

Our cottage feels so bright and open now



Jo and Ben Powell brought American open-plan living to their dark and small-roomed cottage



The kitchen by Woodchester Cabinet Makers features a large island with integral table, and is painted in Farrow & Ball's Ammonite. The Nero Africa Impala Antique granite worktops are from the Bristol Marble & Granite Company

When Jo and Ben Powell came back from the States with their two small daughters five years ago, they rented a cottage in Tetbury while looking around for a permanent home. But two years later, they still hadn't found anywhere, so enlisted the help of a professional house hunter, who soon found them their charming Victorian cottage. 'The location is great,' says Jo. 'As it's right on the edge of the village it's really quiet, with fields all around where we frequently see foxes and pheasants, but it's still easy to get to other places.'

However, the previous owners had lived in the cottage for 42 years and it was dated, with lots of small dark rooms. 'The décor, including one memorable carpet, was very 1970s,' says Ben. 'And the garden was a jungle. Before we made an offer we asked our architect to take a look.' Upon his advice, the couple bought the property and applied for permission to extend and reconfigure the internal layout. 'We didn't think the old extension flowed well or was a great use of the space,' says Jo. 'Also we were used to open-plan living in the States and wanted to create the same effect in the cottage. The cottage needed rewiring, replastering and replumbing so that meant gutting it back to the stonework.' The Powells remained in their rented cottage for almost a year while their future home was renovated.

Jo and Ben's living room is now open-plan to the kitchen. They brought the modular sofa from Macy's back from America. The wool striped rug is Biscayne BS1053 by Crucial Trading at Felbrigg Design. Sarah Hardaker designed the fabric for the Union Jack cushion



Good idea!

Installing a wood-burner adds cosiness and focus to a large space. 'It's super-efficient and just what we need to keep a big open-plan room warm,' says Jo.

▶ 'We bought the Peveck Beltane Chew wood-burner from Elcome Fire & Wood in Stroud and it's really efficient for warming such a big room,' says Jo. The Linea Kline throw is by House of Fraser



The dining room has an elegant look thanks to cabinetry and a maple table from Woodchester Cabinet Makers. The Henley and Sheldrake chairs are by Neptune



One of the biggest jobs was to raise the roof, so they could move the front wall to the left of the front door forward by two metres. They also had to partly re-roof so they took some of the original tiles at the back of the house to use at the front. Then they bought reclaimed tiles for the back. 'They don't quite match, but they will eventually with weathering,' says Ben. The couple also had two storm porches built over the front and back doors by Chris Elliott of Elliott Brothers of Tetbury.

Downstairs, the builders knocked down three walls, removing a larder room in the process to create a large bright and airy kitchen-living room with separate ▶

COME ON IN...



OUR HOME Is an 1850s Victorian four-bedroom cottage in Wiltshire with two extensions, one in 1906 and one in 2015.

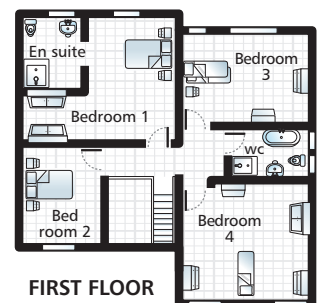
WE ARE Jo, 46, my husband Ben, 45, and our daughters Lily, eight, and Ella, 12. I'm a full-time mum and Ben works for an educational software company.

I'M MOST PLEASED With the lovely open-plan nature of the house.

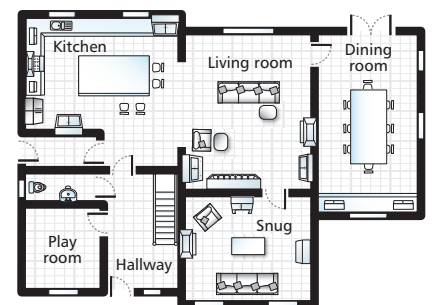
WE SHOP All over the place and buy impulsively when we see something that will work in the house. Nearby Tetbury is a good place for this and we always keep an eye out when we are travelling, especially in the USA.

NEXT TO DO Is more work on the garden. We have some flowerbeds that we want to get established. We've already created borders of lavender and other flowers, which looked great over the summer.

