

Don the Handyman

Don Wilson set up his business two and a half years ago to do general household repairs, bathrooms and plumbing. For jobs like decorating and electrical installation he brings in specialists. His wife, Carolyn, used to do a nice job on tiling but she got promoted at her work and now cannot find the time to write her articles for the Grapevine or do tiling.

Don Wilson has a B.Eng degree in Manufacturing Engineering. He has worked as a Contracts Manager in building services where he managed 50+ workers. He is now 41 and enjoys the change of working on his own, to his own standards and being directly in contact with his customers. He lives in Flackwell and acknowledges that it is a great incentive to provide customer satisfaction when he knows he is going to meet them in Budgens.

Most of Don's work is in the village which suites him very well – why spend time travelling if you can do most of your work ten minutes from home? His ads in the Grapevine and cards in newsagents and the Post Office combined with word of mouth recommendations provide him with all the work he wants. He has, however, recently taken on the maintenance of Crown House School on the Rye for one day a week. He cannot work while the children are in school so he can fit the school's need round his normal working hours.

Don's progress from managing building projects in the Midlands to his idyll in Flackwell was not really planned. He used to race motorbikes until in 1994 he had a "heavy crash" on the track. He went for a job interview at Brunel University on his crutches and he progressed through three interviews without anyone asking how had had his accident. They accepted him and for nine years he found work placements for students studying engineering, social science and law.

He moved to the village 12 years ago and after a bout of illness he decided on a change of life style and he became the handyman we see today. His favourite relaxation is walking their two Westies especially when the dogs feel they would rather get in out of the winter weather and head for a pub with a nice warm fire. He has little time for much else; he built his own car from a kit but when he got it finished he never got time to drive it. It took four years for him to get his own new house straight.

Don has no desire to take on staff and enlarge his business. He enjoys the personal contact with his clients and he aims to establish long term contacts with them so that when they need something doing he is the first person they think of. He says that his engineering training has been valuable to his business. It taught him to look at peoples' problems and find the most effective and economical way to resolve them. This is one of the aspects of his business that he most enjoys.