

Double delights!

Happiness is not just a basin of your own but an entire bathroom, says **Mark Palmer**

WE ALL know the feeling. So we can surely sympathise with Greta Garbo in the movie *Grand Hotel* when she says: 'I want to be alone... I just want to be alone.'

But it's not perhaps the most tactful of utterings when you're sharing a home with someone you profess to love.

Cohabiting couples — whether they be married or unmarried — might put it a little differently. 'I want some space of my own,' is a more likely refrain in an age when we are constantly encouraged to pursue our independence and assert our individuality.

So, it's no surprise that in a survey of 1,000 British people, more than 30 per cent said that if they could add an extra room to their home, it would be to create an 'alone zone' — somewhere to get away from the rest of the family or, indeed, a place where their partner could spend time on his or her own periodically.

Fewer than ten per cent said that they would create a shared living space in the event of adding an extra room — but 14 per cent said they would establish a gym or 'wellness centre', which presumably they would be prepared to share with their other half.

The survey, conducted by Simply Basement, a specialist London basement company, showed that men in particular long for a 'man cave' or what the firm calls Dad Pads and Man Creches.

So far, so predictable. But increasingly many women dream of having their own dressing room or even their own bathroom.

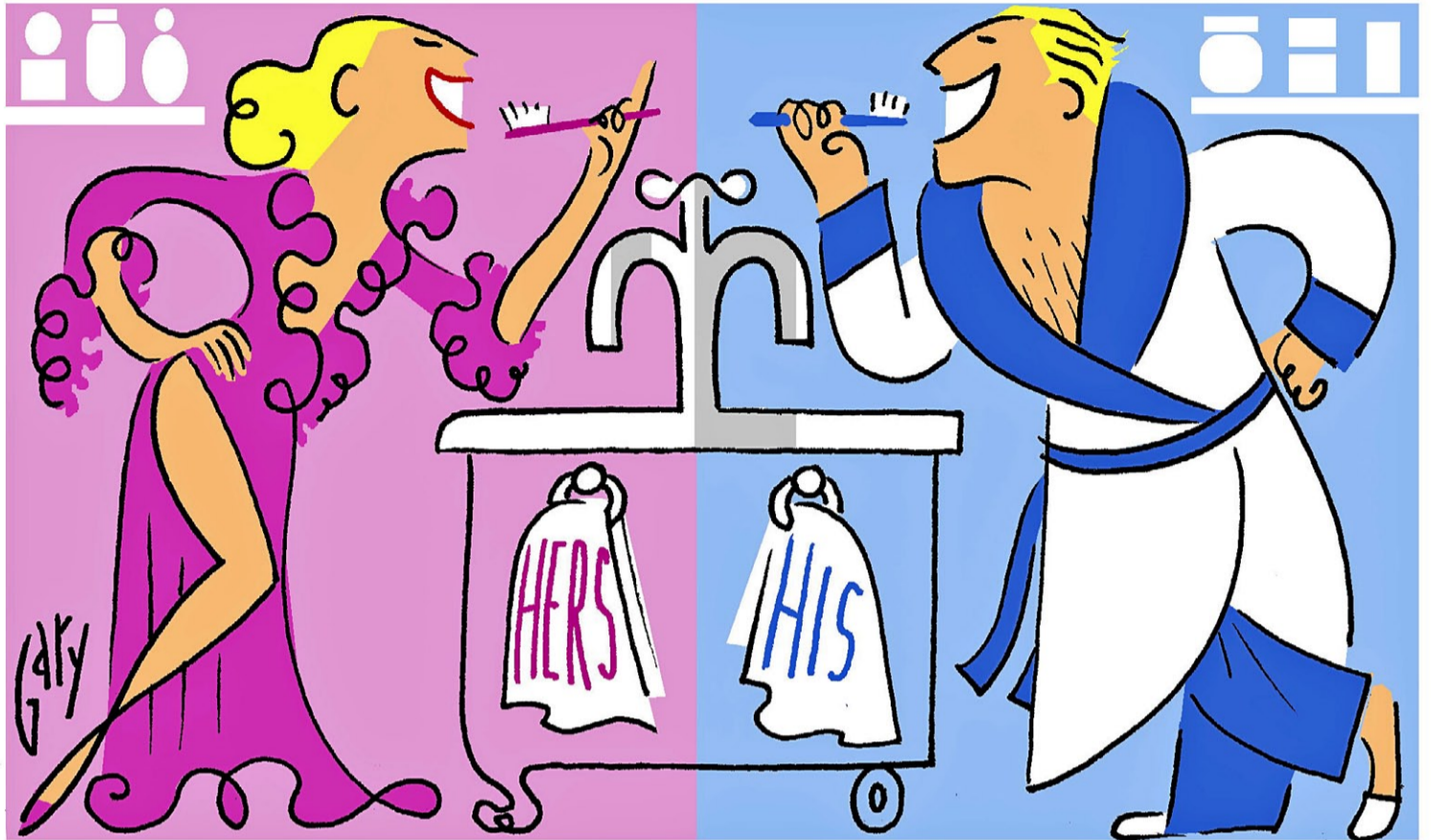
'When our children moved out, we decided to sacrifice one bedroom and turned it into another bathroom — my bathroom in fact,' says Camilla Davies, who lives with her husband in Leicestershire.

