

LIVING IN THE LAP OF (LITTLE) LUXURY



When Imogen Stead and her husband Tom moved into their terraced house in London, they thought they'd have a little bit of decorating to do and that would be it. But once they started stripping wallpaper, their plans escalated, and they turned their little house in London into a luxurious home for them and their baby girl.

LEARNING AS THEY GO

Imogen and Tom bought their first home together in 2020 and started ripping down walls a few days later. With no renovation experience between them, they had no idea of the project they were about to embark upon. And then lockdown happened. Imogen said, "We ended up with a house full of rubble that we couldn't take to a tip until they reopened months later!"

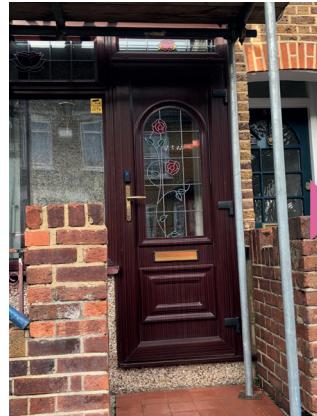
Of course, they've had lots of contractors involved in the job, "We've had a fair amount of help. We had a specialist contractor to do the front of the house, removing the pebbledash, restoring the brickwork, repointing, replacing the bay window. We also hired a loft conversion company who did that conversion for us as well as some of the work on the first floor like adding a bathroom in. We hired a builder to take out the downstairs bathroom and do the kitchen renovation for us."

Her favourite room is currently the kitchen, but Imogen says that every time they finish a room, it becomes her new favourite. "We knocked down the old bathroom which sat in the middle of the floorplan downstairs when we moved in and made a big full-width kitchen area, with a snug off to the back and I feel like this just adds a bit of wow factor to the house. We've just added some fitted cupboards and a library wall to the snug and it's the perfect place to sit now. I love it and I'm looking forward to how cosy it's going to be in the winter too."

Of course, it's not all been easy going. And the kitchen may be her favourite room now, but there were some challenges in getting it finished. "We had a nightmare with our builders on this project and it kept getting delayed, with lots of things finished poorly or not at all. So much so that we ended up having to get the new flooring completely replaced and finish things ourselves just to get them done. It was awful to live through as I was pregnant at the time and we were living without a kitchen, off ready meals, washing up in the bath and only had our bedroom as a living space as we had to use all the other rooms to store the things we had in the kitchen before building work started. It's such a shame as I love the room now, but it shows how important it is to find good trades and how they can make or break your whole renovation experience."

Imogen has learnt a lot about what goes into a renovation during the project, and a bit about herself too. "I love researching and coming up with new ideas for projects and design schemes for rooms. So much so that I'm now considering redoing some of the rooms we finished first and possibly venturing into helping others design their homes too!"

BEFORE



AFTER



FRONT DOOR



FRONTAGE



KITCHEN

BEFORE



AFTER



LOFT SPACE



LIVING ROOM



SNUG

Of course, she'll have to work around Eliza, her nine-month-old daughter. The birth of her baby girl did stop renovation proceedings slightly, but they're back on it now! "A lot of our reno work was done pre-baby which was lucky as it's been a lot harder and slower to get things done now she's around! We pretty much did nothing for the first six months of her life but now we tend to do our DIY projects during nap time, after bedtime or one of us will do the work whilst the other looks after Eliza. But it's very much a juggle that we're still trying to get used to!"

"We've got a long list of snagging jobs like painting doors or skirting boards which haven't been done yet, but the only major project we need to finish is the garden now. We're hoping to try and get that done in the next month or two before autumn. Then I'd really like to redecorate our front bedroom, and possibly our living room as I have some new ideas for these rooms now!"

And her top tips for newbie renovators? "Look for the bones of the house. If you don't have to do a lot of structural work, it'll be cheaper to renovate. The kitchen extension had already been built on ours, so it was just internal layout changes which have enabled us to create our new kitchen space. Consider the cost and the time – everything is so much more expensive now than when we first bought this house, so you need to make sure you have the money, or you're willing to wait and save money and complete jobs as and when you can. Nothing about a renovation is quick, so having patience and knowing an end will come, even if it doesn't feel like it in the moment, is critical."

Check out Imogen and Tom's incredible renovation journey on Instagram:

