

BRINGING 400 YEARS OF HISTORY *back to life*

When Old Moat House went on the market, it looked like no one wanted to take on the extensive ancient renovation project.

When Olivia and Jack Munro looked round, there had been over 50 viewings and no offers, but they fell in love with the potential immediately.

Getting the work done

Almost two years later and they've dug up floors, pulled down walls, re-roofed and discovered many exciting quirks within their ancient building. Olivia estimates that they are only about 20% through their renovation project, but the house is already starting to feel a little more like home.

"The house purchase actually took almost a year to getting the keys, so we had romanticised and gone over and over ideas for all those months, whilst hoping and praying we would actually get it," said Olivia, "We knew the living room would be a good place to start as the other two rooms adjoining meant that we could essentially close off half the house whilst living in the other."

Whilst tearing down the existing living room, they found lots of surprises, including a hidden fireplace and some beautiful ceiling beams. There were also some not-so-welcome discoveries, like broken wastepipes under the floorboards, which meant the drainage had to be fixed in the summer.

"We probably didn't anticipate doing work of this scale, but once we were in it, things just naturally escalated and we kind of just went with the flow! We aren't the type to get too flustered, but if we had viewed the house seeing it stripped out, we probably would have walked away quite briskly!"

Working around the family

The couple haven't let it get on top of them, though, and have spent many hours working on their house around jobs, two

children, their dogs and ponies. "We do it all at the weekends! Jack wakes up at 4am and works non-stop until he drops. I often collect materials on my day off so that it's there ready for the weekend.

"We've completed 1 room out of 12 - almost there with the living room. So, all the other rooms to come!! What's next? Finishing off the living room - we've got a library wall to build in there. Study and shower room to complete - these have been part of the living room project in terms of flooring. We will get the front entrance extension started and then we have upstairs above this side of the house to re-floor and vault the ceilings in - we did the prep work for this when we re-roofed."

Giving it a go

Olivia and Jack have proven that you don't need renovation experience for a project of this size, "We did light renovations to our last house, but nothing of this scale!

"Jack is quite handy and I've been learning along the way. Usually, if it's something new to us, Jack will research extensively and watch tutorials, and then give it a go! For example, he learnt to do lead welding and flashing, and did all of that around the chimney stacks. Purchasing the tools to do it was far cheaper than getting a specialist in to do it!"

The size of the project hasn't dampened Olivia's love for the building either. "The living room is such a beautiful space now, but the kitchen is a great size and has amazing potential, and actually the outside space was one of the big selling points - we are on just under an acre. We have the ponies here in winter and are looking to get chickens and grow vegetables again, both of which we used to do at our old cottage.

"It's quite a big adventure. Knowing that it's going to be a beautiful family home when we are finished keeps us motivated and enjoying the process. We laugh a lot!"



Inspiring other renovators

Olivia has plenty of advice for anyone thinking of starting a renovation project, "Go with your eyes wide open! Try not to romanticise too much. Having an idea and understanding of the work, or knowing someone knowledgeable is a real key thing. You've got to be prepared for mess and things taking a whole lot longer than you thought it would. It helps to be on good terms with a local builder's merchant so you can be sure to get the correct materials at the right price! Having a van or a way to transport materials is definitely a high priority."

And she's shown most of the process on Instagram, "It was started as a way to document our journey and it quickly became apparent that people enjoyed seeing the journey too! We've got a great bunch of followers behind us and they really spur us on!". Follow their renovation story for yourself on Instagram:

@lifeatmoathouse



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