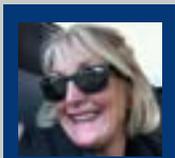




Building the Dream

With the summer holiday season looming, Jane Smith and her husband Richard make sure their plumber and electrician have done what preparatory work they can before autumn...



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It was early July and we needed to make good progress this month as our building team would be taking off the whole of August – and who could blame them, as in the last eight months they had taken just two days' holiday at Christmas and three days at Easter.

This month they would concentrate on the internal decorative stonewalls: the arches, columns, the fireplace. Their work was beautiful, with each stone being hand-picked for its colour, shape and visual effect. We would have decorative walls in the kitchen, sitting room, hallway, master bedroom and landing. The remainder of the outside of the house was also hand-finished with stones this month and a couple of walls were left as simple plaster finish, to add interest to the overall external appearance.

With the plumber having finished his waste and water pipework, a light screed was laid over every floor in preparation for the underfloor heating system to be laid by him during September.

Now it was the turn of Bruno, our electrician, to start the first phase of his work. His team had the task of putting the carrier tubing and electrical sockets and light switch plates in position throughout the house. The actual wiring would be done as phase 2, scheduled for October. Richard and I had spent eight hours with a floor plan of the house, deciding where all the electrics should go, including the TV and computer points. We made a colour-coded plan (light switches in blue, electrical sockets in green, high level kitchen sockets in

purple, etc) and we gave this to the electricians the day they started. This first phase took three weeks and the noise and dust created by them chasing through the walls was incredible.

Once they had finished, the plasterers started. There were four of them and they arrived complete with their enormous white plaster container, which was parked next to the house and would continuously 'feed' their hand-held machines with plaster. There were two phases to their work: first a rough grey coat was applied to the building blocks, then a fine white top coat was added to neatly finish the walls. The house felt so different afterwards – so much larger, cleaner, brighter.

The final touch from the building team before they left for their holiday, was to build four very beautiful chimney pots. I had photographed many chimneys in the preceding month, and together we decided on what should be our design. Again, beautiful work.

When the building team left for their month holiday we felt truly thrilled with what had been achieved in just eight months since Demolition Day and we felt very fortunate to be working with such a skilled group of people.

'Richard, crack the prosecco!' was my cry. ■

