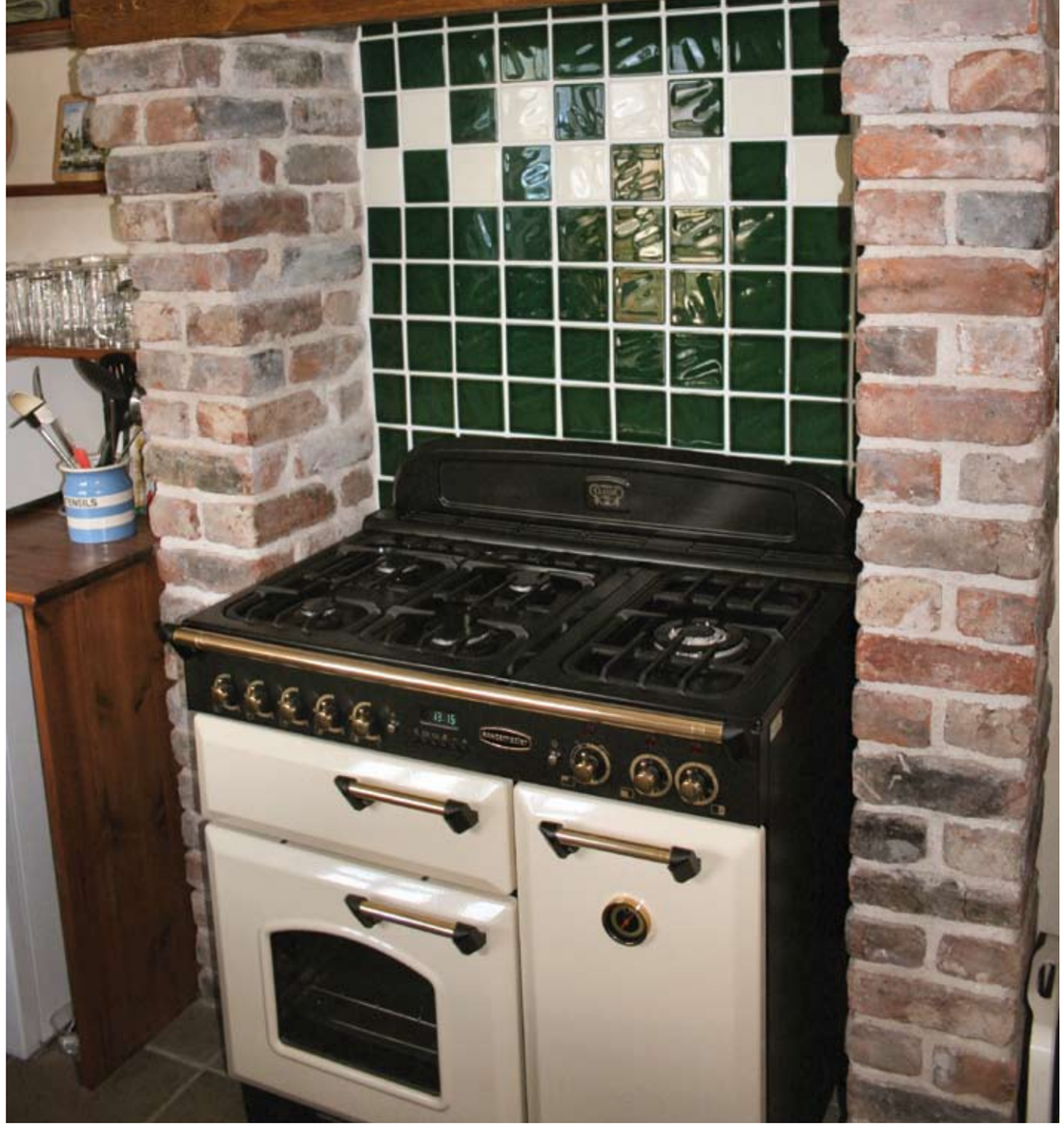
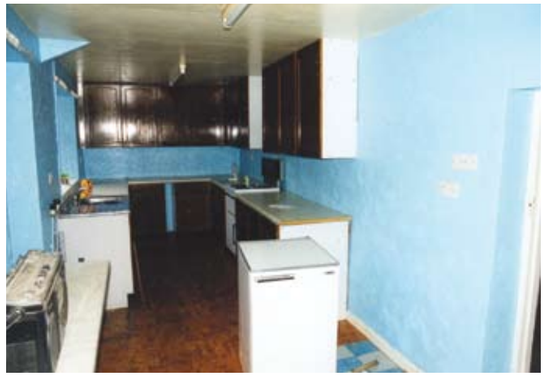


