

WHEN TWO BECOMES ONE

WHEN LIAM AND NICI LINLEY BOUGHT THEIR TERRACED HOUSE 11 YEARS AGO, THEY ALREADY KNEW THERE WOULD BE THINGS THEY WANTED TO CHANGE. FAST FORWARD TO NOW, AND THEY'VE BOUGHT THE PROPERTY NEXT DOOR AND ARE ON THEIR THIRD RENOVATION OF THE FIRST HOUSE, KNOCKING DOWN WALLS TO TURN THEIR TWO HOMES INTO THEIR DREAM HOUSE.

When they started, they had no experience at all, relying on family members to help with the most difficult bits, like knocking out chimney breasts. In 2017, Liam went back to college and trained as an electrician, giving him some useful skills and contacts. This has allowed them to complete most of the renovation themselves, working around their two small children and, of course, their full-time jobs.

THE STORY OF THE RENOVATION

"The house that we originally brought 11 years ago was on the market for three/four years," Nici explained, "It was a full renovation so no one would touch it. And it was going back to when mortgages were hard to get as well. But because we knew my dad would help and it was within our price range, we decided to just have a go. And because we've done so much work to this property, we've never wanted to move."

"So, when the chance to buy next door came up, we knew that would probably be in a similar state, but we knew we could take it on and have the challenge. And make it our own rather than buy something that was ready done."

WHEN REDECORATING TURNS TO RENOVATING

"We always underestimate the amount of work there is," said Nici. "I was pregnant during most of the bigger work, so I had it in the back of my head that I was having a baby at some point, but Liam was just like, 'Oh it will be fine!'"

"When we first got the keys and we started stripping and taking carpets up and things, we just found problem after problem," said Liam. "All the floor joists were rotten in the living room, so we had to replace those, and they were rotten because it was damp on the front wall. The walls were drenched wet through. All the plaster had to come off. And it was challenging."

"It was so handy being able to open the door, walk next door and start work. And it became so much easier when we knocked the hole in the wall and we could just literally unzip the dust sheet door that we'd bought from Amazon and walk through and then we were in our renovation and we could crack on."

And then we could be as messy as we wanted, walk through the dust door, have a shower and get on with dinner!"

"And then on my maternity leave, when baby was sleeping, it was easy to unzip the door and sneak through," said Nici, "The baby monitor worked through the wall so I could get on!"

THE BIGGER PICTURE

"The space that we've gained in the new home has meant we can re-do some of the rooms in the original one," said Liam, "We put a full width attic conversion Dorma on top of the house and because of that, we split the master bedroom into two rooms. But because we've now got the bedrooms next door, we can now turn that back into one room. We need to rebuild the corridor and because of that we can extend the bathroom and have a bigger bathroom."

They think they have around 75% of the renovation still to do, but they are eager to keep pushing on. In fact, it seems like fate had something to do with their purchase.

"One of the midwives who was on duty when I was born had the original house left to her," explained Nici, "It was a coincidence when we bought it."

"Then next door was owned by Harold and Laura who were both in their 90s," said Liam, "They'd lived in it for 70 years or something like that. And they'd raised their children in that house and they were lovely."

"Their daughter Ann came to tell us that Harold had passed away. She didn't know what she was going to do with the house. Jokingly, I said, wouldn't it be funny if we could buy it and knock it into one. A few weeks later we saw her again and she asked if we were serious. We still call it Harold and Laura's house."

With so much work still to do on the house(s), you can follow Liam and Nici's progress on Instagram:

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