giving specialist advice on maintenance."

Samantha's presentation for accreditation included four case studies which detailed her work on four very different projects. At Elliott House (1-4 Bentinck Terrace) in Newcastle, she led the JDDK team that has been responsible for the refurbishment and reconfiguration of what was originally a terrace of four Victorian homes built in 1855 and is now owned by the Changing Lives charity, into 36 one-bedroom self-contained units, in a move away from hostel type accommodation.



...and this fine Newel Post and Balusters of one of the internal staircases.

The challenge of this project was to deliver a scheme and layout that would achieve the clients' aspirations whilst respecting the significance of the original building. Samantha undertook extensive research in order to uncover the heritage significance of the building, not only in its architectural merits but in its communal, historical and evidential values. The building stands as a record of a time of considerable growth and expansion in Elswick during the 19thC, fueled by industrialisation and commercial growth. Grand Victorian properties such as Elliott House demonstrate the affluence and prestige of the area at that time.

*During her research Samantha visited the Newcastle City Archives for old plans, whilst the original plans pre-dated records, there were old building controls records that she was able to analyse and piece together to form the original layout. The proposals for the new scheme aimed to retain and restore the layout as closely to the original layout as possible and were welcomed by the Newcastle City Council's Planning and Conservation team, as Simon Parkin of Newcastle City Council, explained, "Newcastle City Council's Conservation team welcomes development schemes that sensitively repurpose and revitalise listed buildings such as nos. 1-4 Bentinck Terrace based on a clear understanding and appreciation of what contributes to their special architectural and historic interest."*

*"The applicant and their design team worked closely with Conservation and Planning officers throughout the project and succeeded in preserving and, in a number of instances, better revealing the significance of the listed building while creating modern living spaces. The effort made to repair and restore much of the fine decorative plasterwork found throughout the buildings has been particularly noteworthy."*

At Beeswing House near Rothbury, the challenges were of a more practical nature to restore a 19th Century derelict former stable block into a luxurious and highly energy efficient home. The project involved a deep retrofit of the historic building using natural wood fibre insulation and renewable energies such as air source heat pump.

The integration of wall insulation into a solid wall construction in a traditional building, is a particular challenge due to the vapour permeable construction that absorbs moisture and allows moisture to evaporate through the fabric. The use of modern non permeable insulation methods is not compatible with traditional construction and results in moisture getting trapped within the fabric and causing interstitial condensation which over time can lead to deterioration of the fabric. After much research and a robust moisture risk analysis by the manufacturer a wood fibre insulation was selected at a thickness that was compatible and provided a risk-free level of insulation to the building.

Samantha's third case study was on the environmental upgrade project to the external environment of the Byker Estate. Originally designed by internationally renowned architect, Ralph Erskine and constructed mainly during the 1970's, the



Beeswing House - before



Beeswing House - after

estate, bounded by the iconic Byker Wall to the North, was unique, not only in its materials or building technology, but in the way it was designed and constructed in conjunction with the local community. The intervening 50 years, however, has seen the local community's requirements change so the challenge has been to reconfigure the external environment to reflect this whilst still keeping true to the spirit of Erskine's original design.

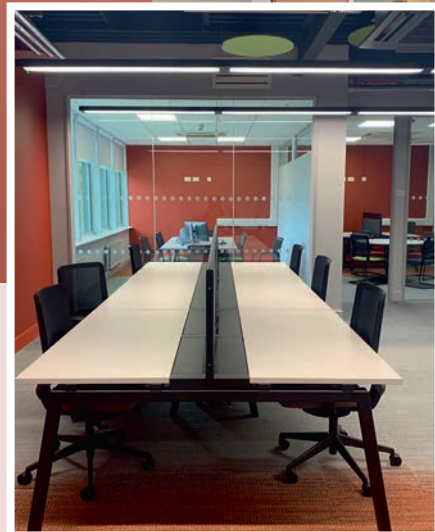
Samantha concluded, "Conservation architecture ensures that our built environment is protected for future generations whether this be ancient monuments or more modern developments like Byker. We have an enormous variety of buildings in and beyond the local region which need protecting and are perfect for reconfiguration for other purposes and I am looking forward to more work in this important field."



