



COUNTRY LIFE'S secret address book

You've just bought a country house and now you're faced with the business of restoring and enhancing it—and possibly knocking it down and starting all over again. Or perhaps you've decided that the house you're in isn't fulfilling its potential. Who are you going to call? COUNTRY LIFE gives you the top 100 architects, interior designers, builders and garden designers who have the knowledge and experience to create the rural retreat of your dreams

Compiled by Arabella Youens

IT is rare that a house is ever frozen in time. Successive owners have needs and tastes that add something new; colour palettes change, layouts are reconfigured, cellars become media rooms, derelict outbuildings are reborn as swimming pools. Or sometimes they simply need to be protected from the ravages of time—or the ravages of their previous owners.

All these changes offer an exciting opportunity to make a house your own. We are fortunate in this country to have a wealth of experts to help us on our way—architects, designers and builders whose intimate knowledge of country houses and their gardens offer an extraordinary opportunity to maximise the possibilities that they present, whether they are village houses, converted barns or listed manor houses.

The following are those who COUNTRY LIFE considers to have the experience, knowledge and skill—and a little magic—required to take a country house to the next exciting stage in its evolution. *Giles Kime*

Architects

As the name suggests, country houses are shaped by their setting. It's a relationship that's hugely complex to manage correctly. Everything from framing the correct views from the windows to meeting the challenges of 21st-century living—informal spaces with built-in flexibility for entertaining when required—demands careful thought.

Thanks to the support and expertise available, there's never been a better time to tackle a new-build country-house project. Whether your taste is for the Postmodern or neo-Classical, there's an extraordinary pool of talent available in Britain, some of it world-renowned. In addition, with the (albeit marginal) relaxation of planning laws—specifically, National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 55, which replaces some fiendishly complicated regulations—constructing new country houses on greenfield sites isn't quite as challenging as it once was.

It won't be within everyone's desire or grasp to start a new country house from scratch, but the more than 300,000 owners of Grade II, Grade II* and Grade I listed houses in England and Category A and B houses in Scotland are also comprehensively served by practices that have deep, specialist knowledge in the restoration and refurbishment of these important historic buildings. Some of those listed are formed of several individuals with specialist experience of country-house work.



Quinlan & Francis Terry Architects replaced a Victorian extension with something more in keeping with the period for Higham House in Essex

ADAM Architecture

World-renowned team of six architects with a portfolio spanning many countries and vernacular styles from Regency to modern Classical via Palladian and Arts-and-Crafts.

They say 'We're one of the leading practitioners of traditional and progressive architecture and contextual urbanism in Europe'

We say 'Impeccable credentials for designing new-build country houses in a traditional vernacular and a favourite of The Prince of Wales' 01962 843843; www.adamarchitecture.com

Andrew Jones Associates

Residential work comprises barn conversions, loft conversions and extensions. London clients include developer Candy & Candy and designer Kelly Hoppen.

They say 'We promote enthusiasm and co-operation among all parties involved'

We say 'A hands-on architect with a modern touch and a strong emphasis on natural light' www.andrewjonesassociates.com; 020-8643 0601

Andrew Wright Associates

Architect and masterplanner who works in a dramatic and modern idiom. Current projects include Higher Mapston, a twin-domed new family house within the Dartmoor National Park.

They say 'Design should respond to each individual situation. When it does, the personality that emerges helps to enhance and define a very special sense of place'

We say 'Inspirational contemporary and sustainable designer of new country houses' www.andrewwrightassociates.com

ANTA

This Highlands-based design and architecture firm was founded by Lachlan and Annie

Stewart in the early 1980s and undertakes projects in the UK and overseas, with a particular focus on the restoration and conservation of historic buildings in Scotland. He is the architect, she runs an interior-design and homeware business.

They say 'Our architecture is strongly informed by the Scottish vernacular and we are best known for our own interpretation and contemporary take on the building tradition'

We say 'Fearless outfit that's perfect for seemingly insurmountable conversions of Scottish castles' 01862 832477; www.anta.co.uk

Ben Pentreath (see also Interior Designers)

Ben and his large team design new-build houses in a range of Classical styles. Ben is also a big player in the masterplanning of the Duchy of Cornwall's Poundbury development in Dorset.

They say 'Whatever the size of project, we apply the same principles: an understanding of scale and proportion, intelligent care and attention to detail and the creation of buildings that feel timeless and appropriate to place'

We say 'A real talent who can draw, design and write beautifully about his life, which dances between Dorset and Bloomsbury. He's in such demand, we're not sure that he ever sleeps' 020-7430 2526; www.benpentreath.com

Birds Portchmouth Russum Architects

Modern practice whose most recent country-house success was Downley House, an original sequence of differently shaped buildings that incorporated the ruined walls and set within the existing walls of an earlier house located in a hidden valley in the South Downs AONB.

They say 'Our ideas draw strength from urban, historical and social analysis, contemporary culture and art through to the technology of construction'



We say 'Thought-provoking practice if you're looking to do something highly distinctive' www.birdsportchmouthrussum.com; 020-7253 8205

Craig Hamilton Architects

Specialists in progressive Classical and traditional houses in a country and urban context that has undertaken several commissions for chapels in recent years, including one that won a Georgian Group Award last year.

They say 'We are committed to the development of the Classical language of architecture'

We say 'Excellent pedigree—The Prince of Wales is a fan—and at the top of the Classical architecture game' 01982 553312; www.craighamiltonarchitects.com

Donald Insall Associates

When it comes to managing, repairing and adapting historic buildings as well as new-build houses, this large practice of seven offices knows its game. Its experience and its portfolio of work are very impressive.

