

**Home profile**

**THE OWNERS** Former merchandise manager Harriet Tuohy, her husband Chris, who works in finance, and their children Jackson, three, and Jonah, one.

**THE PROPERTY** An early Victorian semi-detached villa in southwest London. On the lower-ground floor is an open-plan family room with a living, dining and kitchen area, a utility room, study, playroom, cloakroom and storage area. On the upper-ground floor, there is a reception room, which opens on to a terrace and entrance hall. The first floor houses the master suite, while on the top floor are Jackson and Jonah's bedrooms, a guest bedroom and family bathroom.

**RECEPTION ROOM**

Two rooms were knocked together to create this large living area, which is anchored with a dark grey library unit. 'We lived with the builders for so long that Jackson assumed the ladder was left behind by one of them,' says Harriet. She admits that when the leather armchair arrived, they all jumped up and down on it: 'I couldn't wait for it to look more lived in,' she explains.

**GET THE LOOK** The units were designed by Rebecca Leivars and made by builder Andrew Ilendo. The leather armchair is from Eichholtz and the side table is by I & JL Brown. The buttoned ottomans are by The Sofa & Chair Company. The Arctic Pear chandelier is by Ochre and the wall light is by Hector Finch. The rug is from Nina Burgess. The oval plate by John Derian for Astier de Villatte, opposite, is from Designers Guild.



# EASY DOES IT

Could a home have the look and feel of a laid-back boutique hotel and yet be family-friendly? Yes, says Harriet, whose two boys prove the point daily

Words – Rachel Leedham  
Photography – Rachael Smith

# welcome to the *house of fun.*

'It's somewhere everyone can let their hair down,' says Harriet Tuohy of the home where a typical Saturday morning begins with the whole family jumping into the hot tub in the garden. 'I know there's something a bit cheesy about a hot tub, but we absolutely love it. We had nine people in it last New Year's Eve,' she says.

And while it might be hard to imagine the immaculate southwest London home Harriet shares with her husband Chris and their boys Jackson and Jonah playing host to a bunch of toddlers, she insists that it does just that. 'Yes, the sofa in the family space is velvet, but it's had a lot chucked at it. However, it seems to have come out okay,' says Harriet.

It's the family's relaxed attitude to their home that makes it such an enjoyable place to kick back. A major renovation project, it involved stripping the building back to its shell and starting again, so the interiors now flow together effortlessly, making entertaining a real pleasure. 'The family space is brilliant: we can have friends milling round the kitchen island, while the children get all the toys out in the adjoining playroom,' says Harriet. 'And, of course, the moment it gets warmer, we just slide open the doors and spill out into the garden.'

The inspiration came from visits to plush boutique hotels, such as Babington House in Somerset and Soho House in Berlin: think buttoned velvet upholstery, elegant joinery, roll-top baths and statement lights, from industrial pendants to contemporary chandeliers. 'We wanted to open the door and immediately get the sense that we had arrived in a sanctuary,' explains Harriet.

When she and Chris found the spacious Victorian villa in late 2010, just before Jackson was born, a sanctuary it was not. 'The house hadn't been touched since the Seventies and needed an awful lot doing to it to make it a family home,' Harriet says. 'Before buying this, I had left my job as a merchandise manager at John Lewis to do up a house on my own – it was a real plans-on-the-back-of-a-fag-packet number. But, for this place, I realised I needed professional help. It was too big to take on alone.'

It was an unlikely lead – a conversation struck up in Sainsbury's between Chris and a quantity surveyor – that brought the couple to their architect Stephen Fletcher, who took on Harriet's ideas and then added his own. 'We had already decided that we wanted to extend backwards as well as sideways, beneath the side passage, but Stephen was the one who suggested moving the staircase, which has completely changed the flow of the spaces,' she says.

