

FROM THIS...



After carrying out a rigorous survey, Rapide Services transformed this old home

TO THIS...



Total transformation



Gunsmith Brian Wiseman has exacting standards when it comes to craftsmanship. Alex Melvin finds out why Brian was so impressed with Rapide Services' interior and exterior makeover of his park home

were delighted. They had also seen a second-hand park home that seemed to suit their needs. There was only one problem: the home was more than 20 years old and in need of urgent repair and quite a dramatic transformation.

That's where Rapide Services came in. The Wisemans contacted Denis Stanton and his team at Rapide, who are based in Staffordshire, not far from the Wisemans' chosen site. The

couple explained their dilemma and were so happy with the quick and professional response they received that they instructed Rapide to carry out a full structural survey on the home. This included: checking the concrete base; chassis jacks; chassis; floor joists; floor covering; skirting and walls; and roof. As a standard feature of the company's surveys, Rapide offers easy to understand advice (in layman's terms) and makes a recommendation on all

the remedial work required. In this case, it included budget costings before the purchase of the park home.

Brian said, 'We found this service extremely helpful. Even though you are not required, by law, to have a survey carried out on a park home, this eliminated any hidden costs and enabled us to set aside a firm budget to bring the property up to its current standards and meet with the park's requirements too.'

When Brian and Annette Wiseman (above) found their dream park, a picturesque site in the Staffordshire countryside, they

Below/below right: Gunsmith Brian Wiseman and his wife Annette found their perfect park, the only trouble was, the home they wanted was more than 20 years old and in need of urgent repair and lots of care and attention. That's where Rapide Services came in...

FROM THIS...



TO THIS...





Above/above right: The Wisemans had a new window, entry doors and brick steps added to the back side of the home

Modern makeover

The overall assessment of the home was like many other homes of its age. Denis explains, 'The structure of the home was in good condition. However, the exterior wall covering and windows were antiquated and of an old fashioned design, and so

He's a man who appreciates top quality craftsmanship so it was clear that only the best would do."

were in need of a major overhaul and replacement. It was clearly going to be a big job.'

On first meeting the Wisemans it was clear they would require exacting standards from this refurbishment. Having spent some time discussing the project, it became evident that the couple's work and lifestyle requirements were quite unique.

Gunsmith Brian worked alongside his two brothers in a long established family business: F.W. Wiseman. The business was originally established by Brian's grandfather who worked in the industry as far back as the 19th century. As a young man, Brian's father had arranged for him to serve an apprenticeship as a gun engraver outside the family business, under a Mr Morris who was 71 at the time! Brian completed his apprenticeship and went back into the family business and still carries out his profession to this day.

Denis, who got along extremely well with Brian while working on his home, said, 'One of our lasting memories of Brian will be when he told us that: "If I'm not using my hands, I can't think straight." He's a man who appreciates top quality craftsmanship so it was clear that only the best would do.'

When the Wisemans contacted Rapide, they were living on their own 50ft Mark Boat Canal Barge, which they have had for 16 years ago. With Brian in such a 'hands on' profession, it was no surprise to learn that he had fitted all of the interior on the boat himself over a period of five years. Brian joked, 'For most of this time, Annette and I were living in the bathroom!' Both

Brian and Annette love the boat, which they christened 'Pearl'.

Annette explained, 'When we first bought our barge it was in the year of our pearl wedding anniversary so it seemed fitting at the time.'

Although both Brian and Annette work in the family business, any spare time and holidays are usually still spent exploring the canals and waterways of Great Britain.

However, in the not too distant future the couple are looking forward to full retirement and longer trips away from these shores.

Park lifestyle

With the barge almost finished and retirement looming, the

couple's thoughts turned to a more permanent base with a little more comfort when not travelling. As fans of an alternative lifestyle like life on a barge, the couple were very receptive to the idea of buying a residential park home.

On top of this, Lodgefield Park is only a few minutes' from their current mooring.

Once they had completed the purchase of the home and gained detailed permission from the park owner for the pending refurbishment, Rapide stepped in. One of the couple's main stipulations for Rapide was to alter the 'goldfish bowl' look of the lounge by removing the dated corner bay window. This helped to create lots more space and a feeling of privacy.

