

Our Homes Today

Intending to renovate? Read about one couple's experience

Monday, 11 August 2008

New homeowners are often prepared for some DIY jobs when buying an established home. A bit of cosmetic work such as paint and paper is generally manageable but when it comes to a major overhaul most people bring in the experts.

In the case of MALCOLM and LESLEY McLAGAN owners of JAG KITCHENS at Botany Town Centre, they were the experts and took on a renovation project with fantastic results. Here Our Homes TODAY begins a four-part series documenting how the couple transformed a dilapidated 50 year-old bungalow into a contemporary family home using their own design skills, products and company team members.

Local residents for more than 26 years Malcolm and Lesley McLagan had occupied their last home in Botany Downs for 11 years but having only one adult son still living with them, they wanted a smaller property closer to Howick central.



Malcolm and Lesley McLagan.

"We really like the ambience and friendliness of Howick and loved the idea of taking an easy walk into The Village for a drink and a meal," says Lesley. "Malcolm and I were open to ideas including a renovation."

In their search for a new house the McLagans came across an older brick and tile home on a corner site in Paton Road, Howick. The previous owners had started to pull it apart but were then transferred to Australia. The house sat empty in an unrentable condition for nearly a year before going to auction.



Kitchen showing end wall to laundry before removal.

Malcolm and Lesley were the successful bidders on the day and quickly set about drawing up a wish list of changes. "These included knocking out and replacing walls to create an en suite and installing a new kitchen, bathroom and laundry," Malcolm says. "Most of the plumbing and electrical wiring also needed replacing and there were paint, floors and drapes to consider."

As owners of a kitchen company, the couple came up with their own concept then engaged a local draughtsperson to draw up formal plans for council. All too aware of homeowners who have carried out alterations without building approvals they made sure they did everything by the book.



Laundry showing end wall to kitchen before removal.

"While diving into a job may save a little time and money at the beginning it can cause issues when the house is eventually sold and purchasers want a LIM report," says Malcolm who was pleasantly surprised to receive building approval within two weeks. This meant Jag's carpenter could start demolition work almost immediately.

The work begin... part II

Monday, 25 August 2008

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Once plans and resource consents were in place, Malcolm and Lesley McLagan set the work schedule with removal of some walls and other interior demolition top of the list.

The badly sagging lounge, dining and kitchen ceilings were the first to go and it was a real advantage having an able carpenter who was able to install level ceiling battens before fixing new 'gib' board," Malcolm says. "Amazingly, we filled almost 40 rubbish bags with the old loose-fill insulation which fell out of the ceiling when the 'gib' was removed."



As most of the house had been previously wallpapered, the McLagan brought in professionals to remove all of the old paper. This took two full days and, says Malcolm, was money well spent.

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Next came the reconstruction work. New walls were built and gib-stoppers arrived to skim existing walls and plaster the new walls and ceilings. A plumber was employed to replace most of the existing pipes and install supply to the new en suite being constructed.



Being real fans of gas, Malcolm and Lesley also had the house piped to supply a new instant hot water system, a gas log fire, wall panel heaters and a free-standing cooker. Having enjoyed gas cooking in their previous home they wanted to retain the advantage of instant heat they found so practical and efficient.

"The house had not originally been supplied with gas so we were pleasantly surprised when the gas supplier didn't charge us for laying the new pipes from the road to the house," Malcolm says.

Electrical wiring, most of which was more than 50 years old, also needed replacing and an electrician was employed to

re-wire the entire house. Glaziers were also employed to replace all obscure glass with one uniform pattern. Over the years window replacements had resulted in a number of different patterns being used, just one of the many smaller issues the McLagans had to deal with.



When it came to planning the new kitchen, bathroom and wardrobe organisers Lesley's design skills came to the fore resulting in new layouts, hardware, materials and a streamlined finish in all these areas.

“When we first looked at the house, the kitchen and laundry were about the same size,” says Lesley. “With two compact spaces it made sense to knock down the dividing wall and incorporate the laundry into one end of a new and bigger kitchen. This has given us a really decent size space to work in.”

The McLagans front-loading washing machine was slotted into a cupboard with a dryer hung above and vented to the outside. A bench top runs across the top of the washing machine and includes a stainless steel bowl to one side plus extra cupboard space

“Not having a separate laundry is a compromise but I think the trade off is worthwhile to gain extra space in the kitchen,” Lesley says. “As a kitchen designer I’m often required to think outside the square in order to make the best of limited space or budget.”

