

J.B. and Chris Wild and  
Tiger in the kitchen, with  
Scottish elm central  
unit, aubergine storage  
cupboards and mirror-  
tile splashback

# 21ST-CENTURY COTSWOLDS

*Building their own home allowed the Wild family the best of both  
worlds – a traditional farmhouse façade and hi-tech glamour within*

REPORT Ruth Corbett PHOTOGRAPHS Ray Main





**P**lots in the Cotswolds are like hens' teeth," says interiors and silverware designer J.B. Wild. "But we'd had a tip-off that this one was coming up for auction: 130 acres of fantastic land, with beautiful hedges and all well maintained. It had been in the same family for 90 years and we were lucky enough to get it," she exclaims, still delighted at this piece of good fortune.

Just a stone's throw from Bourton-on-the-Water, a village voted one of England's prettiest, J.B., her husband, Chris, and their

three children had nabbed themselves an idyllic spot – and one on which their dream to build their own home could be realised.

The fact that Chris is a residential property developer was a bonus. His company, Wild Projects, specialises in new building techniques, both high-tech and eco-friendly, and he's incorporated many of these into the build. "It's great to be able to give new technology a go," he says. "The house is best described as Georgian farmhouse in style, but given the levels of insulation and airtightness we've achieved, it's cutting-edge in function."

**'From foundations to paint job in just four months was fast work. I was very, very happy with my builder'**

While Chris oversaw the build, the family availed themselves of the existing accommodation: a tumbledown cottage and a couple of dilapidated Dutch barns. "We had to share the cottage with rats and slugs and every kind of creepy-crawly, but the kids were great – they took it all in their stride," J.B. says.

As well they might: having seen the plans for their future home, a little roughing it must surely have made the eventual transition all the more special. "From foundations to paint job in just four months was fast work," says Chris. "I was very, very happy with my builder." ■

**Clockwise from main picture: the TV room, with a combination of Dulux and Farrow & Ball shades on the walls; the house sits amid 130 acres of land; the staircase doubles as a log store**



The finished result is exceedingly easy on the eye. Built from honey-coloured Cotswold stone, it sits alone and proud in the softly undulating landscape, disturbed only by the bleating of sheep and the clip-clop of hooves as J.B. exercises her horses. A sweeping approach (still rough, but with an avenue of young trees) provides ample drive-time to drink in the bucolic scene.

Inside, the house flows from room to room, with no corridors downstairs. "With the kids, animals and a constant stream of people coming and going, we were keen to have a house that could flex," says Chris.

There are two linked sitting rooms – one formal and the other a TV room, into which the family spill most evenings. Double doors from here reveal the kitchen: J.B.'s domain.

"Chris was happy to let me have carte blanche in here," she says. "His tastes are quite traditional, but I really wanted a modern kitchen: something with a few quirky features that would give it a bit of the wow factor." With exposed beams in a high vaulted roof, it's a huge space, encompassing a dining area, sitting area and cleverly concealed walk-in larder. "We can do 25 for dinner, or just the two of us for a

**Clockwise from above: French antiques in one of the bedrooms; even the barn gets a decorative touch,**

**adorned by the skulls of deer and antelope; the fuchsia bathtub has gorgeous views of the surrounding countryside**

quiet supper, and it works either way," J.B. says.

She credits bespoke kitchen-maker Dominic Ash with the room's success. The two met at a local fête and hit it off immediately. "Until I met Dominic, I thought I knew most things on the subject of kitchen design," says J.B., "but he opened my eyes. He made me see how the obsession people have with filling every wall with storage is unnecessary and counter-productive." Indeed, the kitchen is thin on cupboards and looks all the better for it. Instead, one central unit, made of solid Scottish elm and topped with Cumbrian stone,

**'The obsession people have with filling every kitchen wall with storage is unnecessary and counter-productive'**

sits a third of the way into the space, behind which is a wall housing one long "floating box" of aubergine-coloured storage, and that's it.

"Well, it looks like that's it," J.B. confides. "But the genius bit of the design is the concealed larder-cum-storage room that is hidden behind that wall. It's got all the nuts and bolts stuff in there that no one wants to see."

A particularly stunning feature is the mosaic mirror-tile splashback. "All 2,000-odd tiles had to be individually put on," says J.B., "which was a monotonous day's work. But you get a beautiful shimmer from them, the like of which you'd never get with sheet tiling."

Stylish though the house is, comfort is high on the priority list, too, and as well as the sleek contemporary bits there are lots of cosy elements: old armchairs, battered leather sofas used by the dogs as beds, a mix of brown English antiques and French painted dressers and armoires. And there's lots of colour. A vibrant, striped stair runner snakes up to the top of the house; there are bold blue walls in the TV room, and in the bathroom is a pink tub.

Filled with the things the Wilds simply love, regardless of their style or period, it's a strategy that might not have worked. In this case, it definitely did. ■