THE BEST BIT Is that it's a pretty village that is well placed for travelling to school, work and weekend pursuits. And although our cottage is Victorian in character, it's been modernised in a way that reminds us of our life in the USA.



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

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In the snug, the Powells had the height of the original fireplace raised, then exposed the old stonework on the chimney breast for added character. The Cambridge armchair and Gloucester sofa are from Laura Ashley

‘We were used to open-plan living in the States and wanted to create the same effect in the cottage.’

◁ dining room. The old cloakroom was divided to become a utility room with a smaller downstairs WC next to it and the Powells took out the old staircase and put in a new oak one in a different position. They then laid new oak flooring throughout.

Upstairs, a corridor was taking up too much room and the bedrooms were too small so they redesigned the layout, adding an en suite shower room at the same time. ‘We installed under-floor heating in the

bathroom and shower room,’ says Ben. ‘We have a gas combi boiler for the central heating and hot water, but, as there’s no gas supply to our cottage, we had to bury a tank for propane gas in the front garden.’

As for the jungle-like garden, the couple has worked hard on it. ‘We inherited some nice mature trees and have now created a wild flower meadow at the end of the garden which has fruit trees, wild flowers and a currently uninhabited hedgehog



✦ Ella’s room has a huge built-in wardrobe to keep clutter at bay. The Classic bed is by The White Company, the pink Piki basket is by Olli Ella, the sequin basket is by Gift Pop Boutique and the Daisy Garden quilt and pillow are by Pottery Barn Kids. Find two-way sequin cushions at Primark or Amazon

✦ The guest bedroom has a classic country look with a metal bedframe and a floral bedspread. For similar try the GreenGate Flora White bed cover at Fine Nordic. The rose picture is by Sarah Hardaker



▶ 'Sarah Hardaker is a family friend and she painted the pictures for our bedroom,' says Jo. 'She also designed many of the fabrics for our blinds, curtains and cushions.' The grey velvet cushion is by George and the Richmond tall headboard is by The White Company




Good idea!
Exposing the rustic stonework on some of the walls retains character in the modernised schemes.

house,' says Ben. 'We'll keep the lawn area for the girls to play on and we've finished the patio too.'

The couple had a new Shaker-style kitchen installed by Woodchester Cabinet Makers and commissioned several pieces of bespoke furniture for the dining room and living room, as well as fitted wardrobes in some of the bedrooms. Then, Chris Elliott made a cupboard under the stairs, cleverly designed so that everyone's coats slide out easily on hangers. Chris made all the bathroom cupboards too, including for the downstairs WC. The cellar also

came in handy for storage. 'We had it damp-proofed and it has made a lovely wine store,' says Ben.

Plenty of storage around the house helps the family keep the schemes feeling open and spacious. 'We love our home now because it gives us the open-plan feeling we loved so much in America and allows us all to be together, even if we are each doing our own thing,' says Jo. 'We set out to create a light, large downstairs area that centres around the kitchen – where we spend a lot of time – and we are delighted that we have exactly the space we pictured.' 

▶ A statement bath takes centre stage in the bathroom. The fittings, including the Clearwater Formoso bath and Grohe Eurosmart mixer, are from The Elephant Bathroom Company. Elliott Brothers made the cabinets. Tiles are Delicato Mer by Mandarin Stone. For similar try the GreenGate Ditte Mint bath mat at Fine Nordic



6 IDEAS TO STEAL

Henley deep double headboard shown in Lux Imperial, £549, Harrison Spinks



A tall headboard gives the finishing touch to a bedroom and offers a comfy backrest too.

The Powells have a trio of pendant lights above their island to illuminate and give definition to the working area.



Moccas brushed steel pendant, £125, Fritz Fryer



Various wicker baskets are used throughout the house for storing logs, carrying items upstairs and adding to the rustic look.

Grey wicker log baskets, £60 for two, Pastel Lane

Rugs add comfort to a hard floor and help to zone a large open-plan space.

Maisey Blue rug, from £110, Shimu



The wood-burner heats the open-plan space yet still suits the country look of the Powells' home.



Malvern classic multi-fuel stove, £925, ACR Stoves

These pretty storage boxes are ideal for stowing away all sorts of things for a clutter-free scheme, as in Ella's bedroom.



Busy Lizzy and Amelie Colourful Butterfly and Floral nested storage boxes, £19.99 for three, WHSmith