

THIS PAGE Nick made the kitchen units using leftover tiles and recycled zinc



to be cleared out (I gave the few good boards to friends for repairing barges). The floor was a total mess because the joiners had cut holes in the boards in order to get rid of the sawdust from their work. They just used to blow the dust into the ventilation space below, where it got damp and rotted the other boards. So for the first year I mostly camped with friends (and occasionally up in the old choir gallery) until I could put down a new temporary chipboard floor – which will eventually be replaced with pitch pine.

Apart from that, it was plumbing that dictated the order of work. I managed for 18 months with cold running water, a kettle, a sink unit and a small water heater. I had to wash by standing in a bowl and did

all my cooking with just a single electric frying pan. So my priority was to install a shower and build the kitchen – all created from scrap and salvage.

The biggest cost so far has been the electrics, which needed to be completely replaced to make the place safe. The basic design of the building is corrugated-iron cladding around a timber construction of standard four inch by two inch pitch pine, with wooden window frames in Gothic style. There's a layer of felt inside, then tongue-and-groove cladding forming the interior walls. But it hardly counts as insulation – it gets rather cold in winter and then stiflingly hot in summer. My sleeping platform is a sort of 'floating' mezzanine level up above the kitchen.

Is your progress monitored?

I keep the conservation people up to date, but they leave me more or less to my own devices. There's no insistence on repairs – simply a trust that I will do them one day, which I will. The biggest challenge is going to be the insulation (which will most likely be hemp) because I'll have to remove the corrugated iron to install it, and that probably won't fit back again properly so will need replacing with new metal. Conservation regulations say this has to match the original, but all manufacturers produce it in varying 'profiles' (the size and shape of the curve). And the roof will be another problem because that is different again (a flatter profile with spaces between each corrugation). ▷