



Makeover magic

Whether you want to restore an old yard to its former glory or pull down derelict sheds and start from scratch, a stabling project needs a vision. *Martha Terry* discovers how to do it

GLOW-UPS are all the rage. Home renovation shows have been a TV staple for decades, and the vibe extends to the horse world, too. Whether it's the shaggy winter cob transformed into a summer showing star, or tumble-down back yard converted into stunning stabling, we can't get enough of it.

Gemma Dickens and her mother Lesley embarked on a project yard, Calke Abbey Racing Stables, Derbyshire, which had fallen into disrepair. It had been owned by a trainer who was jailed for growing and selling cannabis on the premises.

"We couldn't see the yard or the property for trees and all the buildings were full of manure or rubbish," says Gemma, motivated by giving her two

veteran grade A showjumpers a luxury retirement. "When we removed the trees to fix the buildings, we found a shed and a horse walker we didn't know were there."

Gemma has refurbished the stables and the gallops, and the next project is the indoor arena, which has a collapsing floor where there were tunnels that had been built under the floor.

"We've done a lot of the work ourselves, and I've learnt new skills like driving a tractor and basic plumbing," adds Gemma, a director at Deloitte.

Now four years on, Gemma has opened the gallops to the public and welcomed a trainer with 14 racehorses to the yard.

"We have a lovely 21-box Harlow's courtyard with tack room, feed room, wash box and further isolation boxes in the hay barn," adds Gemma, who says the budget "runs into six figures. We refurbished the existing Harlow stables, fixing all the issues that had been left unfixed over the years. We have also added outside doors to the stables, so my retired horses can access the field or stables as they need.

"Harlow's are just down the road, so we got all our new materials to fix their original build from them. Some of their employees remembered helping build the yard over 40 years ago."

While Gemma has been able to restore her yard to its former glory, sometimes

the only option is to bulldoze the existing facilities and start from scratch.

Jo Applegarth enjoys giving rescue horses a forever home and has three at her renovated yard, which was completed last summer for around £70,000. Originally, the stabling was in the form of pens inside an old tin barn with odds and ends of corrugated iron, metal gates and wooden boards as partitions. The floor was mud, and the tin roof had gaps where rain and wind could come through.

"We knew it needed knocking down and starting again," says Jo, who bought the property two years ago. "We got a quote from Joe Collier Construction in February, building started at the end of April and was completed on 17 June. I now have 13 internal stables in the new barn, with a concrete floor and roller shutter door."

STABLING companies offer plenty of options to transform existing facilities or start anew. Your choice will depend chiefly on your set-up and your budget, as well as personal preference.

Cheval Liberté has done several projects installing stables or adding frontages to outbuildings to create an attractive new

An innovative project to convert existing outbuildings into new stables, by Cheval Liberté



Calke Abbey Racing Stables had fallen into disrepair (inset), but after a four-year project is now a beautiful yard again

so this is a coveted option for those either with an existing barn, or the space and planning consent to build one. The Imperial range is a classic design.

“The Imperial is our traditional internal stable, which remains as popular as ever and suits everyday practicality, due to its excellent value for money, where quality is not compromised to reach the price point,” says Monarch’s Lorelei Tomkins. “The Imperial Plus is our new range, combining the sleek, smart style of the Imperial with our Majestic range’s dual rail, creating a beautiful, yet cost-effective design.

“The Regal range offers the style of the Majestic, with a more contemporary feel and at a lower price point. The Majestic is the ultimate in internal stabling, made from the finest materials with a choice of designs tailored to suit requirements.”

The world’s your oyster with American barn-style stabling. You can choose your look and don’t have to compromise your needs to fit in with existing structures. It’s convenient to have everything under one roof. And as Nicky Hudson points out, “It’s nice from a welfare perspective to have the horses facing one another and maintaining their herd environment.”

For internal stabling, ventilation is paramount, a key focus at Cheval Liberté.

“The use of high-bar partitions means there is no restriction to airflow,” says Nicky. “Our barns have ventilation flaps as standard and many customers opt to instal shutters

on the outside walls or Plexiglass windows, which allow natural light into the stables.”

As with our own home improvements, a clear vision and budget for your horses’ accommodation can produce an impressive transformation. *Grand Designs*, anyone? **H&H**

look. Where there’s a will, there is usually a way, with some innovative space solutions.

“Where there is a redundant space that allows the recommended stable size for the horse to be housed, frontages and partitions can be modified to fit any aperture to create a stable,” says Cheval Liberté’s Nicky Hudson. “And stable doors and windows can be added to sheds without altering the size for loose housing.

“In instances where space is restricted, a walk-through stable is a good solution when two stables need to be installed in a space that would not allow for a walkway.

“And if you don’t already have a building in which you can install internal stables, our external timber stables are a perfect option where planning permission has been granted. Another option for a smaller budget is a field shelter, which is cheaper than a stable and can have a stable door added.”

Perhaps you need stabling immediately, but budgets are tight and you’re not sure

for how long or whether you’ll get the necessary consent.

“In cases where a permanent stable is not necessary or the horse owners are renting a field, temporary stables are ideal for providing accommodation without planning permission and having the initial capital to purchase stables, as they can be hired,” suggests Nicky.

Cheval Liberté offers a range of frontages and doors, from its entry-level Club to the bespoke Prestige range, which has six different styles, including central doorways, sweeping half-moon designs and higher doors for larger horses. The galvanised steel can be powder-coated in any colour to suit your taste, while brass locks, bolts and finials complete the look.

Monarch Equestrian is particularly renowned for its ranges of internal stables,

“Some remembered building the yard over 40 years ago”

GEMMA DICKENS ON HER REFURB PROJECT

