



WHO LIVES HERE Amanda Cochrane, our editor, her husband, Ben Webb, their two teenage children, Florence and Ollie, and Marnie, their terrier pup.

THE HOUSE A turn-of-the-century terrace house in North West London.

WHY WE LOVE IT It's pared back, light and airy.

KENSAL RISING

It took some convincing, but we managed to get a peek behind the door of our editor's bright and elegant London home.

PHOTOGRAPHY **VERITY WELSTEAD** WORDS AND STYLING **AMANDA COCHRANE**

ABOVE LEFT The original floor tiles had to be removed due to subsidence. I love the replacement blue and white tiles, which have been in place since the late 1990s and are still going strong. **ABOVE RIGHT** The leather sofa is Content by Conran. The glass side table came from Alfie's, a brilliant junk shop on the Golborne Road, and the Bougie light came from Heal's. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The mirror above the fireplace was a Mother's Day gift and came from Les Couilles du Chien on the Golborne Road (Harry Enfield's skit, "I Saw You Coming", is thought to be based on this overpriced, but charming shop). The rug was bought on a trip to Marrakech and the coffee table is by Killian O'Sullivan, an Irish furniture designer who is based in Paris. I interviewed him many moons ago at design show Maison et Objet and was so charmed that I impulsively commissioned a coffee table. I didn't confess to the purchase until many months later when an enormous crate arrived at our Dun Laoghaire home. Ben was not amused!





LEFT The desk is a 1950s kitchen table and came from the Portobello Road. The pictures were found in a chest in my mother-in-law's attic and are by TC. **BELOW** The roller blinds are by Hillarys Blinds and are really good value. The Jacobean chest is a family heirloom and belonged to my father-in-law's parents. The chair is by Ikea, which is recovered in pretty floral fabric. **BOTTOM LEFT** Marnie and me. Our pup is half Sealyham, half Lakeland terrier and 100 per cent trouble!



Over the years, I've spent many hours persuading terrified house owners that their beautiful homes were more than worthy of gracing the pages of *Image Interiors & Living*. I remember a trip to Killala Bay to shoot the home of writer Morag Prunty. As we walked across the threshold, she told me that she was so tense about revealing her home that she'd spent two weeks shoving the contents of her house into the attic!

Suddenly, I understood how she – and all those other homeowners – felt. The day before my own house shoot, I knew what lay in store, but it didn't make it any easier. I had the fear, and in a very big way. All I could see when I looked around my scruffy abode was junk furniture, scuffed paintwork and a load of old tat. How had Marlene Wessels, our designer, persuaded me to feature my own house? And why on earth would anyone be remotely interested?

I phoned photographer Verity Welstead and said we had to call it off. Verity, a very old friend, who has worked with me on numerous house shoots – including Morag's, a gem as it turned out – spent the next hour calming me down. She reminded me of the wonders of clever angles, how we could tidy up for each shot and that we didn't have to feature every room. Our so-called "room of doom" – my unfortunate husband's office that is a store for everything we can't fit in the loft – would be off limits.

In the end, the shoot turned out to be enormous fun. Working alongside Verity as she crafted shot after beautiful shot reminded me why we had fallen in love with our home all those years ago.

In truth, we've moved into our turn-of-the-century terraced house twice – the first time when we bought it in 1998, and the second



The sofa and patterned cushions are from Ikea. The trolley and little table were expertly painted by Marlene. The pendant light is from Phoenix, one of my favourite London interiors stores, where I browse most Saturday mornings.



LEFT The double oven from Smeg is my pride and joy. The Oikos kitchen units, Italian tiled floor and stone composite worktop all came from M. C. Stone. **BELOW RIGHT** The teapot was a birthday present from hubby Ben and came from local interiors store Verandah. **BELOW LEFT** The old kitchen cupboard was recently revamped with a lick of paint and lined with very pretty wallpaper (Vintage 1630) by Swedish wallpaper company BoråsTapeter, available in Ireland through Furnishing Distributors.



time in 2011, when we moved back to London after living in Dublin for seven years. I've zipped backwards between the two cities all my life. It's a typical story for many Irish folk – I have an Irish mother, was born in London, educated in Dublin, and then hit the career path back in London. I had two children there and then moved them both and the Guinness-loving hubby to Ireland to edit *Image Interiors*, a magazine I had always admired.

