

Praise for a great job

Dawn and Tom Sheath asked a park home refurbishment specialist to bring their ageing home up to modern standards. Anne Webb visits Roundstone Park in Sussex to see the results of a job well done

Before



Left: This is Dawn and Tom Sheath's home as it was when they first purchased it. It's obvious some refurbishment work had been done over the 35-plus years since it had been built. However, it was time for an improvement in insulation, bringing it up to modern standards and making it more comfortable for its owners

Location, as any estate agent will tell you, is the most important factor when choosing a new home. That was certainly true for Dawn and Tom Sheath who, on retirement, were looking to move closer to their family. Originally hailing from Chichester in West Sussex, they wanted to be closer to their daughter and son-in-law and their grandchildren, who were living in the Horsham area. They decided to move to a flat in Eastbourne, about 30 miles away.

They loved the flat and its surroundings but there was just one fly in the ointment. That flat was still 30 miles away from their

family and they dearly wanted to be as close as possible to their grandchildren as they were growing up.

Property prices throughout Sussex had gone through the roof

“The home seemed to be in fairly good condition, if a trifle dated”

in the intervening years but Dawn and Tom knew about park homes because they had been holiday caravanners at one time and had found out about the residential park home lifestyle when visiting caravan shows.

As luck would have it, there was a

park home estate in Southwater, the village where their daughter and son-in-law were living, and they had driven past it on many occasions. So, one day they decided to go in and inquire about vacancies.

Award winners

That park was Roundstone, an old-established development which enjoys an excellent reputation, thanks to the caring attitude of its owners, Bob and Natalie Morris. In fact, Bob and Natalie were once voted Park

Owners of the Year by their residents in a promotion run by this magazine.

Roundstone is such a popular park that vacancies occur very rarely but Dawn and Tom were fortunate to find an older twin unit for sale, which dated back to the mid-1970s. It was 28ft long and 20ft wide and Dawn and Tom were told that its original manufacturer was Brentmere. It was obvious that some fairly major refurbishment work had been carried out on it over the intervening years and it seemed in fairly good condition (although it was looking a trifle dated). Tom (a keen do-it-yourself enthusiast)

After



A close-up of the new uPVC-framed windows which are fitted with Georgian glazing bars



The porch exterior now matches the rest of the home



The conservatory at the side of the home provides valuable extra space for Dawn and Tom and is quite a sun-trap

could see its potential and was able to visualise ways in which it could be modernised.

So, they took the plunge, bought the park home and took up residence in October 2006. It wasn't long before they began to appreciate Roundstone's peaceful lifestyle, the friendliness of their neighbours and the excellent way that the estate was managed.

So, happily installed in their home, they started to plan the projects that would bring it up to modern standards.

Sadly, at that point, fate intervened and Tom suffered a stroke. It was then out of the question for him to carry out the refurbishment work on the home himself, so the couple looked around for professionals who could turn their plans into reality.

A professional job

Their first priority was the bathroom and they chose a contractor who appeared to 'tick all the boxes', as Tom put it. 'They stripped the whole room and reclad the walls and ceilings with a maintenance-free decorative plastic material,' he told us.

THE GUILD OF PARK HOME SERVICES

Prestige Developments was one of the founder members of The Guild of Park Home Services, which was set up in 2003. Its members, all involved in park home refurbishment and associated services, are bound by a Code of Conduct and Policy which ensures that any work undertaken on park home residents' is carried out to the highest professional standards with care and consideration shown to the customer and his/her property.



'They installed a new suite and replaced the bath with a shower. Initially, the end result looked great but, 18 months later, following three attempts to stop the shower from leaking and trying to rectify a loose sagging ceiling, we agreed compensation.'

Fortunately Tom's health had improved by this time and he and Dawn set about the work themselves - 'as it should have

been done in the first place,' as Tom commented.

The next priority was to completely upgrade the outside of their home, but after the nightmare of the bathroom Dawn and Tom were extremely careful in selecting contractors to tender for this work. 'One name that seemed to stand out above all the others was Prestige Developments,' Dawn told me. 'Although their quote

Left: Dawn and Tom Sheath outside their refurbished home

was actually the highest, the attention to detail and service from the very first inquiry warranted further investigation.'