Then, both lounge windows were replaced using modern simple box bays which were installed with a new tiled canopy running continually from one bay to the other. Underneath the bays, textured gallows brackets, to the inside uPVC cill and headboards, were fitted. On top of this, other major changes were required in the back bedrooms so casement windows were replaced with a box bay to match the lounge bays. Double doors, leading onto a brick balcony area at the rear of the home, were also added. The bathroom window was also replaced with a smaller one allowing a new shower enclosure to be installed. All other windows and doors were replaced using a uPVC double glazed odd- leg outer frame system, designed especially for park homes.

Alongside the window alterations, the Wisemans wanted to guard against the cold of winter by opting for a traditionally-textured coated energy-efficient, thermally enhanced wall renovation. This included removing the old rotting outer wall boards, checking the existing timber framework for rot and replacing where required. Rapide then had to double the wall thickness by screwing tanalised treated timbers onto the original structure.

Denis explained, 'Unlike simply screwing insulation to the outer walls and rendering, this not only provides a cavity to install further insulation but increases the structural strength



Above: After a new exterior, windows and doors had been installed by Rapide. Right: The right hand side of the home before work



Left: What the Wisemans' home looked like during the refurb

of the home, while enabling the original structure to be seen, allowing any framework rot to be removed and replaced.

Complicated job

Thermax PIR insulation boards were then fitted inside the new wall structure on top of the existing quilt insulation increasing the thermal efficiency of the home by up to 75 per cent. Then, 10mm WBP exterior grade plywood was installed onto the new structure and fixed using stainless steel screws. All existing ventilation voids were checked and reinstated, all plywood joints were then covered with self adhesive jointing tape (twice) and a flat coat of textured coating was

Rapide's specialist expertise and knowledge was something we simply could not have managed without."

applied to all screw heads and joints to prevent hairline cracking of the coating. When the preliminary coating had cured the top coat was applied using the hand trowel and roller method to create a bark effect stipple finish. This process gives a thermally efficient wall structure, keeps the home free from condensation and rot,

makes it warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, as well as reducing external noise levels within the home, ultimately reducing heating costs.

Fitting a porch

The Wisemans also wanted a porch to the left hand side of their home. Their requirements were discussed with the park owner to ensure the design was in-keeping with other units on the park and also met current fire regulations and local authority guidelines.

It was then decided that a uPVC porch would be installed with a triple wall tinted polycarbonate roof, with obscure toughened double glazed units to the upper half and uPVC infill panels to the bottom half, with a 19mm WBP exterior grade plywood floor and a brick skirting and steps to match the existing home.

On the original survey it was also noted that the original sarking felt which protruded underneath the bottom row of roof tiles on either side of the home had perished. To replace this, both courses of tiles were lifted and a uPVC alternative was fitted to avoid further problems. At the same time the rotting original fascia/barge boards were replaced using a uPVC equivalent, the existing leaking guttering and downpipes

were also replaced with uPVC.

Complete: inside and out! Once all the exterior work had been finished, Brian and Annette asked Rapide to carry out some interior alterations too. An old fashioned kitchen wall and cupboard was removed to allow for a more open plan approach. Rapide also fitted a further glass panelled Georgian door and frame by removing part of the existing wall and creating an aperture between the hallway and lounge close to the front door, allowing more light into the lounge area. Finally, the company replaced the existing lounge door, which led into the hall/bedroom entrances, with a glass panelled Georgian door.

On the finished job, Brian said, 'Both Annette and I are delighted with the job carried out by Rapide Services and would wholeheartedly recommend the company to others who are considering buying, and then renovating an older park home.

'Their specialist expertise and knowledge was something we simply could not have managed without. Added to this, the level of professionalism and helpfulness they provided was second to none. We'd like to say a big "thank you".'

Rapide has been refurbishing park homes for 25 years and offers all types of refurb such as tiled roofing systems, extensions, porches, conservatories, uPVC double glazed windows and doors, skirting, internal refurbishment and various exterior wall refurbishments and are pleased to offer free quotations on a national basis for any refurbishment you are contemplating. ●

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INFO POINT

Rapide are now offering full site surveys on second hand homes, with an emphasis on clear, straightforward, advice. For a free information pack, please contact: Rapide Services, Tansmead, Cross Heads, Colwich, Staffs, or telephone: 01889 882275 e-mail: denisstanton@btinternet.com