



JO WOOD talks to **SALLY MORGAN** about her marriage to Rolling Stones legend Ronnie, and her new organic skincare range

She is married to one of the most famous rock stars in the world and has travelled the globe with him, but these days Jo Wood prefers the sedate pace of Richmond to the wild rock and roll lifestyle of her and Ronnie's youth.

"I feel so at home here," says Jo, 53, who now lives in a beautiful mansion backing on to Richmond Park. "My parents and grandmother had links with this area, but the main reason Richmond has a special place in my heart is because it's where I fell in love with Ronnie 30 years ago."

Ronnie, who turns 61 this year, was in the process of selling The Wick, a grand house on Richmond Hill that once belonged to Sir John Mills, when he and Jo first met.

"I remember walking round that lovely place and asking him why he would want to move from there," recalls Jo. "The views over the river from its prime spot on Richmond Hill were amazing. We're friends with Pete Townsend who now owns the house so at least we can still visit it."

Despite spending 10 wild years in America, Jo and Ronnie missed their spiritual home. After they returned they bought a modest house in Wimbledon and then a prestigious Georgian property overlooking Richmond Green in Maids of Honour Row.

"I adore Georgian architecture and could just feel the history in the atmosphere of that house," says Jo. "I was convinced I was going to find treasure in the garden there

and was always digging it up. I never did find any, though.

"But I do believe it was haunted. On the last night before moving to the house where we live now, I was suddenly woken up by something in the middle of the night. The temperature had plummeted and it was absolutely freezing. I was really scared as I'd never sensed that feeling in the house before. It was one of the weirdest experiences I've ever had.

"When Ronnie came back from our second home in Ireland, I described to him what had happened. But he was sceptical. Don't be silly, he said. There's no ghost in that house."

For the last decade Jo and Ronnie have lived – ghost free – a stone's throw from

Richmond in Kingston Vale. The wood-panelling and sumptuous décor in their home give it a baronial feel [see opposite picture of Jo at home]. "Apparently it was built as a hunting lodge for Queen Victoria," Jo continues. "She never spent the night here but used to come for tea."

Jo's own personal favourite place for afternoon tea is the café at Petersham Nurseries at the bottom of Star and Garter Hill.

"I'm always popping in and out of there," she says. "As well as for tea, I also go there for Sunday and birthday dinners. It has a fabulous ambience, and you can just sit there surrounded by exotic plants and flowers, soaking up the lovely surroundings. I recently bought a lemon tree there."

"I love this location because it's not far from the centre of London, so I don't feel as if I'm out in the sticks," she says.

"When I go shopping, I can do it all in Richmond and Kingston. They both have a bustling presence without being too manic."

"Matches is a firm favourite of mine and when it comes to shopping for my grandchildren, The Lion and the Unicorn children's bookshop and Toffee clothes shop in Richmond are both great."

First and foremost, Jo believes that the biggest advantage of living here is that it has been an ideal location to bring up her family. She and Ronnie have four children between them, Leah 29, and Tyrone 24, plus Jamie 34, from Jo's previous relationship, and Jesse 30, from Ronnie's marriage to the late Krissy Wood. Their grandchildren Arthur, 6 and Lola, 2 are from guitarist Jesse's marriage to Tilly Boone.

However, it seems that Jo and Ronnie are preparing for the imminent moment when all their children will have fled their nest.

"Ronnie and I do loads of things together. We go for walks in Richmond Park, and we cycle around it too. I love watching the scenery in the park change throughout the year. Each season has its own beauty."

While many women in her position

might have been tempted to slow down, Jo has chosen to launch a new career creating an organic range of skincare products.

With the aptly named title Every Day, the tempting ingredients such as frangipani, vanilla and citrus fruit are completely organic.

"I was inspired to create my Every Day selection because, unlike my first expensive range, this one is more affordable for most people and can be used daily," says Jo.

"I've concocted a wonderful salt scrub, foaming mousse and nourishing body cream out of delicious scents such as jasmine, sandalwood and Sicilian lemons. One section is called Tula, which means



"quiet" in South African, and the other is called Langa, which means "sunshine."

"The great thing about these products is as well as smelling good enough to eat they come in bottles that are both pretty and bio-degradable," she continues. It's all natural stuff and eco-certified.

"But perhaps the best recommendation for them is that I tested them on my family first. In the early stages of putting the oils

and fragrances together, I'd come home with lots of different pots and hand them out to Ronnie, Tyrone and Leah. Ronnie liked all of it and would simply say, Yeah, it's fantastic. But Leah was a more discerning critic and would give me the feedback I needed. Now they all use my products, which is an encouraging sign."

Jo's passion for organic products began after she was misdiagnosed as suffering from Crohn's disease 15 years ago. It was only after a consultation with a herbalist, that she discovered the mistake.

"The food I was consuming and the creams I was using on my skin were full of chemicals. Once you fill your body with chemicals they break down your immune system."

"This finding changed my life. From then on, I searched for miles to find little health shops that sold organic food. Now they have sprung up all over the place because of high demand. My favourite organic shop is Oliver's in Kew."

As well as steering clear of chemical-ridden foods and skin products, Jo realised that exercise should be an essential part of maintaining good health.

"I keep fit by walking and cycling," she says. "I also have a personal trainer. Thanks to my diet and exercise, my immune system is resilient and I'm very rarely ill."

"Ronnie also has a good, strong immune system, despite the amount of hard partying he's done in his time."

With the launch of her own special contribution to a healthier lifestyle and environment, Jo can hardly contain her excitement.

"I can't wait to see my new products," she says. "It's a bit like having a new baby!" ●

Jo Wood's Every Day range is available locally at Petersham Nurseries, off Petersham Road, TW17 7AG, 020 8940 2230 (9-4.30pm), 13 Hill Street, TW9 1SX, 020 8221 8522.

It is also available by mail order, 0940 007 6014 www.jowoodorganics.com