A Traditional Kitchen for Modern Living

STORY: Paul Watts

Every generation will follow the styles and trends of the day by altering their home to reflect these or make changes to introduce new labour saving devices such as running water or electricity. When introducing our own take on the latest styles we should be thinking of how this can be done without causing problems to the fabric of the building. It is so easy to lose the features that tempted us into wanting the house in the first place. It is always worth pointing out at an early stage that before any work is carried out it is important to obtain the necessary consents such as listed building consent and building regulations.



When listing the things that shouldn't be done to a kitchen of a traditionally constructed building, high on that list should be textured plaster, non-breathing vinyl paint, fitted units, cement and gypsum plasters. All regular readers of Heritage Homes magazine should be aware of the problems associated with this list. When Paul & Lyn Watts took on Tyrella House, a 17c cob and stone building in Devon it was clear that previous owners were not readers of Heritage Homes magazine.

In April 2008 there was a revision of the building regulations that basically protects all traditionally constructed houses from inappropriate work that would otherwise be required by the regulations. For example, you can argue that a damp proof membrane can be potentially damaging to your old house and will not have to fit one if you make a good case.

FORMICA AND EGG BOX DOORS

The house had undergone a major refurbishment in 1970, a large extension was added and up to date late 1960's style fitted throughout the whole house. Tyrella House was upgraded when the whole nation was desperate to show how modern we were. Character, wood burning stoves and plank doors were passe, electric heating, easy to clean Formica and egg box doors were the order of the day.

After such a long time of just paint and lino being used to spruce the kitchen up, it was obviously looking a little tired. The kitchen was musty and damp and needed an overhaul. The first job was to establish what the walls were made of, what they had on them and then what would work best.

One wall being cob, two stone and one brick, none having damp proof courses (DPC) fitted so were drawing moisture from the ground. This makes fitted base units a problem as it traps the moisture and causes rot. Fitted wall units also trap moisture to a lesser extent but can still offer a breeding ground for mould growth. Mould can cause health problems and damp walls can create a cycle of cold poorly insulated walls and more condensation.

Cement had been applied to every wall with a gypsum skim over that and then a textured plaster and vinyl silk paint applied. This is a terrible combination that needed addressing. Prior to 1985 textured plasters may have contained asbestos so care needs to be taken. Action Products supply a safe way of removing this. All the internal plaster was removed from the brick and stone walls. As cob is just mud and straw, removing cement can cause a great deal of damage to the cob. It was therefore decided that this wall would

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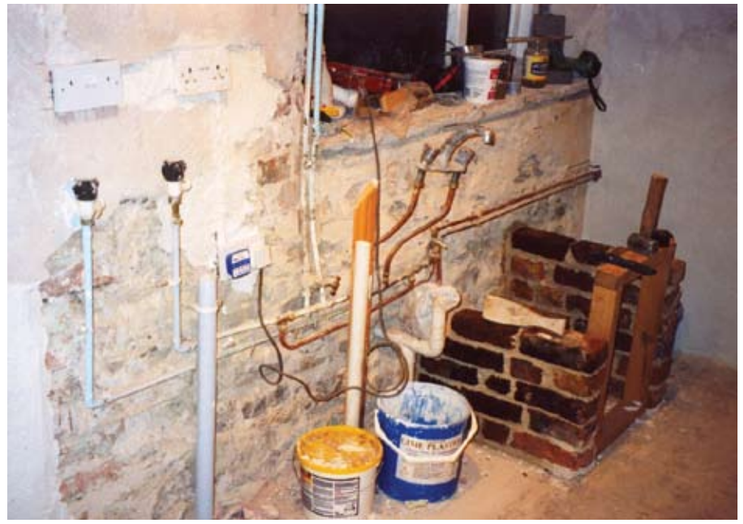
just have the lower couple of feet removed to allow the rising moisture to escape.

