

THE SOFT TOUCH



Alex Chapman has dressed some of the finest homes in the Ribble Valley. One of her most satisfying challenges is creating a beautiful home for her own family, writes **Peter Holland**

Photography: *Rachael Ronnan*

By their own admission it is an ambitious on-going project.

Two years after Alex Chapman and her husband Craig bought their remote rural home they are still spending most of their spare time and money on its tasteful renovation.

What they have created so far is breathtakingly beautiful, yet cosy and welcoming.

You would expect it to be extraordinary, after all Alex is a soft furnishings specialist with a real flair for creating stunning interiors.

"I'm not a show-home and neutral colours sort of person, I prefer the traditional look which is reflected in every room we've started and finished so far. Traditional has real warmth and will never go out of fashion. I also like good quality things, even when it means having to save up for them," she said.

Before Alex could get to work on the interior, it was the fabric of the house which required more urgent attention.

The old property had been rendered in white with bright blue painted windows! Off came the old render and in went new timber windows. The house needed sandblasting and re-pointing, new damp-proofing, re-wiring, re-plastering, fireplaces needed to be exposed... and much more!

"The more we started doing and the more we had to do. One job would reveal another which needed doing and so it went on. However, we're slowly getting there and, where possible, we've done all the work ourselves," added Alex.

Their home, near Downham, enjoys beautiful views of Pendle Hill. It was originally two small cottages dating back to the late 1790s.

"When we bought it there was a distinctly 1960s and 1970s feel to the interior"

When we bought it there was a distinctly 1960s and 1970s feel to the interior; patterned wallpapers, lots of different colours and it had a very dated look. So, I set about changing all that and doing my own thing," she said.



“Some customers are happy to leave an entire interior brief up to me, even a whole house!”



“I can really indulge myself here at home, using the fabrics, colours and styles I love”



The lounge, main bedroom and family bathroom now set the highest of standards. Seven year-old daughter Lily is understandably tickled pink with her bedroom. Three year-old son Charlie has what every small boy's bedroom should be - a place of adventure!

Alex's favourite colours are red, pink and green. The quality fabrics and paints in her home are typical of those you will find in her Clitheroe shop, Twitter Lane Interiors, which specialises in hand-sewn, beautifully crafted soft furnishings.

“I can really indulge myself here at home, using the fabrics, colours and styles I love. With customers it's different but when I see what they are wearing and chat with them for a while I can usually suss them out and understand their taste straight away. Some customers are happy to leave an entire interior brief up to me, even a whole house! That is very flattering. However, where a customer likes a certain thing or style that I don't particularly like, I just go with the flow,” she said.

So, what is next as part of the on-going family home project? Husband Craig is clearly not afraid of hard work.

“Hopefully an extension on the back of the house next year will give us room for a new kitchen and a fourth bedroom. When we bought the house I said it would just be a stepping stone before we moved to another property. Now I think differently. I can see us being here for a long time,” he said.