They say 'We are a leading conservation architecture practice with more than 50 years' experience in the care, repair and adaptation of historic buildings'

We say 'Experts in knowing how to bring an old country house into the 21st century' www.donaldinsallassociates.co.uk; 020-7245 9888

Francis Johnson and Partners

Probably best known for designing large-scale new-build country houses that are respectful of local vernaculars in England, it was the first practice to complete a house under the requirements of PPG7 ('Gummer's Law'). The practice also undertakes modestly sized houses.

Based in Gloucestershire, Yiangou can tackle even the most complex projects

www.countrylife.co.uk

They say 'We have a reputation for the design of new buildings in Classical and traditional styles as well as the scholarly repair and restoration of historic buildings'

We say 'There is no whiff of cookie-cutter style here. This is a versatile a practice with a good track record of delivering well-designed, individual new country houses' www.francisjohnson-architects.co.uk; 01262 674043

Francis Terry and Associates

Francis Terry recently left his father's practice after more than 20 years (see *Quinlan & Francis Terry*, p64) and his newly established eight-strong team promises great things in the future.

They say 'Our approach is to design buildings that satisfy the needs of our clients while simultaneously creating beautiful architecture'

We say 'A master draughtsman with tremendous experience and empathy for the neo-Classical tradition' 01206 580528; <http://ftanda.co.uk>

Giles Quarme & Associates

Experts in the conservation, restoration and alteration of historical buildings in the UK and overseas—the practice was most recently commissioned to work on an Edwardian col-

onial building in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

They say 'We specialise in all aspects of work relating to historic buildings and the design of new buildings within Conservation Areas and AONBs'

We say 'A practice particularly worth approaching if you're tackling a project on a listed house in one of London's conservation areas' 020-7582 0748; www.quarme.com

Gluckman Smith

Tom Smith has won awards for his residential work in Gloucestershire, including the sensitive conversion of an early-19th-century stone-built threshing barn into an eco-friendly family home.

They say 'Our design process aims for an architecture that balances poetic and rational sensibilities'

We say 'A good mix of experience for anyone with projects in both London and the countryside and looking to use one practice' 020-7998 1525; www.gluckmansmith.com

Groves-Raines Architects

Nicholas Groves-Raines has more than 30 years' experience in the sensitive and constructive reuse of historic and listed buildings, with a particular focus on Scottish projects.

They say 'My technique is very much of the ➤





Neo-Classical Bighton Grange in Hampshire was designed by ADAM Architects

present while respecting our architectural heritage and preserving it for the future'

We say 'Super-stylish approach to both the exteriors and interiors of historic Scottish properties, with a focus on creating comfortable family homes'
0131-467 7777; <http://grovesraines.com>

Hoare, Ridge & Morris

Multi-skilled practice that runs from master-planning village extensions right through to the design of furniture and interiors, with a strong bent on sustainability. Experienced in gaining planning permission for major alterations to Grade I-listed properties.

They say 'We work on sensitive historic sites, alter and repair important listed buildings as well as design significant new buildings'

We say 'Strong East-Anglian team that's really interested in delivering energy improvements to old houses'
01728 688747; www.hrma.co.uk

James Gorst Architects

Although the practice also works on the conservation and restoration of historic buildings, designs for new houses tend to be in a modern idiom. Current projects include a large, contemporary country house with estate buildings in Northamptonshire.

They say 'We design contextually responsive, individual buildings that entwine aesthetic values with functional rationalism'

We say 'Definitely worth considering if you're looking to build a new house or or sympathetically adapt an old one in a contemporary style'
020-7336 7140; www.jamesgorstarchitects.com

John Simpson Architects

An outstanding body of work on important institutions and buildings—the practice was responsible for the new McCrum Yard at Eton

College, opened by The Prince of Wales in 2015. Other projects include the Soane-inspired Ashfold House in West Sussex and buildings in Poundbury.

They say 'Architecture is a public art in which each and every building façade forms the character and shape of the public realm'

We say 'A firm that excels at building country houses designed for the 21st-century family'
www.johnsimpsonarchitects.com; 020-7405 1285

John Stark & Crickmay Partnership

Long-established Dorset practice with a broad portfolio of work ranging from rebuilding Ince Castle in Cornwall following a fire to new-build houses and domestic extensions.

They say 'We work on all aspects of conservation as well as new buildings on sensitive sites, sympathetic alterations and additions'

We say 'Good full-service practice with all-round expertise'
01305 262636; www.jscp.co.uk

Julian Bicknell & Associates

A London-based specialist in new-build houses in the traditional or Classical style, with a strong focus on the South-East, notably, the Wentworth and St George's Hill estates.

They say 'Our design philosophy combines a deep sympathy for traditional design and building methods with a full understanding of energy strategies and construction management'

We say 'Can design on a large scale: big houses are the practice's bread and butter'
020-8891 1001; www.julianbicknell.co.uk

Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects

A family practice of architects and interior designers working with old and listed buildings from country houses to cottages and barn conversions mainly in East Anglia and London.

They say 'We have a vast knowledge of historic buildings of all periods and how they have evolved over the centuries'

We say 'Good knowledge of the East Anglian vernacular'
01799 599208; www.kpt.co.uk

Kit Rae-Scott

Not all designers of buildings are qualified architects. Kit Rae-Scott is one such, with a remarkable portfolio of work in the South-West, including Shilstone in Devon, the winner of the Georgian Group's new building in the Classical tradition award in 2011

They say Nothing—and you won't find a website

We say 'For a meticulously designed country house in a traditional idiom that suits its locality, Mr Rae-Scott is hard to beat'
01297 22172; kit.rae-scott@hotmail.com

Lindsay Buchan Architects

Edinburgh-based architect with a track record of successful negotiations with planning departments and Historic Scotland. The practice has tackled projects throughout the UK.