We bought at a time when there were still bargains to be had in Kensal Rise. The house was divided up in to two bedsits and was in a complete state, but it was big, retained plenty of original features, such as the cornicing and lovely fireplaces, and was a short stroll to Queen's Park, a perfect spot where our then-toddlers could run amok.

We didn't have a lot of money to spare and spent weekends digging out bargains in architectural salvage yards, junk shops, markets and bric-a-brac stores, searching out goodies we could spruce up with coats of paint. On a trip to France on holiday with economist David McWilliams and then-girlfriend Sian Smyth, we discovered an old chest in a dusty brocante, and they dutifully drove it back to London in the back of their car. Sofas inherited from my mother-in-law were reupholstered or the covers dyed with Dylon. We sanded the original floorboards – who could afford new carpets? – and lime-washed them. They still look just about okay.

Fast-forward more than a decade later, and the area has "come up". It now has a smattering of gastro pubs, coffee shops, numerous dinky interiors stores (Circus and Verandah), London's coolest florist (Scarlet & Violet, who did the flowers for Kate Moss' wedding) and even a boutique cinema (The Lexi). Of course, as the area has



The pendant lights are from online store Jim Lawrence. I first spotted their lighting designs in Gregans Castle Hotel in the Burren and was immediately smitten. Ben thinks they look all wrong and doesn't like them, but he was overruled! The dining table and chairs have faithfully followed us from home to home, including a seven-year stint in Dublin, but are looking a little careworn and could do with a lick of paint. Or if I took photographer Mark Scott's advice, I'd dump them and get something modern and streamlined to replace them. However, the jury's out on that one ...



AMANDA'S DESIGN TIPS

- White painted floorboards create a feeling of light and space and are easy to keep clean.
- Sticking to a colour theme can help to link rooms. I love turquoise, teal and all shades of blue, which are found in most rooms around our home.
- An eclectic touch, such as the brass lighting above our dining table, can help to warm up modern interiors.
- Upcycle old pieces of junk furniture with a lick of paint and new fabric.
- Add colour to pale interiors with bright accessories, such as a throw or cushions.

gentrified so the demographic has changed. Today, the streets are crawling with hipsters who reside cheek by jowl with smug Notting Hill marrieds complete with kids called Camilla and Toby, massive 4x4s, and more cockapoos than you can shake a stick at.

The odd hipster apart, I love the area's foibles and living in our house, which has changed very little over the years. When we first moved in, a stylist called Michelle Ogundehin (today the editor of *Elle Decoration*) requested to do a recce of our house for a possible shoot. She told us that our house "had heroin chic appeal" and we should leave it in its beautiful, but shambolic state. And that's what we did. We plastered the walls, filled in the holes in the floor, whitewashed the floorboards, and updated the kitchen and bathrooms, but essentially the fabric of the house remains the same.

When we moved back in 2011, we took a good hard look at our house and realised it was in need of a serious update. Doing up the same house twice is a strange experience. After a flood in the kitchen, which was fortuitous, as the insurance money went a long way to paying for a brand new kitchen, we threw a lot of time and energy into the kitchen. Editing an interiors magazine is no help when it comes to choosing a kitchen, and I was tortured by choice. It was a long process – we became experts at cooking up one-pot wonders on a camping cooking stove – but today we're happy with the end result. It needs a little tweaking, some curtains wouldn't go amiss, and I'd love a stove to add some cosiness, but all in good time ...

When I look at Verity's pictures of our house, it's remarkably moving. Before the shoot started, I was nervous and questioned my sanity. Now, having undergone the whole experience, and viewed the whole project from the other side – I'm more convinced than ever that being invited to look into someone's home is an interesting and valuable privilege. Our houses really do tell us a great deal about who we are and the lives we have led. *



The bedside throw adds a much-needed blast of colour and came from Cologne & Cotton. The painting was a wedding present and the marble top table was a junk shop find.

ABOVE I love pale and pared-back interiors, and white painted floorboards feature a fair bit in our home (but I've added a hint of colour with pale pink roller blinds from Hillarys Blinds) the Art Deco mirror from Heirlooms Antiques in Dun Laoghaire, and pink paisley bedlinen from Ikea. **RIGHT** The Florence bed was a birthday gift from my mother (thanks so much Mum, I love it!) and came from Loaf. The bedlinen is from Ikea and the bedside table came from a junk shop while on a weekend away.