

# Hot list: the best renovated historic homes

New awards celebrate retrofits, remodels and even ruins. We take a look at the winners, from country houses to a 19th-century fort

## Best remodelling

Built in 1808 to defend the Suffolk coast against the might of Napoleon, Martello Tower Y had stood derelict for 150 years when Duncan Jackson, an industrial designer, bought it from a farmer in 2000 with the intention of creating a family home. By then the bricks in its ten feet-thick walls — designed to withstand cannon balls — were on the Buildings at Risk register.



The exterior and, below, interior of Martello Tower Y by Piercy & Co



The tower was also a scheduled monument, in an area of outstanding natural beauty and on a site of special scientific interest. In other words, it was a planning nightmare. Plus, it had a windowless ground floor, and the only entrance, once reached by ladder, was 13ft above ground. Yet Jackson and his architect, Stuart Piercy of Piercy&Company, got stuck in — for ten years.

Planning alone took two years. Only two builders would give a quote, and at impossibly high prices, so Jackson and Piercy took it upon themselves to project manage subcontractors for each piece of work.

A sinuous roof extension of steel, glass and plywood mimics the geometry of the tower. It was machine cut off-site from a 3D model and fitted piece by piece from the gun platform. This became the open-plan kitchen and living space, with 360-degree views and a panoramic roof terrace. Ingenious tunnels, diamond-drilled through the substantial brickwork, allow daylight into two of the bedrooms on the ground floor. Two further bedrooms have holes just over two inches wide, for camera obscura views of the countryside.

English Heritage described the design as “an exemplary and unique conversion of this type of building”. It is now a holiday let, available from £2,795 a week with Unique Homestays.