They say 'There is no house style. I believe in appropriate, sympathetic design and not subscribing to current fashions just for the sake of it'

We say 'Definitely worth considering for projects around Edinburgh and East Lothian'
0131-554 9008; www.lindsaybuchan.com

Marc Deaves

A London-based architect who began his career working on historic and listed buildings for the Grosvenor and Cadogan estates. He has begun to take on major country-house projects, including Encombe, Dorset.

They say 'I seek to respect the character and history of the buildings I work on, unpicking past mistakes, choosing appropriate materials and making them suitable for modern-day use'

We say 'Takes a thoughtful, practical and realistic approach to the problems of restoring historic buildings. No website'
020-7498 9361; marc@marcdeaves.com

Ptolemy Dean Architects

A COUNTRY LIFE contributor and specialist in historic preservation as well as the designer of new houses in sensitive locations—we're big fans. He's also the Surveyor of the Fabric at Westminster Abbey, where he's building a new stair tower to the triforium.

They say Very little—the website is just one page. Which speaks volumes

We say 'A very safe pair of hands and particularly skilled in making thoughtful and sensitive additions to historic buildings'
020-7378 7714; www.ptolemydean.co.uk

Purcell

With numerous regional offices, Purcell has ➤

been involved in major restoration projects of country houses and historic buildings across the country, including work at Stowe, Wentworth Woodhouse and Fulham Palace as well as work on historic churches.

They say 'We guide buildings' transformations, help clients to build new structures and create new spaces through bespoke design'

We say 'Impressive track record of planning the refurbishment and redevelopment of sensitive historic buildings'
020-7397 7171; www.purcelluk.com

Quinlan & Francis Terry Architects

Continuing in the Classical architecture tradition of the practice started by Raymond Erith in 1928, this is one of the major players operating today. Recent projects include the new infirmary at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Queen Mother Square in Poundbury.

They say 'Our philosophy is to make new buildings fit so well into their context that they look like they have always been there'

We say 'Classical and traditional architects *par excellence* with an impressive record for securing planning permission for completely new country houses'
01206 323186; www.qftarchitects.com

Simpson & Brown Architects

Edinburgh-based practice with wide-ranging skills such as for castles, distilleries and monuments — it's looked after Lindisfarne for the National Trust since 1990.

They say 'While respecting the past, our architecture strives to respond to the challenges of the future'

We say 'Excellent all-rounder, especially for projects with an archaeological aspect'
0131-555 4678; www.simpsonandbrown.co.uk

Stuart Martin Architects

Dorset-based practice originally based on conservation work, but now increasingly involved in new-build houses, including a cedar-clad house in Rock, Cornwall.

They say 'We are an award-winning architectural practice that designs innovative traditional houses'

We say 'Accomplished practice that delivers many different styles and finishes'
01935 83543; www.stuartmartinarchitects.com

Thomas Croft Architects

West London-based practice that's worked for Sir Paul McCartney, Richard Curtis and Philip Mould among others. Projects include a new brick, flint and pantile holiday house in north Norfolk and a barn that's an interesting collage of architectural fragments.

They say 'We specialise in introducing contemporary interventions in historic buildings or new buildings that relate strongly to historic settings'

We say 'A good choice for those who like robust architectural statements'
020-8962 0066; <http://thomascroft.com>

Thomas Ford & Partners

Although religious buildings are a particular area of specialism for the practice, completed commissions also include the restoration of Pugin's house in Ramsgate, Kent. It's also worked for The Landmark Trust.

They say 'We relish the challenge of unusual projects'

We say 'Huge depth of knowledge'
020-8659 3250; www.thomasford.co.uk

Watson, Bertram & Fell

Broad-spectrum practice with experience in country and town houses as well as village masterplanning for the Duchy of Cornwall and Crown Estate and country estates such as Ilchester and Ozleworth.

They say 'We are a long-established, award-winning practice with a reputation for fine architecture'

We say 'Very strong experience of country-house renovation in the West Country'
01225 337273; www.wbf-bath.co.uk

Yiangou

Classic to contemporary architect based in Cirencester, Gloucestershire, it specialises in new country houses as well as the conversion and remodelling of existing ones. Typically working with very high-end clients, it also designs glass-walled pool houses and lavish wine cellars.

They say 'Our projects are always a response to the individual characteristics of a site'

We say 'An established go-to practice, with particular strength in the Cotswolds'
01285 888150; <http://yiangou.com>

Garden designers

Not for nothing is the annual Chelsea Flower Show the most respected gardening show on Earth: Britain is blessed with a natural pool of creative horticultural talent. Good landscaping can have a truly transformative effect on a property, taking drab spaces and making them attractive. It can also lend character to an unremarkable house.

It's now also possible to fast-track the landscaping of a new country house by planting mature specimen trees. In one (albeit expensive) stroke, green fields can be converted into attractive parkland, resulting in something that might have taken a generation or two to achieve in a previous era.

From pocket-sized but beautifully formed London gardens to larger redesigns and landscaping projects, these designers are masters of the ability to ensure the garden relates and responds to its surrounding landscape and buildings.

Acres Wild

This West Sussex-based duo is known for its ability to create a series of interlocking spaces, sometimes with linking water features. The company has wide experience of typical soil types of the South-East, from free-draining chalky and acidic to heavy wealden clay.

They say 'We create a bold underlying structure that's then softened with full and naturalistic planting'

We say 'Water is a big theme, whether it's in a natural form or as attractive landscaping around a swimming pool'
01403 891084; www.acreswild.co.uk



All-y-bela, Arne Maynard's home, shows his innovative and witty approach to planting



Tom Stuart-Smith has a long history of working in country-house gardens of stature

Angela Collins Garden Design

Established in 1990, the company is known for its Classical architectural shapes set within romantic planting in large country gardens.