Word of mouth

First of all, Tom and Dawn mentioned the project to Roundstone's management who spoke very highly of Prestige's workmanship as they had seen examples of it on the park already. Tom and Dawn also asked friends and neighbours on the park who had used them and they too came back with the same positive responses.

So, buoyed up by these recommendations, the couple decided to book a visit to hear what the company had to say about the proposed work on their park home.

Prestige's sales director, Silvano Geranio visited Dawn and Tom and the couple immediately felt that they were all on the same wavelength. It was clear from the outset that Silvano was committed to providing a really top-class job with great attention to detail. He went through the whole process in detail, explaining exactly what they could do, why it needed to be done, and how they planned to carry it out.

Prestige has been in the park home refurbishment business for more than 18 years and the company is familiar with the structure of all makes and models of homes (including those that are no longer made, like Tom and Dawn's Brentmere). All their refurbishment work is geared to bringing the home on which they are working up to the latest British Standards for park homes.

'Silvano filled us with confidence that not only would the work be



Decorative corner quoins are a distinctive and modern feature



The attractive new gable-end under the roof of Dawn and Tom's impressive, refurbished home



A close-up of the new Decra roof, which comes complete with an impressive 40-year guarantee

After



Left: What a transformation! The refurbished home with new windows, new roof and decorative fascia and the remodelled porch. Just as important are the items you can't see – the extra insulation which makes the home warmer and keeps down the heating bills. Dawn and Tom are delighted with the final outcome

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE AGREEING TO WORK

1 Was the contractor you have chosen recommended to you? Did you find his details on a leaflet through your door or did someone knock on the door uninvited and quote for the work? If you don't have a personal recommendation, proceed with caution.

2 Does the contractor have a registered office address? If he only offers an accommodation address, proceed with caution.

3 Did the contractor provide printed literature showing jobs previously carried out? Be cautious, those photographs might not be genuine, or might not be the contractor's own work. Ask for contact details of 'satisfied customers' so that you can go and check for yourself.

4 Did he provide a written estimate detailing each stage of the work, the materials to be used and the method of application? Always get a detailed specification and, if more than one process is involved in the work, make sure that the costs are itemised.

5 Has the contractor told you the name of the manufacturer of the materials used? Make sure that he is registered or trained to fit them (e.g. Decra, Metrotile or Tufftile roof systems).

carried out to the very highest of standards but that the company genuinely cared about its customers with its attention to detail and personal service,' Tom commented.

A contract was drawn up for work on the walls, windows and roof. The walls were to have a new timber framework on top of the original studwork and a new type of cavity wall insulation was added. Called Celotex, it is double foil backed and greatly increases the insulation values; 9mm ply was then placed on top.

Both the windows and roof on Tom and Dawn's home had been replaced at some time during its long life. However, those windows were not suitable for a park home structure and needed to be replaced as soon as possible because they were leaking.

Tom and Dawn also decided to have a modern tile-effect roof

added while the work was in progress, to complete the home's new look. Their new Decra roof carries a 40-year guarantee (so they'll not have to worry about it in the future).

Fantastic improvement

The work took place in the summer of 2008 in typical wet, windy and generally nasty weather! The team was led by another of the company's directors – Keith Hanger – who has vast experience both in park home manufacture and all aspects of refurbishment. The weather did not deter the team in the slightest.

'They proceeded with the transformation of our home in a cheerful, polite and enthusiastic manner,' Tom told me, 'and it was obvious that they all took a real pride in their work.'

'Nothing was too much trouble, they even put in wires for the

exterior lights and piped through the walls for an outside tap. The transformation was completed in a week, then the area was cleared and everything was left cleaned and polished.

'We were left with a beautiful home that looks brand new and many of our neighbours and friends have commented on the fantastic improvement and how lovely it looks.

'With the benefits of double-depth wall cavity and the Celotex insulation, we have achieved better 'U' values and heat saving than a brand new home, reducing our heating bills and we are doing our bit to save the planet along the way.'

This home already had a small conservatory at one side which Dawn told us is a very useful addition and a real sun trap. There is also a small porch which was recoated so that it matched the rest of the home.

Dawn and Tom have nothing but praise for 'all the professionals' at Prestige Developments. 'We are confident that we will not experience any problems with our home,' said Tom, 'but we also sleep well knowing that if we do have any concerns help is only a telephone call away.'



Above: Roundstone Park is near beauty spots like Beachy Head, Sussex

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