



**PROPERTY  
DETAILS**

**Type of house**  
Four-bedroom detached house, built around 1750  
**Location** Rodborough near Stroud, Gloucestershire  
**Purchase price** £380,000  
**Money spent**  
Around £100,000  
**What it's worth now**  
£600,000

# 'We renovated our house over the internet'

Having embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime trip round the world, this couple revamped their home from overseas



*Above* Eileen and Mark's squashy aubergine sofas from Raft are a comfy place to sit and relax

*Right* With window seats, sofas and armchairs, the seating area is comfy no matter how many friends pop round



**Eileen Tuohy, 46, lives with husband Mark Greenwood, 49, a finance director, in their 18th-century home. Eileen, a postgraduate researcher, describes their modernisation project**

I'll never forget my sense of anticipation as Mark turned the key in the front door of our new home for the very first time. We'd just arrived, following a six-month round-the-world trip, during which we'd kept in regular contact with our builders as they transformed the house into a contemporary home. We'd been sent regular photographs as the project

progressed, but nothing prepared us for the wonderful feeling when we walked in to discover how well the work had gone.

Mark and I discovered Rodborough in 2003 when we bought a holiday home here. We loved the location so much that we began making plans to move to the area for good. Although our little holiday cottage was lovely, we felt we needed more space to make a permanent move. We discovered our neighbour was selling her larger cottage next door and were thrilled when she agreed that we could buy it. It was in good

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*Above* The suspended woodburning stove from Diligence International creates a stunning focal point in Eileen and Mark's open-plan living and dining room. The couple bought the rug under the coffee table while on their travels in India

### My most treasured possession



'I love this oil painting by the artist Kenny McKendry. It depicts the Skerries, a group of rocks just off the Antrim coast, which is an area I have many happy memories of. I spotted it a few years ago while visiting a gallery in Belfast and instantly fell for it. It's so luminous, and the way the light is reflected is incredible.'

Right Eileen and Mark have incorporated an eclectic mix of furniture into their home. The contemporary Italian dining table is from Living Space, while the wooden dining chairs were reupholstered in embroidered silk from Painswick Fabrics



Below Eileen is thrilled with her kitchen, which was made by local joiner James Brunson. The cabinets were painted a striking shade of green, called Glass V from Paint and Paper Library



Left Incorporating three glazed slots into one of the internal kitchen walls not only brings extra light into the room but also gives it a contemporary touch

Below One of the bigger jobs for the renovators was moving the staircase to create better access to the first floor. The joiner built a new staircase for the space



condition but there were changes we wanted to make in order to make it more modern.

When we bought the house, disappearing on a world tour wasn't on the agenda. However, when the company Mark worked for was taken over, we decided it was now or never, so we dipped into our savings and brought our travelling plans forward – by about 10 years! I handed in my notice and Mark postponed the start date of his new job.

With tickets for our trip booked, reality dawned and we realised that our choices for everything from paint colours to kitchen units would have to be made before we left. Our architect, Chris Davies, was excellent and, along with our builder, John Ramsden, we bounced ideas around to decide how we could flood the house with light and make the most of the stunning views. We decided to put in more windows and enlarge others, knock down internal walls and install glazed doors. The aim was to make the house

feel open but not empty. We wanted a welcoming place, where family and friends could enjoy this beautiful part of the world with us.

