

INTO THE WOODS

Childhood memories were the inspiration behind the building of this cosy but unconventional home – and the start of a new business venture

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EXTERIOR
Originally a pair of cabins, the structure has been expanded to create a second bedroom and a new living room with south-west-facing light and a connection to the garden. The exterior is painted in Bedou's UV-resistant black Barn Paint from Prospan. The outdoor lights are from Rowen & Wren ▶



HOME PROFILE

WHO LIVES HERE

Jude Hesselgrave, founder of Wickerwood Farm (wickerwoodfarm.com), a boutique wedding venue located on their farm, and her partner Roger Page, who owns Kane Building Contractors

THE PROPERTY

A two-bedroom log cabin in Horam, East Sussex

BUILD COST £60,000

WHAT IT'S WORTH NOW

About £260,000



Jude Hesselgrave and her partner Roger Page are self-builders in the truest sense, building their cabin by hand and decorating it with salvaged furniture and pieces they've made. For Jude in particular, the project has special meaning, as the cabin is located on the footprint of an old outbuilding on Sussex farmland that once belonged to her grandparents. She grew up on a neighbouring farm, and remembers summer evenings spent loading the barn with hay for the cattle. 'I have such fond memories of my childhood here, it was hard seeing the farm gradually deteriorate,' says Jude. 'So we decided with our joint skills – I'm a stylist and prop maker, and Roger's a builder – we could create our own home here.'

Towards the end of 2007, the catalyst for change came when the couple felt the impact of the recession. Roger's building work almost dried up overnight and Jude's reclamation business also took a nosedive. 'We had to make a decision. There was a big mortgage on our Brighton house, so we decided it made sense to downsize until things picked up,' says Jude. 'And the land was there waiting for us.' It wasn't an easy decision, though. 'Although we were excited to build our own home, it was a big step to move from a house in a busy city to the countryside, so the cabin was our "temporary" solution,' she explains.

The cabin the couple had in mind wasn't a sophisticated kit with insulated walls, but a basic structure they could build by hand with the option of adding to it later. They bought two simple cabin kits

with the idea of bolting them together to create a one-bedroom home. 'When the cabins arrived, they were in hundreds of pre-cut lengths of timber, but thankfully we had a plan and drawings to follow and the building went up in no time. Within a couple of months we were able to move in,' says Jude.

Next on the agenda was sorting out the interior. Jude explains: 'Simplicity was key, as at first our cabin wasn't very big. We wanted to create a calm, cosy, welcoming feel that blended well with our old furniture, so I went for a neutral palette with small touches of colour to add warmth and depth to the rooms.'

Pine floorboards in the breakfast room were finished with a simple clear sealant, and the exposed tongue-and-groove walls were painted in white primer for a rustic edge. Plastered walls were painted dark grey and a cow parsley print wallpaper was used in the kitchen and living room. Jude sourced reclaimed furniture from flea markets and antiques fairs to complete their home. 'I'm a country girl at heart – using salvaged and organic materials goes hand-in-hand with being brought up on a farm,' says Jude. 'I rarely buy new – I'm drawn to distressed and weathered finishes that tell a story.'

The first winter in the cabin came as a shock – heavy snow sent temperatures plummeting indoors as well as out. The couple realised they'd made a mistake by not researching the correct windows and doors properly, as gaps had formed as the cabin's wooden structure swelled and shrank with the changing seasons. 'It was so cold that ▶



EXTERIOR
Roger and Jude built the wooden cabin themselves on the footprint of an old barn on a farm that's been in Jude's family for three generations. The couple like to relax on the patio in the sunshine, taking in the surrounding countryside views

BREAKFAST ROOM
An organic rosehip decoration hangs above an antique pine table bought at Ardingly Antique Fair – creating a wonderfully rustic scene typical of Jude's style. The rug is from French Connection

KITCHEN
Glossy red tiles from The Stone & Tile Gallery are a colourful contrast to the grey Ikea units

'I rarely buy new – I'm drawn to distressed and weathered finishes that tell a story'



sometimes we had to sleep fully clothed at night,' says Jude. 'So later that year we replaced the windows and doors.'

Despite this setback, the couple grew to love their new lifestyle and soon extended the cabin to create an extra bedroom and a new living room. These changes became a major turning point in how they lived – their bedroom was relocated to the old living room, and a breakfast room created in its place, just off the new entrance into their home. 'Beautiful 15th-century oak timbers, which Roger salvaged from an old farmhouse that was being restored, were incorporated into the structural design of the new living room,' says Jude. 'We left them exposed to add character.' Reclaimed floorboards from an old mill and a feature wall painted in a soft mustard bring even more personality and warmth into the space.

Jude made the dining table, and the cupboards either side of the fireplace were built by Roger to fit vintage window shutters bought from a brocante in Lille. Sprays of dried foliage, gathered from around the farm, are displayed throughout. The natural finish defines Jude's whole approach to the cabin, and is also her signature stamp when it comes to styling outdoor weddings at the farm. 'This is a very special place to live, and the new business is the perfect way to share it with others,' says Jude. 'We really enjoyed creating the cabin and would do it all over again in a heartbeat – it's a place we're proud to call home.'

For more information or to book an outdoor wedding at the farm, see wickerwoodfarm.com



LIVING ROOM

Jude spotted the antique chair outside an upholstery shop, while the birdcage was found at Ardingly Antiques Fair. A red Franco Beige woodburner from Ebay adds a pop of colour to the scheme, and lies in with an original Arabian rug – find similar at Modern Rugs

BEDROOM

A hand-blown glass pendant light from Rockett St George hangs from a wrought-iron vintage shelf bracket that was bought at La Grande Braderie in Lille. A reclaimed sea chest has been cleverly repurposed as a bedside table. Similar can be bought on Etsy

Get the Look

Recreate Jude's cosy interior style with wooden furniture and rustic decorative touches



1 Field tiles in Ruby, £149.95/sq m, Original Style 2 Maddox pendant light, £69, Housecozy 3 Ashkan natural baskets, £25/3/tee, Habitat 4 Etched grey vase, £36, Cox & Cox 5 Hexagonal dessert plate, £55, Liberty London 6 Calgary tan faux leather dining chair, £252, Artisan 7 Moroccan leather pouffe in Tan, £98, Bohemia 8 Wire and wood storage basket, £21, Kinfolk 9 Herham bad throw in Dove, £98, The Cotton Post 10 Spindle-back chair, £190, Garden Trading 11 Bee cushion, £7, George Home
FOR STORE DETAILS SEE **WHERE TO BUY PAGE**

STYLE IT FAST

Quick fixes from the high street and online to help you get Jude's vintage look, and all under £20



Camellia large bowl, £16.90, Hudson Home



Strawberries biscuit barrel, £14.95, Annabel James



Red wall clock, £19.95, Rex London



Elli Artisan lantern, £16.99, Lights4fun



Fresh Blooms vase, £8, Next