The modern gypsum skim was failing on the lower part of the wall anyway due to the build up of moisture and was removed. The cement that was left was treated with Bayosan DG27 primer to enable lime putty plaster skim to be applied.

Although clearly subjective, Paul and Lyn thought that there was little character in the kitchen as it was so set about trying to recreate some. A number of reclaimed bricks were obtained from a neighbour and used to create a setting for the new range style cooker. Lime mortars mixed at 3 parts aggregate and 1 part lime putty were used to bed the bricks. The same bricks were also used to create a base for a new slate work top and the reclaimed Belfast sink.

The proportions of the room were thought to be wrong so a partition wall was erected to provide a pantry, to house a freezer and the central heating boiler. With hindsite, Paul and Lyn acknowledge this was not the best combination but seems to work well. The far wall that is now hidden inside the pantry was suffering from modern emulsion trapping moisture that was in turn forcing the paint from the wall. Rather than totally remove this, the loose paint was scraped off lower down and an NBT breathable emulsion applied all over. This allows moisture to escape and has worked well giving the wall a sense of age that is clean and washable.



The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) now encourage people not to use reclaimed materials as it is often difficult to be sure of where they have originated and it may encourage theft. If you plan on undertaking any work see if it is possible to commission good quality replacement materials in keeping with the period as this also helps to keep our traditional skills base.