They say 'My priority is to marry the house to the countryside beyond where billowing and romantic borders are punctuated by strong architectural planting'

We say 'A classic designer working principally in the Cotswolds, who keeps a careful eye on creating easily maintained gardens' 07876 592440; www.angelacollins.co.uk

Arabella Lennox-Boyd

This Italian-born landscape designer for more than four decades has a host of gold-medal-winning gardens at Chelsea under her belt.

They say 'There are few practices that have worked on as varied a palette, whether it be major English country estates, a contemporary roof terrace in Hong Kong or a private seaside garden in Spain'

We say 'A globally recognised *tour de force*' 020-7931 9995; www.arabellalennoxboyd.com

Arne Maynard Garden Design

One of the most celebrated garden designers working today (past clients include Queen Rania of Jordan), who offers courses at his medieval tower house in Monmouthshire.

They say 'A garden needs to respond to its surrounding landscape, its history and the buildings within and around its confines'

We say 'Talented all-rounder—you can't go wrong for a classic country garden' 020-7689 8100; <http://arnemaynard.com>

Christopher Bradley-Hole

His ground-breaking Latin Garden won best in show at Chelsea in 1997 and signalled a change in attitude towards Modernism, not just at the show, but also in the wider world.

They say 'We are a design consultancy at

the leading edge of landscape and garden design providing a specialist design service for contemporary landscapes'

We say 'A leader in the field, who creates minimal, harmonious spaces. The thinking man's garden designer' 020-7357 7666; www.christopherbradley-hole.co.uk

del Buono Gazerwitz Landscape Architecture

Tommaso del Buono left his native Florence in the 1980s to study in London. After working for Arabella Lennox-Boyd, he set up in partnership with Paul Gazertwitz.

They say 'We don't have a fixed style, but favour clean lines, playing with scale and proportions, beautiful materials, unfussy detailing and giving our gardens a strong structure to support more, softer planting'

We say 'Modern and elegant designs that are often defined by structures' 020-7613 1122; <http://delbuono-gazerwitz.co.uk>

George Carter Garden Design

A sculptor turned garden designer and the creator of many notable projects, including the Garden of Surprises at Burghley House, Lincolnshire, George is strong on well-proportioned spaces and vistas.

They say 'We specialise in formal gardens inspired by the simple geometry of 17th-century gardens'

We say 'The perfect option for anyone keen on strong shapes and structure' 01362 668130; <http://georgecartergardens.co.uk>

I. & J. Bannerman

Dubbed the 'Bonnie and Clyde of garden design', Isabel and Julian Bannerman have an approach to design that, although rooted in history and the classical tradition, is fresh,

eclectic and surprising. Their work includes garden at Highgrove and Arundel Castle.

They say 'We strive to create places that work for living in'

We say 'Romantic and theatrical designs, heavily scented with an excellent pedigree' www.bannermandesign.com

Jinny Blom

A prolific landscape architect whose work includes both traditional schemes and high-drama contemporary styles. She's also known for her complete discretion when it comes to clients and her willingness to dig alongside her crew.

They say 'Design is more a matter of intelligence and appropriateness than inflicting a style'

We say 'Never hampered by one look, her designs are as varied as her clients' 020-7253 2100; www.jinnyblom.com

Julie Toll Landscape & Garden Design

One of the first to pioneer meadow planting in private gardens, Julie Toll enjoys incorporating the work of craftsmen into her designs.

They say 'We go to great lengths to ensure the planting is imaginative and attractive to wildlife, using a wide range of bespoke plants to complement hard landscaping, and provides sensory beauty'

We say 'A considered designer with a portfolio that ranges from Hertfordshire to Nevis' 01438 310095; www.julietoll.co.uk

Kim Wilkie

A designer of international note—work takes him to Chile, Moscow and Oman—he transformed the once murky courtyard at the V&A.

They say 'I try to understand the memories and associations embedded in a place and the natural flows of people, land, water and climate'

We say 'Technically talented and very strong on creating structural forms with the landscape' 01489 891691; www.kimwilkie.com

Luciano Giubbilei

A Siennese designer who has won awards at Chelsea and also works with Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter, East Sussex.

They say 'Gardening is, to a large degree, performance art and, like all great music and theatre, gardens need to be constantly reinterpreted to retain their relevance and vitality while preserving the original fabric'

We say 'He creates gardens that are understated and elegant—they're simple at first glance, but layered with more complexity' 020-7622 2616; www.lucianogiubbilei.com

Marcus Barnett

The former Scots Guards officer graduated with distinction from the Inchbald School of Garden Design and his practice works on town houses, roof terraces and estates both here and overseas.

They say 'Our passion is to create gardens that are seductive and absorbing in their visual beauty, harmonious, ever-changing and with a slowly unfolding story'

We say 'Stylish designer at ease with large landscaping projects'
020-7736 9761; www.marcusbarnett.com

Marie-Louise Agius of Balston Agius

This designer has an impressive portfolio that includes London projects, roof gardens, a private estate in Yorkshire and an urban planning project. She won a gold medal at Chelsea in 2013. Marie-Louise also looks after the gardens at Exbury, Hampshire, created by her great-grandfather, the celebrated plantsman Lionel de Rothschild.

They say 'We are highly experienced in architecture, landscape planning, forestry, horticulture and garden management'

We say 'Clever, adaptable designs that integrate house and garden beautifully'
01380 848181; www.balstonagius.co.uk

Mary Keen

Lady Mary Keen has worked on gardens across Europe and America and counts Lord Rothschild among her clients. She also designed the gardens at Glyndebourne.

They say Nothing at all—she lets her gardens speak for themselves

We say 'One of the most revered figures in the field'

Contact by word of mouth

Pip Morrison

Until recently a double act with Mary Keen, there's scarcely anything about him online.