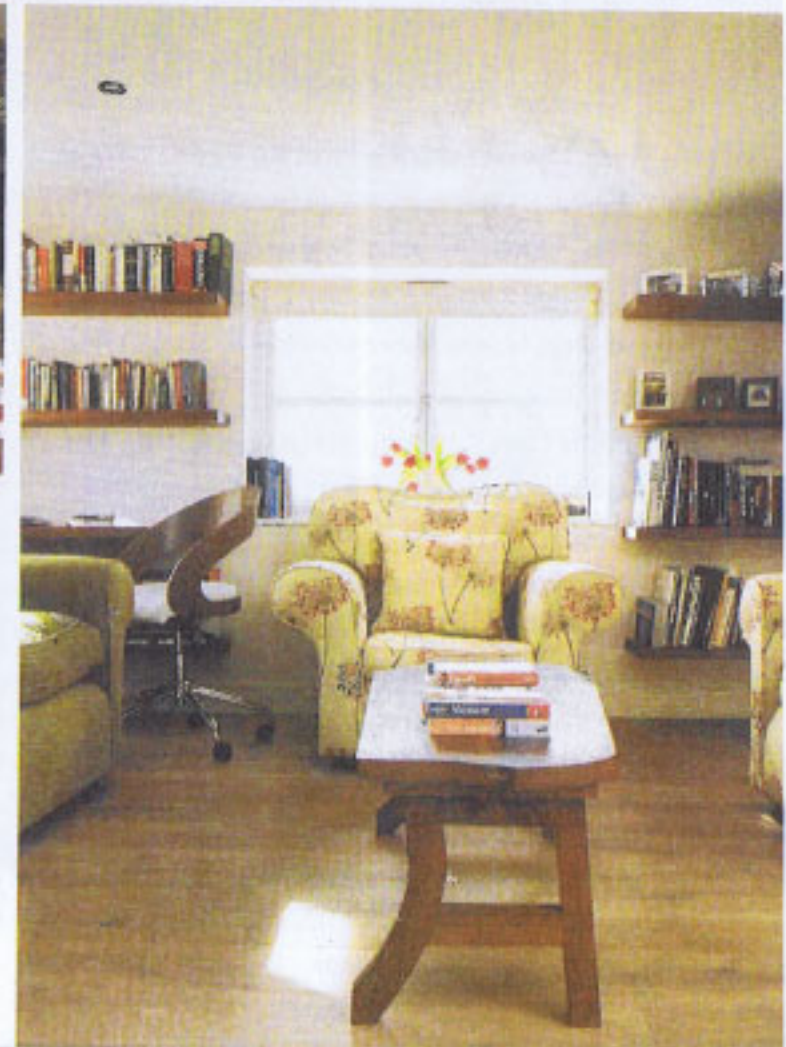
We had no qualms about leaving the remaining work in Chris and John's hands, having planned every detail and chosen everything before we left. John was terrific, even visiting Bathstore in his own time to source fixtures and fittings.

Our furniture and belongings went into storage. I labelled every box, so that everything would end up in the right room, and even drew a sketch of where I wanted the furniture to go. After weeks spent going over every detail of the plans, Mark and I packed our cases and headed abroad, armed with our Blackberry



Above This bold red lampshade from Habitat adds a splash of vivid colour in the study

Right The study has been totally transformed from a dark and damp space into a relaxing, airy room complete with comfy reupholstered furniture



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Friends and family love to stay in the tranquil green and cream bedroom. The stripy duvet cover, lampshade and green felt cushion were all found at Habitat



Left Visitors often remark on the striking Marks and Spencer mirror in the guest room's ensuite, which follows the green colour theme. The wooden chest of drawers is from John Lewis

Below right In the bathroom, the couple used the same stone tiles in various sizes to add interest to the room. The walls are painted in Dulux's York White, which gives a crisp and clean look set against the grey slate tiles



Stunning views greet Eileen and Mark each morning from their bedroom window. The throw, bought while travelling in Jaipur, India, is a reminder of their world trip



Eileen and Mark teamed period features like the old beams with an uncluttered contemporary look in the third bedroom



Diary of a PERIOD HOME MODERNISATION

**May 2003** Eileen and Mark first saw the property when they were buying a weekend home next door.  
**February 2007** They made their neighbour an offer that was accepted.  
**August 2007** The sale went through and the couple hired an architect.  
**December 2007** Planning permission was granted and a local builder hired.  
**January 2008** Eileen and Mark cleared the house and site. They sold their weekend house and put their furniture into storage.  
**March 2008** The couple embarked on their travels while the builders moved in on site. The first job was to rebuild the gable end of the house and install

two new oak beams before rebuilding some crumbling Cotswold stone walls.  
**April to May 2008** Further structural work was carried out, as well as plumbing and rewiring.  
**June 2008** All windows were replaced, the underfloor heating was laid and insulation was improved.  
**July 2008** The bathrooms were fitted. Solar panels and a woodburning stove were installed and a well was uncovered.  
**August 2008** A bespoke kitchen was fitted and the whole house painted and decorated before the furniture was brought out of storage.  
**September 2008** The couple came home from travelling and moved in.

and laptop so we could keep in touch with John as work progressed. It all went very smoothly, and I think John was secretly pleased to be given such free rein. He was excellent at staying in touch, putting our minds at rest that the work was on track and free of problems.

Everybody did a wonderful job, including the HomeFree concierge team, who came in just before we flew home to sort out the finer details. They gave the house a thorough clean, arranged the furniture, put away an online supermarket delivery and popped some flowers in a vase. Their efforts were the icing on the cake to an unforgettable homecoming.

● Contact the Tuohys' builder, John, on 01452 741881 or jrbuilding.co.uk. Chris Davies of Gordon Clarke Architects can be contacted on 01453 751007 or at gordonclarke.co.uk

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE 'WHERE TO BUY' PAGE AT BACK OF ISSUE