



Above: The garden room was built after the main house was completed – and this time planning approval was no problem

and it was time to get in the first lot of subcontractors and start on the groundworks. However, although the team only had to build basic strip foundations and a concrete slab as a base for the frame, they were seriously hampered by bad weather and Colin remembers this as the worst part of the whole build. “Doing the groundworks was terrible. We regularly had 4ft of mud to contend with and on some occasions we were even held up by bad snow,” he says.

A smooth operation

Luckily, after the groundworks were in place, the rest of the build went like clockwork, with Colin using his industry experience, contacts and project management skills to speed it all along. The team from Welsh Oak Frame got the frame up within five weeks, and it wasn't long before it was time to think about first and second-fixes and start on the interior finishing.


“The chaps from Welsh Oak Frame were very enthusiastic and I'd used most of the other subcontractors before. It really helps if you understand the build process and if everyone is talking the same language.” He comments that one of the worst mistakes a self-builder can make is trying to manage a project when they have no knowledge of the building industry, its language and its way of working.

In total, the build took 15 months to complete and, with his old house sold, Colin was able to move in in December 2002, just in time for Christmas.

“There were still a couple of things that weren't finished, but I was desperate to get into my new home,” he says. “It was such a relief to think it had all been worthwhile.”

The end of the road

The look of Colin's house is accentuated by its beautiful surroundings, which he created after moving in. Once he was settled, he dedicated his attentions to developing the stunning parkland around the property, not to mention a 1-acre lake. Having been used to living near water, Colin was keen to have fish and ducks, so he excavated 2,000 tons of earth to create an expanse of water, which is more than 2m (6ft) deep in the middle. “I find the ducks and the lake very relaxing and the perfect accompaniment to my house,” he says.

So what does the future hold for Colin? He laughs. “I don't intend to build another thing. I'm here to stay and there has to be a time when you can simply stop and enjoy life.” Of course, he needs something to keep him occupied – so instead he's devoting his time to building a Lotus 11 kit car. 

USEFUL CONTACTS

Bathrooms and plumbing PHS Supplies, Wrexham **T:** 01978 311183

Builders' merchant Boys & Boden, Welshpool **T:** 01938 556677

Decorating Tony Huxley **T:** 01948 770326

Design and package Welsh Oak Frame
T: 01686 688000 **W:** www.welshoakframe.com

Double glazing JC Glass **T:** 0151 647 0503

Electrics Richard Prigg **T:** 07801 707192

Groundworks Ian Beardmore **T:** 07808 918569

Paint Colour Supplies, Wrexham **T:** 01978 357632

Pond excavation and landscaping House Brothers & Bailey

T: 01935 433358 **W:** www.lakesandgolfcourses.com

Sand and aggregates Phil Williams **T:** 01691 828702

Underfloor heating Evenheat **T:** 01295 277881