

'Changing the layout has transformed our bathroom space'

Holly Dorling and Andrew Johnson turned a dated en suite into a calming sanctuary with a relaxed, neutral palette

WORDS JO MESSENGER PHOTOGRAPHS FRASER MARR



BEFORE



FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Holly Dorling (above), who is a partner in a floristry business (flower-ardington.co.uk), and her partner Andrew Johnson, an investments manager

THE PROPERTY

A detached modern house with four bedrooms

THE LOCATION

Near Wantage, Oxfordshire

WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple's bathroom project cost around £25,000



STATEMENT TUB

Above The Pevensey heated towel rails are from Instil Design, along with the Slipp bath, Cifial 465 mixer, the mosaic tiles by Finwood Designs, and the Jura limestone flooring. The walls are painted in Bone by Farrow & Ball

DESIGN DETAILS

Left Wall cabinets and the vanity unit are from Instil Design. The open shelving next to the Geberit Duofix frame and Cifial WC breaks up the solid look of the WC area

When Andrew and I talked about setting up home together, I didn't hesitate when he suggested I move into his house,' says Holly. 'In the village where I grew up, and close to my floristry business, it was the ideal location for me and meant that we didn't have to find another property.'

While the setting was perfect, the interior was dated, so Holly agreed to help Andrew to modernise it. 'The house was completely liveable, but built in the early 1990s. It looked a little old-fashioned and not to our taste,' Holly explains. 'We weren't in an immediate rush to get all the work done, so agreed to live there and go through it room by

room, rather than gutting it and coming home to a building site every night.'

Work started downstairs, first with a new kitchen and redecoration, followed by the main bathroom upstairs. However, the couple could see that the en suite to the main bedroom was not going to be a straightforward refit. Despite its good size, the long room felt small due to the sloping roof that ran the length of it. 'The rooms at the front of the house have dormer windows and the ones at the back have rooflights – none of them have four straight vertical walls,' explains Holly. 'This was one of the reasons we decided to call in the experts when it came to redesigning our en suite.'

The couple had worked with Martina Landhed from Instil Design on their main

bathroom and were so pleased with the results that they asked her to help with their en suite. They also hired local builder Kevin Robertson again for the new project, following the success of the previous bathroom.

Kevin had managed to gain some extra space in that room by moving back the wall under the eaves and found that he could do the same in this one, gaining an extra 30cm in width. 'First on my list of things to change was the open archway entrance into the room,' says Holly. 'Even though it wasn't going to be the bathroom that guests would use, I still felt that privacy was important and didn't like the way the WC was visible from the bedroom.' The couple's brief to Martina included a large walk-in shower to replace ►



PAINTED FEATURE
Above A vanity unit in Mouse's Back by Farrow & Ball, with a Jura Grey limestone countertop, sits next

to the shower. The matching mirror, Catalano X300 basin mixers and Astro Riva wall lamps are all from Instil Design

the old built-in cubicle, and a new layout that would better utilise the space, plus add plenty of storage for a clean, minimal feel. The existing scheme was badly planned, with big empty spaces and additional items, such as a bidet, that the couple felt had been included only to help fill up the room. Holly asked Martina to move the WC from directly under the window to the corner by the door. 'We talked about ways to use the space to its full advantage without the different pieces looking as if they had been plonked in the corners. Martina suggested building the WC into a larger unit with open shelving at the side.'

Removing the old step-up shower cubicle made the room feel wider, too. It was replaced with a new studwork wall, and the shower's walk-in design made it feel light and open, while still offering privacy. The new shower also features an integrated seat; Holly was keen to have one right from the start, and it

meant they could have a linear drain underneath, rather than a visible one in the middle of the floor. 'This is where employing a designer makes such a difference in a space such as a bathroom. I didn't even know linear drains existed and it meant we didn't have to spoil the lovely effect of the limestone flooring,' she says. 'Another of Martina's smart ideas was to have two recesses in the shower: one visible for toiletries, and a more concealed one for the things we didn't want on show, such as the shower glass cleaner and squeegee.'

