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individual Homes

SELF-BUILD, RENOVATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

home

EDITOR MICHAEL HOLMES REVEALS
THE WINNERS OF THE 1996 DAILY TELEGRAPH
INDIVIDUAL HOMES AWARDS.

I HAVE SPENT a fair slice of the past few weeks touring the far-flung corners of these blessed isles in search of the 1996 Homebuilders of the Year. In the fine company of fellow judges, Tom Rowland (Property Correspondent on The Daily Telegraph) and our own erstwhile editor (now publisher), Peter Harris, I have visited no less than fourteen houses in almost as many counties. Households of all shapes and sizes have welcomed us into homes of a similarly varied disposition and answered a barrage of probing questions about every aspect of their project. Many thanks to everyone who entered this years Awards, and especially to those shortlisted entrants who showed us such patience and tolerance!

The standard of entry in this, the fourth year of the IH Homebuilder Awards, was exceptionally high — probably the best to date. Merely whittling down the huge pile of superb entries to a realistically sized short-list was a tough job in itself. Needless to say, every one of the houses on that short-list turned out to be a masterpiece in its own right. Probably the only decision on which we all agreed was how incredibly difficult it was to pick an overall winner!

Early on we recognised that setting any formal judging criteria for a competition of this nature, with such a diverse range of quality entries, was going to be a complex task: not only did each of the houses vary enormously in design (from the very modern to the traditional), and construction technique (from conversion to innovative new forms of timber-framing), but we also had to take into account factors such as relative value for money and the way the entrants had chosen to go about their project and the effect this had both on the cost and the end result. The judging criteria were as follows:

DESIGN: Primary consideration was given to the success of the layout of the living and accommodation spaces and the way in which they serve the living requirements of the household. An assessment was also made of the design's suitability for its site and its interaction with its surroundings. Flexibility of internal layout for future occupants was also considered.

QUALITY OF FINISH: The standard, suitability and quality of materials, specification and workmanship were taken into consideration in relation to the scale and cost of the project and the way in which work was undertaken.

VALUE FOR MONEY: The judges assessed the relative value for money of each project, taking into consideration its scale and specification, including an estimate of the value of the time invested by the entrants or their families either in project management or DIY building work.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: A number of the projects showed tremendous resourcefulness and innovation in design and specification and these factors were taken into special consideration by the judges.

After much deliberation, in an attempt to reflect the diverse range of homes being built by individuals in this country, the judges have decided to split this year's Awards into five different categories: Best Modern House, Best Traditional House, Best Town House, Best Conversion and Best Small House. From the winners of these five categories, we have with great difficulty managed to select one overall winner: **Michael Winter & Elizabeth Monk**, for Boundary House. All the winners will receive an Award and certificate, but Michael and Elizabeth will receive a week's luxury holiday in Venice later this year.



The Daily Telegraph and Individual
Homes Builder of the Year 1996
and also Best Modern House
Award 1996 — **Michael Winter
& Elizabeth Monk**, for
Boundary House.



YOUNG ARCHITECT Michael Winter and accountant partner Elizabeth Monk have created an exciting, futuristic home using a unique timber-frame system developed by Winter especially for the project. The couple purchased their site in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, from Railtrack in 1994 after a two year search and set out to create a low-energy, low-impact home using environmentally friendly materials.

Winter designed the house himself and managed the project using subcontractors whilst Monk used her professional skills as an accountant to manage the money. The project was completed

builders of the year, '96

in eight months at a cost of around £300,000 for 2,900 sq ft of usable space (£70 per sq ft). The judges felt that this refreshing and original design, built largely from timber and with an organic snaking floor-plan, was particularly appropriate for its wooded site.

The design has minimum glazing to the northern elevation, both to minimise heat loss and to provide privacy from the branch railway line which runs alongside the site to the north. Much of the southern elevation comprises large glazed areas, affording the first floor, open-plan living areas splendid views of the adjacent village cricket ground and maximising the benefit of passive solar gain: this house requires no conventional central heating system. Solar panels satisfy all hot water requirements, whilst a mechanical ventilation system with heat pump provides sufficient additional warmth to keep the super-insulated structure cosy. A wood burning stove provides additional heat in the dead of winter, but is largely a decorative feature. To further minimise its impact on the wooded environment, Boundary House is built on columns supported by deep concrete pads and is self-sufficient in water (except for drinking) which is collected from the copper roof into a large reservoir positioned below the house.

Four bedrooms, three bathrooms and a laundry are located on the ground floor, all shielded from the noise of passing trains by an embankment and natural screening. Designed so as to allow Winter to work from home, the first floor includes a separate open-plan office/studio area whilst Monk has her own study. There is also a spacious covered deck area to the West.

Boundary House not only represents an excellent example of contemporary design, but its creators had also bravely extended the frontiers of ecological design and timber-frame technology.



Photos courtesy of John Edward Linden