Byker Estate - View over the rooftops



The IT hub features a Manhattan Loft feel with exposed trunking and services coupled with modern furniture to create a showcase working space for the Northumberland NHS Trust.



## GIVING OFFICES THE WOW FACTOR

We have given a 1980's standard office development a £1.1m makeover to create a state-of-the-art IT hub for developers, Clive Tait Consulting Services (CTCS) and their clients, Northumberland Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

With the supply of highly skilled IT professionals being less than the increasing demand, employers like the NHS need to attract personnel with relaxed working spaces which reflect the interiors more of California's Silicon Valley than traditional offices, as JDDK Project Architect and Associate Director, Nicky Hodgson, explained, "Our brief from CTCS was to create an internal working space which would attract the very highest calibre IT professionals, whom the Trust was bringing together for the first time in one building."

"The scheme has converted the dated interior into an open plan office with break-out spaces, meeting rooms and pods, a central Director's office and a relaxation area. The feel is one of a 'Manhattan loft' with high ceilings, exposed trunking and service ducts, long benches and comfy seats. Bright primary coloured furniture dominates with different flooring treatments breaking up the area into defined sections."

"The 1980's exterior gives no hint of the inside where the whole feel of the building changes to reflect the modern tastes of the 100 or so predominantly young professionals who work here and whose feedback has been incredibly positive. Environmentally it's also a very positive move to reconfigure existing buildings into new uses rather than demolish and rebuild."

"We started work on the scheme in November last year and have built up a great rapport with CTCS who handed over the scheme in July this year, four weeks ahead of schedule and within budget which is remarkable considering the post-pandemic pressure on the sector. What was also really impressive was that local contractors and materials were always used whenever possible."

Clive Tait, of CTCS added, "The JDDK team have given CTCS an exemplary service which has helped us to realise our full potential on this project and live up to our slogan of Building with Vision. Nicky Hodgson, in particular, as a consummate and leading professional in her field, shared our vision and brought such enthusiasm, perception and inspiration that we were proud to be able to include her in the CTCS team."



Sunderland's Valiant Close development

## VALIANT CLOSE WINS NATIONAL HOUSING AWARD

**Sunderland City Council's Valiant Close development has been named Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative at the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards.**

Our design for this innovative mixed development off Cork Street, Hendon, near Sunderland city centre, has redeveloped the previous Northeast Disabilities Resource Centre (NDRC) with a brand new facility and created 17 new bungalows, 16 of which are designed specifically for residents with disabilities, on the adjacent unused land.

The NDRC is a specialist day care centre which provides personal support packages to enable people with disabilities, many of whom are diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and allied conditions such as a physical disability and/or a learning disability, to get the most from life. The original centre, a former children's nursery to which the charity relocated in 2005, is now replaced with a purpose-built two storey structure, containing reception area, treatment rooms, canteen and kitchen and event and activity areas to the ground floor with further activity rooms and offices to the first floor which overlook the adjacent bungalows.

The new bungalows, which will be managed by NDRC, have been designed externally to blend in with the traditional scale and form of the neighbouring housing in Hendon but with a contemporary twist. JDDK Project Architect, Otis Murdoch, commented, "The one and two bedroom bungalows are designed to fit in with the surrounding, traditional single storey

Hendon architecture with hips at entrances, canopies over entrance doors, head and sill details, render, and contrasting gable treatments. They are also specifically for residents with advanced needs and are Category Three wheelchair accessible."

"The main NDRC building is designed with dropped eaves to fit in with the surrounding massing and to humanise the scale at the main entrance whilst the bungalows are oriented with mainly east west aspects to provide a good overall balance of sunlight to the dwellings and are set back from the adjacent noisy road with acoustic fencing providing further privacy. The development provides 23 parking spaces, including spaces for mobility vehicles and two minibus spaces within the central courtyard area and overlooked by the bungalows."