Now, visitors are drawn straight into a reception area, created by knocking two rooms into one. Incongruous Thirties bay windows at either end have been replaced with elegant designs that Stephen matched to the windows of the neighbouring properties. The family room on the floor below, which was lowered by two feet to improve the proportions, includes a sleek glazed extension connecting the house with the garden – its crisp lines have been softened with Douglas fir boards, used on the walls as well as the floors. 'The big debate was how much wood before it started to resemble a ski chalet,' says Harriet.

Touches such as the timber and rich colour palette add character to the house, as well as providing a backdrop to the couple's possessions. 'We moved into the house in late November 2012 when Jonah was tiny,' Harriet says. 'We still had five months' building work ahead of us and we hadn't bought much more than a bed. I just needed a bit of help, so I called up interior designer Rebecca Leivars, begging her to find me a dining table and sofa in time for Christmas.'

Rebecca went on to assist in pulling together the schemes that give the spaces an easy, relaxed glamour, from the touchy-feely velvet furnishings to the striking dark grey library unit – a contemporary take on bookshelves in a gentlemen's club. 'There was a real synergy to our relationship – we bounced ideas off each other,' says Harriet, who has since started retraining as an interior designer herself.

'What this project showed me is how much I love the process of creating a home,' she adds. 'We really do have a place that is personal to us – it's wonderful to be surrounded by the things that we love.'

*Stephen Fletcher can be contacted at [stephen-fletcher.co.uk](http://stephen-fletcher.co.uk) and Rebecca Leivars at [leivars.com](http://leivars.com)*

## CLOAKROOM

Harriet first spotted these encaustic tiles when out having dinner with friends in Chiswick. 'I knew I had to use them somewhere in the house,' she says. The panelling adds another layer of interest to the room.

**GET THE LOOK** The tiles are by Emery & Cie. The panelling is painted in Down Pipe eggshell by Farrow & Ball. The vintage Fifties chair is from Rockett St George. The blind fabric is Pavilion by Zimmer + Rohde. The wall lights flanking the mirror, below, are from John Lewis – Harriet added the bespoke shades.



## RECEPTION ROOM

'We chose the colours to tie in with the purples and greens of the garden, but we also wanted some punch,' Harriet says of the choice of teal velvet for the Chesterfield corner sofa. The elegant new window with folding shutters has been left bare to provide a foil to the sumptuous fabrics.

**GET THE LOOK** The Moon coffee table is by Ochre. The Chesterfield is by The Sofa & Chair Company, covered in Cascada velvet in Teal by Wemyss. The chairs are from the Brabbu range by UniQue Home, covered in mauve Otello velvet by Nobilis. The floral cushion fabric is Weybridge from the vintage collection at Sanderson.



*'We're not too precious about things – we see the odd stain on the table as a good memory notched up'*

**KITCHEN**

Metal pendant lights and metro tiles add an industrial edge to the painted kitchen units, which are topped with Belgian fossil stone. 'It's less glossy and formal than granite,' says Harriet. **GET THE LOOK** The units are by Plain English and painted in All White eggshell by Farrow & Ball. For fossil-stone worktops, try Set in Stone. The Original BTC pendant lights are from Holloways of Ludlow. The Dime bar stools are by Alexander & Pearl. The Retro Metro tiles are from Fired Earth. The Salcombe linen blind fabric is from The Natural Curtain Company. The blackboard paint is from B&Q.



*'When Chris and I first lived together, our tastes were completely different. Over the years, we've found they have merged'*

**Home truths**

**WHAT'S YOUR SIGNATURE DRINK?** Red wine. Lots of it.  
**DO YOU HAVE A FASHION MANTRA?** Only buy it if you love it.  
**THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WERE EVER GIVEN?** Plan for the worst and hope for the best. You can apply it to anything.  
**WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?** Filling it with things that make you happy. That makes it a very personal space.  
**TELL US A GUILTY SECRET.** I have a pancake addiction and can consume unhealthy volumes.  
**WHAT WOULD YOU NEVER HAVE IN YOUR HOME?** Royal blue carpet... I had it in my first rented place in London and hated it.  
**YOU KNOW SPRING HAS SPRUNG WHEN...** There is that gorgeous lightness in the air.  
**WHICH SONG WOULD GET YOU DANCING EVERY TIME?** Red Alert by Basement Jaxx – it's very nostalgic.  
**WHAT'S YOUR SOLUTION TO EASY ENTERTAINING?** Leave all the cooking to Chris!

