

‘People will be celebrating in the house we built for centuries to come’

Merry and Ben Albright’s timber-framed home may look like a picturesque country cottage, but in fact it’s less than four years old, has the latest eco features and was built in just 16 weeks



▲ Storm lanterns in the porch add a festive feel to the entrance of the house

◀ Merry’s favourite feature of the cottage is the wonderful church-like porch with its sturdy but welcoming front door

Merry and Ben Albright knew exactly the kind of home they wanted to buy – a beamed Tudor cottage in a pretty Herefordshire village. But for the couple who are both in their mid-twenties, finding a period house within their price range was proving impossible.

Then, three years ago, just as the newlyweds had begun to despair of ever finding an affordable first home in the area they love, they spotted a plot of land and realised that, rather than continuing their elusive search for their dream cottage, they could actually build it themselves from scratch instead.

‘We had been living with my parents in the next village because the housing market in this area had gone crazy,’ says Merry. ‘So when, luckily, a plot became available here, we knew that ▶



This pretty wreath filled with pine cones was bought from The Pier (0845-609 1234) and Merry customised it with sprays of white roses and hydrangeas





tones. The floors in the hallway and kitchen, though, are laid with polished black limestone tiles to inject a contemporary touch. To save money, Merry got out her sewing machine and made all the curtains, blinds and many of the cushion covers herself. 'But, where we could afford it and felt it was really worthwhile, we did splash out,' she says. 'For instance, we chose bespoke, freestanding wooden kitchen units from deVOL. We picked them because

we admire the craftsmanship and they provide the traditional feel were looking for in the kitchen.'

The first floor is reached by a simple, chunky oak staircase. The main bedroom, complete with sloping country cottage-style ceiling, has a relaxed atmosphere and is sparsely furnished while a white-painted Victorian bedstead that Merry picked up for £20 provides the focal point. 'We visited auctions to get buys like this inexpensively,' she ►

▲ A sumptuous Victorian iron bed, picked up for £20 at auction, is the focal point of the main bedroom and has been dressed in a vintage hand-stitched quilt and topped with cotton linen from The White Company (0870-900 9555). Merry made the cushion covers herself from pieces of 1930s silk and the bedside tables were made from offcuts of oak

► Country touches add a rustic feel in the bedroom