They say Nothing—possibly too busy working

We say 'A really good choice for someone who wants the traditional look, but hasn't got much experience in owning a large country garden and needs hand-holding'

Contact by word of mouth

Robert Myers Associates

Large practice based in Cambridge, but working throughout the UK and overseas with a long pedigree of Chelsea medals. Elizabeth Banks, the president of the RHS, is a consultant.

They say 'We develop site-specific landscape designs that incorporate an understanding of the historical, architectural and cultural context'

We say 'Robert is celebrated for his extraordinary attention to detail'

01544 232035; www.robertmyers-associates.co.uk

Rupert Golby

A Kew-trained designer with a loyal following in the Cotswolds, including Daylesford House, and beyond, Rupert began his career as an apprentice with Rosemary Verey.

They say 'I'm not a designer with a signature style. I believe in the owners being the main



2100 Tom Mannion

Max Rollitt has a 'magpie's eye for beautiful pieces' that create refined comfort

influence on the garden though I also draw on the location for inspiration'

We say 'An obvious choice for a classically inspired Cotswold garden'
07785 228384

Simon Johnson

Highly experienced in a variety of climatic conditions, from the shores of the Baltic to the southern Mediterranean. For many years, he worked with Penelope Hobhouse and his reworking of the landscape at Parnham House in Dorset is outstanding.

They say 'I try to find the right balance between what people think they need and what is best for the place'

We say 'A good bet for owners of multiple homes in varied climates'
www.simonjohnson.co.uk

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

He advises on a number of public and private gardens, including Kensington Palace.

They say 'Todd brings to his garden design a sense of the complexities of our relation to the past'

We say 'An almost unparalleled mix of historical and horticultural knowledge'
020-7253 2100; www.tlg-landscape.co.uk

Tom Stuart-Smith

He's the recipient of many Chelsea awards with a long history of working in country-house gardens of considerable stature.

They say 'We are a practice with an international reputation for making gardens that combine naturalism and modernity'

We say 'Impeccable taste and a good choice for creating a garden that will last generations'
020-7253 2100; www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk

Xa Tollemache

Highly accomplished gardener whose designs range from courtyard gardens to large estates.

They say 'I use the influence of the house, landscape and lives of the people living there as the start button for the design that will follow'

We say 'A good choice for a grand, traditional garden, especially in East Anglia'
01473 890799; www.xa-tollemache.co.uk

The decorators

In the past, Britain's colonial and trading past instilled in designers the unique capacity to embrace external influences and make them their own. That spirit is alive and well today, but the style is in a constant state of evolution and remains tantalisingly hard to define.

For some, like Ben Pentreath, it's about layers, encompassing 'a mélange of accumulated generations of furniture and clutter, such as a 1930s bathroom with no shower, poor heating, primitive wiring and some of the most beautiful furniture you have ever seen'.

For others, it's a more disciplined combination of faded chintzes and prized antiques. There is now also a growing band of designers whose interpretations mix contemporary touches in the form of blocks of colour, modern furniture, striking paintings and highly decorative lighting—all of which are held together under the wide umbrella of the modern English country look.

Alidad

Formerly a director of the Islamic Art department at Sotheby's, he's lived in London for more than 40 years and works mainly in Britain, Europe and the Middle East.

They say 'His unique aesthetic blends a wide spectrum of luxurious materials and a deep art historical knowledge with timeless restraint'

We say 'A designer who's not afraid of using pattern and fabric with grand effect'

020-7384 0121; <http://alidad.com>

Ben Pentreath (see also Architects)

A London and Dorset-based polymath (interior design is one arm of his busy architectural-design practice), who's known for creating rooms that are timeless, but not locked into any historical period.

They say 'We draw inspiration in equal measure from the great English practitioners of the 1960s and 1970s and from historical interiors of every period, but all infused with a fresh, modern sensibility'

We say 'A master at re-creating the many layers of the country-house look updated with flashes of colour'

020-7430 2424; www.benpentreath.com

Chester Jones

A designer who trained as an architect and works in a modern idiom, using antiques and artefacts from a range of cultures and periods.

They say 'Living contentedly is, to a great extent, feeling comfortable in one's own surroundings. Facilitating this is our principal objective'

We say 'A serious designer with a pared-back style and overtly artistic eye'

020-7498 2717; <http://chesterjones.com>

Colin Orchard

Based in Chelsea and the Cotswolds, Colin worked at Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler before setting up on his own in 1989. He's responsible for the exquisite revival of the interiors at Ballyfin.

He says 'I want my clients to be totally happy, but excited, too'

We say 'The ultimate in the English country-house style'

020-7351 5501; info@colinorchard.com

Douglas Mackie Design

The architect is renowned for his integration of serious art collections with beautifully conceived backgrounds.

They say 'My philosophy is to create a perfect balance between furniture, art and sculpture'

We say 'A sophisticated decorator who uses modern British art and contemporary furniture with striking effects'

020-7487 3295; www.douglasmackie.com

Edward Bulmer

A specialist in the reorganisation and redecoration of historic buildings and houses, Edward



Simon Upton/Sibyl Colefax and John Fowler

Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler is Britain's longest-established interior-decorating firm

has worked on a wide range of historic houses, including Althorp and Goodwood. He's also a paint specialist, with his own range.

They say 'Almost always, these houses are used to display collections of art and I approach this as half-curator and half-designer. If the result isn't convenient or comfortable, it has failed'

We say 'A undisputed specialist for Grade I-listed interiors'

01544 388535; www.edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk

Emma Sims-Hilditch

A Wiltshire-based designer who champions a contemporary country look that sits happily in everything from manor houses and cottages to apartments and town houses.

