

Dream home at an affordable cost

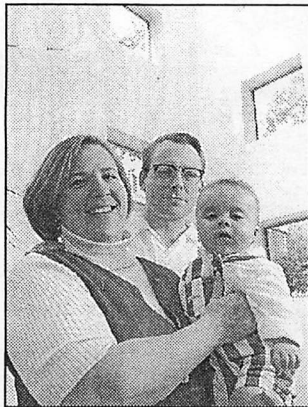
CHRIS Jones built his own home near Hull for £55,000, after paying £12,000 for an unusual plot alongside a railway line. It is 24ft wide and half a mile long.

Chris describes the house as a meeting of modernism and the traditional English home. It has a roof garden, four bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, and a spiral staircase rises through the centre.

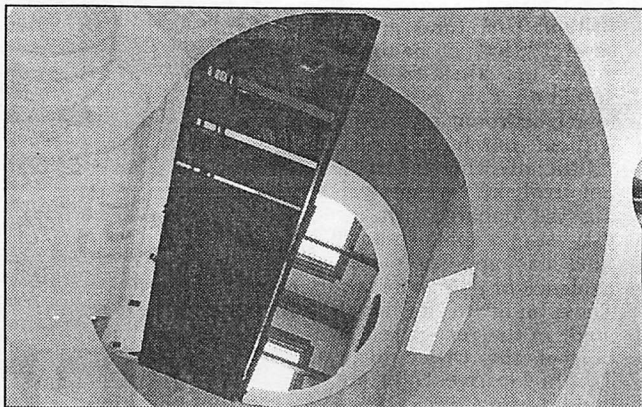
"What you get is a fabulous house at the same price as an old one," says Chris. "You can't get a beautiful home like mine for £55,000. I think it is the best built in this area for 30 years. The value may be up to £150,000, but I didn't do it for profit. You do it because you want to."

He says there are many other forgotten parcels of land in Britain's cities. One such plot was discovered by Bill Shorten and Joyce Owens in Islington.

Joyce says: "Building your own home is a dream. We wanted something bigger than we could afford, but we



The Shorten family in their new home and Chris Jones' spiral staircase



also wanted to live in Islington." The plot they bought in January 1994 was a bargain at £33,000.

"Our initial scheme was well received by the planners. Islington encourages good modern architecture. I come from Florida. You cannot lead a Florida lifestyle in central London but our house is very transparent, with lots of windows. It allows you to experience the outside with-

out experiencing the weather."

Joyce has set up her own architecture practice, Azman Owens, which undertakes self-build projects.

Peta-Jane and Matthew Gath are close to finishing their home in a North Yorkshire village. It is a five-bedroom, detached house designed to blend with nearby properties, which are mainly old cottages.

The total cost will be £110,000, including fixtures and fittings. The Gaths say the property is already valued at £200,000.

"We put a large deposit on the plot, had to agree a build programme, and one of the lenders valued it at every stage. We had the idea and drew a flat plan, then got an architect to draw it properly. We wanted something not available on the market."