

HOME INSPIRATION

# A MASTERCCLASS IN MIXING

The old, the bold and the new blend seamlessly in this inspired reimagining of a Victorian farmhouse in Wales

# IT UP

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENT DARBY PRODUCTION BY SIÂN WILLIAMS

## THE DETAILS

WHAT'S THE STYLE?

*Early Victorian farmhouse with contemporary additions*

WHERE IS IT?

*Near the village of Talog, Carmarthenshire, west Wales*

WHO LIVES HERE?

*Anthony Rees and David Thomas, gin distillers, with Llwyd their cocker spaniel*



Treasures from foreign travels sit happily alongside their collection of Welsh art and crafts



Had it not been for a chance visit to an antiques shop in Carmarthenshire, Anthony Rees and David Thomas might never have found their current home with eight acres of land. They both grew up in Wales, but had lived in London for 30 years. On a return visit to west Wales in 2011, they happened to visit Tim Bowen Antiques in Ferryside. The owner told them about a property he was selling – an 1850s picture-perfect coastal cottage. “It took us ten minutes to decide we should snap it up,” Anthony says, “and within a month we were in.”

Four years later, by then retired from the corporate world, they craved a bigger house in a more remote location and the first property on the first website they looked at was the house they bought, there and then – an early Victorian farmhouse outside the village of Talog. “I’m from a farming background and I just knew this was ‘it,’” Anthony says. “I didn’t even need to go inside when I saw the coach house, the old Dutch barn and the two cowsheds.”

But major work lay ahead. The property needed updating, but the plus side was that nothing had been demolished or modernised. Today, one cowshed has been converted into a distillery where Anthony and David produce organic, handcrafted gin, a new business

they launched in 2018: “It certainly helped us integrate into the community.” The coach house stores tractors and trailers for their farm work – they have 11 rare-breed Balwen sheep, geese and ducks, plus four large ponds teeming with wildlife.

They originally fancied “a James Bond lair overlooking the sea, because we both like modern architecture” and there is a touch of 007 about the striking cantilevered glass cube that is their main sitting room, bolted on to the west-facing side of the house, with a balcony stretching out into the landscape. To complete the feeling of being immersed in nature, the ceiling is painted in Farrow & Ball’s deep Studio Green. Though planning permission took three years, the result is a room with the wow factor that invites you to lounge on the French sofas and, on chilly evenings, enjoy the warmth of the Jøtul woodburner, which is backed with grey, white and green tiles by Bert & May.

The ultra-modern cube with a polished concrete floor segues into the original wooden floor of a second sitting room. This has a more intimate feel, with two 1960s ▶

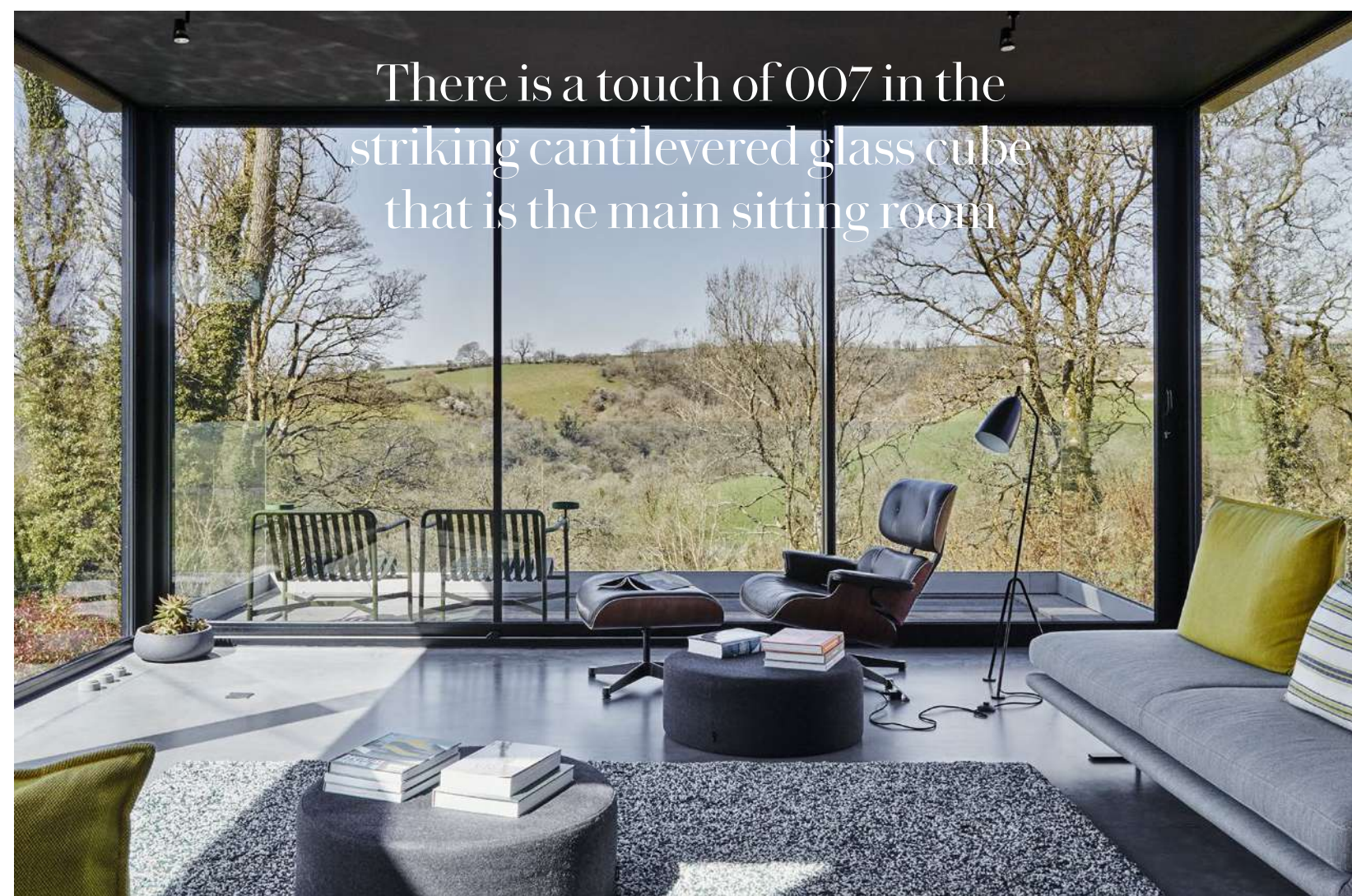
OPPOSITE Anthony’s favourite possession, the 17th-century dark oak cupboard was found at Tim Bowen Antiques in Ferryside BELOW LEFT The narrow bench by Mick Sheridan Upholstery in Llangadog sits on the original slate floor. Simon Howard in Llandeilo designed the bold stained glass above the doorway BELOW RIGHT David and Anthony