As with the kitchen, Lesley was able to custom-size the bathroom vanities and wardrobe organisers to exactly fit her requirements. “Just as we don’t expect clients of Jag Kitchens to work with a standardised system of modular kitchen cabinets, nor do we expect them to purchase bathroom vanities in a set range of sizes.

“Rather, we sit down with them and develop the look they like, then manufacture both kitchens and vanities to their exact size requirements. Interestingly, customers expect to pay a premium for a custom-sized product, when, in fact, at Jag they are generally no more expensive than buying standardised units which could be a unnecessary compromise.”

With all of the structural work complete the next jobs to tackle were paint, tiling and fitting of the kitchen and bathrooms – more on that next time.

“We were also able to use the same reliable group of tradespeople that we recommend to our kitchen customers,” Malcolm says. “We have a great plumber and electrician and employ a carpenter on the payroll enabling our clients to have building work done as a package with their kitchen. They don’t have to hunt down a builder to do a small job and, in our case, we benefited from the same advantages.”

During the initial demolition and building, a number of Malcolm’s and Lesley’s friends dropped by to see what they had bought.

“Everyone made comments about the house being interesting and about its potential,” says Lesley. “I’m sure when they went back to their cars the discussion was about how crazy we were. With a project like this you have to have a mental picture of the end result otherwise you would never start.”



Lounge/kitchen before removal of wall on right.

With a timeframe of eight weeks from settlement to moving in the McLagans set about co-ordinating the various trades-people with the following tasks needing to be done in the first two weeks:

- **Removal of all old wallpaper**
- **Knock out wall between kitchen & dining**
- **Knock out wall between kitchen & laundry**
- **Remove wall between the study and bedroom to create a larger master bedroom**
- **Create an en suite and walk-in wardrobe for the master bedroom**
- **Remove uneven and cracked ceiling and replace with new plasterboard in the lounge, dining and kitchen areas**
- **Build new false fireplace to house gas log fire**



Kitchen showing end wall to lounge before removal.

Working to a strict timetable most of the above jobs were completed on time with the McLagans well into planning for the next stage. Read Our Homes TODAY, August 25 for their progress.

Work progresses... part III

Monday, 08 September 2008

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Working at speed, made easier by the complete removal of all trappings, the house in Paton's Rd took shape quickly thanks to efficient and professional tradespeople.

With structural and building work complete Lesley and Malcolm McLagan's next move was to have the newly plastered walls and ceilings painted.

Given the compact size of the house it was decided to use light colours throughout with Resene Thorndon Cream chosen for the living area walls. The ceilings and timber trim have been painted in a 1/8 tint of the same colour giving an easy integrated feel to the home.

Some timber mouldings were damaged while being removed during the renovation but replacements machined by Jag Kitchens' factory manager ensured their effect was not lost.

Then the McLagan's also decided to sand and polyurethane the existing timber floors in the living areas but first had to replace damaged or badly water stained floorboards. A search eventually turned up a company, which could supply and replace the necessary boards, before work went ahead on the sanding and finishing. Stain was incorporated into the polyurethane to darken the typical yellow look of Tawa.

"It was great finding one company to take care of both fixing and finishing the floor," says Malcolm. "Replacing tongue and groove flooring can be tricky but these people do it every day and made a great job of ours."

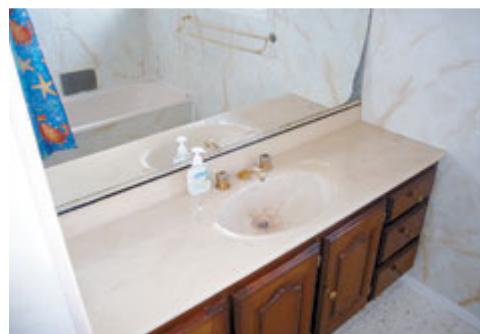
With the painting and floor finished it was time to install the lights, power points and gas log fire. A host of new power points were added and all existing power points realigned to the same height to give a uniform look.

A gas log fire had been chosen as a convenient way to heat the living area with the fire effect providing a warm ambience. For total effect a false chimney was built to house the fire and a flat screen television placed above it.

The tilers were the next to arrive, their job to tile the bathroom and en suite floors and walls. "Tiling some of the original walls proved a challenge with walls being out of plumb and ceilings out of level," Malcolm says. "While the final tiling result looks good the issues we had just illustrates why it would have made more sense to have completely stripped out all the old gib and replaced it with new."

