

Life

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SUMMER LIGHTS

Celebrate the warm nights
with our July Garden Planner **P12-13**

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WELCOME TO LIFE



July is the month to sit back and enjoy the garden at the peak of its summer glory. Our garden planner (p12-13) includes ideas for delicious salads and drinks to enjoy al fresco and tips on lighting those (hopefully) warm nights. Barbecue fans should check out the charcoal maker, which I'm told the Duke of Edinburgh ordered two of when he saw it at the Chelsea Flower Show. Elsewhere, the novelist Tom Rob Smith shows off his extraordinary roof garden, which brings a touch of the prairie to Bermondsey (p5). And on this spread, architects of contemporary houses prove that old stone and roses around the door do not define the country house. Finally, *Life* deputy editor Catalina Stogdon gets up at dawn to learn the art of fish preparation at Billingsgate Market (p15) and Gary King tries his hand at polocrosse (p21), known as poor man's polo.

Anne Cuthbertson
Editor, *Life*
life@telegraph.co.uk



A THOROUGHLY

Caroline McGhie learns many country-dwellers are opting for modernity over pastoral pastiche

You might think that very few people go for uncompromising modernity in the country, yet those who do can attract huge admiration. The Turvill family built Bavent House at Reydon, on the reed beds of Suffolk, in what you might call "fairy-tale-modern" style. Clad in zinc and iroko, the house is reminiscent of a beach hut, while the uneven roofline is like an ancient settlement or distant castle. Departing from the vernacular still takes courage, though. "We had to defend ourselves, explain why we weren't doing a pastiche country house, but now we feel we made the right decision," says Lucy Turvill, a pharmaceutical consultant who moved into Bavent House almost a year ago with her husband Richard, who owns a laundry business, and their daughter Clear, 12. "The materials are just wonderful. The wood has faded to a soft colour and mimics the reed beds."

Their architect, Anthony Hudson, has just won a Royal Institute of British Architects award for the house. "I had the image of the beach huts at Southwold in my mind, the old black tarred ones," he says. "I decided to use black-zinc cladding for the more public faces of the house - a protective skin. Wherever we cut into it to create areas to sit outside, we used timber cladding."

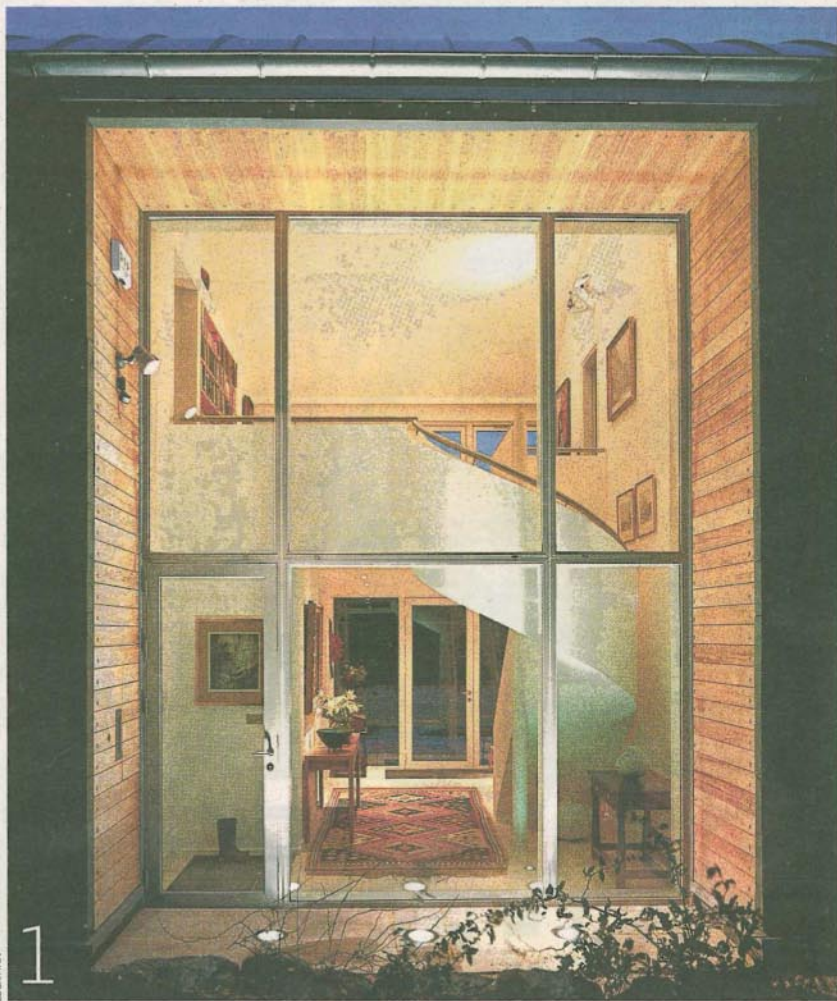
This is clever stuff, simple but rigorous, or "choreographed", as he would say. Designing for something on the edge of the sea, where there is little more than wind and birds, was quite a challenge, especially as the spectacular views were to the north and the dreary ones to the south.