**STUDY**

Chris's 'man cave', where he retreats to play his guitar, features a vintage cartoon mural. When the door is closed, it blends seamlessly with the timber cladding. **GET THE LOOK** The Baedekar desk chair is from Oka. The Beano and Friends cartoon mural is from Surface View. The Douglas fir cladding is by Dinesen.



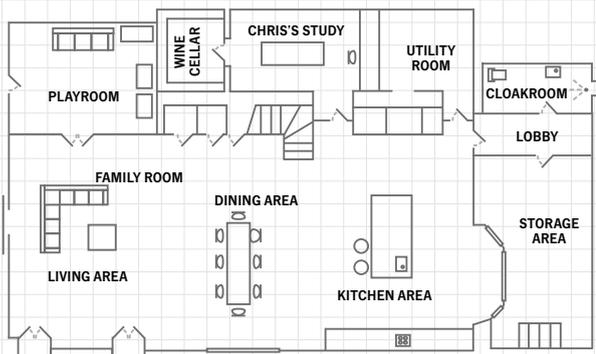
## MASTER BEDROOM

Featuring a vintage floral wallpaper and caned French-style bed, this space is unashamedly feminine. Folding doors mean the room can be closed off from the adjoining dressing area.

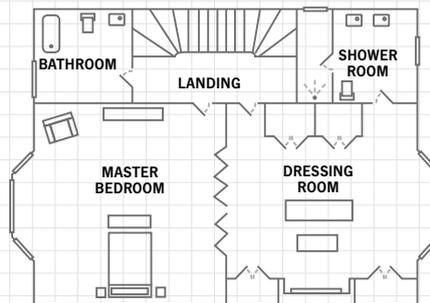
**GET THE LOOK** The Louis XV cane bed is from *And So To Bed*. The wallpaper is a vintage Cath Kidston print, made to order. The floral cushion is from *Designers Guild*. The rugs are by *The Plantation Rug Company*.



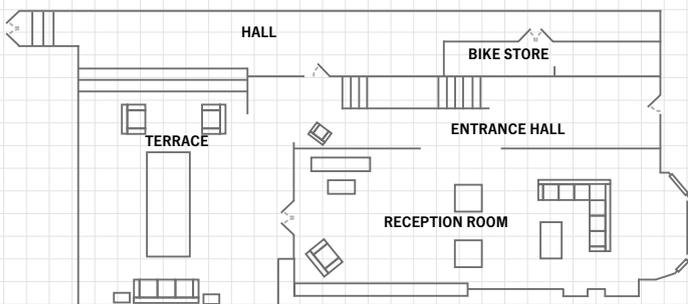
## The blueprint



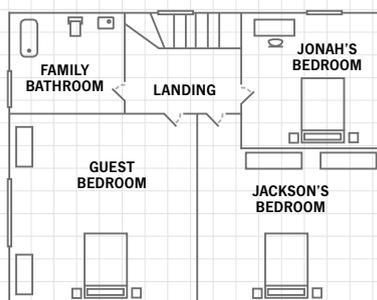
LOWER-GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



UPPER-GROUND FLOOR



TOP FLOOR

## DRESSING ROOM ↑

Taking its cue from boutique hotels, the couple's dressing room houses a luxe roll-top bath in the middle of the room. Speakers discreetly set into the ceiling ensure that Harriet can listen to her favourite tunes as she soaks.

**GET THE LOOK** The Marseille Stannum copper bateau bath is from *The Cast Iron Bath Company*. The storage pouffe is from *The Sofa & Chair Company*. The metal pendant is from *Trainspotters* and the walls are painted in *Celestial Grey matt emulsion* by *Sanderson*. The built-in wardrobes were designed by *Stephen Fletcher* and built by *Andrew Ilendo*.

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