



All shipshape and Surrey fashion

The county is hoping for a spring revival in the market and these four magnificent houses are set to lead the charge

IT'S not all plain sailing in Surrey, says Mark Lawson of buying agents The Buying Solution, who finds the market there still 'patchy', with increased demand for properties priced up to £2 million, but a lull among those valued between £2m and £4m—the latter largely the result of last year's Stamp Duty increase and the overhanging threat of a 'mansion tax'. 'However,' he adds, 'we're seeing slightly more activity in the market for properties priced at £4m and upwards, although there does seem to be a gaping hole left by the absence of Russian buyers, who haven't emerged following the cold spring and the even colder effect of the Cypriot banking collapse'.

“ We created a new country house within a Grade II*-listed building ”

Nigel Mitchell of Knight Frank in Guildford (01483 565171) is much more upbeat. With two private sales to Russian buyers under his belt since the start of the year, he's confident that the market for good houses in south Surrey is as strong as ever, although buyers, he says, are 'in no mood to compromise'. His conviction will be tested in the coming weeks following the launch, in today's COUNTRY LIFE, of a trio of classic Surrey houses that have been impressively renovated by vendors who weren't prepared to compromise either.

It could be third time lucky for Mr Mitchell in the case of illustrious, Grade II*-listed Pickhurst at Chiddingfold, between Godalming and Haslemere (*Fig 1*), which he's already sold twice in the past 15 years. Built for himself in the style of Norman Shaw by the Scottish-born architect John McKean Brydon between 1885 and 1889, Pickhurst stands grandly in the middle of a pristine, 130-acre estate surrounded by pasture, woodland and swathes of Surrey's greenest



Fig 1: The massive, six-year renovation project at Pickhurst, near Chiddingfold, has brought the house and its impressive interiors (below) back to life. £15m

and most pleasant countryside.

The original late-Victorian mansion was much reduced in size in the 1950s, when its original large service wing and internal courtyard were demolished after a fire. Now, following a massive, six-year renovation programme carried out by specialist country-house architect Ian Adam-Smith, the house has been brilliantly reconfigured and extended, its cottages and outbuildings restored, and its gardens redesigned and replanted by the formidable duo of Arabella

Lennox-Boyd and Chelsea gold medalist Fiona Lawrenson. This rare combination of talent and expertise is duly reflected in the uncompromising £15m guide price quoted by Knight Frank.

For West Sussex-based architect Mr Adam-Smith, who grew up in 'Lutyens territory' and was greatly influenced in his early years by Roderick Gradidge, author of *Dream Houses* and *The Surrey Style*, and a regular contributor to COUNTRY LIFE, the rebuilding of Pickhurst has been a hugely satisfying experience. But there were challenges, too. 'At the outset, the house looked as if it had been more or less chainsawed in half, yet, in spite of the fact that, before the fire, it was almost twice its size, local planning regulations would only allow us to extend the footprint by 40%.

'And, with no plans and no service wing to work with, we had to more or less create an entire new country house within a Grade II*-listed building—bearing in mind all the restrictions that that implies. Luckily, I was given a free hand by my very



fastidious client, and we were able to build a new entrance, incorporate a modern-kitchen/family-living complex, upgrade the bedrooms and bathrooms, install acres of walnut panelling and replace the existing cherry-wood flooring with oak parquetry.

'With more than a nod to Lutyens, Webb and, in the gardens, to Gertrude Jekyll, we also reintroduced some interesting original features, such as the belvedere from where you can look out across the roofs of the many and varied Arts-and-Crafts houses that are a distinctive feature of Chiddingfold and the other villages in this wonderful part of Surrey.'

In its present incarnation, Pickhurst boasts some 12,500sq ft of opulent but manageable living space, with accommodation on two main floors, including entrance and inner halls, four main reception rooms, a billiard room, a kitchen/breakfast room, a family room, a home cinema, a palatial master suite and five further bedroom suites.

There are shades of Lutyens about the imaginatively converted coach house, the entrance lodge and the three estate cottages. The formal gardens pay tribute to 'the Lady of Godal-

Spring colour for the 'perfect family house'



THE late spring has brought a burst of long-awaited colour to the manicured gardens and grounds surrounding Barnfield at Dunsfold, eight miles from Godalming, for which joint agents Grantley (01483 498121) and Hamptons International (01483 572864) quote a guide price of £8.25m. Barnfield dates from the 1500s, but the present house, built in the Surrey/Sussex vernacular, is mainly 19th century.

In the 1980s, it was owned by the late John Foulston, the owner of the Brands Hatch motor-

racing circuit. For its present owners, who bought it 10 years ago, Barnfield, set in 50 acres of pasture and woodland on the edge of the National Trust-owned Sydney Wood, has been 'the perfect family house'.

The main house, which is unlisted, offers four reception rooms, a kitchen/family room, a study, seven bedrooms and three bathrooms; two estate cottages provide additional accommodation. Amenities include American-barn stabling, a swimming pool and a tennis court.



Fig 2: Impeccable Cotterell House, near Cranleigh. £5m



Fig 3: Barford Court, near Farnham. Offers over £3m

ring', and include three walled gardens. Sporting amenities include an outdoor swimming pool, a splendid stable yard and a thriving pheasant shoot.

Georgian houses are rare within the Surrey Hills AONB, and consequently much coveted. Knight Frank quote a guide price of £5m for the impeccably renovated Cotterell House (Fig 2), with 30 acres of land, near the pretty village of Shere, five miles from Cranleigh. The house, listed Grade II, combines a fine, east-facing Georgian façade with southern and western facades that betray its earlier, 17th-century origins.

Ideal for a country-loving family, the 5,584sq ft main house has two principal reception rooms, a large kitchen/breakfast room, a family room, study and playroom, master and guest suites, four further bedrooms and three bathrooms. A beautifully converted, 3,379sq ft barn provides two further bedrooms, a kitchen/dining area and an impressive games room. Amenities include stabling, a tennis court, a new outdoor swimming pool, and pleasant formal gardens sur-

rounded by paddocks and woodland.

Third in Knight Frank's line-up of distinguished Surrey houses is Barford Court at Churt, near Farnham (Fig 3), for which offers over £3m are requested. Built in 1895 in the Dutch Revival style for Sir Gilbert Murray, drafter of the League of Nations covenant and co-founder of Oxfam, Barford Court started life as a symmetrical south-facing 'doll's house'. The house then passed to a family of Canadian bankers who added a schoolroom (now the library) and a new front door. In the 1930s and 1940s, Barford Court was owned by the family of the sculptor Sir Anthony Caro.

The estate was eventually broken up and sold off in 1971. House and gardens fell on hard times after the great storm of 1987 and the property remained empty for five years before its current owners set about restoring it to its full Edwardian glory in 1994.

Barford Court stands in 16 acres of gardens and grounds and has four reception rooms, nine bedrooms and four bathrooms.