

ECCO STOVE

Jenny Thomas Testimonial

“I am pleased to be writing a very detailed review of the Ecco Stove, as I did a fair amount of preliminary research and the stove needed a little trouble-shooting initially; by sharing it I hope that anybody else contemplating purchasing one for their home doesn't need to do so much and will feel encouraged to invest. First of all, I love my Ecco Stove and would thoroughly recommend one as the main/sole heating source for a traditionally built rural cottage or house.

My two-hundred-year-old two-bedroom semi-detached stone-walled cottage in Somerset used to be a nightmare to heat. The gas-fired central heating was removed after the boiler was condemned. (I made the mistake of disconnecting it whilst installing solar tubes.) For fifteen years I was heavily reliant on a 9kW Woodwarm multifuel stove, which, though an excellent stove, was not adequate to heat more than the lounge, and then only when it was fired up. This was backed up by an electric heater which was costing a fortune to run, and an Everhot cooker in my kitchen. I was often incredibly cold during the winter (14/15 degrees in the lounge was usual in the mornings until the stove was lit, and I had to always be there to keep it going).

After a great deal of research, I concluded that replacing the gas boiler was not an option for me on environmental grounds (indeed, I have removed the gas supply); limitations to insulating such an old, damp cottage precluded an air-source heat pump; and reliably sourcing pellets for a gravity-fed pellet stove (which after a promising start, never seemed to take off in the UK) concerned me, especially as much is transported from Eastern European forests – as with logs and briquettes – making the environmental and carbon footprint a nonsense. That left a masonry stove.

Whilst I had some reservations about the use of wood logs and briquettes as a fuel source because of atmospheric particulate pollution, internal and external, with great trepidation, I decided to go ahead with installing the E678 Ecco Stove in August 2021.

The masonry stove has transformed my cottage. The stove achieves a steady 23/24 degrees in the lounge for afternoons and evenings; furthermore, the residual morning temperature in the lounge has not dropped below 18 degrees this winter, and the kitchen, study and bedrooms are heated adequately and as needed by opening and shutting doors.

Because of some early teething problems with the flue not drawing well (my cottage is very squat, and the chimney is only 5m high and it was still relatively warm outside), there were some initial difficulties with a lot of smoke escaping from the stove, completely cured by John at Ecco Stoves visiting me all the way from Birmingham, heroically walking up the roof to remove the cowl from the chimney!

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However, because I was anxious about smoke and particulates escaping into the house, seen or unseen, especially with so much recent negative publicity about the health hazards of domestic and atmospheric pollution from woodburning stoves, I impulse-purchased an Air-via Medical air purifier with a remote monitor to identify and if necessary remove any particulates coming from the stove.

Having the very sensitive remote sensor has helped me have confidence in the safety of lighting and refuelling the Ecco Stove. I am pleased to say that no particulates or volatiles escape into the room from the stove. The readings don't budge whilst the stove heats up, or during refuelling once the flames have died down and there's a bed of glowing embers. 2.5 micron particulates invariably stay between 0 and 10 particles/cubic metre in the lounge and the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) stay in the "safe" zone.

I buy locally sourced kiln-dried logs, and this year have experimented with Norfolk Oak briquettes (which do produce a lot of heat and very little ash). Being very lazy, I lay the fire in a reverse pyramid, with either three fat logs (side to side to reduce fogging the glass door) or three of the briquettes, leaving some air gaps, on the bottom layer, three to five medium logs on the next layer (also side to side), then a layer of thin logs front to back to support some softwood kindling and a sawdust/wax firelighter. Because of the ridiculously short chimney, if the stove is completely cold, I pre-warm the air in the flue via one of the bottom air inlets with a Dremmel mini blowtorch, which is not necessary if the stove is re-lit during the morning. I light the firelighter at the top of the pyramid and the fire burns from top to bottom. By the time the stove is allowed to go out, or is ready for refuelling, it has invariably reached the "best" temperature range. It's a little hard to tell yet if I have burned marginally more fuel this year but, if so, I reckon it's because the stove is so quick and easy to light, the room temperature is better regulated and maintained, and the process is much more effective for far less effort, as a result of which I have chosen to run it for longer periods each day. And I'm warm!

Over the last few months, the atmospheric moisture percentage as measured by the sensor has dropped steadily from being at the upper limit of what is considered comfortable and healthy (65%) last September/October to consistently below 50%, and often the lower end of the range (around 40 to 45%). The mildew from condensation on the lounge ceiling and staircase walls, which I would normally have to scrub off as a routine Spring clean, has not returned. Drier air requires less energy to heat than damp air, as well as is healthier for both humans and buildings.

With hindsight, I am glad I purchased the air purifier, as not only has it reassured me that the Ecco Stove is not a source of domestic pollution, it has been repurposed. Since it has become redundant in the lounge, it has migrated to the kitchen in lieu of a cooker hood, for which purpose it is ideal. It became apparent (even with the sensor in the lounge) that making toast, frying anything, and opening the oven door whilst cooking elevates the 2.5micron particulates in seconds, often past the maximum reading on the sensor's scale of 500 particles/cubic metre, as well as the VOCs maxing out on the scale.

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Anecdotally, I took the sensor along the lane, into the narrow side passage and to my back garden last night (murky, damp, windless). It showed up to 70 particles/cubic metre, roughly double the reading at noon pm today of up to 30 particles/cubic metre, and 2.30 pm, half an hour after lighting the stove, it is around 20 particles/cubic metre. Mine is in a row of cottages in a hamlet, the majority of which have conventional woodburning stoves, and of course I am not in a position to judge what contribution is from my Ecco Stove. In daylight, however, once lit it is very hard to see any smoke coming from the chimney especially by comparison with my neighbours'.

Incidentally, I sold the 15-year-old Woodwarm to a stove engineer who rebuilds/refurbishes stoves, and I am so glad I did as the welding along the hidden back seams was beginning to fail. Also, the twin-walled flue liner, installed at the same time, was completely knackered. I'm sure the Ecco Stove will be around in many decades, assuming the cottage is still standing.

In conclusion, this winter the cottage has been cosy, warm and comfortable for the first time since I bought the property in 2005, and I say, Hurrah!"

Jenny Thomas

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