Anthony resolved this by creating a glass centre for the house which allowed the sun to slice right through and marsh views to be accessible to both sides. "When you arrive, you get an interesting silhouette of shapes, a slightly jumbled appearance of planes and faces which is intentionally picturesque," he says.

"You cannot but appreciate the light and space. It is incredibly uplifting," says Lucy. "Being modern, it actually reflects the way we live. The alternative is to take on an old house to bend and adapt."

Bavent has two family bedrooms, two guest bedrooms and is wrapped in terraces offering shelter from the wind.

The house was also commended in this year's *Grand Designs* awards. It isn't the first time Anthony has attracted acclaim. Baggy House in north Devon, a modernist masterpiece with Art Deco overtones and intensely worked interiors, won the Riba Building of the Year award in 1994. It was built for Gavin



1 Modern marvel: Prospect Barn in Gloucestershire, top, has windows all along one side and is bathed in light



Award-winning: Bavent House, on the reed beds of Suffolk, is clad in zinc and wood; and modernist masterpiece, Baggy House, p1, has won a RIBA award

Davies, former chairman of the BBC and government economic adviser, and it continues to mesmerise everyone who becomes aware of it.

The Turvills stuck their necks out and chose a groundbreaking

architect, but how many of us would do the same? Thanks to programmes like *Grand Designs*, a love of geometry and glass has begun to spread from the city to the country.

"Things have changed massively," says Anthony. "It is still difficult to get new country houses built, in terms of planning and opportunities, but there is now a huge appetite for them. People love the image, style, light and space which make life more enjoyable."

Estate agents and search agents acknowledge that the kinds of buyers who, 10 years ago, wanted only the quintessential English period house, will now happily look at modern ones. But modern comes in many different guises, from a brilliant original design such as Hudson's to neo-Georgian or mock-Cotswold-mansion, with many hybrids in between.

"People genuinely want modern now," says Hugo Thistlethwaite of buying agents Prime Purchase. "The desire for them has rolled out of London. It is about the whole business of modern living now, rather than about old snobbish attitudes. Buyers have travelled the



MODERN MANOR

world, stayed in fantastic hotels, love new technology – which needs to be built in – and don't want lots of little rooms off dusty corridors."

Lovers of classical designs can go to an architect like Robert Adam (descendant of the great 18th-century architect). A classic modern house in the Georgian manner designed by his practice can be bought before it is built. Ranmore is a 97-acre plot in the Surrey Hills, with planning permission for six bedrooms, indoor pool and spa, barns, stabling, garages and tennis court, at £8 million through Knight Frank (01932 591600). The building would then cost £200 to £300 per square foot.

But at the very top end of the market – the multimillion level – international buyers are keen on "environmentally friendly funky-modern" as Mark Lawson, search agent with The Buying Solution, calls it.

"There is such a desperate shortage of Georgian rectories. The super-rich, who have houses all over the world, are so keen on modern now they want to find plots and design for themselves. It is the cool thing to do."



Country cool: Marsh View, above, has views over the salt marshes in Norfolk; Eclipse, right, is a hi-tech country haven with a jetty on the Beaulieu River in Hampshire



MODERN COUNTRY HOUSES FOR SALE

1 Funky hermit crab: Bill Pack, retired architect, and his wife Connie converted this old Dutch barn using their son William as the architect. They wrapped it in zinc cladding and cedar boards, gave it a distinctive curved roof and arranged windows all along one side. They were careful not to change the silhouette, and created a house which is always "bathed in light". Prospect Barn near Northleach in Gloucestershire has since won awards and is for sale at £1.45m through Knight Frank (01285 659771).

2 Small and wild: Marsh View at Burnham Norton, north Norfolk, is designed by Patrick and Claudia Lynch, with views across the salt marshes in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Clad in birch plywood with floors of poured black concrete, three bedrooms and a double-height living room with glass walls, a sky window and a studio in the garden. The Modern House (08456 344068) is asking £649,000.

3 Hi-tech uber-luxury: Eclipse is a modern country house built as a hi-tech palace. Knight

Frank (020 7861 1065) is selling it at £1.2m. It snakes low to the ground in the 26-acre plot right on the Beaulieu River in Hampshire, on the opposite bank to Buckler's Hard, with a jetty to moor the boats. It has five bedroom suites, indoor pool with star-studded ceiling, media room as large as a local cinema, gymnasium, tennis court, stabling, manège, three-bedroom lodge, studio and a tree-lined carriage drive. There are terraced sun decks dotted with sun beds and a helicopter store.

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ELECTRICITY EXPORTED	
762 kWh/Year	£23 at 03.00p/kWh
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