

# DESIGN + BUILD

YOUR DREAM HOME



ELIZABETH WILHIDE

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## mill lawn cottage, NEW FOREST, HAMPSHIRE, UK

**ARCHITECT:** John Pardey Architects

A chronic shortage of space, particularly outdoor space, was what prompted one couple to leave the city for the countryside. With three growing children to be considered, their previous home and its tiny garden was beginning to feel cramped, and none of the properties they could afford in the vicinity gave the couple what they were looking for. As if exchanging south London for Hampshire was not already a big enough step, they set themselves another challenge by deciding to build their own home. The site they acquired, 0.7 hectares (1.7 acres) of idyllic countryside in the New Forest, took up about half their allotted budget.



The project, however, was no leap in the dark. Both husband and wife are engineers, and the husband's father is an architect, which meant that they already had a working familiarity with spatial design and structure. To refine their ideas and gain a broad sense of what was possible, they took advantage of London's annual 'Open House' weekend, when the public can visit private architect-designed houses all over the capital. The result of their viewings and deliberations was a detailed three-page brief which set out their specifications and wishes in full. Central to the brief was their desire to have a house that was 'extremely modern with a high attention to detail'.

The architect the couple chose to fulfil this brief was John Pardey, whose practice is based in a town near the land they had purchased. Pardey, who had built a modern house for himself, had long cherished the ambition to build a contemporary courtyard

house; right from the project's beginning, the match between clients and professional was a sympathetic one.

Existing planning constraints had already limited the amount of floor area that could be built on the site. Also, while the couple wanted a modern house, they were still keen that it should blend with its setting rather than impose or intrude upon it. In keeping with the verdant surroundings of Hampshire's New Forest, the resulting design was no brash urban upstart, but modest, calm and simple. Unfortunately, that was not the way the local parish council was to see it. When the designs for the house went into planning, objections were raised on the grounds that the house was out of keeping with its context. It might well have been a case of back to the drawing board were it not for a local planning officer who overruled the objections and allowed the scheme to proceed.

**ABOVE:** Situated in idyllic countryside in the New Forest, this contemporary house is L-shaped in plan, with a single storey 'stable block' providing accommodation for the family's children.



**ABOVE:** The house under construction. The lower level is blockwork construction; the first floor structure is timber. The structural difference is echoed on the façade.

**RIGHT:** Large expanses of glass bathe the interior in natural light and provide beguiling views of the stunning setting.

The couple had specified that they would prefer a building that did not read as a single mass, but rather as a collection of linked shapes. With the two-storey barn-like structure connected to a single-storey wing reminiscent of a stable block, the building is L-shaped in plan, forming a partially enclosed courtyard at the rear. The ground level is of blockwork construction, while the upper storey is timber, a difference expressed on the façades, where the lower rendered storey gives way to western red cedar cladding above. The pitched roof is clad in black zinc.

The internal planning provides a broadly open layout of distinct areas serving different functions – the couple did not feel that loft-style spaces were appropriate for the setting. The dwelling's main entrance, down a garden path that runs through a wildflower meadow, is sited where the single-storey wing meets the main house and opens into a dramatic

hall/dining area. The L-shaped kitchen looks out over the front and wraps around the corner under the main staircase. Internal openings provide slices of view through to the sitting room with its central focus, an open fire on a concrete hearth. On the level above are the master bedroom and a wet room.

The single-storey wing provides a more or less linear arrangement running the long side of the L. Immediately to the left of the main entrance is a study, followed by a guest toilet, and a guest room and en suite bathroom. Three further bedrooms and a large bathroom are for the children. These rooms have windows that open like traditional stable doors, onto an outside terrace.

Throughout, attention to detail is evident in the high quality of finishes and materials. Many of the elements are bespoke. Aside from the limestone in the hall and the rubber flooring used in all the bathrooms, the flooring





**BELOW:** Throughout, the house is beautifully detailed and finished. A recessed horizontal strip window frames a view in a bathroom, which is neatly clad in large mosaic tiles. While white oiled oak is largely used throughout the rest of the house, flooring in the bathroom is rubber, a more practical choice.



**RIGHT:** The kitchen, which is L-shaped, looks out over the front of the house and wraps under the main staircase. The counter is made of basalt, with generous base units underneath. Although the house is not fully open-plan, internal windows and openings serve to keep it light and airy.









**FAR LEFT:** A glazed gable end, augmented by a narrow recessed vertical window, fills the master bedroom with light. Storage is built-in.

**LEFT:** The L-shaped plan of the house and wing create a private courtyard at the rear.

**BELOW:** On the courtyard side of the house, three large sliding windows connect directly with an outdoor deck. The timber decking provides a seamless transition. The main stairs are made of folded steel.

is white oiled oak. The kitchen counter is basalt, and generous storage is provided in the base units underneath. The staircase is made of folded steel. The basic palette of materials, both indoor and out is natural and neutral in tone, in keeping with the country setting. However, this reticence is enlivened by vivid splashes of colour that occur throughout the house, striking a particularly uplifting note in the children's bedrooms. In the bedrooms and bathrooms, built-in furniture and storage makes the most of the available area.

A particularly ingenious feature is the wine cellar concealed under a hatch in the study floor – open it up and a spiral staircase descends 2m (6½ft) below giving access to wall-mounted racks.

As beautifully designed and detailed as the house is, there is no doubt where the true focus of attention lies. Every opportunity is taken to merge indoors with out, and fantastic views are not distant prospects, but an integral part of the design itself. Three huge sliding windows connect the living areas with an outdoor deck, while a glazed gable end in the master bedroom bathes the upper storey in light. Unlike traditional cottages, which are often inward-looking and dark, this modern country house embraces its setting with open and enthusiastic arms.

