

GOING UP IN THE WORLD



Jim and Clare Mansell have added another storey to their bland Sussex bungalow, transforming it into a spacious and airy New England-style house.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY**
PICTURES: **CLARE MANSELL**



PICTURES: The boxy original bungalow (above) had been built in 1900 and progressively extended.

After years spent living in military accommodation, both in the UK and abroad, Jim and Clare Mansell decided that they needed to put down roots and create a family home for themselves and their son Theo, now three. The squat 100-year-old bungalow in Chichester which they chose couldn't have been less appealing, but the couple were determined to completely reinvent the property and turn it into something far more exciting..

"Jim's an army officer, so after we met in 2006 we spent several years travelling the world living in every type of military accommodation, including a lovely house built on the prairie in Canada with a cinema room in the basement," says Clare. "That house was a

great inspiration for what we wanted to create back in the UK."

The couple and their young son returned from a spell in Cyprus (where they had been housed in an unmodernised 1950s house with no air conditioning or heating) and moved into the equally tired and dated three-bedroom bungalow in Sussex, which they purchased because of its location and the views of Chichester harbour to the Isle of Wight.

"My family live in the next village and this is an area we both know well, so we never really considered buying anywhere else," explains Clare, who worked for 20 years as a radio presenter and is currently a graphic design student and a keen photographer.

"We called our home 'the ugly bungalow', and



originally we applied to demolish it and build a replacement house on the site, but when we looked closely at the costs we decided to revamp what was already here instead," she continues. "The loft was too cramped to simply convert, and the garden isn't huge, so building upwards seemed like the obvious solution."

The couple installed a new combi boiler, replaced the bathroom suite and modernised the flat-roofed section of the bungalow which had contained a cramped kitchen. This involved building a small extension under permitted development rights, and combining the former sunroom and kitchen to create a far more practical kitchen/dining space.

Once this initial urgent work was completed they turned their attention to the rest of the property

PICTURES The bungalow's roof was removed and a new timber-framed first floor was constructed to create three new bedrooms and two bathrooms upstairs.

– contacting Nigel Lewis, whose Hampshire-based company Space & Style Home Design specialises in extension and remodelling projects.

"We were champing at the bit to get started and Googled companies which undertake exterior makeovers," says Clare. "I approached a couple of architects, who politely declined to work with us when they realised that our budget was just £150,000, but when Nigel visited he was so enthusiastic that we immediately knew we'd found the right person."

At 6ft 4 inches tall Nigel is also the same height as Jim, and realised just how important high ceilings, a large shower and tall doorways would be in the new upstairs rooms. Clare had gathered together pictures of homes and interiors she admired on a Pinterest board,



and this proved a useful tool for Nigel when it came to designing the house.

His plan was to totally transform the exterior of the existing bungalow, which had absolutely no redeeming features. The entire roof would be removed and the building extended upwards to form a timber-framed first-floor structure, incorporating pretty dormer windows. A new veranda would be built to shelter the front entrance door, several windows would be relocated and replaced, with self-coloured render and weatherboarding covering the ugly original brickwork.

Internally, the new first floor was designed to contain a main bedroom, with an en suite and walk-in wardrobe, a bedroom for Theo and one for guests, as well as a family bathroom. Downstairs, a wall between the old main bedroom and lounge would be removed to create a spacious sitting room, with a study and an en suite guest room on the opposite side of the hallway. The recently re-fitted kitchen has remained untouched at the rear of the house and was one of the few rooms to not require a complete makeover.

PICTURES:

Combining the old main bedroom and lounge has created a spacious sitting room with engineered oak flooring and a contemporary woodburning stove.



“There was no way that we could consider living here when the roof and ceilings came down, but our budget was tight and we decided against renting another property,” says Jim. “Once Nigel’s planning application had been approved we bought an insulated garden cabin to use as a bedroom, so that we could remain living on site throughout the five-month project, which was also useful from a security point of view.”

Work started in March 2014 when scaffolding was erected around the building, which was then wrapped in plastic to form a weatherproof shell. This highly visible structure attracted a great deal of attention, and people would regularly crane their necks for a better view as they passed by the site.

