

THE INTERIOR LAY OUT

Four of the houses in Bishops Wood are related to the original project house design but inside they are all different - a fact which still leads to confusion when the occupiers visit each other.

King's Acre differs from the original design in that the dining room backs on to the kitchen whereas in the project house the dining room would have been a rather smaller play room and the snug would have been the dining room.

We also altered the windows. Originally the whole south wall was planned to be full length windows and there were no windows on the east or west walls. The north wall was more generously provided with windows than we thought wise and there was no outer porchway.

We were very conscious of the need for heat retention, hence the minimum number of windows to the north and the outer porch. We specified a double glazed window for the landing but the rest of the double glazing was added later. We put extra insulation in the roof but received - and still receive - conflicting advice about filling the cavity walls with foam so we did nothing about this.

What is now the study was originally designed as mother's bed sitter. It contained the stainless steel sink which is now in the kitchen and had a gas pipe laid to it. The alcove under the book case was intended as the working area although we never imagined that Mother would do more there than make her tea, prepare her breakfast and bake the excellent cakes which she loved doing so much. After her death we dismantled the sink, sealed off the water taps and finally had the book shelves made. They was Joan's design and they were completed only a few weeks before she died.

The reason for the rather narrow windows in the west wall of the study is that we used to have a large and magnificent old book case and the window was made to fill the relatively small space which it left. The dining room similarly was designed around the furniture which we had hence the positioning of the window on the east wall.

So that mother's section could be relatively self contained we specified a door in the passage way between the cloaks cupboard and the downstairs toilet. This meant that if we had guests after she had gone to bed she could use the toilet without feeling obliged to put on a dressing gown in case she met them on the way.

The kitchen, as originally laid out, was designed by Joan and specified to the last inch. The builders weren't very good at working to inches and they had to reposition the door opening and several other items before they got it right. Our plans for every detail in the house were very precise and very clear but in almost every room the builder made some mistake which necessitated re-work. Small wonder that they went bankrupt.

In Joan's kitchen there was a double stainless steel sink let into a fitted unit which filled the wall from the door to the front window. The wall where the sink is now was originally bare and a twin tub washing machine stood there.

The cooker stood adjacent to the serving hatch on the south wall and still embedded in that wall is the conduit and wire to the original control panel. The wire is however safely cut off between the joists and the new wiring to the cooker runs down the soil pipe cover in the hall and through the wall into the cooker switch. The automatic washing machine uses the original wiring to a former power point for its wall switch, from which it also uses the soil pipe cover to its new power point. The lift up flap on the work surface is designed to give access to the plumbing for the washing machine.

When we were contemplating buying the automatic machine we had a terrible job finding out how much space had to be left clear at the back. None of the shops stocking it seemed to have the slightest idea how it had to be plumbed in and they all seemed astonished at the idea that we wanted it to empty itself directly down a drain and had no desire at all to hang the drain tube over the sink every time it was used. However, we finally triumphed and had everything fitted up so that it fitted under the work surface next to the cooker.

When the old cooker was moved from its original position it left a gap which is now filled by a cupboard with sliding doors. The top of this cupboard of course fills the space between the two original work surfaces. Were these the same level? Only on the drawings. There is a difference of about $\frac{1}{2}$ " in their height which you can notice by looking at the top door runner of the cupboard. The rather curious notch in the floor of the cupboard adjacent to this was to allow the door on the original cooker to be opened wide.

The original sink unit (less the sink) now stands outside in the covered way, still in its flame coloured paint, and is used as a general store cupboard.

Thus was the kitchen originally designed and later transformed which only goes to show that no two people are ever likely to agree on an ideal kitchen layout.

Apart from the alterations to the study and the kitchen the house remains as originally planned except for the gas installations. Gas was piped to the estate right from the start. As far as we were aware these were the only houses in Cuddesdon to have this facility, so it must have cost the Gas Board a pretty penny to lay the main. The theory was that all the houses would have gas central heating which would presumably have given the Board a reasonable return on their investment.

We had no intention of using any gas appliances ourselves. Oil, in 1966 was much cheaper for heating purposes and on my calculations would save the cost of a new boiler in ten years, by which time if the relativities changed we could change the boiler and not be out of pocket. As it happened the oil crisis broke in seven years and in the summer of 1974 we had the gas boiler fitted as the main central heating source, retaining the oil boiler for emergencies and for any further change in relative fuel costs.

Successive winters of power cuts due to either coal or electricity strikes counsel us to have the gas hob installed at the same time as the boiler. The way that electricity prices have risen since then suggests that the hob will prove to be a good investment. The total cost of the gas installations was just under £320 and thus should pay for itself within four years.

Certainly the fuel crisis of 1974 made us glad that we already had the gas piped into the house in anticipation of the time when my mother would want to have her own gas cooker. We never use the gas poker point by the lounge fireplace but even that may prove valuable one day.

We now have a well insulated house with double glazing on all except the south side, double thickness fibreglass in the roof and Crittall foam filling in the wall cavities. We can cook on either gas or electricity, we can heat by oil or gas and if all else fails we have an open fire which can be fuelled by wood from the garden and a paraffin lamp. Which is probably as far as we can go in the way of fuel insurance.