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# HAPPY ENDING

*A Cotswolds-based book led Jutta Betz and Andreas Erbe to take a novel approach to rural life, splitting their time between Britain and their native Germany*





**Study**  
Stacked wine crates make a unique bookcase. Blue and white throw, Oka

### Living room

Sofas and mismatched soft furnishings create a relaxed, cosy atmosphere. Cushions, Kate Forman Chandelier (opposite page), Maisons du Monde



For Jutta Betz, loving this area of England started in an unusual way. While living in the countryside outside Frankfurt, she read an English crime novel based in the Cotswolds. The descriptions of rolling hills, bubbling streams, meadows dotted with sheep and ponies, and quaint villages filled with old stone cottages sounded so inviting, she decided to check it out for herself.

Soon, she persuaded her husband, Andreas, to book a holiday in a quintessentially English hotel in June, when the roses were in full bloom and lambs were still skipping in the meadows. That was back in 2016. 'Our first few days in the Cotswolds far exceeded our wildest expectations,' says Jutta. 'We were both so smitten that we decided to live in the UK for half the year and spend the other half in Germany.'

Finding the right property took almost 11 months and proved tricky. 'We have always loved period properties, but many homes we viewed had precariously low ceilings – as Andreas is quite tall, none of them worked for us. We almost gave up.' Then, one day, the couple found an idyllic Georgian property online. It was located in the village of Bibury, which William Morris famously described as the 'prettiest in England'. An old vicarage close to the nearby church, it had tall, elegant ceilings, square panelled rooms, original shutters and sash windows. The façade was romantically covered in Virginia creeper and it had every ingredient associated with the >



### AT HOME WITH...

**Owners** Jutta Betz, a business coach, and her husband, Andreas Erbe, a financier, bought the house in 2016. They have three grown-up children, Miles, Meagan and Benia, and English bulldogs, Emil and Lotti.

**House** A Grade II-listed two-bedroom vicarage, built in 1820.

“I LOVE THE IMPERFECTIONS OF ANTIQUES. THEY HAVE CHARACTER AND THEY CONTRAST WELL WITH SILKY, GLAMOROUS TEXTURES, OR REFLECTIVE SURFACES”





## Kitchen

A modern industrial cooker and old-style freestanding shop fittings combine to create an eclectic feel. Cooker, Siemens. Units, price on request, Cox & Cox



## Conservatory

Two 19th-century demi lune tables fit together to make a round. Tables, Anton & K. Similar chairs, Scumble Goose

classic Cotswolds cottage, even down to its landscaped garden and the roses growing around the front door. 'It was as though the house had our names on it,' says Jutta.

Previous owners had added a charming, Gothic-style conservatory to one end of the kitchen, which was a huge asset. 'It's an all-year-round room,' says Jutta. 'In winter, you can sit in it and count the stars and, in the summer, we are bathed in the coloured rays of the setting sun.'

On the downside, some elements of the vicarage had been overly modernised. Adding to this, the previous owners had a burning passion for pink – numerous walls, as well as the kitchen units, had been painted in this rosy shade. Many of the original features were missing, replaced with new fireplaces and modern laminate floors. 'We had hoped to find flagstones below the laminate but, sadly, it was all concrete,' says Jutta. 'The kitchen presented other problems. It was rather dark and stark, dominated by an industrial cooker and modern units. I had so wanted an Aga, but the existing cooker was perfectly efficient and too expensive for us to justify replacing it.'

Fortunately for the couple, Andrew Coombs, a first-rate local builder, came to their rescue. 'Andrew understood the local planning regulations and had dealt with other period houses in the area,' says Jutta. 'He obtained permission to install two new sash windows on either side of the cooker, which has raised the light levels in the kitchen dramatically.' Jutta found >

## ON OUR DOORSTEP

**Visit...** 'Blenheim Palace ([blenheimpalace.com](http://blenheimpalace.com)), seat of the Dukes of Marlborough and Winston Churchill's birthplace. It's full of grand rooms with painted ceilings and expansive landscaped grounds with lakes and follies. We love to walk the dogs here.'

**Shop at...** 'Burford Garden Company ([burford.co.uk](http://burford.co.uk)) for an ever-changing variety of quirky and unusual interior design accessories, fine food and wines, and lush plants for the garden.'

