



MANOR FROM HEAVEN *makeover*

Living North continues its house makeover...



A KITCH IN TIME makeover

Continuing the makeover, we arrive at our biggest challenge – to turn a smelly, dark and dark mess of a room into something to lift the spirits, as well as wine and other beverages – the kitchen.

One of the distinct disadvantages of working on a larger, older house is not merely the size of the building, but quite often, its layout. In times gone by, staff were the order of the day and the kitchen, instead of being at the juncture or hub of the house, was often hidden away at the back, connected to sculleries, store rooms and servants quarters. Sadly, the servants had left many years previously and it was up to us to roll our sleeves up. As an option, we could have moved the kitchen to one of the reception rooms of the house for a south facing aspect with a view of the garden. Given the AGA (oil fired with oil tank conveniently in place), drainage in situ, together with handy adjoining cupboard and utility space, we decided to play safe and leave it where it was.

To say the room was tired is an understatement – knackered would be better. Lino was peeling from the cemented floor, paint was flaking from the damp walls (three of which were exterior walls), the ceiling's plaster was loose in numerous places and the cupboards, drainage board and shelving were well and truly past their sell by date. The 'tobacco' coloured paint made things look even worse and to compound matters, the AGA needed a serious overhaul (and, as we later established, some remedial work) and the windows were rotten – excellent!

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On the plus side – well let me see – there's always one – yes I know, we had, as they say, a pretty much blank canvas on which to create a new stylish kitchen and that's exactly what we set about doing.





Our first objective was to gut the place. As anyone will know if you're in the right mood – ie had a row with the wife or a letter from the bank – this can be done in double-quick time. This kitchen proved no exception. We took out the old cupboards, the draining units, a brown fridge, old shelving and last but not least, the lino – disgusting! What were we left with? Well not a lot – a few pipes, the 'retro' AGA and a radiator.

Next on the list was to decide on what to do with the floor. The existing floor was uneven concrete and had to be levelled before we could do anything. Having had experience of virtually every type of kitchen flooring, all of which had pros and cons, we opted for a soft, honey coloured limestone from Arco Iris. Limestone is brilliant, not only is it light and warm in colour, which we needed in this north facing room, it is very low maintenance and definitely the easiest flooring we have had in terms of keeping it clean and looking good. We used a smaller version of the same tile behind the AGA to tie the room together and, because the AGA was quite old, they looked like they had been there forever too. On the downside, one mistake we made was not to introduce underfloor heating in the kitchen. Although the benefit of continuous heat from the AGA is a help, the floor and room generally would have benefited, at little extra cost.

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The list of kitchen designers and manufacturers in the region is as long as it is impressive and after much deliberation we decided to go with Martin Scarth of Broomley Furniture. We'd worked with him before and as well as being thoroughly reliable, he has a decent sense of humour – quite important when you're doing any building work! What's more, although you can choose some fairly good 'off the shelf' kitchens from the bigger chains, Magnet etc, there's something special about having your own kitchen made. Those special details – your choice of taps, where the bin goes, how many drawers, cupboards etc., not to mention the materials used – all make a difference.

The kitchen, although it isn't small, does have three doors and two windows, plus one wall virtually completely taken up by the AGA, leaving very little useable wall space. The walls were also in quite bad



repair. The stone and plasterwork was very uneven on two of them and the remaining walls were plasterboard which wouldn't hold up anything. We therefore decided on an unfitted kitchen; pieces of individual freestanding furniture to give us flexibility – plus it avoided having all the problems of fitting cupboards to uneven walls. Martin sketched out a large larger cupboard and sink run with space for a double farmhouse

sink and dishwasher. We decided to include a large island to provide valuable worktop space, plus space for a hob and combi oven beneath and a small seating area, as wall space was at a premium.

All the units are simple and 'country' in style which suits the nature of the room. Martin also sketched a smaller unit to provide extra storage for glasses and the all-important coffee maker! The open oak shelving mirrors the breakfast bar and again is a very versatile piece of furniture which we can use anywhere.

We decided to use the recesses on either side of the AGA for the fridge and freezer as a large American fridge would have dominated the room and taken up too much space. We could have turned them into cupboards but again, the state of repair of the walls inside would have meant replastering on a large scale, whilst the fridge and freezer from AEG just slotted in perfectly.

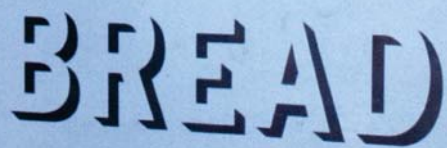
The Impala granite is from Dunelm Stone (also known as granite-worktops-direct.com). The measuring process is fairly

straightforward and is all done by a very clever machine. The granite is then cut and just arrives with the appropriate spaces for a sink, hob etc and then placed on top.

The whole look of the kitchen was kept fairly simple using a mix of 'country' furniture with a touch of the industrial

The ceiling of the kitchen was plaster between wooden beams which were painted black. We considered stripping back the beams but the wood underneath was not overly spectacular so instead we painted over the whole thing in Clotted Cream from Kelly Hoppen at Fired Earth, which is the colour we used on the woodwork too. It took three coats! The plaster, which was falling away in places, had to be cut back and replaced. A tip here – if you need a plasterer, they're not always the easiest people to find.





The walls are painted in Ridge Blue from Kevin McCloud's English Palette from Fired Earth. The AGA shelf and shelving beside the sink are both handmade by Martin in oak. The oak towel rail and vintage enamel bucket are from RE, the clock is from Vintage and the painting is a limited edition screen print by Susi Bellamy. The huge toaster and red Kitchen Aid mixer are from John Lewis as are the woven storage boxes. The stools are also from John Lewis's new spring catalogue.

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