

AN ENDEAVOUR IN ELEGANCE

Stretton designer Jojo Bradley took some damp and dreary Georgian promise and created a stunning family home

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Jojo Bradley studied psychology at university, not exactly an obvious first step towards an interior design career, yet within a decade of graduating she is running a business that employs six people and creates beautiful homes for clients across Cheshire and the North West.

We meet at Jojo's stunning period home, in the tiny village of Stretton, near Chester. If you want to get a handle on an interior decorator's personal style, and skill, this is usually

the best place to start. Indeed, it was in the renovation and décor of this house that Jojo really cemented her skills, developed a network of tried and trusted trades (and a short list of those she won't work with again) and learned some key lessons for future projects.

Jojo hails from Yorkshire and met her husband, Mark, at university in Newcastle-upon-Tyne eleven years ago. Eight years ago she joined him in Cheshire.

'His whole family is here,' she

says. 'And the family business. We married five years ago, a year after finding this house. Despite being horribly run down and in need of a lot of work, it ticked every box for us. I love period properties and the Georgian style is my favourite; the symmetry and proportions.'

The house is a traditional double-fronted style, onto which a Victorian extension had been built and then a second extension later on, adding another wing to the rear.

'It really was in a very poor



ABOVE:
Blending traditional with contemporary in the drawing room

LEFT:
Jojo Bradley

FAR RIGHT:
Creating a second archway in the entrance hall allows natural light to flood in





state, even though it was actually still lived in (or at least a small portion of it was) when we bought it. There are two cellars and both were completely flooded. It was a very complex job to have them both drained and tanked. The house was very damp – in the room that we have made into a playroom the carpet literally squelched as you walked across it, and there were mushrooms growing from the walls!

Adding to the complexity was the fact that, at some point in its life, the property had been split into two homes - so Jojo had the

tricky task of putting them back together.

'This was a house of its time so it consisted of lot of small rooms, upstairs and down. I wanted to make it right for the modern family lifestyle and opened up the downstairs living areas. The later extension was both completely wrong and falling down, so we took it down and built an orangerie that connects to the kitchen area, which is built in the Victorian extension.

'I was very keen to save, or replace, all the original design features where I could. I spent hours scouring reclamation yards ▶





across Cheshire and Yorkshire. All the cornicing and ceiling roses needed replacing. We found the original bells that the family would have used to call their servants and I put those up in the entrance hall. Mark suggested that we have them all wired back for use, but I could see how that would work out, so declined!

The door to the playroom, which you enter from the kitchen, was clearly originally the rear entrance to the home, and she has had this renovated to its original style, which looks fabulous.

There was also an arched doorway into one of the formal rooms at the front of the house. It was too low for her very tall husband, so she removed the window light, but left the arch. To unite the hallway from entrance to living area, she then had her builders recreate the exact same archway as you enter

the front door, finishing both areas with a beautiful period ceiling light.

'For me, it's really important to let as much light in as possible,' she says. 'The entrance hall was very dark, so we opened it up to one of the drawing rooms, to let the light from those windows into the space, and also put a roof light in at the top of the stairs.'

Upstairs Jojo has reduced the many, many small rooms to six large bedrooms, each with its own bathroom and – glory of glories – an upstairs laundry room. Laughing, she tells me it's the best thing she ever did.

'It makes no sense to me to carry all the washing downstairs, wash, dry and iron it and carry it all back up again!'

It is a stroke of genius, I have to admit. Lugging baskets of washing up and down stairs

"I spent hours scouring reclamation yards across Cheshire and Yorkshire."



It's a dog's life...

FAR LEFT:
The orangerie, with a dining table designed by Jojo

LEFT:
Family kitchen

RIGHT:
The nursery

is a major feature of my every weekend. Jojo isn't a fan of the washing line, which helps of course!

Her personal décor style is classic cool; not easy to box off with a single term, but I can tell you that it's quite enviably elegant. In every room there are beautiful artworks, and this is something that Jojo uses in her





The house, as seen from Jojo's newly landscaped gardens

designs for clients, too.

'I wanted to make each room unique,' she says. 'We love to travel and now, wherever we go, we seek out some unique art to bring home, which completes the room and reminds us of our trips. We went to Japan, for example, where I found a gorgeous antique kimono, in beautiful colours. I have had sofa cushions made in matching shades and, when I eventually get it framed, it will hang in the drawing room. Original art is something I encourage my clients to invest in, too.'

'With each one, I set up a WhatsApp group, so we can message each other with updates and questions, but also so I can send them pictures of pieces or fabrics I think they will love. They can respond there and then, so if I spot something I love, they can make a decision very quickly.'

Jojo's interior design business grew organically, if very quickly, from small seeds.

'When Mark and I moved into our first home, I did all the interior design myself. I had

always had an interest in the field, and sent myself on courses in design and in upholstery. I re-upholstered pieces of furniture and made curtains. Friends and family started asking me to do pieces for them too.'

'Six years ago I borrowed £1500 from Mark, bought myself a sewing machine, a worktable and a small amount of stock. I started by making curtains, pinboards and such and it grew from there, but very soon it was a full time job.'

'At first it was just soft furnishings, but then people started to ask me to source furniture, then design a whole scheme and now we offer a full interior design service, right from a single room to a full home, from first fix out, including a full turn-key service.'

If she can take a semi-derelict house and create this beautiful home, during 36 months of wedding planning, pregnancy and building a business, there's not a lot Jojo can't accomplish, I would say. ♦

jojobradleyinteriors.co.uk



Jojo's en-suite offer spectacular views



The guest room



A careful balance

By choosing contemporary lighting that takes its design inspiration from times past, Jojo maintains her home's Georgian integrity while ensuring that it is no museum piece.

Senator six-light pendant in polished chrome, £558, darlighting.co.uk



Colour coordinates

By choosing modern neutrals for her major tones, Jojo can then add on trend shades and pattern in luxurious fabrics to deliver elegant, contemporary style.

FROM TOP:

Peony Flower velvet cushion cover, £35, hilaryandflo.co.uk

Regale silk cushion, £110, bivain.com

Equus Rosado de Flores cushion, £155, vintagecushions.com



Get the look

Interior designer Jojo Bradley's Stretton home is a masterclass in classical cool. If you like the look, look here...

Make it your own

Selecting artworks that reflect your own style, remind you of your travels and bring something completely unique to your home is a design imperative recommended by Jojo to all her clients.

Immersion, oil painting on canvas by Amy Devlin, £1,850, artfinder.com



Be like Jojo

Add a little on trend whimsy to your dining table

Leopard candle holder, £168, audenza.com



Ageless style

Jojo has selected furnishings that balance the age of the house with contemporary lifestyle needs.

Harrow two-seater sofa, from £1,595, parkernoll.co.uk

