

Before

LAURA CARTLEDGE discovers a remodel project which took the idea of a bungalow up a level.

Pictures courtesy of Clare Mansell

Building the dream

After



Before



After

Clare Mansell's background isn't in interior design. As a radio producer she helped TalkSport take to the air and spent years presenting digital station Kiss before joining the British Forces Broadcasting Service.

"That is where I met my husband Jim, in the Falklands, they sent me down there to do the radio," she recalls.

The pair were then posted to Germany, Canada and Cyprus before moving to northern Scotland.

While the destinations were varied, the signature 'green carpet and nylon covered sofas' in the accommodation quarters left Clare 'bursting' to be able to make somewhere their own.

"I am a Rightmove addict," admits Clare. "I was always looking, but we weren't really looking, if you know what I mean."

No stranger to the Bosham area, having lived there previously, it is no surprise a property overlooking Chichester Harbour would catch Clare's eye.

"When we came here you could tell it had enormous potential because of the view, not that you could see it then," she smiles.

"It was a spacious hallway and you could sense the light and space even though it was a bungalow.

"I just got that feeling," Clare reveals, "That feeling they talk about on Location, Location, Location."

That was in 2009 and the old home was in need of care and attention, but it had the setting and met the 'wise advice' Clare's dad had given her.

"He said 'just find somewhere in a nice location that is in a good enough condition to rent out while you are overseas,'" she recites, "And this fitted the bill."

But for the bungalow to reach that standard – or 'round one' of the renovations as Clare calls it – cost £20,000 and plenty of parental help.



Clare, Theo and Jim Mansell

“I just got that feeling – that feeling they talk about on Location, Location, Location”

"They built their own house," she explains.

"It was brilliant. We were in Canada at the time so my parents had our budget and they managed it for us.

"In a good way we didn't get a say, they would send images asking 'this tile?' And we'd say 'great,'" grins Clare.

"They did a video for us walking around the house, we've still got it."

Bigger plans had always been in the pipeline however with discussed options including a modular home, a complete rebuild and a remodel.

Clare, Jim and son Theo, now three, moved into the property in 2013 and within two days had found the solution – thanks to Space & Style run by Nigel Lewis from Gosport.

"We always felt that buying a Huf Haus was just 'off the shelf', not what we wanted – I had seen one too many Grand Designs programmes," admits Clare.

"Nigel is a one man band, a structural engineer not an architect.

"He scribbled this idea based on what I'd shown him on Pinterest. And we both said 'that's it'. He nailed it straight away, he got what we wanted."

With that they had their house, albeit in drawing form on a napkin, and could apply for planning permission.

The Mansell's previous homes helped influence the design of the New England style home.

"Even if it was just a case of 'we never want that' or 'we do want that,'" she agrees.

"Our Cyprus house had a really nice open staircase area, which we have here.

"And we have a flag pole, we put them out for visitors, that was something from Canada as they are into their flag waving."

As for the floorplan, the couple let the existing accommodation take the lead.

"It felt like a house that should have a staircase. And it felt like these two rooms should be one," she lists.



"It's nice that the house has evolved rather than scrapping it and starting again. It was telling us its story – if that doesn't sound too hippyish.

"I was thinking this morning about how much of this house is recycled – not in a cool and funky way," adds Clare.

"The beams in the porch are the old rafters from the roof they took off, there's a window in the kitchen we took out and put back in again."

In March 2014 the work to build the dream home began.

"We had brilliant builders, we had good weather. Of course there were a few problems but it largely went to plan," she says.

"We came in on time and in budget which never happens – I told everyone it would be six months as I didn't believe it would be done in four and a half."

But it was and by the middle of July a stunning New England home occupied the bungalow's spot.

"We've had someone knock on the door and ask if it was a kit house – that was a big compliment to us," Clare whispers.

"It looks really welcoming, that is what we wanted."

It is hard to put your finger on what makes the beautiful blue home so appealing, perhaps because the list is too long, but there is certainly a sense that was just meant to be.

"Our furniture didn't work in quarters, it never looked right. Then we put them in here and it just worked," agrees Clare.

So what would be her tips for tackling a remodel?

"I am no authority on it but I would say find someone who can draw up the plans to give the whole project an overall finished look," she replies, "rather than just sticking a first floor on to an existing building. That has been the success for us.

"I'm also a big believer that your instincts guide you, it guided us to this place."



To read Clare's blog and find out more about the building journey, visit www.maybushstudio.com