They say 'We believe true luxury is about quality of life, embracing the beauty of everyday living to create a look that is truly inspiring'

We say 'Emma creates elegant and cheerful rooms that are firmly rooted in modern country living'

01249 783087; www.simshilditch.com

Guy Goodfellow

The London-based, full-service team, which includes architects and draughtsmen, was responsible for the restoration of Garsington Manor as well as London town houses.

They say 'His natural flair, combined with his classical background, guides the design process of projects towards their appropriate and suitable decoration with unmistakable originality'

We say 'Not locked into one particular look — refreshingly unpredictable'

020-7349 0728; www.guygoodfellow.com

Henrietta Spencer-Churchill

Having studied at the Inchbald School of Design, Lady Henrietta set up Woodstock Designs in 1981. It specialises in the renovation and restoration of Classical and listed buildings.

They say 'We incorporate current trends and technology while respecting historic character and architecture'

We say 'For classic country-house decorating, look no further'

www.spencerchurchilldesigns.com; 01993 811887

Henriette von Stockhausen

Having co-founded VSP Interiors with Jane Petti in 2000, Dorset-based Henriette has built up a reputation for skilfully blending colour with beautiful antiques that is inspired by her European childhood.

They say 'With a spell in stage and theatre design, Henriette brings a sense of drama to any space'

We say 'A perfect choice for young families moving into a big country home'

07787 574192; www.vspinteriors.com

Hugh Leslie

Strong form and colour are a big player in his designs, which often incorporate different styles and periods.

They say 'Hugh's flexible approach and wide-ranging expertise make for a working relationship that's second to none'

We say 'Predominantly London-focused with a heavy bent towards a clean mid-20th-century look'

020-7584 7185; <http://hughleslie.com>



Bathing beauty: for the ultimate interior-design service, consult the acclaimed multi-disciplinary team at Janine Stone

Jane Churchill Interiors

Decorating is in her blood—her great-aunt was Nancy Lancaster—and she's become a household name since starting out in 1975. She's renowned for her traditional sense of style and embodiment of all things quintessentially English.

They say 'Jane combines classic and contemporary elements so that each project is unique and personal to the client'

We say 'Transcends fashion to create good-looking country style with modern detailing' www.janechurchillinteriors.co.uk; 020-7730 8564

Janine Stone & Co

London and Cheshire based multidisciplinary practice with architectural, interior-design, building and project-management teams in one seamless unit to offer the ultimate concept-to-completion design service for private residential projects. These often involve bespoke furniture commissions, art curation and unique design solutions for 21st-century living.

They say 'We understand the demands of working with discerning private clients and their need for a special level of professionalism, initiative and discretion'

We say 'Creative, classically inspired design team with a long list of international clients' 020-7627 5300; www.janinestone.com

Joanna Wood

One of the most established figures in British interior design, known for lavishly combining traditional and contemporary elements

They say 'Joanna brings to each project her care and attention to detail, creating a timeless style and producing a result that is both practical and visually exciting'

We say 'An engaging personality and long-standing member of the Pimlico Road design set' 020-7730 5064; www.joannawood.com

John Evans

A Birmingham-based team that produces top-end contemporary classic designs for town and country houses.

They say 'He creates interior spaces that evoke clean simplicity with a comfortable balance of proportion and scale'

We say 'Consider for something dramatic and unusual, such as a statement pool house or a subterranean spa' 020-7252 2392; www.johnevensdesign.com

Katharine Pooley

Designer to the rich and very rich, the former Morgan Stanley employee began her decorating career in Singapore, where she designed four homes.

They say 'We understand the ultimate balance between luxury and intelligent design'

We say 'From Chelsea town houses to converted barns in the Cotswolds, her designs are elegantly executed' 020-7584 3223; www.katharinepooley.com

Keech Green

Known for its 'modern deco' approach to interior design, Graham Green and Michael Keech work on a variety of projects, including the interiors for a 45,000sq ft neo-Classical house in Yorkshire.

They say 'The desire for longevity ensures that we rise above the prevalence of short-term "fashion statements"'

We say 'Experts in restrained colour palettes and luxury finishes' 020-7351 5701; www.keechgreen.com

Lucy Elworthy

A designer blessed with an exceptional eye for colour and pattern as well as an ability to track down unusual and eclectic pieces.

They say 'Lucy has the innate perception,

empathy and understanding to help create a style that fits a client's personality'

We say 'Married to architect John Compagnelli, with whom she often collaborates, creating a rare and winning double act' 07957 693246; www.lucyelworthy.co.uk

Max Rollitt

This Winchester-based antiques restorer and dealer turned decorator and furniture designer has a classically refined yet informal style.

They say 'His extensive experience has developed an inherent sensitivity towards the materials and Classical architectural elements that are condensed in the decorative arts'

We say 'He an aesthetic that's rooted in the classic English tradition with a magpie's eye for beautiful pieces' 01962 791124; www.maxrollitt.com

McWhirter Morris

A Chelsea-based design duo formed by former Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler decorator Sarah Morris and antique dealer James McWhirter. They work across country houses, London town houses and holiday homes overseas.

They say 'Our interiors combine comfort, charm and personality with equal attention paid to architecture and works of art'

We say 'Not governed by fashion trends, they produce attractive, pretty rooms in the classic country-house form' 020-7349 2575; www.mcwhirtermorris.com

Mlinaric, Henry and Zervudachi

David Mlinaric established his firm in 1964 and worked on many important London and country houses, many in association with the National Trust. Now a consultant, his team is based in two offices in Belgravia and Paris.

They say 'Particular emphasis is placed on a sympathetic use of colour, an electric aes- ➤

thetic that often includes both antiques and modern furniture and, most importantly, comfort for the client'

We say 'Understated and elegant designers used to decorating houses all over the world' 020-7730 9072; mhzlondon.com

Nina Campbell

The grande dame of interior designers, who's known for her wit and sense of style, as well as her extensive range of fabrics and wallpapers. One of her first commissions when she started out was to decorate Annabel's nightclub.