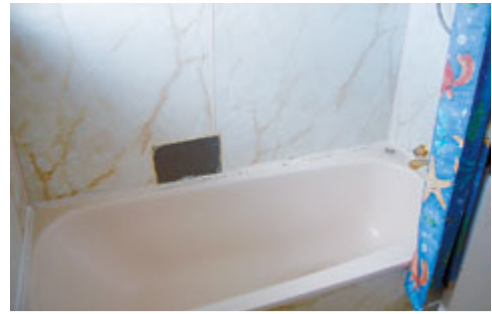


Malcolm and Lesley McLagan.



Before (right and below pics) of the bathroom.

Next came the installation of the kitchen, which was handled by Lesley and Malcolm's son Nick who works for Jag Kitchens. Lesley had designed the kitchen to finish short of the ceiling so that a 90mm gib coving could be continued above the cabinetry to give an attractive, flush look. The same gib cove was used throughout the house to replace the original timber scotia which was very basic.



The kitchen design had its difficulties as the removal of the wall between the original kitchen and laundry had resulted in a long narrow room with one full wall of windows.

"I had no choice but to install the cooking facilities under a window which made mounting a rangehood of some sort a real challenge," Lesley says. "Having good extraction at home was a must as Malcolm tends to cook steaks on a cast iron griddle pan with all the accompanying smoke. I solved the problem by building a bulkhead above the windows into which we installed a powerful Powerpack rangehood."

A remaining stub wall, which had run between the kitchen and laundry also needed to be dealt to. This short piece of wall had to remain intact as it supported part of the roof framing. However, it was disguised with a matching panel installed between the pantry and crockery cupboard.

"These problem areas were typical of issues a kitchen designer constantly deals with," says Lesley. "It's a lot more complicated than just screwing some standard sized boxes together. Renovations can be particularly taxing but it's the kind of challenge I really enjoy. The fact that Jag Kitchens can custom-size its cabinetry certainly makes renovations easier."



After pic.

With the kitchen and laundry area installed and tiling complete in the bathrooms, the next job was fitting bathroom vanities, shower screens and wardrobes.

A shower-over-bath arrangement was chosen to save space in the main bathroom. This allowed for a generous vanity and a towel storage cupboard, the latter a real bonus as storage was problematic in this smallish house.

The floor in the ensuite had been cut out and waterproofed as part of the building process so that it could be tiled straight into the shower waste giving a seamless effect. "While it was more work doing it that way it did achieve a nice clean look with no shower lip to step over." Lesley says.

With work progressing steadily the next job was to connect the plumbing and wire in the appliances. The McLagan's chose a 900mm-wide, free-standing cooker combining a five burner gas top with electric oven while an icemaker fridge, dishwasher and front-loading washing machine with dryer above completed the appliances in this combined kitchen/laundry area.

With most of the interior finished it was time to measure up for carpet and window coverings. Find out in OHT September 22 who Malcolm and Lesley enlisted to help in this area and see the end result of their renovation project.

Project complete

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Malcolm, Lesley and Rusty - the work's done, time to relax.

They found a house in Paton Rd and bought it at auction from owners who had done some demolition work prior to an intended renovation. However, before real work began a work transfer took them to Australia. The house was left in an unrentable condition and sat empty for approximately a year before going to auction.

On purchasing the house, Malcolm and Lesley knew a total renovation was called for so first sat down and compiled a list of exactly what they wanted in a finished home.

With the house being around half the size of what they were used to there were obvious constraints but open plan living, dining and kitchen was a must.

"We wanted a kitchen with plenty of bench top area and big enough to incorporate a 90cm free- standing cooker and double door refrigerator," Malcolm says.

"A reasonable sized main bedroom complete with en suite and walk-in wardrobe was also essential."

Owning a kitchen business that employs a full time carpenter made the building side of things easier. "Gain did a fantastic job despite the usual handicaps of working on an old house where walls and ceilings were well out of level," Malcolm says.

Jag Kitchens had the ability to not only manufacture the kitchen but also custom size vanities and wardrobe organisers, an in-house service that they offer to customers.

Having good trade contacts through their business, Malcolm and Lesley used the same people for their renovation work that they recommend to their Jag Kitchen customers.

"Success in any renovation project comes from surrounding yourself with good trades people," says Malcolm. "Building, and particularly renovating, is not an exact science and you need the right people when the inevitable problems arise."



Making clever use of tight spaces.

