



Before picture of the 1950s chalet bungalow



From modest to Amazing

Harry Antonious' stunning four-bedroom Cheltenham house is unrecognisable from the humble 1950s chalet bungalow he took on

WORDS: Victoria Jenkins ♦ PHOTOS: William Goddard

The elderly lady who had lived in a 1950s chalet bungalow in Cheltenham would never recognise it now. It has gone from the modest to the spectacular, and it's all down to builder Harry Antonious whose home it now is.

It all began when Harry spotted it up for sale. Although he and his partner Catherine had just spent 18 months working on his own home, he immediately wanted to buy it so rang Catherine to come and see it too.

They then approached house agent Nick Griffiths who told

them that if he really wanted it, he would have to sell his own house first.

'Amazingly, within five days I had sold my own house,' says Harry. 'Thanks to Nick who took just five days to get the photos and details online – whereupon it sold immediately.'

The 1950s chalet was a probate sale. Downstairs there was the original 50s kitchen which was rotten, a dining room, lounge and back room, plus a pink bathroom. Upstairs, there were two bedrooms, and to make life easier for the previous owner there was an open WC in one of



And after – the spectacular gable window has totally changed the look of the former chalet bungalow



Sitting area of the open-plan kitchen-dining-sitting room. The engineered oak flooring is from Timbmet of Stroud, and the walls are painted in Dinner Jacket by Valspar from B&Q



Harry Antonious with partner Catherine

the bedrooms – ‘quite literally in the corner of the bedroom on display,’ explains Harry.

‘The house was quite dilapidated,’ he continues. ‘I remember that, while waiting to hear if we’d got the house, I sketched some ideas for improving it. I particularly wanted a big and spectacular gable window at the front.’

Harry then had various architects to give their input on the final design. Planning was granted with no hiccups, and soon afterwards excavations for the foundations began.

‘We also had to apply to move all the gas and electricity meters out of the old garage. The new supply had to be situated in the front boundary opposite the highway, and the road had to be closed while it was put in. A new water main was also installed.’



All bedroom furniture is from Marks and Spencer

The build began by putting up a completely enclosed scaffold with sheeting all around it to protect the house. This allowed work to carry on despite the weather, as the upper floor was to be demolished and two extensions were to be built at the back and the front.

Harry and his two boys then moved into the house and one of the first things he did was cut down the row of gloomy leylandii in the back garden. 'We needed a digger to get at the roots,' he says. 'Then we planted quick-growing bamboo in their place.' He also

created a frontage to the property (originally laid to lawn) which allowed parking and easy access for the forthcoming build.

Initially the boys and Harry slept downstairs.

'Once the extensions were built up to floor-plate level, the main roof came off down to joist level,' he says. All the internal walls were removed except for two on the ground floor, just leaving a shell. Harry and his team then rebuilt the whole roof from scratch, accommodating a new dormer frontage, with a new rear master bedroom.

'I've always wanted to create something modern, sleek and contemporary, and now I've done so'

One big difficulty was that the planner would not allow the existing height of the bungalow ridge to be increased. So, the first-floor walls were limited in height, but Harry cleverly designed the rooms so that they were vaulted; this gives a feeling of height and allows natural light into every area of the house.

Once the upper floor was half-completed, the boys moved up there to sleep, using a temporary bathroom which cost all of £200. But as there was no room for Harry, Catherine's father kindly donated his caravan as a temporary home and it was parked in the back garden.

ADDRESS BOOK

- **Marley Modern roof tiles:** 07768 651515; antonious.co.uk
- Bence, 01242 237241; bence.co.uk
- Countryside Windows, 01242 821122; countrysidewindows.co.uk
- Harry Antonious Construction Ltd, 01242 242644; jacksonarchitects.co.uk
- **Heating and plumbing:** Richard Holland, 01242 512532; rhph.co.uk
- Vince Marlow, architect of VJM Design House, 01242 227197
- **Sanitary ware:** City Plumbing, 01242 221411
- **Oak flooring:** Timbmet, 01453 826886; timbmet.com



All three bathrooms are fitted out with City Plumbing and Victorian Plumbing furniture and the tiling is all from Topps Tiles

‘There were some very stormy nights that winter which made the caravan rock and sway,’ he continues. ‘Plus, the plastic sheeting around the scaffolding made a terrible flapping noise all night.’

Harry also created a temporary ‘kitchen’ in the house consisting of a second-hand cooker and scaffolding planks for shelves.

‘Having gutted the house back to its original brick we rebuilt nearly all the internal walls except for two downstairs,’ says Harry. The house was then completely rewired.

At one point, early on in the build, Harry was working on his own, as he had his men on other projects.

‘I was cutting the concrete tiles, going up the ladder to fit them on the roof, coming back down again, cutting more and so on. It was particularly hot weather at the time, but it was work that just had to be done.’

Finally, after a great deal of heavy labour, the four-bedroom house was completed.

A kitchen dining extension has been built on at the back – part single-storey and part two-storey – and huge RSJs had to be fitted to hold the building up.

As for the front, a two-storey extension has been built on here, made dramatic by a six-metre-tall gable window.



‘I’ve added on an extra 110 square metres in all,’ he says. There is now underfloor heating in the new kitchen-diner and in all the bathrooms, plus gas central heating throughout. The entire ground floor is laid with engineered oak, and the bathrooms have tiled floors.

TOP: This bathroom was fitted with a Velux window and furniture is from City Plumbing and Victorian Plumbing with the tiling from Topps Tiles

‘All the doors and windows have been replaced,’ he adds. ‘We now have powder-coated aluminium double-glazed windows and oak-veneered internal doors.’

The final stage was to build a new garage to the side of the property.

Harry finishes: ‘I’ve always wanted to create something modern, sleek and contemporary, and now I’ve done so.’

‘Now it’s a lovely family home with more than enough room for us all, including my boys and Catherine’s son.’ ♦

‘There were some very stormy nights that winter which made the caravan rock and sway’