They say 'Her designs appeal to both young and old and sit well in both contemporary and traditional interiors'

We say 'Confident use of colour and pattern, all underpinned with comfort' 020-7225 1011; <http://ninacampbellinteriors.com>

Paolo Moschino for Nicholas Haslam

Contemporary designers who favour glossy surfaces, good art and lavish materials with a clientele based across the world's most influential cities.

They say 'Although initially grounded in the principles of English design, the arrival of Paolo Moschino and Philip Vergeylen brought a Continental flair to the company'

We say 'A sophisticated and expensive look that translates just as well in a London penthouse as it does in an old rectory' 020-7730 8623; www.nicholashaslam.com

Penny Morrison

South African by birth, Penny isn't bound by English tradition and her trademark eclectic look layers old and new, resulting in an uncer-

monious and welcoming finish.

They say 'I use a mix of antique and modern furniture to create an interesting atmosphere while focusing on comfort'

We say 'Imaginatively incorporates existing possessions into new schemes and has her own range of fabrics' 01547 560460; www.pennymorrison.com

Piers von Westenholz

A former Olympic skier who enjoys a reputation as one of Britain's more respected antique dealers, he's worked with many decorating luminaries, including David Mlinaric and Robert Kime, and specialises in sourcing antiques for large country houses.

They say 'Simplicity and comfort are my watchwords'

We say 'The perfect choice for anyone who respects books and antiques' 01279 842545; www.westenholz.co.uk

Pippa Paton

With a fleet of clients in the Cotswolds—including owners of cottages, barn conversions and Grade II-listed manor houses—Oxfordshire-based Pippa has built up a reputation for her cool-headed, functional yet eclectic designs.

They say 'With a real emphasis on precision and creative detail, the multidisciplinary team creates beautiful and inspiring contemporary homes that people love to live in'

We say 'Perfect for anyone looking for a clean and contemporary country-house look' 01865 595470; www.pippapatondesign.co.uk

Rivière Interiors

With backgrounds in the decorative arts,

Robert and Josyane Young are known for their ability to juxtapose traditional and contemporary materials and accents.

They say 'A completed project ideally displays a sensitivity for existing architecture, an understanding of space, a confident touch with colour and texture, a certain individual originality and honours the client's brief'

We say 'One of a reliable band of dealer-decorators who source beautiful antiques and know how to use them' 020-7228 7847; www.robertyoungantiques.com

Rita König

The journalist turned interior designer has a large, London-based studio working on residential and commercial properties where she introduces her signature look of English with a hint of eccentricity mixed in.

They say 'A home is made up of layers that you've accumulated at different stages and have meaning'

We say 'Adept at mixing old and new with relaxed and unpretentious results' 020-3735 7280; <http://ritakonig.com>

Robert Kime

A man with unimpeachable taste, who brings antique dealing, textile collecting and an abiding passion for putting rooms together with great effect. He has worked on both Highgrove and Clarence House. (No relation to our very own Interiors Editor.)

They say 'His interiors appear to have evolved over time, combining a relaxed mood with antiques, vintage textiles and quirky pieces'

We say 'For a beautiful and layered country-house look, you can't go wrong' 020-7831 6066; www.robertkime.com

Rose Uniacke

Once a name known only to those with their ear to the decorating ground, she now has the soubriquet of being 'the Beckhams' interior designer'—we think that shows they've got good taste.

They say 'Interiors matter: they change the things we do and the way we do them. That's why Rose works as hard as she does to design harmonious interiors that are at once reassuring and uplifting'

We say 'Pared-back elegance is her *leitmotiv*. No room is ever over-furnished' 020-7730 7050; <http://roseuniacke.com>

Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler

Founded in the 1930s, this is one of the most long-established interior decorating firms in Britain with a worldwide reputation. Work spans not-able country houses, city apartments, ranches and tropical beach houses. The business has moved to new premises on Pimlico Road.

They say 'The eight designers have more than 150 years of collective experience'



Simon McBride

Easy elegance is the key to Emma Sims Hilditch's contemporary country style

between them and are as used to creating 21st-century interiors as they are to working on important historic buildings'

We say 'Classically stylish with a unique heritage'

020-7493 2231; www.sibylcofax.com

Studio Atkinson

The designer has been closely involved with Soho House (and, more recently, the members' room at Queen's Club). Susie is known to eschew whatever is considered fashionable and, instead, bring rooms to life through mixing unexpected elements.

They say 'Every space should invite and inspire, each detail be carefully considered'

We say 'A great option for a new generation of country house owners'

020-7835 5525; <http://susieatkinson.com>

Thorp

Headed by Philippa Thorp, this large, Belgravia-based practice is known for its transatlantic style, which translates cleanly from Long Island to London via light-filled country houses.

They say 'Our interior design brings texture, colour and form together to create intimate living environments that reflect your personal style and character'

We say 'Super-stylish decorator to the jet-set'

020-7235 7808; www.thorp.co.uk

Todhunter Earle

London design duo (with a large, extended team of young designers) who divide their time between the city and their country houses. Projects encompass country houses, town houses, yachts and hotels.

They say 'A happy job is a good job'

We say 'Very hands-on focus which delivers a wide variety of interpretations of the on-trend, modern, country-house look'

020-7349 9999; <http://todhunterearle.com>

Veere Grenney

Having trained under Mary Fox Linton, Veere was a director at Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler before launching on his own. He has an impressive portfolio of projects to his name on both sides of the Atlantic.