THIS PAGE The reflecting rill constructed in slate complements the modern design of the cube  
OPPOSITE, ABOVE Hooks on the kitchen ceiling are a reminder of the house's history as a working farm  
OPPOSITE, BELOW Every seat in the cube comes with a wonderful view



There is a touch of 007 in the striking cantilevered glass cube that is the main sitting room





## 5 WAYS TO MIX OLD AND NEW

**1 RETAIN THE BEST ORIGINAL FEATURES** but express your personality with new additions. Well-designed items of furniture, art and ceramics will stand the test of time.

**2 BE CONFIDENT WITH PATTERN AND COLOUR** The Marimekko wallpaper in the pantry, the Eating Room Red cupboards and the vintage Portmeirion shouldn't all work together, but they do.

**3 ONLY BUY AND MIX THINGS YOU LIKE,** not just because they match. Then allow them to evolve over time.

**4 CREATE A MOVEABLE FEAST** We stop seeing things when they've been in the same place for a while, so move objects such as paintings and pottery around from time to time, and from room to room. This works really well with art.

**5 LINK SHAPES AND SHADES** Our eyes always make connections between forms and colours and this is the easiest way to marry pieces from disparate periods successfully.



Italian reclining armchairs, 1960s Ladderax shelving and a log fire, above which is a 'fauxidermy' stag's head by Welsh textile artist Helly Powell, using shed antlers and Melin Tregwynt patterns. Treasures from foreign travels sit happily alongside their collection of Welsh art and crafts, such as stained glass by Simon Howard and paintings by Wynne Jenkins and Adam Taylor.

"Neither of us likes clutter," Anthony says, and this is plain to see in the kitchen-diner with its pristine worksurfaces, spotless white Aga and concealed storage – a Bulthaup design from Kitchen Architecture in London. The floor-to-ceiling Rimadesio Zenit shelving holds early Portmeirion pottery, mostly found on Ebay. While three walls are painted in Little Greene's Jack Black – "We like to be bold with colour" – one stone wall, previously covered in tiles and units, was stripped bare, allowed to dry out and then repaired.

In the dining area, a white circular 1970s table, found on Ebay, is matched with fabric-lined chairs by Hay, and two handmade Welsh stick chairs by Chris Williams sit on the reclaimed pine floorboards by an original fireplace. Llwyd the rescue dog, a grey, white and black cocker spaniel, blends in perfectly.

In the pantry, bright and bold Marimekko Kippis wallpaper on a culinary theme offsets the Farrow & Ball Eating Room Red-painted cupboards, one of which holds a random collection of Portmeirion storage jars from the 1960s and 70s, also found on Ebay. Furniture in the bedrooms upstairs is more traditional. One has a 1930s

Heal's wooden bed and tongue-and-groove walls painted in Farrow & Ball's Plummet. Another has a four-poster, with one wall papered in Cole & Son's Fontainebleau and three painted in Fired Earth's South Bank. And the attic room has one bare stone wall and a Victorian iron bed. Throws, curtains and cushions are from Melin Tregwynt textiles and retro grey radiators from Castrads.

Bright and bold patterns re-emerge in the guest shower room and main bedroom ensuite, with floor and wall tiles by Fired Earth, while the 'family' bathroom has a white rolltop bath with a view of the garden; walls here are painted in Fired Earth's Malachite.

The old and the bold sit side by side in this imaginative transformation of a 19th-century farmhouse, now brought back to life and productive once more with its on-site artisan gin business. Anthony and David have returned to their Welsh roots and combined local and traditional with exotic and modern. All distilled to distinction.

**JIN TALOG DISTILLERY** offers free tours and tastings by appointment only ([jintalog.wales](http://jintalog.wales); @jintalog). This house appears in the latest edition of *Modern Rustic*. To order your copy, go to [hearstmagazines.co.uk/cl-specials](http://hearstmagazines.co.uk/cl-specials)

**OPPOSITE AND ABOVE RIGHT** The Madison curtains and Knot Garden bed throws from Melin Tregwynt are a signature Welsh touch, along with the bare stone wall **ABOVE LEFT** The glass cube structure – the couple's main sitting room – is bolted on to the side of the house with a balcony area