



### Frankly speaking

**FRANK DAVEY** is reluctant to put a dampener on proceedings, but water can be a problem....



Driving home the other evening the gathering mist made me realise that autumn is almost upon us, and I will be looking at cases of apparent sudden dampness again. And I will be scratching my head to decide which of the usual suspects is to blame, or whether we have that all-too-common situation where it's not just one factor, but several, which are in play, reaching the stage where something had to give. There are perfectly dry properties, though I don't recall that I have ever lived in one. There always seems to be something from a dripping waste or pipe connection to streaming condensation because it's too cold to open the window after a shower, or even water being blown around a window with too small rebates. An older house can suffer from rising dampness from the ground, penetrating dampness from rainfall, and falling dampness where a (again rainwater) saturated chimney carries soot and tars with it. Near the coast, salt can contaminate brickwork and plaster and even modern properties are not immune to problems if care has not been taken in the construction. The number of issues to consider is huge, and then take into account that water will track along beams, pipes and fissures to enter a room below, but far to the side of the point it came in at, and it can be enough to make a grown man cry.

No, there's no magic wand or instrument to infallibly put things right, and yes, it can be difficult to get to the right answer, but look for the obvious and narrow the issues as you confirm the gutters haven't fallen off, the bath overflow is connected and that the flash downpipes we have been experiencing don't create a moat around the building. As the days get cooler the prospect of condensation causing dampness increases significantly and it's amazing how damp a wall can get just from atmospheric moisture. It has been estimated that in a typical household one person can introduce two litres of water a day into the atmosphere as vapour or 'steam'; with a household of just three that's well over a gallon of water sweating around the house as a hidden gas, or vapour. Warm air causes the moisture to evaporate off, but if it's cooled, the air cannot hold as much moisture, and that's how mist forms. Indoors, it's rare that it gets foggy unless Dad leaves the lid off the kettle again, but there are cold spots and warm spots in any house, and those cold spots can attract an invisible film of condensation which will gradually increase. Consider this: If a wall has some condensation, as that moisture evaporates it chills the wall even more and increases the risk of more condensation. If you haven't seen dampness all summer, but there's a damp patch as the weather cools, especially if mould develops, think of condensation. If you're lucky, you can then put a lid on it.

■ Frank Davey is a chartered surveyor with Allgood & Davey, sponsor of this column. Contact him on 01603 861961.

# Daring to think differently

Welcome to the new age of single storey living...a 'latralife' home boasting cutting edge technology, light and space yet all on one floor.

Regional property editor **CAROLINE CULOT** went to visit the innovative Greenbanks in Holt, the brainchild of Daniel Broch, for sale for offers in the region of £800,000.



Property specialist Daniel Broch of Bliss brought us the Nest in Cley and the Cabin in Blakeney which he's currently living in himself while he rebuilds his own house. And at the same time, together with his wife Lisa, he has created this all singing, all dancing new concept in easy living in north Norfolk. Situated right in the heart of Holt, this three bedroom house pushes the boundaries in terms of what can be achieved using high specification, luxury fittings and innovative thinking. It might be on one floor but offers a palatial 2,200 sqft of accommodation with ceiling heights of 2.8 ms up to 3.5ms achieving what the Brochs love in their homes - light and space. Their vision is for homes which we can all actually enjoy living in, which enhances our quality of life not somewhere we associate with more chores. So Greenbanks has been designed with low maintenance yet luxury in mind using many products which are completely new to Norfolk. The exterior boasts kebonny hardwood cladding which apparently goes a silvery colour when more weathered along with flint 'block', a modern more hard wearing use of Norfolk flint so it looks fantastic and I loved the design centred around an inner courtyard. Inside is a fabulous kitchen/dining/living area with Masterclass units topped with glacier white corian and oak and a fir floor. You've got every gadget going including a pop up extractor fan, a boiling/drinking/hot and cold water tap and beautifully bespoke joinery throughout. But this is a house for living in so it's got a large utility and larder as well as apparently one of the UK's first pet

doors whereby your pet is fitted with a chip that enables it to go in and out. It's a high tech version of many large dog flaps I've seen in country houses but just fabulous! Throughout there is a hotel feel because everything is top end in terms of spec such as the Silent Gliss wave curtain tracks and all the en suites are top hotel standard with floor to ceiling glass shower screens. Underfloor heating is throughout and there is a woodburner in the living/entertaining space. There is an office/smg and a glorious master bedroom suite as well as two further bedrooms. Outside is a terrace in caramel coloured stone as well as landscaped gardens and a driveway. Daniel Broch of Bliss said: "To us space is a feeling, and we want to make that feeling extra special. So we've thrown away convention, dared to think differently, allowed ourselves to dream, posed ourselves a question. Can we use 21st century design, technology and construction to build homes for the now and for as much future as you want? We think we've taken our first tentative steps to answering the question. We call it Latralife."

■ You can contact Sowerbys on 01263 710777 or Savills on 01263 229229. An open day is being held on Saturday, October 4 from 11-2.



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PROPERTY 3

# and just dream...

Property of the week

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Savills

Armed with a keen eye and the architectural guide Pevsner in hand, **LOUIS de SOISSONS** ventures out into the city.



The 100th anniversary of the start of the first world war gives the myriad war memorials that punctuate our cities, towns and villages an added poignancy, and I begin this month's column with a visit to one that can be found just a stone's throw from the Savills office on Agricultural Hall Plain. On top of her tall plinth, the striking angel of peace sheathes her sword while parting the traffic below. The column commemorates not the fallen of 1914-18, however, but of the Boer War in South Africa, something I hadn't fully appreciated until now. It was unveiled in 1904; how many Norwich passers-by would find themselves in the thick of conflict just a decade later? To find the memorial to those who lost their lives in the first world war, you have to head to the market place and the beautifully restored 1927 work by Lutyens that stands, altar-like, in the memorial gardens below City Hall.

It has not always been here but was moved from its original position by the Guildhall when City Hall and the terraced gardens were built in 1938. That date strikes a doleful note; yet more sacrifice would soon follow and Lutyens' monument would become the memorial for two world wars that we see today.

The memorial gardens is certainly a place to make you think and, following the restoration and reopening in 2011, it is also a pleasant place to stop and sit. Paul de Monchaux's pleasing sculpture, *Breath*, is an attractive and evocative 21st century addition to the characteristically 1930s setting. Though not a war memorial in the sense of these others, I could not end my homage without stopping at the statue of Edith Cavell in Tombland. Character and determination are etched into the expression of the nurse from Swardston, executed by the Germans in 1915 for aiding the escape of allied soldiers. Below her image, there is something arresting and moving in the soldier who reaches up to place his wreath. Architecture influences our lives in so many ways; it gives us buildings in which to live, work and relax; sights to admire or revile and, my subject this month, a cause to reflect and remember.

■ **Louis de Soissons** is head of the Norwich residential team at Savills Norwich, sponsor of this column. Contact him on 01603 229229.



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