

What We're Doing

READERS AND THEIR CURRENT PROJECTS



Nicci and Gareth Durbridge, Wales

A young couple's first self-build project

We are currently completing our first self-build in Pantydwr, Mid Wales and living on site in a cheap static caravan! Following a decision to project manage the build ourselves, we have been busy lining up tradesmen as well as completing hands-on jobs.

The brickwork/roof is now complete, the windows are being made and we are currently insulating the roof pitches and boarding the eaves of the attic space. We recently kitted the house out in CAT 5 cable to allow for speakers etc. The underfloor heating is also a job that we have taken on ourselves.

We could not recommend self-build enough. Daunting as it is, so much enjoyment comes from seeing your home evolve!

Want to share your project? Email us your story and pictures with 'What We're Doing' in the subject box to homebuilding@centaur.co.uk. We offer a year's free subscription for each story we print.

Dilapidated London Listed Buildings to Become Homes

London Mayor Boris Johnson has unveiled a £60 million plan to use English Heritage's new Heritage At Risk Register to help bring London's listed buildings at risk back into use as housing. There are currently 572 Buildings at Risk in London, 50% of which are empty and could be brought back into use. Of all the buildings on the register, 210 are residential buildings, but there are also many non-residential listed buildings on the register which could be successfully converted into housing with the help of English Heritage's advice. If you own or are interested in buying an empty property to bring it back into use, you should initially contact the local authority. You should also seek the advice of your local authority Conservation Officer at the earliest opportunity to find out how the property could be restored.



The £60k, Two-Day House

Dispelling the myth that self-build has to be expensive, this low-impact house can be built in two days at a cost of just £830/m²

Manufactured on British soil, Bright Build's innovative new £60,000 house is constructed of a steel frame with profiled steel wall panels. The above house is clad in Canadian redcedar with white panels, although many other options are available. The building is made from individual building blocks, or 'modules', each completed off site ready for occupation, then separated into component modules, delivered to site and put back together again as a complete house — meaning it takes just a few hours for the first link, then a few days to finish off.

The above house costs £60,000 to build (excluding land, foundations, delivery, drainage cost, and incoming services) and includes a kitchen, bathroom suite and built-in wardrobes in the bedroom, but a house of any size, specification and layout can be constructed at a cost of £830/m². For more information log on to www.brightbuild.co.uk.



What is the most interesting project you have worked on?

We recently relocated and reconstructed Temple Bar (RIGHT) — which has stood within a Herefordshire park for the last 100 years — to its former home, London. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity. The building was originally built in 1650 to mark the boundary between London and Westminster.

How has the restoration and stonemasonry industry changed over the last 25 years?

We now use computers to produce new work with remarkable precision. But with restoration work, the skills and techniques are the same as those used hundreds of years ago!

Contact CWO on 01243 784225 www.cwo.uk.com

A Conversation With

ADAM STONE
The expert stonemason and Technical Director of Cathedral Works Organisation (CWO) on his varied career



When did you begin your career?

I started in 1979 as an apprentice stonemason with English Heritage at Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire. I couldn't find an apprenticeship as a mechanic and the stonemasons apprenticeship was the only one on the notice board! However, I soon found out what a lucky break I had and have loved my job ever since.

Why do you enjoy your profession?

Stonemasonry has provided me with such a varied career — from working in the middle of a moor on a 900-year-old Celtic cross, to using computer-aided design to create contemporary cantilevered stone staircases in self-builds. From carving foliated pinnacles with grotesques based on the four horsemen of the apocalypse to designing a complex spreadsheet to enable accurate estimates to be compiled in our current multi-million pound business.

Self-build Diary

The walls are up and now Jes and Megan can see a house appearing

Like the weather of late, there have been rapid changes on site this month. The walls have been completed and we are onto the roof structure. All has gone exceptionally well. All the tradesmen on site have praised the accuracy and thoroughness of Tom Sherrington's construction drawings and armed with these there has been very little left open to



question. The time spent at this stage has really paid off as the blocklayers have built the shell to the millimetre, thus the steel purlins and roof structure are going in as per the drawings. This is saving time and money but also keeping the stress levels down. Where we have had to make



adjustments they have been fairly minor.

The order for the windows has been confirmed and placed with Velfac, who have been exceptionally good so far. We have chosen our colour based on the sweet chestnut cladding we are planning to use. This was a bit tricky as the cladding weathers from a golden yellow to a silver grey; in the end we went for our usual preference — a sludgy sort of bluey grey. Fitting them myself and tying them in with the cladding is going to be a fairly epic task.

The building site now has something nearing the outline of a house appearing from the mud, so much so that a starling has already moved in to the cavity wall and made a home. I am taking this as a good omen!



Jes and Megan's diary continues next month