B:lly Watson

Creative, collaborative and personable Front End Engineer from the Peaks with a huge wealth of experience spanning agency, in-house and freelance roles across 12 years; including Next, Node, React (+ Native) and TypeScript.

A passion for accessibility and use of subtle animation and interactivity to enhance user experience. Interests include scuba diving and mountain biking.

Digits:

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Experience:

Pets at Home
Handforth

Principal Front End Engineer
October 2024 - present • Contract

- Promoted to oversee the entire team of 15 engineers on complex e-commerce platform with 7M+ monthly visitors
- Focused on improving platform - auth enhancements; unblocking E2E tests; boosting performance and improving robustness
- Made tech debt a collaborative process; keeping the codebase modern and relevant whilst garnering a shared sense of ownership
- Reviewed upcoming features; collaborating with other principals to scrutinise, prioritise and iterate
- Improved accessibility, usability, performance and conversion rates for users while boosting SEO and reducing churn
- Triaged incoming bugs to ensure they were refined and ready to fix before hitting squads
- Ran accessibility audit, updating site components and pages to target WCAG compliance

Technical Lead
April 2023 - October 2024 • Contract

- 3x-extended consultant role at FTSE250 product company, to help huge digital transformation
- Tasked with providing expertise to upskill existing engineers whilst also creating and delivering new Next site
- Responsible for completion of vital features like search, find-us, bookings, subscriptions and health plans
- Led three of six development squads, mentoring devs to boost in-house knowledge and skills
- Drove strategic technical decisions; instilled performant, scalable and robust coding techniques
- Defined coding standards, critiqued PR's and encouraged best practices to ensure high code quality and test coverage
- Introduced advanced mocking patterns and accessible strategy for Jest unit tests and Playwright integration tests

IAM Cloud
Huddersfield

Senior Software Engineer
September 2022 - April 2023 • Contract

- Developed software UI used by thousands of companies and millions of customers
- Leveraged advanced React methodologies (use of hooks, callbacks and memoization)
- Created extensive unit testing strategy for components, hooks and context
- Extended use of Chakra design system, with advanced Storybook implementation
- Published packages to NPM with Rush monorepo for consumption by other projects
- Utilised Docker to spin up Verdaccio instance, allowing local testing without publishing
- Switched to Vite stack instead of Webpack, and explored Vitest instead of Jest

Pollen
London

Senior Software Engineer
April 2022 - August 2022 • Permanent

- Led and mentored development team of 4 as a T-shaped engineer at travel company
- Used TypeScript and GraphQL extensively in an Agile, product-focused environment
- Contributed to component library shared by web (Next) and mobile (React Native)
- Thoroughly unit tested code with Jest, explored functional and E2E tests with Cypress
- Improved code performance to enhance UX by reducing render and loading times
- Drove codebase accessibility audit, boosting usability for all users as well as SEO
- Integrated feature flags and implemented AB testing in collaboration with data team

Absurd
Manchester

Lead Front End Developer
July 2021 - April 2022 • Permanent

- Promoted to lead role after building out multi-faceted team of different seniority
- Mentored and line-managed whole team; mapping objectives and running 1-2-1's
- Honed bleeding edge agency tech stack - Next, TypeScript, Node, Sass and Jest
- Embraced GraphQL, using it in headless instances of Shopify and Contentful
- Introduced modern unit testing with Jest // React Testing Library for code confidence
- Remained hands-on, developing major projects for Umbro, Lucy & Yak and CitySuites
- Involved in strategic decisions like DX, branch strategy and Azure DevOps migration

Senior Front End Developer
September 2018 - July 2021 • Permanent

- Headhunted for senior role at service design agency after relocation to Manchester
- Introduced ES6+, TypeScript, React and React Native as well as GSAP and Webpack
- Implemented advanced React concepts like custom hooks, context and suspense
- Expanded agency's expertise into mobile via creation of a TypeScript React Native app
- Turbocharged performance and SEO of agency website utilising Next and SSR
- Developed Alexa app with Node and Lamba, led agency's official Alexa certification
- Championed the PWA, leveraging advantages with an offline-capable Vue project

Plusnet
Sheffield

Front End Developer
May 2016 - December 2017 • Permanent

- In-house JavaScript expert at major ISP whose site receives millions of hits per year
- Mentored placement student during project to rebuild Service Status in React
- Introduced unit testing using Mocha and Chai, used Selenium for functional testing
- Rebuilt old Grunt build stack in Gulp, saving the department 3 day's dev time per year
- Developed new prototype Member Centre in Angular after conducting user testing
- Completed code reviews for entire department to encourage clean, manageable code

Havas Lynx
Manchester

Front End Developer
March 2014 - August 2015 • Permanent

- Promoted to mid-weight following advancement of skills and knowledge as a junior

- Key member of development team, initiated and led both individual and team projects
- Acted up and ran department during replacement for outgoing Head of Front End
- Honed JS skills with use of Knockout, Require and writing custom Handlebars helpers
- Mentored junior devs, advising on key decisions and best practices to develop skills
- Responsible for scheduling and timelines, hiring freelance resource where necessary

Junior Front End Developer

July 2012 - March 2014 • Permanent

- Given full time role as a junior developer after impressing during placement
- Developed websites, apps and eDetails; including for various client CLM platforms
- Collaborated with mobile team for iOS apps, using TeamCity and provisioning profiles
- Involved in developing new build stack, moving from Jekyll + Zepto to Grunt + jQuery
- Used templating tools like Handlebars, Assemble and Jade to avoid code repetition
- Ran rapid prototyping - overnight app development for global company conference

Placement Developer

July 2012 • Placement

- Offered placement after being headhunted at university Creative Showcase
- Furthered experience to modern web technologies including HTML5, Sass and Zepto
- Gained exposure to Back End technologies by working on PHP and .NET websites

Skills:

Through my extensive experience I've gained a vast array of skillsets and expertise in a range of web and native technologies. I have a keen focus on thoroughly tested, scalable and maintainable code - which is performant and accessible - and live by the mantra: write less, do more! Next, Node, React Native and TypeScript is my preferred tech stack but I'm a firm believer in using the right tool for the job.

As a T-shaped engineer, I value collaboration with members of the wider project team across different disciplines. Having experience of leading teams and mentoring other engineers, I also find the management side of the job really rewarding, while at the same time cherishing the technical challenge of being an expert engineer. I am passionate about usability and accessibility and how these enhance UX.

Qualifications:

Leeds Metropolitan University

September 2009 - May 2012
First Class BSc (Hons) in Multimedia Technology

Lady Manners School

September 2001 - May 2008
12 GCSEs and 3 A-Levels

Profile:

🌐 engaging.engineering   //   📇 linkedin.com/in/watsonbilly   //   🚀 github.com/bcwatson22

References:

Tom Tollafield

Head of Software, Pets at Home
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Mattia Battiston

Engineering Manager, Pollen
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Rob Dorsett

Technical Director, Absurd
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