

An Englishman's home

The British love of castles ensured such noble structures were still being constructed long after medieval times, as Clive Aslet finds

Architecture

Twentieth Century Castles in Britain

Amicia de Moubray (Frances Lincoln, £30, *£24)

WHAT characterised the 20th century in architecture?

Modernism, obviously—but it didn't go unresisted. There were probably more people in the awkward squad who rebelled against the Continental machine-made Utopia than among the rationalists who embraced it. This book examines one group of them, the backward-looking romantics who built or rescued castles. Inevitably, it was a club for the rich, but Amicia de Moubray has found more examples of the phenomenon than many historians of the period would have expected. Beneath the tweeds and fishing hat of Julius Drewe, the flamboyant evening clothes of Claude Lowther or the roast-beef features of Lord Leverhulme beat hearts yearning for pageantry and trumpets.

Often, the money to fund these works came from the USA, a land, as Ruskin noted as a reason for not living there, without castles. William Waldorf Astor, a suspicious, gauche and gloomy man, rejoiced in Hever, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. Although he enlarged the accommodation, adding a huge new wing for guests and servants, as well as a lake and an Italian garden, he did so with ingenious tact: his guest and service wing took the form of a medieval village, built on the other side of the moat, so as not to detract from the castle itself.

Both Martin Conway, connoisseur and mountaineer, and Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, married Americans—twice. The fortune of Mary Leiter from Chicago made it possible for Curzon to purchase Tattershall Castle, Bodiam



Bamburgh Castle, remodelled from 1894–1906 for Lord Armstrong

and Montacute for the National Trust. Conway restored Allington. His second wife, Iva Lawson, had been reclusively preoccupied with the restoration of Saltwood Castle since her first husband shot himself in the woods. (Saltwood was later the home of the director of the National Gallery, Kenneth Clark.)

Beneath their 20th-century clothes beat hearts yearning for pageantry

William Randolph Hearst bought St Donat's Castle, South Wales, as a plaything, importing medieval screens, roofs and fireplaces from elsewhere. He could have got Leeds Castle in Kent, but that was beyond even him. Lady Baillie, using her Whitney inheritance, took it on. The programme of *de luxe* decoration under Stéphane Boudin continued throughout the Depression and even into the 1960s.

Not that American fortunes

were always required to play this game. The geographical origin of Drewe's Home and Colonial Stores, which enabled him to construct Castle Drogo, Devon, is evident in the name. Edward Hudson, who played castles with Edwin Lutyens at Lindisfarne, founded COUNTRY LIFE.

One of the most appealing castles in the book is Braylsham, which nestled on a lake-bound island in the Sussex Weald in the 1990s. It's the creation of John Mew, who built and raced his own car in the 1950s, sailed, played rugby until he was 50, and worked as an orthodontist. Having constructed some of Braylsham with his own hands, he could appreciate the castle's 'innate feeling of security' and his wife, Jo, didn't want to come home to another 'sterile environment' after a working day spent as a hospital physiotherapist.

One might, at times, have wished for better editing in this book—the Wall Street Crash took place after 1925 and Selfridge's wasn't the world's first department store—but the author has uncovered a seam of architecture that speaks to a deep need in the human spirit.

English literature

The Connell Guides

Various authors

(Connell Guides, £6.99 from www.connellguides.com, *£6.6

IF YOU KNOW anyone who's revising for English AS or A level or a university English Literature degree, the perfect Easter present is waiting for him or her: a Connell Guide or two, of the set texts being studied whether a Shakespeare play or a 19th-century novel. Pocket-sized and elegantly produced these highly readable guides (there are 18 so far, and more to come) are a delight to devour even if you're not revising.

Jolyon Connell, who dreamed up and founded the highly successful weekly digest of current affairs *The Week*, has done a similar thing for literature putting into one slim volume a the most important and apposite things that the great critics have written about a masterpiece. Mr Connell was inspired to start the series when his daughter was looking for worthwhile notes to help her get a good mark for her English A level. There being nothing good enough available he tried writing one himself—did the trick, exam-wise, so he commissioned some more. 'I subscribe to the view that you can learn more about life from great novels or plays than from any history book or philosopher,' he says. These guides relate literature closely to real life in a way that will resonate with teenagers.

They are concisely and vigorously written, often by university professors who really know their stuff. Not a word is wasted. But they're approachable, too. 'It's like being in a room with marvellous tutors or approachable boffins,' as Joanna Lumley says. The chapters have essay title-style names with a question mark (for example, 'How close is the Macbeths' marriage?' 'What is it that breaks down *Lear*?') and almost every sentence is quotable for use in an essay: one can all but see the double-ticks in the margin.

Ysenda Maxtone Graham