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THE NEXT GENERATION

Atop a hill in the rolling South Yorkshire landscape with views reaching across the Peak District, Highfield is a self-built home with family connections. Jennie Musgrove paid a visit to find out more.





IN KEEPING WITH THE REST OF THE INTERIOR, THE KITCHEN HAS A FRESH AND SIMPLE DESIGN, WITH A BREAKFAST ISLAND AND STOOLS DIVIDING IT FROM THE DINING ROOM

Standing on a hill overlooking the market town of Penistone, South Yorkshire, Highfield was created by three generations: Roger and Linda Brown who self-built it, Roger's father who owned the bungalow which previously occupied the plot, and Roger's architect son Andrew, who designed the contemporary home.

When Roger's father died, Roger and Linda sold their successful business and took early retirement. Wanting a new challenge, they knocked down the bungalow and asked their son Andrew to design a new house to take its place.

"When my father died we decided to move back here and do something a bit different," said Roger. The couple gave their son an open brief, asking simply that the new house made the most of the fantastic views over the Peak District. Said Linda: "We didn't want a huge place, we only wanted three-bedrooms. And we wanted to have upside-down living to take advantage of the views. That's virtually all we told him, and he came up with this

design – which was a surprise!"

The contemporary home Andrew designed features a curving sedum-planted roof, Yorkshire stone walls and red cedar cladding. Natural materials and organic design are combined to create a building which nestles into the Yorkshire hills as if it had always been there; and yet the home's eco credentials place it firmly in the present day. The planted roof reduces rainwater run off and a rainwater recycling system ensures no water is wasted, as it is stored in a 550-gallon storage tank. High levels of insulation work alongside a heat recovery ventilation system and an airtight fabric to combat rising fuel bills. "We are keen to do something green but we're not over the top," said Linda. "Some of the things we looked into are just not feasible, because they cost so much money and they'd never pay for themselves."

Roger and Linda have an unrivalled understanding of how their house works because they not only project managed the build; they did »

ABOVE The first-floor living room is Roger's favourite part of the home, with large windows and glass concertina doors allowing plenty of natural light in. **RIGHT** A breakfast island divides the kitchen and dining area, which features Dutch furniture and a beautiful oak dining table.



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LEFT Glossy cream units and black tiles create a sleek yet traditional kitchen. **ABOVE** A hand-made oak and sycamore staircase is lit up at night-time by blue LED lights.

most of the labour themselves. The couple moved out of their previous home, a traditional farmhouse, and into a caravan in Highfield’s garden to carry out the two-year build. “We originally thought we’d rent somewhere but having the caravan outside was better for security,” said Linda. “In the summer it was fine but during the winter we had to have plenty of heaters on!”

Having overseen the project from conception to completion, Roger and Linda have enjoyed the experience – but wouldn’t necessarily want to repeat it. “You get to the stage where you wonder whether it’ll ever get finished,” said Roger. “When you’re part way through a build and you’re sat around because there’s frost on the ground and you can’t get on with it...I’m glad we did it, but would we do it again? No. Once is enough!”

The hard work the couple invested has paid off, however, and they now enjoy a superb modern home complete with open-plan kitchen/dining room, three ground floor bedrooms and first floor

study overlooking the ground floor living space.

Roger’s favourite part of their new home is the living room on the first floor. With a huge window overlooking the Yorkshire hills and glass concertina doors leading to a roof terrace, the space is filled with natural light and is complemented perfectly by its curving ceiling and the softwood beams which support it. Andrew had the idea of placing a row of wall lights parallel to the ceiling, so they follow the curve and illuminate the beams at night. The house is full of quirky features such as this, and it’s in these details that the home’s excellent design and engineering is exhibited. Two straight lines of slate run diagonally through the decking on the roof terrace, breaking up the area. “When Andrew takes on a design he does it all!” said Roger. “It would have looked like a very large area of decking if we hadn’t broken it up. The line of slate is also aligned with the line of the roof.” Another beautiful detail is the suspended oak and sycamore staircase that Roger built and which forms the centrepiece of »



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the home. In recognition of the excellent standard of Highfield's design and architecture, the home recently won The Daily Telegraph/Homebuilding & Renovating magazine award for Best DIY Project.

Although it was only completed in autumn 2008, Roger and Linda moved in more than a year ago and began making the finishing touches to the building's interior. In keeping with the rest of the interior, the kitchen has a fresh and simple design, with a breakfast island and stools dividing it from the dining room. "One of the best times was when we started putting all the kitchen units together, and all the bedroom furniture," said Roger. "When you get to that stage you can see it's coming together."

Slate grey ceramic floor tiles from Crown Tiles & Bathrooms, Barnsley, have been used throughout the ground floor to create a sense of continuity. Linda searched for the perfect tiles for both bathrooms and in the end sourced them from the same place. "Linda spent a lot of time travelling around looking at tiles," said Roger. "She's seen

every tile sort within a 50-mile radius of here!"

Roger and Linda employed a minimalist design scheme when furnishing the home, and found that a lot of the furniture from their previous farmhouse was out of place in Highfield. "We stored all our furniture when we moved into the caravan," said Roger, "although maybe we should have had a sale because we ended up buying a lot of new stuff. We had to rethink it all." In fact, the only pieces the couple brought with them from their previous home are an oak dining table and oak Dutch units in the dining area.

The next stage for Highfield is its garden. Roger and Linda plan to begin landscaping in spring – but not before they've had a well-earned rest. "There's about an acre of land so it'll take two or three years of work to do," said Roger. "But it's a springtime job so we're having a break!" Here's looking forward to the completion of Highfield, which will truly be a home for the next generation. 🌱

ABOVE Softwood beams support the curving ceiling and create a visually fascinating focal point. **RIGHT** A chic entrance hall provides a warm welcome for visitors to Highfield.

ADDRESS BOOK

The house was designed by Andrew Brown, director of designSpace Architects in Church Fenton, North Yorkshire.

Visit: www.designspacearchitects.co.uk or tel. 01937 558 213.

All tiles were sourced from Crown Tiles & Bathrooms, Barnsley.

Tel. 01226 380 116.

Oak doors are from Howdens Joinery.

Visit: www.howdens.com

The kitchen is from Wickes.

Visit: www.wickes.co.uk or tel. 0845 279 9898