**Go for a meal at...** 'The Swan ([info@swanhotel.co.uk](mailto:info@swanhotel.co.uk)) in Bibury, a quaint, charming inn dating back to the 1750s, with a healthy and delicious menu. Bibury trout is a speciality of theirs.'

**Dining room**

An antique mirror bounces light to create the illusion of space. Original Georgian **mirror** with foxed plate, Anton & K. **Table** and **chandelier**, both Maisons du Monde





*En suite*

Striped baskets used to store towels decorate a bespoke vanity unit made in old oak by Andrew Coombs Baskets, Burford Garden Company, Burford, Oxfordshire. [Plum.com](http://www.Plum.com)

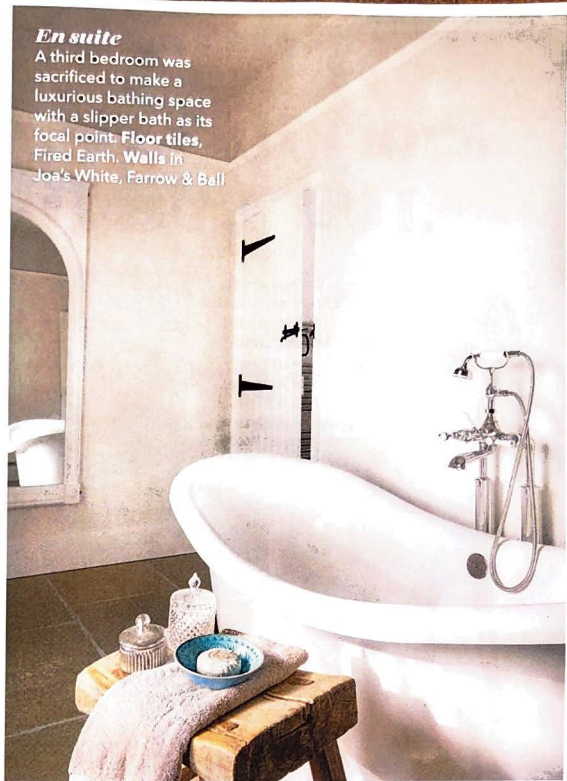






**Main bedroom**

Panels enhance the Georgian proportions, while soft colours evoke a relaxing mood. Quilted bedcover, Maisons du Monde



**En suite**

A third bedroom was sacrificed to make a luxurious bathing space with a slipper bath as its focal point. Floor tiles, Fired Earth. Walls in Joa's White, Farrow & Ball

freestanding cottage-style units with a traditional feel, that counterbalance the stark look of the stainless-steel cooker.

Eliminating all trace of pink was next on the agenda. Andrea and his team removed the pink bathroom fittings and painted over the many pink walls in calming off whites and pale greys chosen by Jutta. New period fireplaces with woodburning stoves, flagstones in the kitchen, wooden floors and wide-planked doors with iron latches were sourced. A bedroom was turned into a luxurious en suite to the main bedroom and, gradually, Jutta put her stamp on each room.

Faded hues, chalky paints and vintage voile are at the heart of her French brocante look, lit by elegant crystal chandeliers that add sparkle and distinction to the main rooms. With so many antiques shops in the area, the couple sourced most of their furniture locally. A few single pieces, including an old Bavarian dresser and a vintage leather trunk used as a coffee table came from Germany, and shop fittings that display Jutta's collection of silver candlesticks were shipped from France.

'Interestingly, it is the sounds that enrich our life here,' says Jutta. 'Apart from birdsong, we love sitting in the conservatory, listening to the pitter patter of the rain. In summer, we all spill into the garden, which is divided into five areas, including a barbecue space and sunken garden. It is ideal for parties. We always feel on holiday here. It is magical.'

**To rent The Flower Press, visit [uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com)**

**LIVING THE DREAM**

Jutta Betz and Andreas Erbe divide their time between Germany and the UK, yet feel at home in both places.

**Have you felt welcomed by the community?**

'Yes. We take care to support local shops, such as the cheese shop and wine shop, and buy from nearby antiques stores. We have got to know the shop owners personally.'

**What's the best way to get to know a new area?**

'We made friends with neighbours and invited them to barbecues or for drinks. They told us about where to shop, good places to eat and lovely walks.'

**How do you secure the house when it's empty?**

'We rent out the house when we are in Germany, so it is hardly ever empty. We use a reliable, caring agent and make our guests feel special with a good welcome pack.'