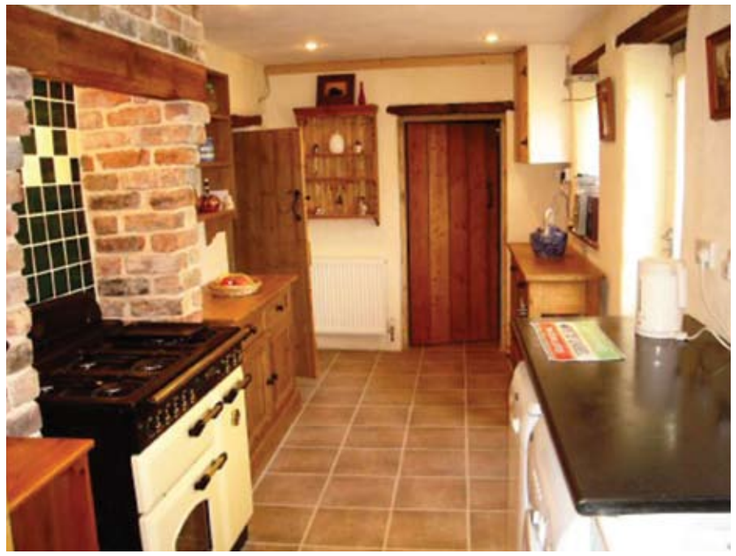
LIME PLASTER WITH DEVON CREAM

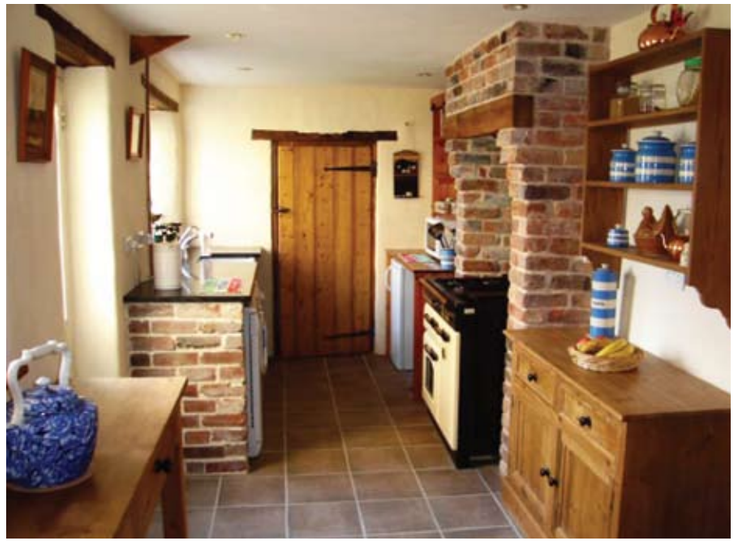
All the walls were then treated to lime putty plasters and decorated with ‘Devon Cream’ limewash. The plasterboard ceiling was re-skimmed with lime putty plaster 3/2 mix after an application of DG27. The ceiling was then painted with a white NBT emulsion as this is easier to apply overhead than limewash. The ceiling could have had a modern gypsum plaster but the little bit of surface breathablity helps to reduce the chances of condensation.

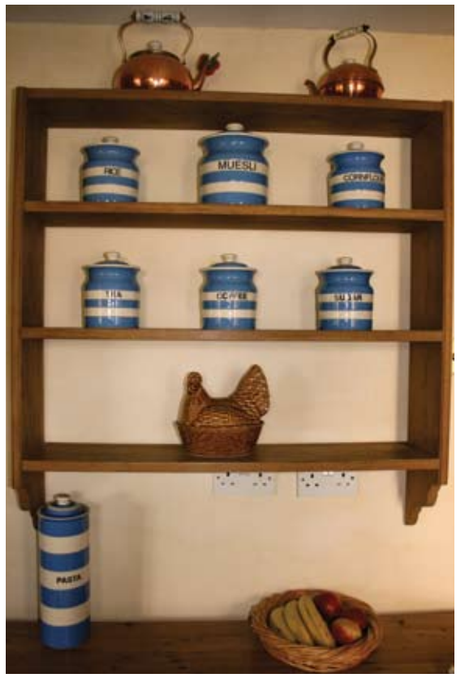
The combination of soft bricks and lime mortar around a cooker can be a poor mix. Cooking fats can be absorbed into the bricks as well as dust dropping into the food. An excellent way to deal with this is to use a silicate based fixative. This is a primer intended for use before application of silicate paints. Being fully breathable there is no conflict with use on a traditional building and the primer is not visible on the bricks or mortar, unlike a shiny varnish. The back of the wall had ceramic tiles applied for ease of cleaning but were not applied right to the ground. Once again, this allows the rising moisture to escape.

A couple of plank and ledge doors were bought at a local auction, these were dipped and oiled with Biofa Universal Hard Oil. Hand made ‘From the Anvil’ ironmongery was used for the hinges and latches. The Hard Oil was also used to nourish the oak lintels and other wood around the room.

Once the decoration was complete, the furniture could be added. To maximise the air to the walls, careful consideration was given to what was to be used. A carpenter







WHERE TO GET THE PRODUCTS

Slate work top & pine furniture:
Winkleigh Timber

Lime plasters, limewash, ironmongery, Biofa primer and oil, Safe Text Remover, NBT emulsion:
Mike Wye & Associates Ltd.
Telephone: 01409-281644

was employed to build in a unit with no back or doors to house the fridge. A couple of open shelving units, and a free standing cupboard and a bacon table complete the makeover.

Paul Watts is an employee of Mike Wye & Associates Ltd who are one of the country's leading building lime specialists and have conducted one day practical training courses for over 12 years.

Further details on the Tyrella House kitchen renovation and the materials used can be obtained by contacting Mike Wye & Associates on:
Website: www.mikewye.co.uk
Email: sales@mikewye.co.uk
Telephone: 01409-281644