



From lab *to* living room

Chemistry student Vicky Lonsdale decided interior design was the perfect mix for a new career. Amanda Griffiths reports

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRSTY THOMPSON

Above: Cream was used in the living room to match the furniture

Vicky Lonsdale is forging a career as an interior designer thanks, by strange twist of fate, to a chemistry degree.

It's not the usual path for someone intending to go into a world of flair and furnishings but it's one she decided to follow when friends at university in Manchester asked her to give their rooms a make-over.

'I loved getting bits and pieces from Manchester markets and then they began saying they thought I was really quite good at it,' says 30-year-old Vicky.

'I never really knew what I wanted to do when I was at school. Although I had a creative flair I wasn't good at art. I ended up going down the science and



“I wanted to keep the character but make it quirky and different”



Victoria Lonsdale



The formal dining room is Vicky's favourite room with the beautiful showpiece chandelier



Vicky wanted to make at least one of the bedrooms a girlie retreat, this pink twin room does the trick

maths route. I don't regret it, but I always knew it wasn't right for me.'

From re-designing students' bedrooms, Preston-born Vicky has progressed to having an integral role redesigning and refurbishing the holiday cottages at Ribby Hall Village in Wrea Green as well as their newly-acquired White House. This Georgian property sleeps 14 and it is hired by anyone from celebrities and footballers to families enjoying a break.

'I'm really very lucky,' she says. 'I've got no formal qualifications in interior design. I just walk into a room and know what to do with it. I guess I have an instinct for it. I obviously do some research to make sure that my feelings are correct, especially when you're

looking at something like the White House. I wanted to be sympathetic to its Georgian heritage but give it a modern touch too.

'The Georgians were really big on wallpaper, so I used that but as a feature wall rather than on all four. Not only does that give it a modern air but it's also cheaper and easier to replace.

'I've used Georgian colours where possible, particularly the greens and duck egg blues, but I also wanted to add some bolder colours. Apparently, in Georgian times the bolder the colours you used, the more affluent you were. Here I added splashes to give the "wow" factor.

'I felt it important to give each room a different personality. I wanted there to

be at least one that people would walk into and love. I wanted to keep the character but make it quirky and different.

'The formal dining room is my favourite, probably because one of my favourite colours is teal. I think it's also the one room I've had the most positive comments about.

'I try to use one eye-catching piece and mix budget items with it. You >



The master bedroom in muted creams and golds



Above and left: Black and white is simple but elegant, the trick Vicky says is not to over-do the black

Vicky's tips

Don't spend a fortune to create impact in a room. Use a wallpaper on one wall to highlight a chimney breast, or behind a sofa, then pick a colour from the wallpaper and add splashes of this around the room in accessories such as vases and cushions. This makes a look easy to change and update.

Replace a plain lampshade with a bold, striking design. This needn't cost much but will have a dramatic effect.

Choose a bold patterned curtain fabric you love and make the design the focus of your room. Choose an eyelet heading, which will cut down the amount of fabric you need while giving your scheme a modern feel.

Nature has made a comeback in design. Choose natural woods and mix with elements such as slate and stone in flooring and accessories. To complete the look team with fabrics in botanical and large floral themes.

Following on from fashion, there is a big influence of lace and geometrics, delicate handicraft and brocade designs right now. Use them in the home to create a bright, airy and feminine feel and team with delicate ceramics to complete the look.

Strong colour influences for spring/summer are colourful shades of turquoise, deep blues, coral and violet as well as soft feminine hues of soft pink teamed with light greys.

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don't have to spend a lot of money to get the right look. In the dining room the chandelier has that "wow" effect, but the black tables are only from Ikea.'

Vicky has also used mirrors to the best effect to bring light into the house.

Originally employed in the marketing department at Ribby Hall, Vicky soon became involved in the refurbishments, not only because of her love for interior design but also thanks to her previous experience at Burnley-based Wilman Interiors, which make and design gorgeous fabrics, wallpaper, furniture and soft furnishings and now uses a lot of their products along with wallpapers and soft furnishings from other companies like Laura Ashley and Harlequin, to create her visions.

'At Wilman I would get the new collections, the fabrics and colours

coming through for the next season and it was my job to get that photographed,' she says. 'I'd hire houses like this, to create and shoot those room scenes you see in magazines and help put together look books and tips on how the reader could use our fabrics to create the look in their own homes.'

'I came here just over two years ago and because of my experience in the world of interiors at Wilman have been able to get more and more involved with the interior design here.'

'I love the creative side of it, but also the project management. I work with a great maintenance team who do the work. They say I'm like a whirlwind! We only have a few weeks to get the work done before they're occupied again so we have to keep to a tight schedule. That deadline makes it all exciting!' 🌸