

THE



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FREE

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howzat for a house!

■ MELODY MADDOX ■

It's called The Boundary House, but a forward-looking home in Tunbridge Wells has gone beyond conventional limits, picked up a host of awards and is set to define a standard of living for the 21st century.

Named to reflect its proximity to Nevill Cricket ground, Boundary House was designed and constructed by Michael Winter, a distinguished local architect, in such a way as to minimise its impact on the environment, both in terms of the house's construction and maintenance. In building the house Michael and Elizabeth Winter ensured that, as far as possible, it fitted the plot with minimum damage to the woodland in which it is situated. Only three trees were

removed from a dense thicket of woodland, and the ship-like structure sails between the remaining trunks.

Challenging traditional design styles, Michael came up with a home which, to conventional eyes, might appear inside out and upside down. To reduce the effect which building a house has on its site, the timber frame is raised on concrete pads, rather than on traditional foundations. The columns resting on the pads are



Light and space predominate

Picture: Michael Winter

used as an interesting external feature of the property, rather than concealed within the shell of the building. Michael Winters is a member of the Ecological Design Association whose south-east members often make their pilgrimage through the woods for meetings at this flagship property.

The internal space is arranged upside down: the living areas are upstairs and the bedrooms downstairs, which takes advantage of the way heat naturally rises. Solar heat is captured by the vast expanse of triple glazed windows on the south side of the building, and this is maximised in winter when there are no leaves on the trees. In summer overheating is prevented by the large overhanging roof, whose solar panels heat enough water for the couple's needs, although there is a backup immersion heater. The combination of solar heat and solar panels means that no central heating is required, although there is a wood-burning stove in the living area.

Water is collected from the house's copper roof and is stored in a 19,000 gallon tank underneath the garage. A simple ultra-violet system, similar to that used in swimming pools, sterilises the water for washing and bathrooms but not for drinking. So, local environmental impact has been considered in the conservation of the wooded area and virtual self-sufficiency in water supply; global impact has been lessened by the reduction of energy consumption and loss. But an additional benefit is extremely low utility bills: the annual gas

bill is £5.09; water supply and sewerage total £17.68 a year.

Wood predominates not only externally but also internally. Flooring makes use of reclaimed wood from a Dartford school. The wood burning stove sits centrally within the living area on its slated hearth with its galvanised steel chimney. The huge expanse of glass upstairs almost creates the feeling of being in a greenhouse, letting the outside in, rather than competing with it. Complemented by colour from the natural materials, furniture is simple cane, wicker, wood and canvas. The interior is an expression of the external structure, letting the form speak for itself.

Properties built on the cusp between the last century and this are now held up as a model of good design and quality. The vision behind The Boundary House indicates that as another century peels away, history may well repeat itself.

● Melody Maddox is an interior designer.



The Boundary House.

Picture Michael Winter