



## Installing and caring for your dream fireplace

You've chosen your new fire, fire surround and hearth – all that's left is the installation. Your retailer will often have his own team of installers or will be able to recommend a reputable independent installer to you. In many cases the retailer will undertake a pre-installation survey to ensure that you have chosen an appliance which can be safely fitted in your room.

There is always the temptation to cut corners and save money by installing the fireplace yourself. However, in the case of gas and solid fuel fires this is illegal, and in the case of expensive, heavy or fragile fire surrounds undesirable.

The following sections provide an overview of the technical, legal and practical aspects involved in the installation of a complete fireplace.

### **Chim chimenee, chim chimenee, chim chim cheroo**

Before a new solid fuel or gas fire is installed it is strongly recommended that the chimney is swept. In the case of Class 1 chimneys, not only does this ensure that the chimney is clean but it will also assist in determining whether the current chimney lining is adequate. The integrity of the chimney lining can be verified by a simple test undertaken by your installer.

In the case of solid fuel fires which are in regular use, chimneys should be swept at least on an annual basis. You can find the details of your nearest chimney sweep by visiting [www.chimneyworks.co.uk](http://www.chimneyworks.co.uk), the website of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps.

On the top of the chimney it is advisable to fit a cowl or guard. Cowls – in their most basic form an inverted steel 'bowl' which clips in to the chimney pot - protect against the possibility of downdraughts, prevent rain entering the chimney, and stop wildlife enjoying a warm but unwelcome sanctuary.

### **All I need is the air that I breathe...**

All open flame fires require a supply of air in order to burn efficiently. In many cases, the ventilation provided through window frames, doors and brickwork – often referred to as 'adventitious' ventilation - is sufficient. Modern homes are becoming ever more airtight – double-glazing, cavity wall insulation – that it may be advisable to provide additional ventilation by fitting an air brick. Additional ventilation is mandatory in the case of gas fires whose input exceeds 7 kilowatts. If you are concerned that ventilation may be a problem then it is worth discussing it with your retailer before you select your fire.

Many gas fires now incorporate oxygen depletion sensors which cut off the gas supply in the event of insufficient oxygen to avoid any potential build-up of Carbon Monoxide.

### **It was on the Monday morning that the gas man came to call...**

All gas appliances must be installed by a CORGI (Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers) registered gas fitters. All CORGI gas fitters are listed on the website [www.corgi-gas-safety.com](http://www.corgi-gas-safety.com).

More recently it has become a legal requirement that all solid fuel fires be fitted by a HETAS (Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme) approved installer. HETAS's website, which lists approved engineers, can be found at [www.hetas.co.uk](http://www.hetas.co.uk).

#### **If I only had a hearth...**

As was noted in the earlier article, 'Choosing your dream fireplace', all solid fuel fires and stoves, and all gas fires, must have a hearth made out of a non-combustible material such as stone.

A hearth should be at least 2" (50mm) deep and extend forward from the front of the fireplace opening by at least 12" (300mm) and by 6" (150mm) at either side of the fireplace opening. Further dimensional information for hearths relating to freestanding stoves and other appliances can be found at [www.fireplace.co.uk/faq01.htm](http://www.fireplace.co.uk/faq01.htm).

#### **If I only had time.....**

Most fires and fireplaces can be fitted by experienced installers within a day. This may not be the case where complex stone or marble fireplaces are being installed or where additional ventilation and structural works are required.

The construction of new or replacement chimneys and flues – or major structural modifications to existing ones - require building regulations approval from your local council. Where work involves only minor alterations it is unlikely to be subject to building regulations although reference to Approved Document J (Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems) is advised to ensure the work is undertaken with due consideration of all safety issues.

#### **If you follow the road to safety...**

Fireguards are a very important safety feature for open fires, protecting young, old and pets alike. There are many different types of fireguard and your retailer will be able to advise which one is most suitable for you specific requirements.

Unlike solid fuel fires, gas fires should not be used to burn up waste paper or any other materials. This is highly dangerous and will compromise the performance of your fire as well as invalidating the warranty. Don't do it!

The coals, bricks, pebbles and logs used on gas fires are manufactured from refractory ceramic fibres (RCF) and should only be changed in line with the guidance in your appliance's operating manual. If you are in any doubt as to how to proceed then it is advisable to contact your retailer for advice.

There is a quotation that states, 'There is no place more delightful than one's own fireplace', and with a little care and attention your fireplace can remain delightful for many years to come.