The project started well with the demolition of walls quickly taken care of before the new walls were framed and gibbed. It was decided to replace the ceiling in the living and kitchen areas as they were way out of level and had been stripped of their original fancy mouldings. Walls that were to be retained were stripped of wallpaper before being skim-plastered prior to painting. The gib stoppers replaced narrow timber scotia with new fancy covings and for a relatively low cost transformed the look of the ceilings.

With plumbing and electrical services in a mess, the house was almost completely rewired and replumbed. Mains gas was installed at the same time and the hot water, room heating and cooking all switched to gas.

The whole project continued to run well with the only hold-up being the painting contractor who ultimately put the move-in date back by nearly three weeks.

Having moved into the house three weeks ago Malcolm and Lesley are finally enjoying their change in lifestyle.

“We have certainly had to de-clutter our lives and get rid of things we never really used,” says Lesley. “We have to be super organised and everything has to go back in its place. It’s actually quite therapeutic to simplify your life and I’m looking forward to tackling the garden now the interior is finished.

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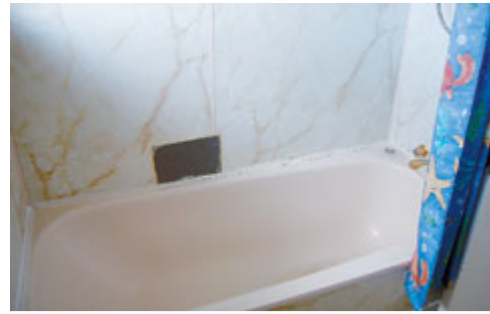


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One room at a time

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Renovation of each internal area of the Paton Road home brought its own joys and trials. Reflecting on the project room by room, Malcolm and Lesley outline their house transformation.

Kitchen

The kitchen was an interesting design exercise in the respect that the removal of the wall between the original kitchen and laundry resulted in a long narrow room. Windows completely took up one wall of the room so this was the logical place to install the sink, dishwasher and work surface. It meant installing the 90cm cooker in front of the window, there being insufficient space on the tall wall.

“Putting the cooking in front of a window certainly isn’t something I would do by choice,” says Lesley.

“However, when doing a renovation like this you have to work with the available space. Extraction was a concern and I considered installing a downdraft extractor before finally deciding on building a bulkhead above the windows into which we installed a power pack extraction unit. It has proved remarkably efficient and works better than the canopy rangehood in our former house.”

With the laundry appliances now installed in a cupboard at the end of the kitchen, Lesley has used the balance of tall wall space to install a pantry, crockery cabinet and icemaker fridge.

“It was important to keep the pantry and crockery cabinet reasonably shallow so that the space between the oven and cabinets in the galley kitchen remained workable,” she says. “The new gib coving trimming the ceiling in the rest of the house has been continued above the kitchen cabinets to give a nice finished look and to eliminate the typical dust trap.”

Having direct access to many products through their company Jag Kitchens, Malcolm and Lesley chose durable melamine cabinetry combined with a Silestone engineered stone bench top. Having had a dark granite top in their last home, they opted for a lighter top and darker cabinetry this time round.

“It’s interesting that most New Zealand homes tend to have dark tops combined with lighter cabinetry” says Lesley. “Because half of our showroom kitchens feature light bench tops, lots of our customers then choose the same.”

After the kitchen bench was in place, a coloured glass splashback was installed across the window wall above the sink and cooker. The colour of



Lounge/kitchen before removal of wall on right.



Lesley in her new Jag kitchen.

Kitchen Cabinetry
*Laminex LPL Licorice Linea
and Prime Melamine Putty*
Bench Top
Silestone Blanco Norte
Door and Drawer Hardware
Blum
Freestanding Cooker
Trieste 90cm Gas/Electric
Dishwasher
Asko
Rangehood
Design Air Powerpack
Refrigerator
GE Double Door

the glass was matched to the wall colour for a subtle effect.

When it came to fittings, Lesley chose Blum brand European door hinges and Blum Tandem Box soft closing drawers. The Blum system of drawer dividers was also used in the cutlery and utensil drawers.

“We always stress to customers that they should never use inferior hardware,” Malcolm says. “At Jag we always use the best quality product even if it’s for a rental property or granny flat. That’s partly because we do a lot of work out of Auckland and have no desire to receive service calls to replace hinges on the Coromandel. The silly thing is that it doesn’t cost a great deal extra to use the best products.”



Living Area

Like many houses built in the '50s the living area consisted of several small rooms with only a servery and no doorway between the kitchen and dining area. As a result, most of the walls between the kitchen, dining and lounge were removed during the renovation to provide open plan living.