The builders dug huge pits and channels in the garden to form soakaways for the new roof, knocked down

“We wanted something that would withstand the wear and tear of two dogs and a small child.”



internal walls to create the sitting room, and widened the hallway in order to accommodate a new staircase.

“They’re a family team we’ve known for many years, who have also worked for my father and sister,” says Clare. “Shane Marriott bought materials and project managed the build, which made the whole experience much more enjoyable. The team would let themselves into the house at seven each morning and were very hard workers.”

Fortunately the existing foundations and brick bungalow walls required no reinforcement, and once the timber-framed first floor and roof structure had been erected the family could climb up ladders to enjoy the elevated view. They took pictures, which they labelled to show where doorways and furniture would go, and were keen that the new staircase should rise up to an open gallery on the first floor to avoid feeling enclosed.

Sticking to the £150,000 budget was all important, and robust, low maintenance materials were essential in the coastal setting. “We replaced the old uPVC windows with new uPVC sashes, which are maintenance free and only cost £8,000 for the whole house,” says Jim. “We also chose composite slates for the roof, which replace the old



concrete tiles and make an enormous difference to the overall look of the exterior.”

The property stands within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and all materials needed to be approved by Chichester Council, including the low maintenance



“We have created the kind of home we simply couldn’t have afforded to buy in an area we love.”

“It’s quite rustic looking and we wanted something that would withstand the wear and tear of two dogs and a small child.”

Very little was left in the pot at the end of the project to buy new furniture, but the couple inherited a huge red leather corner sofa from Clare’s parents and managed to stick to their budget by haggling on every price and shopping on eBay. Clare, who blogged about the building work, also entered a number of competitions and managed to win underfloor heating sets for the bathrooms.



fibre cement weatherboarding, which is factory finished in Boothbay Blue and attached horizontally.

Once the main timber structure was erected in just two weeks, and had been insulated and plastered out internally, the final weeks of the project involved a plumber and an electrician completing the second fix, finishing bathrooms, putting radiators on walls and installing the lights and alarm.

Decorators were then employed to paint the interiors – a job which Jim and Clare had intended to do themselves, until they realised what a mammoth time-consuming task it would be.

“We made savings elsewhere on things like our flooring, and Jim laid the oiled engineered oak floor in the sitting room and hallway himself,” says Clare, who once again used Pinterest to design the interiors.

PICTURES: The relaxing main bedroom features exposed structural pine beams.

“We made a few mistakes along the way during this build, but things actually ran more smoothly than we dared hope,” says Clare. “We encountered good and bad customer service along the way and developed a huge respect for the builders. Undoubtedly we have made a great investment for the future, but beyond that we have created the kind of home we simply couldn’t have afforded to buy in an area we love.”

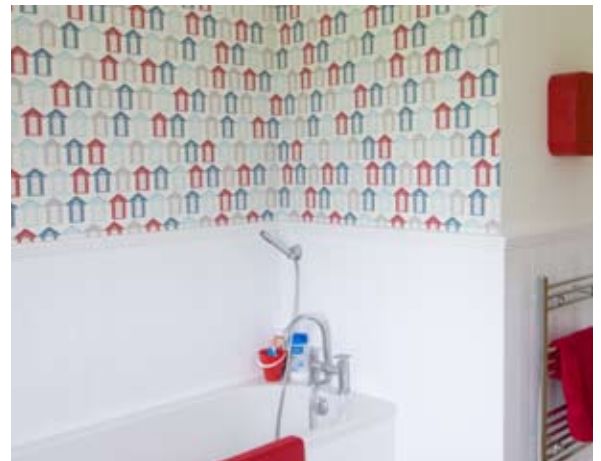
THE BOTTOM LINE

Clare and Jim paid £335,000 for the original bungalow in 2009 and spent £170,000 extending and fitting out the property, which is currently valued at around £850,000.



ABOVE: A free-standing bath was installed in addition to a shower in the main en suite.

LEFT AND BELOW: Red tiles and beach-hut wallpaper bring splashes of colour to the family bathroom.



