

Grand designs

Steve Rowe meets recently married couple **Tim and Simon Cardinali-Wood** to see how their 40-year-old single-unit park home was completely renovated by mobile home specialists **Rapide Services**

Images: Kostas Tselios

It was on a rather wet October day that I drove up to a small park home site in Nottinghamshire to meet Tim and Simon Cardinali-Wood, who have recently had their park home totally refurbished. The weather might have been miserable, but the welcome couldn't have been more warm and friendly and, along with photographer Kostas, I had a great time chatting to the guys about the renovation, as well as finding out more about how they met and how they came to be living in a park home in the first place.

The couple met just over a year ago, as Tim

explained, 'I had just left a 27-year relationship and, once my partner had bought me out of my share in our old home, I started to look for a home to buy for myself.

'I looked at quite a few places, both in and around Nottingham, but eventually decided that I wanted to stay within the city. I found this park home site when a friend of mine mentioned that one of her employees lived in a home there.

'So, we came to have a look round and I found this home, which was in a pretty poor state, but I could see had some potential if it



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Tim and Simon make it official on their big day



Before and after: On the outside of the home, the old aluminium cladding was removed and replaced with modern plastic cladding, which is easy to maintain and provides better insulation

was fully renovated.

'It was around this time that I met Simon, on an internet dating website, and we moved in here together.'

New start

How have they found life on a park home site? Tim continued, 'Most of the people on this small site have been very nice to us and it's a very well located park, close to shops and pubs, plus just 20 minutes from the centre of Nottingham. I work fairly locally as well. I used to work for the NHS in mental health but, with cuts looming, I decided to get together with a business partner and set up my own charity to help care for people with mental health issues in the local community. This is called Nottingham Focus On Wellbeing (please visit the website at www.nottinghamfocusonwellbeing.co.uk) and, although it's only early days, I am hopeful that this will be a success.'

I then asked Simon how he had found his new life in a park home. He enthused, 'Living here has been like a new start for both of us and, to cement our love, we got married a few months ago, with a large ceremony in Nottingham's town hall. Lots of friends came along and we had a really great day, including having photos taken on the balcony that's usually reserved for royalty! Now that the



Starting the kitchen alterations

home is renovated, life here is great and we enjoy having friends round. We even made sure the renovation work included an extra-wide front door to accommodate a friend of ours who uses a wheelchair, and she now loves coming to see us here.'

The renovation

What about the home renovation itself - how did they choose a company to use? Tim continued, 'We got quotes from a few companies, but Denis Stanton of Rapide Services was easily the friendliest and most professional so we decided to go with him.'

'The work we wanted done was to totally remove the old aluminium cladding from the exterior of the home and replace it with better-insulated and maintenance-free plastic cladding.'

'We also wanted a new kitchen and a new bathroom with a large walk-in shower in place of a bath. Finally, we wanted an old entrance porch on the side of the home replaced with a sun-room that could be used as a dining room. By remodelling and renovating the home we wanted to make it maintenance-free for the future, as well as making it better insulated, with new double-glazed windows and the plastic cladding on the exterior. The total cost for all the work was over £30,000 and we are very happy with the quality of the finished job and with the professional and friendly service from Denis and his team.'

What was it like having the work done while you were still living in the home? Simon joked, 'We had to pile all of our possessions in the lounge while the work was

home improvements refurbishment



Above The new kitchen looks amazing, with everything close to hand and wipe-clean surfaces and flooring

taking place, so we sat on the settee in the evening surrounded by piles of belongings.

'Our dog Bella found this a little stressful, but she is very content now that the work is finished. The only problems during the work were caused by us, really! For instance, I came back one day having taken Bella out for a walk in the rain and I threw my rain coat down on the floor, over an electrical extension lead, causing the electric to fuse. When this first happened, I thought Denis might have caused the problem due to all the works taking place, before I lifted the jacket and realised my mistake!

Total transformation

Now that the work is finished, what difference had it made to their lives? Tim concluded, 'It has totally transformed our home, which now feels very modern and is warm and cosy, as well as being very easy to look after. We are particularly happy with the new shower room, which is very roomy and easy to use. The new kitchen is also miles better than the old one, with everything easy to hand. Perhaps the biggest improvement, however, has been to the sun room. Before this was just a dark porch area that was separated from the rest of the home, with a

narrow doorway between it and the main hallway. Now the wall here has been totally removed, so that the sun room incorporates the hallway, with direct access off it to the bedroom, washroom and kitchen.

'The space here now feels huge, with plenty of space for a table and chairs, and we use it as a dining room as well as a sun room. We are really happy with the work and would

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thoroughly recommend Denis and his company Rapide Services for anyone else planning renovation work to their park home.'

I must conclude by saying a big thanks to Tim and Simon for letting us into their home and being so friendly and such good company. I think the main lesson here is that you



Tim and Simon prepare to cut the cake on their wedding day

shouldn't be put off a second-hand park home just because it looks a little dated, or needs some work done. Get a professional park home specialist in to do the work and you can totally transform an old home, making it a better place to live and adding to its value at the same time. »



The small porch on the side of the home was dark and with just a small doorway between it and the main home. Now this space has been totally opened up, giving a lovely sunny room that is used for dining



home improvements

refurbishment

Checklist

RAPIDE SERVICES

We contacted Denis Stanton at Rapide Services to get his view on the work carried out here, plus to get an idea of the costings for this type of renovation work.

Dennis explained, 'From my initial meeting with Tim and Simon, it was clear they required the exterior of their 40-year-old Donnington park home to be modernised, giving them the appearance of a modern park home, whilst achieving a maintenance-free finish and meeting current insulation standards. Having shown them various products, it was agreed that a double thickness insulated wall renovation with Canixel cladding (which is manufactured in Canada and widely used by park home manufacturers in the UK) would be ideal, complemented by Canixel uPVC odd leg windows and doors. The existing porch was also turned into a conservatory. Internally, the kitchen area was made larger and a new fitted kitchen was installed, whilst the bathroom area was

made smaller and a new suite fitted which included a walk-in shower. To minimise decoration, the kitchen, bathroom and conservatory were all clad internally with maintenance-free Plastivan decorative wall finish.'

We then asked Denis to give us an idea of what this sort of work would cost. He explained, 'I have always been wary of quoting 'typical' costs without seeing the work needed, for the simple reason that the size of home, kitchen, bathroom etc can vary greatly, as can the specifications required, i.e. the standard of finish required. This can make a vast difference when costing - I hope readers will take this into account when looking at the following typical costs: a new bathroom in a park home would typically cost from £5,000 - £10,000; a new kitchen from £6,000 - £12,000; a new conservatory from £6,000 - £15,000. To fully insulate the exterior of a home using Canixel cladding would cost

from £10,000 - £14,000. Finally, to fit new uPVC odd leg windows to a home would typically cost from £6,000 - £10,000.'

If you would also like a quote for renovation work by Rapide Services, just contact Denis for a free quote. His company covers all of the UK.

RAPIDE SERVICES

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The washroom was transformed, with a new walk-in shower cubicle instead of a bath

