

Kitchen Works

The work to rebuild and refit our kitchen was about to start. We had removed everything portable and stored it in big plastic crates all over the house, in the garage and even in the garden shed. Now, we were ready to go. Then we waited...and waited...and well...waited.

The Builders Cometh

Day one and no show from the builders! Paul, my husband, looked at me with a quizzical arch of the brow. "Do you think they are actually here and we just can't see them?" The thought had occurred. Maybe they were like the tailors in the Emperor's new clothes. Perhaps they were actually making headway and we were oblivious to their industry and hard work. The next day, I was languishing in a hot bath when the heavy rap on the door shocked me into action at 7.45am. The builders were here! They weren't invisible after all! Poor things, their first experience of their client was a woman dressed in a towelling robe with a red face and dripping wet hair! We were off. Once here, the builders were working their socks off. We couldn't access the back of our house from day two, so to reach my office in the garden I had to walk out of the door, round past my neighbour's house, down my driveway and up the back garden. It was quite a slog and, if I forgot to take what I needed with me it just became a



hassle. This might not seem too harsh to the untrained eye, but believe me, we were staring three months of this in the face and it seemed daunting! Little did we know, the builders were not planning "three months" at all. No! They started the job and built half a roof but, then, oh best behold, the conservatory people announced they would not consider even starting our project until every measurement could

be checked, cross-referenced and double checked...in triplicate. Naturally, for all concerned, this was the correct way to proceed but, in truth it was a fallow period of six long, empty weeks ahead of us whilst our conservatory was being built off site.

A Chimp on Speed

Eventually, we got used to climbing down twelve inches from our original back door, hot footing it across a mound of rubble and climbing over what would be our new threshold. In a skirt, for example, this involved a hitching up whilst carrying a wet bundle of washing. Nevertheless, we became used to it. At this time, we still had a small stretch of work surface, a sink (albeit with a bucket under it for waste water), and a temperamental old gas oven, but our roof was a sheet of blue tarpaulin barely holding out against the February winds. These last remnants of our old kitchen vanished when the conservatory erector turned up. Never did a chap swear, curse

or moan more than our conservatory man but, boy did he work! He was like a chimp on speed. I have never seen anyone bend and weave through scaffolding like him. He arrived at the crack of dawn and worked until twilight for five days solid. All this and he commuted to Stoke for two nights. Suddenly, it was up! The glass shining in its glorious newness, the workmanship outstanding as tiny joints were cut to deal with the odd angles and ‘interesting lines’ (not builder speak!) of an old property.

Feeling Warm and Fuzzy

Suddenly, a glimpse of the finishing line was in sight. Next came Christian, the tiler who turned up, took his damp measurements and shook his head. Apparently, we needed to be 12.5 but we were languishing at 17. Disaster! The Kitchen was due for fitting but, the floor couldn't go down. A compromise was reached with a patchwork quilt of tiles but just enough to fit the units. By now we were living off a stand-pipe to wash up, cook, clean and feed the washing machine which was in the garden. It wasn't fun but, for all the hardship, our thoughts were with those who had been flooded in the Wychwoods and for whom, our experience was a very minor inconvenience. Then, Gary arrived.

A true craftsman in the real old-fashioned sense of the word, Gary began work on the hand-built kitchen. I learnt new words, like ‘scribing’ and watched carpentry that blew my mind. This was a man with incredible skills and a dedication to the project which made me feel all warm and fuzzy.

Total Gorgeosity!

My kitchen was taking shape, nooks and crannies were being built, cupboards were being fitted, the work surface arrived, lights were fitted, plumbing was plumbed...the excitement was mounting. Then, it was done...just like that. Finished. A thing of beauty. A kitchen so gorgeous it exceeded all measurements of previous gorgeosity. It was a triumph of first class workmanship and talent. Now came my bit...filling it. I started with the first box from the attic. It contained my favourite wine glasses now to be arranged beautifully in new glass-fronted cabinets. It was heaven. When I finished, everything had a place of its own and better, space. No more tottering piles of china and clanking pans leaning precariously out of the cupboards. It was midnight when I finally finished. Paul and I stood admiring our completed kitchen: “Shall I bring the other six boxes up from the shed tomorrow morning?” he asked.

Jan Harvey

Play and Swim For a Pound

The **Chipping Norton Leisure Centre's** ‘Play for a Pound’ offer is returning for the summer holidays! All customers are able to book one hour for one pound per person.

From 9 am until 5 pm Monday to Friday. Please check availability and book on: 01993 861951.

This year ‘**Swim for a pound**’ are also available during all junior fun pool sessions Monday to Friday. Junior fun sessions will be advertised on the summer holiday pool timetable. Contact the Centre on: 01993 861951 for a Summer Holiday Activities Brochure. **Get active this summer!**