In addition to winning an APSE Award, which recognises frontline services provided by UK local authorities, Valiant Close was also commended in

MJ (Municipal Journal) Awards for the 'Best Social Housing Initiative' in recognition of its efforts to deliver affordable homes for rent for residents across the city and shortlisted in the Inside Housing Awards in the Best Development and Best Healthy Homes Development categories, as well as the council officers behind the programme being shortlisted for the Best Development Team award.

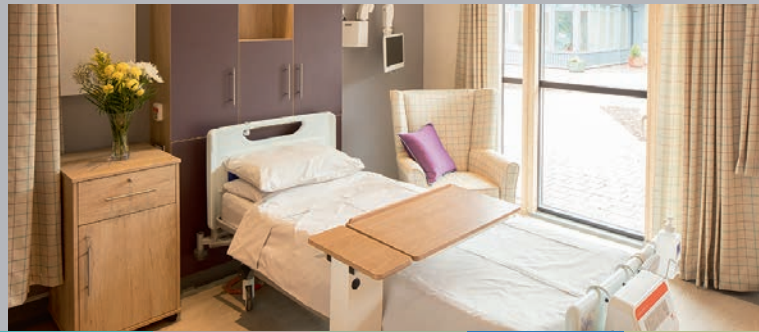
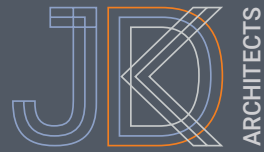
Valiant Close is just one part of Sunderland City Council's Housing Delivery and Investment Plan (HDIP) – a £59m programme launched in 2020. Councillor Kevin Johnson, cabinet member of Sunderland City Council commented, "It's wonderful to see Valiant Close, and indeed the brilliant team behind the HDIP recognised in these awards. We have made such fantastic progress since this plan was launched and to see this acknowledged in these prestigious awards is vindication of that, putting us alongside the best in the industry."



The new Northeast Disabilities Resource Centre



## JDDK HOSPICE DESIGN



JDDK DISCOVER DESIGN DELIVER

Research Children's Hospices Adolescent Hospices Adult Hospices

[The JDDK Hospice Brochure](#)

## JDDK AT HOSPICE UK

**We are delighted to be Gold Sponsors of the Hospice UK Conference being held at the SEC Glasgow from Tuesday 22 – Thursday 24 November. Six senior members of the practice, including three Directors, will be in attendance and contributing to the event.**

We have developed an enviable reputation in the sector with over 50 hospice projects completed since 1987. JDDK Director, Mura Mullan commented, "We first attended Hospice UK in 2018 where we enjoyed meeting existing and potential clients in addition to listening to some great presentations from some of the best palliative care experts in the country."

"Palliative care is a very important sector to the practice, from St Oswald's Hospice in Newcastle, our first hospice project in 1987, to our most recent at Martin House Children's Hospice in Wetherby. As fuel costs rise this year, adding to the pressure on meeting Government commitments to reaching Net Zero by 2050, we are also bringing our expertise and experience in Sustainability to the sector."

On Wednesday 23rd November JDDK Director, Adam Vaughan, who specialises in sustainable design, is one of the expert panel leading a workshop considering "The business case for environmental sustainability" in the hospice sector.

To coincide with the Conference and celebrate JDDK's 35 years of working on hospice projects, we will be launching our new Hospice Design brochure, which will be available at the conference and on-line.

## RESPONDING TO THE RETROFIT CHALLENGE – UPDATE

**In the Spring issue of Millmount News, we discussed our work for RSLs and developers retrofitting energy efficient heating, insulation and ventilation systems to the nation's 5 million affordable homes.**

In addition to the ongoing Demonstrator project for another client, our work for Your Homes Newcastle and Newcastle City Council has now progressed from the preparation of their successful Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 bid for £6m funding to be spent on 275 properties in Walker, to installation work on a pilot property.

With JDDK acting as both Retrofit Designer and Retrofit Coordinator, the empty property at Musgrave Terrace in Walker is being fitted with new windows, doors, loft insulation, external wall insulation, ventilation fans and Air Tightness measures.