'It's been a wonderful addition and my husband and I wish we had done it years ago. It would have saved a lot of arguments, not least because he is meticulously tidy and I find it impossible to put anything away.'

NOT so long ago, it was regarded as forward-thinking to have a basin each. But life has moved on space.

'Dedicated areas for both him and her is definitely a strong selling point when going to the market,' says David Smith, a partner in the Andover office of estate agents Myddelton & Major.

'I keep meeting people who say that if they were going to build a house from scratch they would want



Chic: His 'n' hers dressing rooms cost from £3,000 at furniture company Neville Johnson

a bathroom each for the two people living there.'

Myddelton & Major recently sold a four-bedroom cottage in Quarley, North Hampshire, for just under £1 million. What especially attracted the buyer was the purpose-built barn next to the house, where the man had his office and space to pursue his interests.

He even had his own little kitchen and wet room.

Michael Caine has often said that the secret of his long marriage comes down to having two bathrooms. But it's not just

separate bathrooms that couples are looking for.

'Increasingly our clients want his and her offices,' says Jonathan Harington, of the buyers' agent, Haringtons UK. 'Where before the wife might have a corner of the kitchen for a desk and her paperwork, she is now seeking her own office to work from.'

'This does add value to the property and is part of modern living for those who can afford it.'

For upmarket interior designer John McCall — whose clients normally can afford such things — there is no end to the his 'n' hers wishlist.

'Separate bathrooms are now completely normal. And many of my female clients want their own dressing room, where the masseur and hairdresser can visit,' says McCall. 'His 'n' hers studies are also quite normal with their own books and music. I have done a personal yoga and mediating space for one lady and a mirror-lined room with ballet barre for another.'

The current interest in Alone Zones may stem in part from the book, *Rework*, written by two Americans, Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson.

They argue that long stretches of 'alone time' are when we are at our most productive — 'when you don't have to mind-shift between various tasks and can get a boatload done'.

And with more and more people working from home, there's a need to be productive — and find inspiration. Soaking in your own bath tub in your

own bathroom without being disturbed might just help.

James Wyatt, a partner of Barton Wyatt, an estate agents working on the Wentworth Estate in Surrey, thinks it's the 'non sexy' age for a lot of people.

'Sharing a bath or shower is lower down the list of priorities for

uber-busy couples,' he says. 'It's probably not been more than five to seven years since his 'n' her dressing rooms were all the rage, but now it's definitely his 'n' her bathrooms. That said, those wanting giant double love-showers seem to be not only happier, but nicer people, too.'

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