Contacts

PROJECT

Design Space and Style Home Design: spaceandstyle.co.uk

Builder Shane Marriott Construction: shanemarriottconstruction.com

Clare's blog: maybushstudio.com

STRUCTURE

Weatherboarding HardiePlank: jameshardie.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Internal doors Magnet: magnet.co.uk

Sanitaryware Better Bathrooms: betterbathrooms.com

Kitchen Ikea: ikea.com

Evohome heating control Honeywell UK: honeywelluk.com

Bathroom beach hut wallpaper Graham & Brown: grahambrown.com

Wooden flooring Covers: covers.biz

Staircase Stairbox: stairbox.com

Morso stove Osowarm: osowarm.co.uk

Garden cabin Creative Living: creativelivingcabins.co.uk

Home truths

What was the high point?

Something changed every week during the build, such as the weatherboarding going on, so we could see the progress and enjoy all the milestones.

...and the low point?

We were often trapped in the kitchen trying to entertain Theo while the builders worked in the rest of the house.

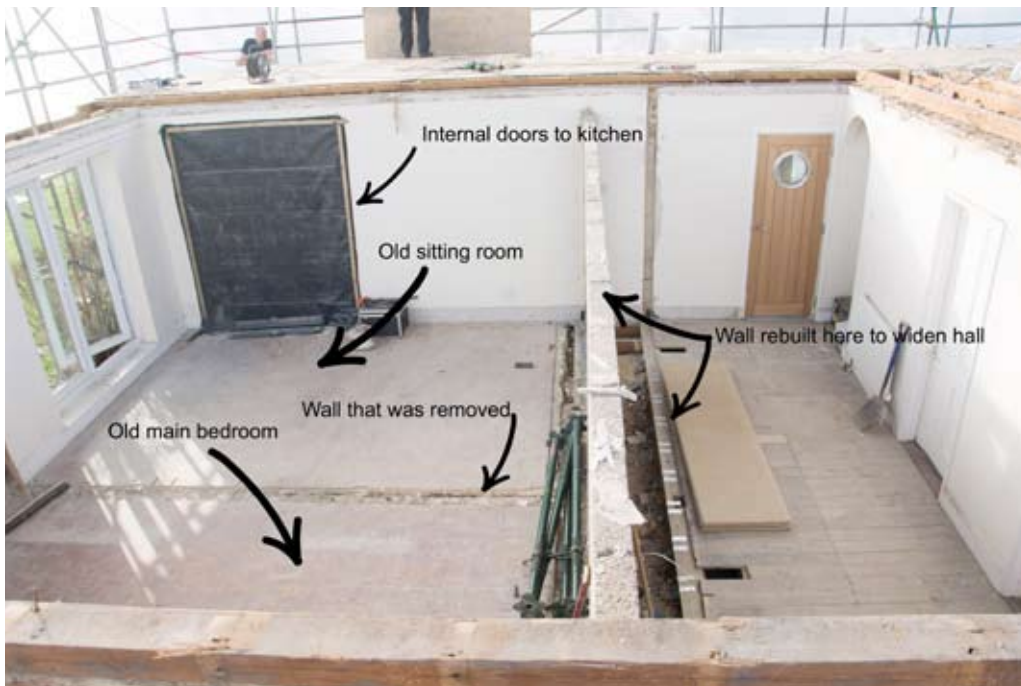
Your best buy?

Re-roofing with composite slate was the best decision we could have made, because it's such an important feature. Recycling the old roof tiles would have been a huge mistake, but we were able to reuse old floor joists to create the roof structure for the veranda.

...and the biggest extravagance?

Our en suite bathroom cost twice as much as the family bathroom to fit out.





PICTURES: A watertight membrane was erected around scaffolding while the first floor was added. To make it easier to plan individual rooms, Clare, a graphic designer, marked photographs of the work in progress.



The floorplan

The original single-storey bungalow has been almost doubled in size with a new first floor containing three bedrooms, a bathroom and master en suite. A wall was taken down between the old lounge and the original master bedroom on the ground floor to create a spacious sitting room.



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR