

'We made a large room feel more welcoming'

Amber and Richard Stammers redesigned their en suite to improve its layout and make the most of all the floor space available

WORDS JO MESSENGER PHOTOGRAPHS FRASER MARR

DESIGN TIP

When you are choosing the brassware for a contemporary roll-top bath, consider fitting a bath waste filler instead of rim- or wall-mounted long spout taps

BEFORE



FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Amber Stammers, an accountant for a commercial valve company, and husband Richard, a director of a commercial water controls company, live here with their children James, 12, and Ella, nine

THE PROPERTY

A five-bedroom, detached modern house

THE LOCATION

Near Oxford, Oxfordshire

WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple's bathroom project cost around £21,000

ORIGINAL BATH

Above In the old design, the suite and bathroom furniture was tucked into the corners and sides of the room, with a large, unused space in the centre. The fixtures and fittings also needed replacing, as the shower leaked and the bath took too long to fill



NEW DESIGN

A stud wall divides up the room and creates a wet-room-style shower area. A glass panel, supplied by Instil Design, is built into this and the ceiling, avoiding the need for a frame or brackets. The wall and floor tiles are by Grespania, and the basin unit is by Dansani. Try the Nouveau design by Clearwater Baths for a similar bath. Vitra supplies reproduction Panton chairs. The wooden blind is from Abingdon Blinds & Curtains

We weren't considering moving home, but when this house came up for sale we couldn't resist taking a look,' says Amber. 'Its appeal was that it was in a much more convenient location for us, nearer schools and shops, plus it was on a large plot with a private drive and a beautifully landscaped garden.'

'Another selling point was that it was in a very good condition structurally, and only needed updating rather than major renovation work, which we didn't want to take on with young children,' she admits. 'It was too good to walk away from, and so we moved in two-and-a-half years ago.'

The previous owners had built a two-storey side extension, which added a home office and larger living room downstairs, as well as creating a bigger bedroom with an en suite upstairs. 'The en suite is large, measuring 4.3x4.2 metres, but its design didn't really work for us when we moved in,' explains Amber. 'The bathroom suite and furniture was all laid out around the edges of the room, with a huge space in the centre, and the proportions were odd. There was an enormous spa bath in one corner, plus a standard-size shower cubicle in another, and two small basins were



SHOWER AREA

The double walk-in shower features two Raindance showerheads, an Axor hand shower and a Vario/Porter's shower set, all from Hansgrohe. A Bisque towel rail is positioned at one end. Recesses have been built into the rear stud wall – all are mirror-backed, except for one in Shameez Gold mosaic tiles by Grespania

tucked away over the other side of the room, far from anything else.'

The fixtures and fittings weren't very old, but the couple soon found out that the whole design was impractical. The huge bath took so long to fill that they never used it and the shower was leaking due to poor installation, so it also couldn't be used. In addition, the north-facing room was poorly insulated, so it always felt cold and unwelcoming, and the stark blue-and-white scheme only added to the chilly atmosphere.

'While most people complain that their bathroom is too small, we had the opposite problem,' says Amber. 'Six months after moving in, we decided to call in a bathroom designer to help us use the space more effectively and make it feel more inviting.'

One of Amber's friends recommended Martina Landhed from Instil Design, who visited the couple at home to look at ways to make the space more useable. 'It is probably the largest bathroom I have ever designed,' admits Martina. 'There was so much "dead" floor space, hardly any storage and only basic lighting.'

The Stammers wanted a new, natural-looking scheme, with stone tiles and wooden furniture. To replace the enclosed shower cubicle, they wanted to include

a wet-room-style open shower space. Martina's design sited the bath in the centre of the room, with a bespoke glass panel behind to act as a screen for a double-sized walk-in shower.

With the new scheme agreed, the en suite floor was insulated and underfloor heating laid to help the room stay warm. A large, flat panel radiator with a good heat output was positioned beneath the window, with a heated towel rail on the opposite wall. The design also included

a new 18cm-thick stud wall, built along the back wall behind the shower area to hide the WC vent pipe, wall-mounted WC frame and cistern, waste pipes and

ducting pipes from the bathroom extractor.

'This was one room where we didn't have to worry about losing space,' says Amber. 'As part of Martina's design, there are seven backlit feature recessed niches in the wall, for storage. Six are mirror-clad, but the large one in the shower area is tiled with decorative mosaics. The installer, Kevin Robertson, nicknamed it "The Great Wall of Stammers", and it took one of his carpenters a week to make.'

To make the space feel more intimate, a half-height stud wall was built a third of the way in to the room to separate the bath and basins from the wet-room-style

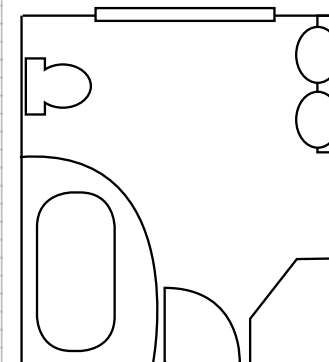
shower area, which easily fits two fixed showerheads and a hand shower. Above the half-height wall, 1cm-thick bronzed, toughened glass reaches up to the ceiling. 'It was Kevin who suggested using the coloured glass rather than clear. It cost around 20 per cent more, but its rich, warm tone works really well with the dark mosaic panels and furniture,' says Amber.

Choosing a large, statement suite helped make the room feel less imposing and, on the wall opposite the shower, two separate basin vanity units with mirrors and two storage units take up almost the whole wall space. To add interest, the wall units were fitted so that they stand 2cm proud of the wall, to make them appear as though they are floating, and Martina ran an LED light strip around them for an ambient visual effect at night time. Two uplights and six sets of LED downlights in the wall recesses all create softer mood lighting, along with the LED floor lights arranged around the base of the bath.

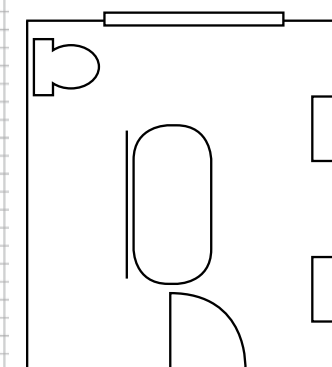
'The bathroom project was completed within only four weeks, and the new layout has completely transformed the space,' says Amber. 'Clever touches, such as the lighting, mean the room no longer feels too big. Martina's design was spot on and I've even used her idea of placing a chair in the corner; it was in the original diagram and I liked the way it took the sharp edges off the space – it finishes off the scheme perfectly.'

THE PLANS

BEFORE



AFTER



A small stud wall with a glass panel above was built in the centre of the room to create separate zones. The bath is on one side of this, and the shower is on the other. A stud wall was also built at the back of the room, behind the shower, to conceal pipework. The vanity units are now more spread out

THE COSTS

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Fixtures and fittings | £9,760 |
| Installation | £6,200 |
| Tiles | £2,800 |
| Furniture | £2,140 |
| TOTAL | £20,900 |

STORAGE CABINETS

Below Dark-coloured, wall-hung cabinets and vanity units by Dansani provide contrast and structure. The mirrors by Dansani are lit by integrated sensor lights

THE CONTACTS

Bathroom design, fixtures and fittings Martina Landhed, Instil Design, 0800 677 1040, instil-design.co.uk
Construction and installation K Robertson General Builders, 07812 093918
Tiles Grespania
Shower Hansgrohe
Radiator Bisque



My project notes



Amber Stammers shares her advice for creating a stylish new bathroom

My design tip

'Lighting is the key to a great design. With the overhead and ambient lighting on separate systems, we can choose the feel of the room. The lights around the furniture and in the recesses look spectacular at night, but sometimes it's just as nice to relax in the bath with only the floor lights on.'

My favourite shop

'Although I wanted a sleek, modern look, with such a big space to fill it was important to include a few decorative elements to prevent it looking bare and unfinished. I sourced most of the accessories in the room, such as the coloured glass jars by the bath, from Raindrops & Roses.'

What I've learnt

'When you have a room that's an unusual size or shape, it's worth hiring a professional designer to make the most of it. We had a few ideas, but couldn't get past the sheer size of the room.'

If I did it all over again...

'...I would make sure that any renovation work was done in the spring or summer months. During the project, in winter, the doors to the house were always open due to tradespeople going in and out, so it got quite cold.'

My best purchase

'The bronze-tinted screen that separates the bath and shower was a great buy. I really don't think the scheme would have looked as dramatic with clear glass. Maybe its position in the middle of the room makes it work so well, but it really pulls the scheme together.'



Above Using different styles and tones of lighting means you can adapt the mood of the room. It's also great for highlighting design features



Above Adding accessories personalises a room scheme. Amber chooses beautiful designs from Raindrops & Roses for her home



Unusual finishes, such as the bronzed glass and the metallic tiles, make a scheme special