





AND NOW FOR THE big REVEAL

For a while the Wilkinsons had to live in their Cheltenham cottage with no floors, no electricity and no water, but take a look at these pictures and you can see why they thought the transformation was well worth it

WORDS: Victoria Jenkins

PHOTOS: William Goddard Photography

**ABOVE:**

The new extension is clad in larch from a Wotton Bassett sawmill. The canopy is in black plywood created by Harry Antonious

LEFT:

Silversmith Susan Wilkinson

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uke and Susan Wilkinson bought their 1815 Regency terraced cottage partly because of the view of the medieval church opposite. 'We knew the land would never be built on,' says Susan, a silversmith.

It was also partly because the cottage, while having a modest front, had a large garden with old apple trees behind. 'From the front we were looking out onto quite a busy road and at the back onto a beautiful secluded spot,' says Luke an environmental consultant.

So, they bought the cottage in Cheltenham in 2007. It had been extended at the rear to create a kitchen and third bedroom above in the 1980s; there was also a large but rotten wooden conservatory.

'We knew that one day when we could afford it, we would improve things,' says Susan. 'For instance, to get to the conservatory you couldn't just walk through from the kitchen next to it. Instead, you had to walk back through the whole house doing a U-turn.'

In the meantime, Jim their son (now 10) was born.

Then in 2014 the couple approached designer Mike Lumley who, in contrast to another 'rather arrogant' architect who said their plans wouldn't work, said that yes, they would.

But it still took five years before the planners accepted their ideas to demolish the conservatory and most of the old extension and build a timber-clad two-storey pitched-roof extension in their place.

'We had a difficult neighbour who strongly objected, plus the planners didn't understand the configuration,' says Susan. 'They didn't like the idea of our having a pitched roof running parallel to the pitched roof of the existing house. They wanted it to be at right angles so it looked more obviously like an extension, something they're keen on nowadays. But that would have removed all the daylight from a neighbouring cottage.'

‘At one point the cottage had no floors, no electricity and no water’

At the planning meeting there was a split decision so their application was refused. However, it was only after two planning officers came along to the cottage to see for themselves that they understood why having a parallel pitched roof was the only way to do it.

As a result, the couple reapplied with an amended design which was finally approved.

Builder Harry Antonious began work in May 2019 and the family moved out into a nearby rented flat.

‘This is because the back of the house had to come off,’ says Luke. ‘And we weren’t just adding an extension, but renovating the cottage too. Walls were replastered where necessary, we put in new central heating and new radiators. We rewired and replumbed, put in new windows and reclaimed doors and took up and replaced the flooring.’

‘Jim’s bedroom floor was sagging so we had to completely replace the joists and the boards,’ says Susan. ‘And where necessary we extended the new engineered oak flooring of the extension into the hallway.’


At one point the cottage had no floors, no electricity and no water.



The wall paint is in washable ‘French Grey’ by Little Greene, and the banister was made by Capsule, based on Susan’s retro design



The bathroom and en suite are both furnished with Mandarin Stone ‘Industry’ tiles, and Crosswater fittings from Leckhampton Bathrooms and Kitchens



Big bi-fold doors now open on to the garden from the new kitchen-diner

‘We have every intention of living here as long as we can’

The work took just over five months in all and now the larch-clad timber-framed extension comprises a very large kitchen-dining room plus utility room and WC downstairs; a new staircase leads up to a lofty chapel-like space above with new en suite bathroom. They also refurbished the existing bathroom.

‘We actually kept the upstairs part of the original extension,’ says Susan. ‘It meant Harry and his team had to support the third bedroom with RSJs while the building work went on around it.’

Their new kitchen, of floor units only, is from Benchmarx with plywood doors from Capsule which Susan stained black. Capsule also made the white worktops and the bannister based on Susan’s retro design.

Finally the family could move back in

by October 2019 whereupon they invited the whole family round for Christmas.

‘What impressed us about Harry’s team was that they got on with the job in a very methodical way with no drama,’ says Luke. ‘And we really appreciated his project management, giving us a timescale for choosing radiators, doors, lighting, kitchen units and so on; it made it calm and collaborative, not stressful.’

‘Because we built on the footprint of the conservatory and the old extension, we haven’t added so much to the size of the house,’ he finishes. ‘The total footprint of the extension is 62 sq m downstairs and 28 sq m above.’

‘But we have made a huge difference to the way we live and that’s important as we have every intention of living here as long as we can.’ ♦

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