ECO STOVE

LISTED PROPERTY HEATING SOLUTION

Finding the right heating solution for your listed property can be a challenge. Here, a member of The Listed Property Owners' Club and proprietor of a particularly chilly 17th century home, tests a new technology that has only recently emerged in the UK. Discover how the family got on, and whether they are ready to face another British winter.

I was always aware of the difficulties faced by owners of period homes with respect to heating their properties, but this winter after being pushed to breaking (or is that freezing?) point by the cold, we decided that something had to give.

Our mid-17th century house, consisting of five large bedrooms, three reception rooms and a kitchen, all distributed over three floors, had something of a hotchpotch of heating options. With a radiator on each floor, open fireplaces in some rooms, a wood-burner in one, heated towel rails in two of the bathrooms, an AGA in the kitchen and an ageing oil boiler in the cellar; it could hardly be described as a joined up system.

The problems were clear: the radiators in the corridors didn't heat the rooms, just the corridors; the open fires took all day to light, and keep lit, and didn't then heat the rooms, just the flues. The towel rails (being covered in towels) only warmed the bathrooms fractionally, whilst the wood burner went too far and would heat its vicinity to a sweltering 28 degrees. In the kitchen, the AGA was great

at warming any bottoms that perched upon it, but this only served to annoy the cook! Add to this the common scenario of old windows and doors that don't quite fit and I am sure you can imagine our discomfort during the winter months when no amount of extra jumpers would do the trick to keep us warm.

Of course, our first thoughts had been to look into installing a new central heating system, but with the house featuring several panelled rooms, we already understood that the chances of our conservation officer allowing us to punch holes in 350-year-old panelling for pipes and fixings would be nil. Also with our sky-high bills for heating oil, the cost of such a system would be out of reach.

So, with a conventional central heating system out of the running, what other options were there? We turned to the internet for research, throwing 'alternative heating sources' into a search engine. Among the wood chip boilers and the solar panel installers we came across a solution that seemed like magic: Ecco Stove, a wood-burning stove that would heat the whole house, without any connections to electricity or central heating. Could this be?

We watched the company's YouTube channel and investigated their website further. We learned that Ecco Stoves combine the convenience of wood-burners with the efficiency and heat storage potential of masonry heaters. We were impressed by the facts stating that a stove could store up to 25% of its charged heat for up to 12 hours after the fire went out and that a floor area of up to 240m2 could be heated with as little as two fires a day. Was it too good to be true?

The Ecco Stove idea certainly piqued our interest; a wood-burning stove that would store and disperse heat slowly over time. We had plenty of wood which was quickly going up in smoke in the open fires but only really keeping one person warm - the one running from room to room, lighting, stoking and hauling logs up flights of stairs. A central heating system would need surface-mounted pipes, a new boiler and a new flue. This magic stove could sit where the old one was and use the same flue, no new pipes, same old boiler. We decided it had to be worth a try.

We called Ecco Stove and arranged for them to visit. They took notes and drew a plan of the house, explaining where the new stove would be installed and promised that not only this room would be warm even when it was freezing outside but also larger important parts of the house as well.

They explained how by heating the stoves to a high temperature the body of the stove would become "charged" with stored energy which is then slowly released, allowing it to permeate the house without overheating the room in which it stands. What's more, they gave us some numbers of people with Ecco Stoves who we could call to see what they thought. Still fascinated to see if the product could live up to the hype, I called the previous customers and was pleased to encounter people with lovely warm houses who were delighted with the product.
We were sold and took the plunge, agreeing that if the stove only heated one entire floor it would be worth it.