On completion, the results will be closely monitored whilst being repeated on other properties in the area.



Retrofit work underway at Musgrave Terrace

## ON SITE

We currently have a range of interesting projects at various stages of completion. Here's a few...



**Private House, Bamburgh**

We are nearing completion of the refurbishment and extension of a heritage property in Bamburgh on behalf of a private client.

### King Edward's Lane, Morpeth

Groundworks are proceeding well at the Ida Homes development for two blocks of 18 apartments which have been designed in the style of the surrounding houses.



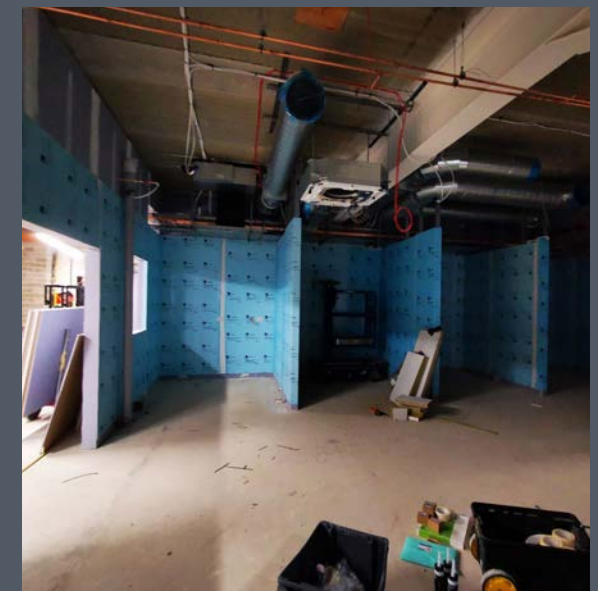
### Magdalene Court, Newcastle

Construction of three, two storey homes and one block of 15 accessible one bedroom apartments designed for people with a disability and targeted at older people.



**The Old School, Washington**

Conversion of the former Biddick School in Washington into a residential scheme for 15 one bedroom apartments to provide a safe environment for supported living for residents who are transitioning to independent living.



**DWR Veterinary Hospital**

At Newmarket, contractors Meldrum Construction Services, are on site with the internal fit-out to a major extension to the Dick White Referrals veterinary hospital, now part of the Linnaeus Group.



## WELLBEING WORKS!

Since our introduction of a reduced hours week (see page 3) it has been good to see how the team have been using their additional time away from work...

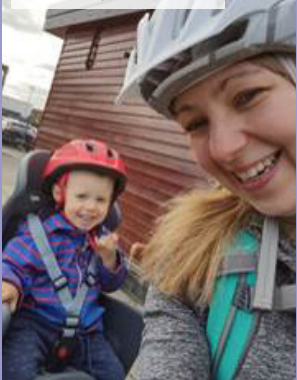
Stuart has spent time as a volunteer for St Oswald's Hospice, training those preparing for a fund raising trek in South America.



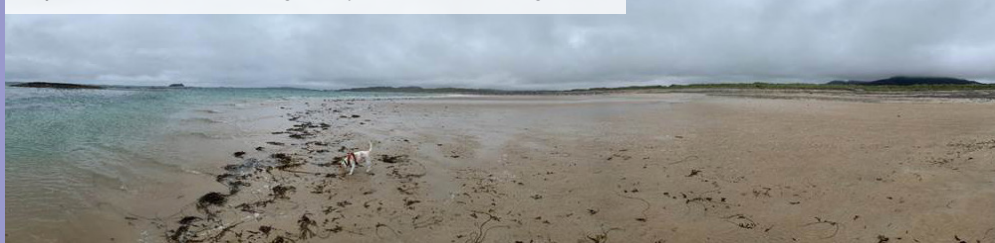
Sam has had more quality time with her children – her daughter is now following in Sam's expert cake making footsteps.



Clair has time for more adventures on two wheels with her boys.



Andy Rutherford has been finding headspace on his coastal dog walks.



