

# The business that's shuttering illusions

The Cambridge Shutter Company was set up 6 years ago by interior designer Rebecca Mason. She spoke to **Adrian Peel**.



**W**ith a degree in 3D interior design, Rebecca Mason has more than 25 years' experience in her chosen field.

Originally from the North East, her family started in the shutter industry in 2006 and theirs was the first business to specialise in plantation shutters in that region, meaning that by the time Rebecca set up the Cambridge Shutter Company in 2011, she knew the industry inside out.

"I've got a background in interior design so I bring a different element," she said. "I'm from a design rather than a sales background, so the important thing to me is the detail, getting the best results for people."

The Cambridge Shutter Company is a small, family-run business based in Harston – Rebecca's son works for the company. "I'm involved with all aspects, from visiting clients through to installation and completion – I like to see it through," said Rebecca.

"It's a very personalised service. Sometimes it's a bit difficult to compete with the big national companies, but the vast majority of our business comes through recommendations and referrals. We thrive on that, really, and in order to get that sort of business we have to do good jobs."

How did Rebecca end up working with shutters? "My mum's also an interior designer, and about 11 or 12 years ago she had this nice Victorian villa on the coast up in the North East," she said.

"She'd seen in a magazine some plantation shutters, and it was back in the day when you never saw them – they were never on TV or never advertised – and she really wanted them for her house. She couldn't get them outside of London at that time, so she and my dad set up East Coast Shutters. They've recently closed it down because they've retired."

"My brother and I got involved with the business at various stages, me on a more ad hoc basis, but it felt like it was a great product and I wanted to do it for myself down here. We've been in this area since late 1996, so this is home to us."

Rebecca, a qualified secondary school teacher, used to teach woodwork and metalwork, so has the practical skills to complement the technical and architectural skills she learned during her more technical-leaning degree course.

So what is popular at the moment in the world of shutters?

Rebecca said: "There's quite a wide range of prices from one product to another. You have the entry-level MDF [medium density fibreboard] products, which are always popular because of price,

but there are certain applications where it's not so useful.

"In Cambridge particularly there are a lot of Victorian and Edwardian houses with sash windows, so we have a large demand for tier-on-tier shutters, where you have the top panel open independently of the bottom one. It provides a great look. It gives you the benefit of maintaining your light source but complete privacy as well. It's not like having curtains, that have to be drawn or open."

The company will be exhibiting at the inaugural Cambridge Home + Garden Show at the Guildhall on September 9, an event sponsored by the *Cambridge Independent*.

"I went to see a lady to measure up some bay windows for her and she told me about it because she's exhibiting at the show," said Rebecca. "So I had it in mind it would be a good way of upping our profile."

■ [thecambridgeshuttercompany.co.uk](http://thecambridgeshuttercompany.co.uk)



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