

## MOVING HOUSE

Rightmove - now there's a word I don't want to hear again in a long time! They say that moving house is high up on the list of things which can lead to a nervous breakdown and my last house move almost certainly did bring me to the edge.

You think you have given yourself enough time, don't you? Start well in advance, get organised and it will be a breeze, you think! Mmmm, that's the optimist's view! Reality is a rather different story! So, the clear out began .....cupboards apart, drawers out, charity bags filled, off to the tip and the charity shop, then repeat ad nauseam. It reminded me of doing the Hokey Cokey - in, out, in, out, shake it all about!

Three solid days it took to clear the loft of smelly trainers, sweatshirts, NME newspapers, old videos and cassette tapes, teddy bears, Rubik cubes, jigsaws with half their pieces missing, a dartboard and all kinds of bric-a-brac from a decade ago. I cursed my offspring, who had been expressly forbidden when we moved in to store anything whatsoever in the loft. Unbeknown to me they had obviously disobeyed and filled the space with their " might come in handy later" or "can't bear to part with it" junk.

The garage was an even worse proposition. No car had ever been garaged there, as the interior groaned in protest at the tea chests and boxes of STUFF stored within its walls: futon bases, paint pots, wallpaper, brooms, buckets, boxes of broken Christmas decorations, soft toys, old lawn mowers and a sack of Willy Nelson CDs, belonging to my husband. No, he didn't actually LIKE Willy Nelson, but they were going cheap at a French brocante and proved a great sleep inducer post lunch on a Sunday afternoon, cleverly avoiding the big clear up in the kitchen. Sharing the sack with Willy Nelson were other favourite; Barbara Dickson and Shirley Bassey (I think he secretly had a thing for Jewish women!). The same brocante fair had encouraged a collection of French flat irons and ancient laundry equipment, which he crammed into the car boot and once back home displayed around the Adams fireplace in our lounge. Over the years they were joined by wooden carvings of Viking Warriors from Norway, grotesque masks from Africa, an unfinished painting of George Washington with only half a head, a miscellany of ancient dairy equipment, which was being discarded in the Agricultural College where he worked. As a child born during the latter part of World War 11 in the East End of London he simply couldn't bear to see anything go to waste. 'Make do and mend' was his motto.

I had already been through this scenario 15 years previously after his untimely death, when I had had to sell the family home and downsize. In the big house we had stables (no horses ever in them, I hasten to add), a coach house and two further outbuildings. Now as you have probably gathered, my husband was a hoarder and his mantra was " put it in the stable, you never know when it might come in useful". So, I had had to clear all these buildings prior to my last move and needed to commission a juggernaut from the scrapyard to remove it all. In the stable alone there were rotten old carpets, three washing machines, two dishwashers, six bicycles with no chains, a cracked toilet, a washbasin, a garden roller, a fridge-freezer and an assortment of old-fashioned leather suitcases and hat boxes, all of which had been abandoned by the previous owners of Holly House, who had done a moonlight flit to dodge a huge unpaid tax bill. This move had been so calamitous that my attitude this last time around was "I've been there, done it, got the T-shirt, so by comparison this will be pretty straightforward!"

However, it's not just the clearing and decluttering which is demanding. Next come the viewings. There are so many things that can go wrong just as viewers arrive. There were incidents when my cats decided to drag in disembowelled mice and plonk them in the middle of the kitchen floor or when one cat decided to have diarrhoea in the litter tray only two minutes beforehand. Most embarrassing was the occasion when I was desperately drying underwear and had left a pair of lacy Jennifer Lopez knickers hanging over a bedroom radiator! The estate agent arrived to take photos of the bungalow and made the knickers a central feature in the photograph! On another occasion an eager couple arrived early to find me dragging an old mattress which had seen better days down the garden path.

Despite all the sweat, toil and drama the bungalow sold in the end, of course, and I now live in a beautiful old country cottage. However, I can assure you I have no intention of moving again, in a hurry and it wasn't a day too soon when the SOLD board went up and I joyfully deleted the property search on Rightmove!

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