The wall between the original similarly sized kitchen and laundry was removed to give one large workable space. While the living/dining is still not huge there is adequate room for an eight-place dining table and three sofas.



The new lounge complete with gas fire and inset TV screen.

A false chimney was built into the lounge and this houses a gas log fire with a flat screen television installed above. Malcolm made a decision to downsize their existing television set so as not to dominate this smaller room.

The existing single door from the lounge to the patio has been retained but will later be replaced by bifolds. Permitted plans have also been obtained to remove a set of windows and install another set of bifolds opening onto the proposed outdoor entertainment area.

“It will be a while before we develop the outdoors,” says Lesley. “I really want to think that through properly. It’s too easy to build a structure and plant around it cutting out sunlight in the process. Here, the sun streams into the living areas and this needs to be retained.”

Window Coverings

Lesley had always liked timber shutters and despite the cost she opted to use these as window coverings in the bedroom and en suite. What we liked about dealing with Averill Construction was that having constructed the

louvre frame, their craftsmen returned to plane the frame to an exact fit before fitting and painting the louvre blades. This service is simply not possible from suppliers who have their products manufactured in Asia.

Venetian blinds were hung in the kitchen and bathroom but choosing window coverings for the living area proved more difficult so Lesley enlisted the help of interior designer Wendy Morris of Artemon Ltd for input.

Wendy was responsible for the window treatments in several rooms. She explains her choices. "Keeping in mind that the large open plan area at the back of the McLagan's house will be developed into a landscaped outdoor room, one wall will be given over to bi-folds that stack back so no need for curtains there. Rusty the dog will use this access too so it was important to keep drapes out of his thoroughfare!

We decided on shutters over the small window in the corner of the lounge. A different length to the other windows in the room, it was unsuited to drapes which would have intruded on the space. However, a combination of voile and separate lining on two tracks was chosen for the rest of the lounge and dining.

Malcolm likes to look out onto the private backyard, whereas Lesley likes the warmth and formality of fabric at the windows. To cover both options, a double track was installed to carry the rich licorice-toned lining at the back and similarly-toned voile in front. Now, the voile can be pulled across to reduce direct sunlight yet still allow visibility but when warmth, opulence and privacy are required, the lining can be pulled to.

The room itself is quite long and narrow with different heights to each window so we placed the tracks directly under the gib cove, giving the impression of a higher and wider space. The existing furnishings and paintwork suggested earthy tones with a hint of green, leaving a subtle palette, which can be altered with cushions and artwork to give the room some zing.

When it came to the kitchen windows the options were determined by the existing wooden joinery. We chose Venetian blinds in the same colour as the cabinetry and drapes, which helps the kitchen flow into the dining and living."

Bathrooms

The newly built en suite was fitted with a frameless glass shower. The timber floor was cut out under the shower area so the tiled floor could be sloped into the shower waste resulting in a seamless appearance with no step into the shower.

The wall-hung vanity was custom made by Jag Kitchens and was manufactured using melamine cabinetry fitted with a Silestone top and porcelain vessel. German-made Hansa tapware was used throughout the house.

The design of the main bathroom was more exacting. The original plan had been to install a separate shower rather than a shower-over-bath arrangement. On considering how tight storage was in such a small house it was decided to build a large towel storage unit into the bathroom and revert to a shower-over-bath setup. Again the storage cabinet and vanity were custom sized to exactly fit the wall and were also given a Silestone top.



Bathroom with customised vanity.

Bedrooms

A walk-in wardrobe was constructed as part of the master bedroom at the same time the en suite was built. The other two bedrooms received wardrobe organisers incorporating linen and towel storage for each room. This compensated for the small hall linen cupboard.



Flooring

Malcolm and Lesley retained the Tawa tongue and groove flooring in the living area and kitchen although some damaged and badly water stained boards were replaced before the floor was sanded, stained and polyurethaned. A good quality Solution Dyed Nylon carpet was laid in the hallway and bedrooms while floors and walls in the bathrooms and toilet areas were tiled.

Heating and Lighting

A gas log fire complete with granite hearth was installed in the living area and this has been the only source of heating to date. With the temperatures warming there has been no need to use the gas panel heater installed in the hallway.

Halogen downlights have been used throughout. Most are on dimmers for effect and to minimise electricity usage when a lot of light is not required. Table lamps in the lounge and bedroom offer combined lighting and aesthetics.