A large bathroom can be difficult to plan, but the couple found that having the space divided into zones can help it to feel more friendly and inviting, with defined areas for washing, bathing and showering. 'We were keen to move on from the old layout with everything built around the edge,' Holly says. 'The freestanding bath really makes a difference; it doesn't feel as if

everything is sticking out of the walls with a huge space in the middle.'

Replacing the archway also gave them a challenge, as a door would have to open into the room, either on to the WC or against the new studwork wall for the shower. The answer is a sliding door, which glides behind the shower instead.

Being made from frosted glass, it also helps to introduce light into the dressing room beyond.

Another issue that the couple and Martina had to overcome was finding the

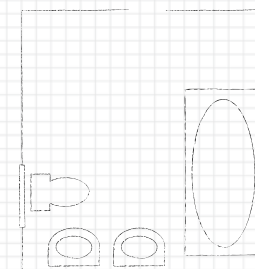
right material for the furniture. 'It caused quite a headache as our initial thought was to go for natural wood. However, we couldn't find anything that went with the grey tone of the tiles,' Holly recalls. 'Instead, we went for painted finish, which gives the room a much softer feel, is easy on the eye and doesn't make the cabinetry feel too dominant in the space.'

The new en suite is a far cry from the open-to-view room they rarely used

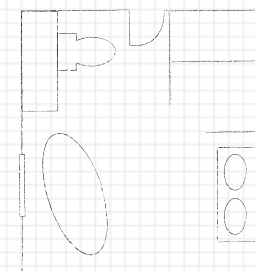
'I never thought it would be a space that I'd enjoy being in. Now it's a welcoming retreat after a long day at work'

THE PLANS

BEFORE



AFTER



A door replaces an archway for privacy. The space has been used to its potential, with a new walk-in shower and a freestanding bath

THE CONTACTS

Construction K Robertson General Builders, 07812 093918
Bathroom design, sanitaryware, shower and tiles Instil Design, 0800 677 1040, instil-design.co.uk

THE COSTS

Building work and installation	£5,600
Furniture	£5,395
Tiles	£3,268
Shower	£3,266
Sanitaryware	£3,115
Brassware	£2,050
Heating	£1,290
Lighting	£1,096
TOTAL	£25,080

before, and the soft palette of colours has been carried through to the dressing room and bedroom, so Holly and Andrew's space now feels more like a hotel suite than three separate rooms. 'It seemed so uninviting before,' says Holly. 'I never thought it would be a space that I'd enjoy being in. Now it's a welcoming retreat after a long day at work.' 🏠

Project notes



Holly Dorling shares her ideas for a successful bathroom renovation

My top tip

'If your room is somewhat dark, look at ways of optimising the natural light that it receives. Our bathroom isn't a bright space and the adjacent dressing room receives no light whatsoever, so Martina, our bathroom designer, suggested having a mirrored panel fitted into a recess directly opposite the Velux window (right) to bounce the light back into the room.'

Choosing a suitable colour scheme

'The room was designed to flow naturally into the dressing room and bedroom, which are both decorated in muted tones for a relaxed, calming feel. We didn't want to introduce anything too vibrant that might date quickly.'

Best advice

'Don't overlook the lighting. We have three different levels on separate switches that we can control for various effects. We have wall lights either side of the mirror (far right) as well as in the recesses (right) for when we want a softer, more relaxed effect. Dimmed lighting is good if you want to use the bathroom at night without waking up your other half.'

My favourite buy

'I love the limestone tiles (below right). With underfloor heating, they are a delight to walk on. They have the most beautiful fossils in them and our tiler picked out the best ones to make sure they have prominence in the room so that they really stand out.'

What I have learnt

'Good communication is key. I worked with the same designer and builder that I used for our other bathroom, and while we had lots of ideas of our own, we realised that they are the experts in this field and trusted their judgment, especially when it came to the layout and product dimensions.' 🏠

