

Home, sweet Holme

WHEN Haydn and Mel Armsby refurbished their family home in North Yorkshire, they had all the skills to do a fantastic job. The couple own Holme Design Ltd, a design company which specialises in helping people plan and install their dream kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms.

"It was a neglected Seventies house and we completely gutted and revamped it before we moved in," says Haydn. For their own home the couple chose granite worktops with upstands at the back, instead of tiles, for the kitchen, and laminate panels in the bathroom. "In fact, there's not a single tile stuck on the wall," says Haydn, just one practical answer to the grimy grout problem in so many homes.

But that is the Armsby's business: making homes look beautiful, but using modern technologies and materials to make them practical too.

Haydn had been in the kitchen and bathroom business for 30 years in North and West Yorkshire and Durham when the couple decided to branch out on their own.

Their own home is in Holme-on-Swale, North Yorkshire, which is where the name for the firm came from, but the business is in Bedale. Here the couple help their clients do everything from revamping a room to complete home renovations.

From the initial consultation, where clients' ideas and aspirations are developed into personal creative designs, through to installation by qualified local tradesmen, Haydn is on hand to discuss and deal with any and every aspect of the process.

Each design is hand-drawn to scale before being transferred onto computer, where detailed 3D CAD images are produced allowing clients to visualise their chosen design. This is where Mel's expertise comes in.

"We buy from British manufacturers and use tried and tested local plumbers, electricians and joiners for the installation," says Haydn. "Quality is at the heart of what we do."

There's a huge collection on show in the Bedale showroom, from classically elegant to cool and contemporary, including the Framed, Linear and Touch (handleless) kitchens, inspired by the celebrated designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh, to the Chippendale range, which boasts craftsmanship synonymous with their 18th Century name, and Ideal Standard bathrooms.

Haydn says there's a trend at the moment for painted kitchens, in all sorts of colours and finishes, including vivid high-gloss. The kitchen gadgets of the moment include instant boiling water taps, though you have to go for a top quality 100C version to make a decent cuppa, and induction hobs. "They are amazing," he says. "You turn them on and nothing happens, but put a pan on and what's inside heats up twice as fast as gas while being



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very energy-efficient. And yet the hob remains cold to the touch, a great safety feature"

For bathrooms, walk-in showers with only a glass panel are very popular. "Without doors and hinges, there's less to clean and nothing much to go wrong," says Haydn. Here, limestone flooring and walls are the in-thing.

Size is no object. Two of the jobs the firm has been most proud of in their first year job are an old vicarage near Thirsk where they transformed the kitchen with limestone flooring and stunning units, but also a small galley kitchen/diner which needed to seat six. "It all fitted beautifully," says Haydn.

In a previous existence, Haydn worked as a piano technician. "It was a bit of a dying art," he laughs. Now he's turning that attention to detail to people's homes... and it seems he's hitting the right note.