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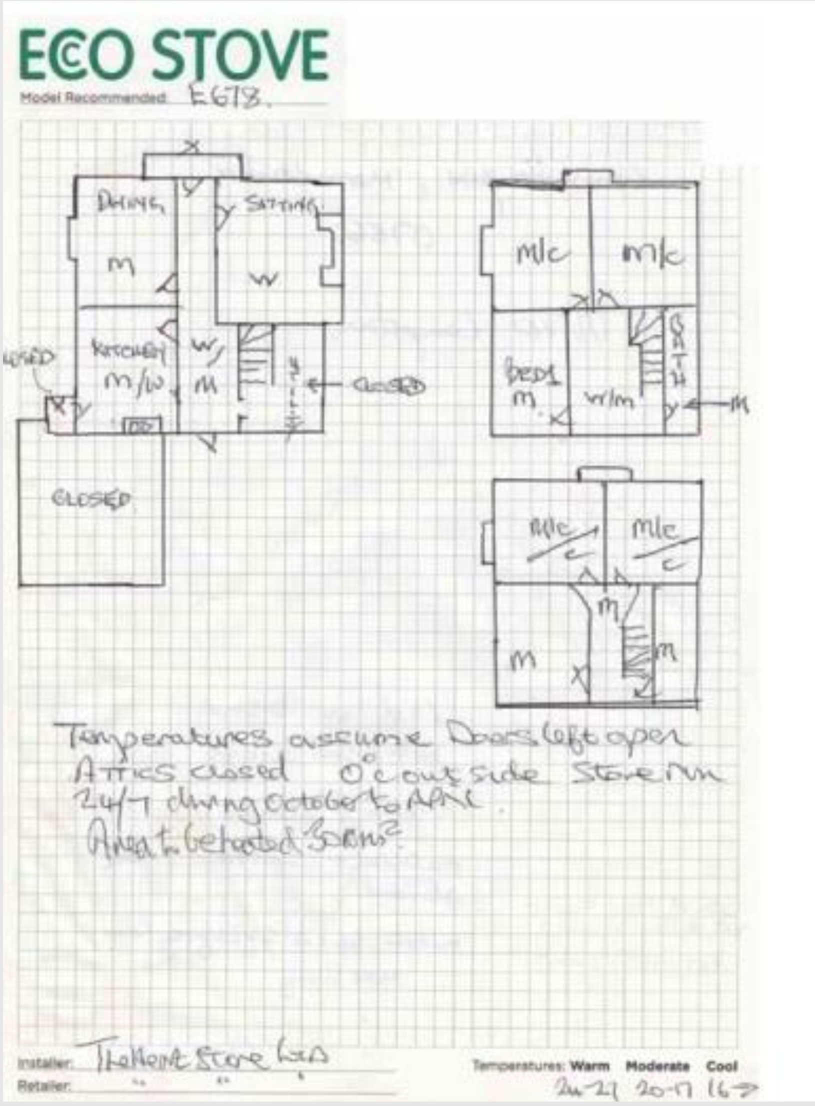
ECO STOVE
Model Recommended: E678.
DINING
SITTING
KITCHEN
CLOSED
BED1
BATH
Temperatures assume Doors left open
Attics closed 0°c outside Stove run
24/7 during October to April
Installer:
Retailer:
Temperatures: Warm Moderate Cool
24-21 20-17 16>

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On fitting day, the Ecco Stove team removed our old stove and carried it to the garage. After checking the flue, the new stove was brought in and set up, and before we knew it, the fire was lit. The advice for using our new stove couldn't have been simpler: 'Warm it up slowly, heat up the chambers and dry out the finish. To use, heat the stove up really hot, close the doors of the rooms you don't need to heat, keep ajar the doors of rooms you want to keep aired.' It all seemed simple enough.

Our first few attempts were not exactly successful, we smoked ourselves out in our impatience for heat (thank goodness for our draughty house), or were too cautious and failed to reach the required temperature. We persevered and before long we had cracked it. The body of the stove did exactly as promised and stored the heat from the fire to slowly disperse over time. The difference was remarkable, a gentle, even heat that warmed the house with no hotspots!
We still need lots of wood, but now that wood is put to good use warming the house. We know to leave the doors open and the stove retains heat for around 12 hours once the fire has gone out. It doesn't stay lit overnight or if we are out for longer than about four hours, but the heat is held in the stove so this is not necessary. It's a small price to pay for not cutting up our beautiful panelling, and was approximately a third of the price of a central heating system.

And now the house is so nice and warm we can even look forward to winter!

Article written by Listed Heritage Magazine

The Listed Property Owners Club

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