## CASTLES & COASTS HOUSING ASSOCIATION FRAMEWORK

We are delighted to have been appointed to the Castles & Coasts Housing Association's (CCHA) framework for suppliers and consultants.

The Association was created in July 2017 as a result of merging Two Castle (TCHA) and Derwent & Solway (D&S) Housing Associations and employs nearly 200 staff. It owns and manages more than 7,000 properties in rural and urban communities across the North of England, with around 75% located in Cumbria.

CCHA is committed to the delivery of more than 600 homes across Cumbria and the North East over the next five years providing homes for Rent, Shared

Ownership, Rent to Buy and Outright Sale. As a Housing Association with a strong social conscience, they are also focused on tackling the housing crisis, improving lives, and harnessing their financial strength to meet the needs of their local communities.

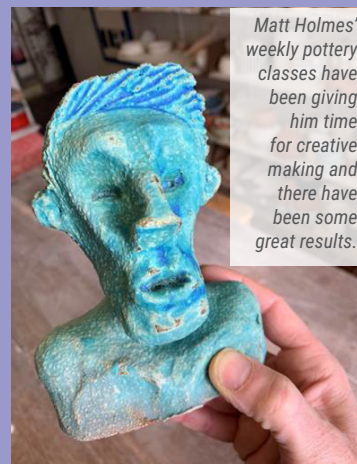
Although the Association's Development Strategy focuses mainly on the areas of South and North Lakes, Penrith, Carlisle, the Tyne Valley and South Northumberland, they will also be considering opportunities toward the Cumbrian coast, on Tyneside and Wearside and the adjacent areas.



For Nicky Watson she has had time to focus on her own home renovations.



Adam Vaughan has had time to practice what he preaches in his low carbon retrofit of his own home.



Matt Holmes' weekly pottery classes have been giving him time for creative making and there have been some great results.



For Tristan Cooper the sky isn't the limit as he has more time for his hobby of astrophotography.

Time to paint and sketch brings Alison Thornton-Sykes relaxation and calm.



Otis Murdoch – Refresh

## TIME2SKETCH

As last year, we used a lunch break in September to support the Architects Benevolent Society's fund-raising initiative. The theme of 'Places And Spaces That Bring Joy' gave us just one hour to demonstrate our traditional skills of sketching!

Matt Holmes – Pollet Sea Arch



Stuart Franklin – A Lazy Family Afternoon In The Garden



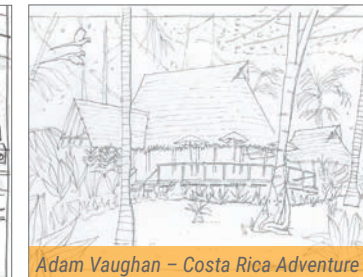
Nicky Watson – The Joy of Entering the Pantheon in Rome 37 years Ago



Sam Dixon – Cabin In The Woods



Clair Sanders – Simple Pleasures



Adam Vaughan – Costa Rica Adventure

Alison Thornton-Sykes – Druridge Bay Joy



## Congratulations to...

**Sam Dixon**, on gaining accreditation as an RIBA Conservation Architect, one of just over 350 accredited architects nationally.



**Gavin Wu**, on becoming a fully qualified and registered architect. Gavin joined JDDK in 2018 and completed his qualifications earlier this year.



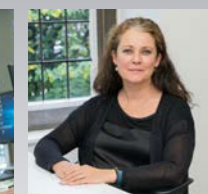
**Otis & Hannah** on their marriage on 15th of October at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.



**LeeXin Lau**, on completing her Part 3 RIBA qualification. Leexin joined JDDK in 2019.



**Adam Vaughan**, on qualifying as a Retrofit Coordinator and gaining Trustmark accreditation. The accreditation enables him to act as Retrofit Coordinators on a range of domestic retrofit schemes including under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.



**Kevin Turnbull and Nicky Hodgson** for both completing 30 years with the practice.

and finally...

a belated congratulations to **Romanda Jobson** who celebrated her 30th anniversary at JDDK in 2020.



JDDK DISCOVER DESIGN DELIVER

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