



Above: Light floods in to the master bedroom

Right: Ben and Ollie's room is filled with bright and colourful décor as well as being safe for them to sleep in

Below: The cottage didn't have a back garden but Andrea and Steven negotiated with neighbours to get this space



but we've survived it.'

Ever since they decided to go ahead with the renovation, Andrea has been planning the décor and as well as using local tradesman for the structural work she has filled the interior with beautiful curtains, fabrics, furnishings and trinkets they have collected. They are now looking forward to enjoying their beautiful 18th century cottage together.

Steven said: 'We can't wait to spend time with the boys. For the past few months they've been sleeping out of the house a lot to escape the chaos. Now all of their friends are asking to come to our house and they can't wait to see it. Their grandparents were absolutely fantastic.

'It has been very tough. But it's also been very exciting being able to get a house, a safe house, which we all love.' ■

how to do basic DIY as well as more skilled jobs too. Many people would not welcome the prospect of tackling such a big job in such a short space of time, but the pair were determined.

Steven, who works as a printer, said: 'It's been really exciting. We've enjoyed it. There have been times when we've questioned what we were doing but to have the home we have has been worth it. Whatever we could do ourselves that could save us money, we did it. It has been a real rollercoaster ride for us all

Get the look

This vintage, white-washed shaker cupboard, £69.95, from Macclesfield-based interiors@tides, is made from sustainable mango wood and would look great in any kitchen.



Andrea and Steven have their own Roberts radio displayed pride of place in their sun room. Get your own with this classic Revival design in red, £160, available in numerous shops across Cheshire. Visit robertsradio.co.uk to find your nearest.

Cath Kidston products feature regularly in this cottage. Try this pretty bouquet bedspread, £145, to add some flower power in your own home. Stores in Liverpool and Manchester



Andrea and Steven have used flashes of blue in Ben and Ollie's bedroom. Do it yourself with this stripy blue and red Alfie wool rug, £55, from Laura Ashley. Stockists across the county. Visit www.lauraashley.com to find your nearest.

Modern pieces sit alongside traditional country cottage items in the Murphy family's kitchen. This black gloss Dualit Lite Toaster, £60, strikes a balance between the two.



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pouring through part of the roof. But most worrying, they were also told their house was unsafe, particularly in Ben and Ollie's room. Survey work done in their bedroom revealed the floorboards were dangerous and their sons could have come crashing through the sitting

Above: Andrea loves her crisp, new bathroom

Above right: Andrea has mixed neutral shades with delicate pastels in the master bedroom



room ceiling at any point. It was only luck that had prevented it. Fire safety tests also revealed horrifying results.

Steven, 37, said: 'There were huge gaps in the floorboards between the sitting room and the boys' bedroom. A test was done to show us how the smoke poured into their room. If there had been a fire the smoke alarm would never have gone off in time for them to be able to get out.'

'We were in total shock. To think we had already lived here for three years and unknowingly put our sons' lives in danger was such a shock for us. We just felt sick.'

Andrea and Steven worked every hour they could manage, as well as doing their own jobs, to get the house into a safe condition. They gutted, renovated and redecorated the cottage, which included three reception rooms, two bedrooms, a bathroom and an ensuite, in just four months. They learnt →

Top tips

Andrea and Steven offer advice on doing your own renovation project



Know what you want: Have a clear idea and plan of what you want to achieve. With careful planning and mood boards you can achieve the look you have always wanted.

Shop around: Get a few quotes from tradesmen and look into their references. Make it clear what you are asking them to do, get a quote and go with your gut instinct.

Set a budget: Have a budget set and keep track of your spending because once the work starts it becomes very hectic dealing with many tradespeople and ordering in materials.

Double check: Measure and measure again. Plan where furniture will sit go and sit against. This will help with your scheme and allow you to decide which walls to wallpaper or paint.

Family help is invaluable: Keep grandparents happy. They are so helpful looking after the children for the weekend when jobs are unsafe for children.

Get stuck in: Most of all be prepared to do lots of work yourself as this will help to keep costs down.

Expect to get tired: There will be long days and lots of hard work but it is always worth going that extra mile as it really shows when all the work is finished. By doing it right the first time you won't need to go back and do it again.

Enjoy: Try to enjoy it. For us it was a fantastic experience in a very short space of time, with amazing results at the end. We have learnt so much and are so pleased but we won't be rushing in to do another house. This is our dream house and we did it.