They say 'He's a master at marrying the humble with the grand and clean modernity with classicism'

We say 'Supremely elegant and pared-back style—suits the anti-floral brigade perfectly'

020-7351 7170; www.veeregrenney.com

Builders

At the heart of every new-build house or successful restoration is a team of knowledgeable craftsmen who have the passion and patience to create something of great merit. Whereas the dreams

begin with the architect and then flourish with the interior designer, it's the building firm's job to make their plans real—and therein lies the source of a lot of challenges. Listed buildings are not known quantities, so these will typically present themselves at a point when they're least welcome and, unless you're using someone of merit to complete the build, that will be well after the original budget has been overshot.

One solution is to avoid cutting corners. Our list is largely made up of family companies, many of which have several hundred years' experience in restoring and refurbishing period properties and employ their own skilled craftsmen, who have undertaken apprenticeships and climbed the ranks.

Whether it's a full turnkey service—from securing planning permission right through to every aspect of interior design—to adding extensions or an oak-framed garden structure, these are the building firms with excellent foundations.

C. Tavener & Son Ltd

Established in 1846, the family firm works on high-end projects from Belgravia and Holland Park to Paris and Provence.

They say 'Attention to detail is at the heart of everything we do'

We say 'This company is at the pinnacle of the London building trade'

020-7328 7111; www.tavener.co.uk

Carpenter Oak

An oak-frame building business of 30 years' standing, this Devon-based company raises more than 60 frames a year, from oak sun-room extensions to high-end architectural oak houses in the UK and overseas.

They say 'If you're looking to create an oak-framed house, extension or outbuilding, we have the experience to make your ambition come alive'

We say 'Has the complete team, from project managers to frame designers and carpenters, so it's worth considering if you're looking for a hassle-free turnkey service'

01803 732900; www.carpenteroak.com

Ellis & Co Ltd

Award-winning experts in the conservation, repair and renovation of historic houses across Somerset and the South-West.

They say 'Our aim is to preserve the past sympathetically and honestly for the benefit of future generations'

We say 'Excellent option for repair or restoration of Grade I-listed houses. The firm's recent work on St Giles House on the Shaftesbury Estate won a host of awards'

01749 342706; www.ellisandco.uk.com



An R. Moulding & Co craftsman hard at work

Ken Biggs

West Country-based family firm founded in 1928 that covers both complete new-build houses to general repairs and extensions.

They say 'We can cover a full spectrum in all aspects of construction to a project value of £6 million'

We say 'Johnnie Boden's contractor of choice with an excellent reputation for friendliness and professionalism'

01761 470743; www.ken-biggs.co.uk

Oakwrights

Oak-frame house builder that prides itself on its state-of-the-art equipment: 80% of the precision cutting is done by machine, with the craftsmen doing the scribe work, decoration and embellishment, much of which is done using traditional hand tools.

They say 'We blend traditional and modern construction techniques to create a traditionally jointed and pegged timber frame with all the comforts of a modern home'

We say 'A forward-thinking company with impressive technology skills'

01432 353353; www.oakwrights.co.uk

Prime Oak

Based in the West Midlands, this well-established oak-frame builder can do the full range, from an orangery or stable complex through to a new-build house. Sister companies include oak-framer Julius Bahn and the garden room and windows supplier Montpelier.

They say 'We provide an outstanding quality product coupled with exacting yet personal service'

We say 'Good all-rounder that supports craftsmanship by running an apprenticeship programme with local colleges'

Prime Oak: 01384 296611; www.primeoak.co.uk. Julius Bahn: 03444 171400; www.juliusbahn.co.uk. Montpelier: 01384 279933; www.montpelierjoinery.com

R. Durtnell & Sons

Britain's oldest building company (established in 1591), which works throughout London and the South-East and specialises in restoring and renovating historic buildings.

They say 'By understanding our clients' needs and objectives, we are better equipped to deliver the high-quality buildings that have been our hallmark since the days of Elizabeth I'

We say 'A safe pair of hands for a contemporary new-build or restoration project'
01959 564105; <http://durtnell.co.uk>

R. Moulding & Co

Salisbury-based family business that, as well as building and restoring country houses, has carved out work at Stonehenge.

They say 'Everything we do is driven by the latest building standards and techniques, underpinned with the passion of our dedicated



Prime Oak can call on a range of experienced specialists to create bespoke solutions

team and a core understanding of traditional materials and skills'

We say 'Skilled team that's worked on country houses from all periods'
01722 742228; www.rmoulding.co.uk

R. W. Armstrong

A 60-year-old regional firm with a reputation for high-quality refurbishments and renovations of listed houses, as well as London town houses and smaller projects.

They say 'We are a residential builder in Hampshire providing high-quality building services for the county as well as for

most of the South-East'

We say 'Reliable and knowledgeable, it's responsible for building many designs by ADAM Architecture'
01256 850177; www.rwarmstrong.co.uk

Stevensons of Norwich

A specialist in the design, restoration and installation of decorative ceilings, wall panels and stone-effect building façades.

They say 'We have more than 30 years' experience working with plaster, lath and lime plaster.'

We say 'For decorative cornices and ceiling roses or their restoration, go to Stevensons'
01603 400824; www.stevensons-of-norwich.co.uk

Symm

A family-owned, Oxford-based company involved in some of the grandest new country houses being built today as well as traditional country cottages and London penthouses.

They say 'We are no ordinary builder'

We say 'A leading firm, which unusually carries out most of the specialist trades itself rather than employing sub-contractors'
01865 254900; www.symm.co.uk

Walter Lilly

Very-high-end London builder whose recent projects include a £28 million subterranean extension and refurbishment of a 22,000sq ft Grade I-listed house in Mayfair and a £9 million fit-out on a 27,000sq ft house in Hampstead.

They say 'The brand is a byword for luxury and refinement'

We say 'London builders don't get much grander'
020-8730 6200; www.walterlilly.co.uk



R. W. Armstrong combined period presence and 21st-century family comforts in this elegant Georgian property