

ACCOLADES FOR SOCIETY'S ARCHITECTURE PROJECT REPORT

Following the publication of the VAP Report, copies were distributed far and wide and the exhibition has been touring venues within the region. Feedback has been amazing and very rewarding, not least because much of it has come from professional archaeologists and historians. Here is a selection of the comments:

"A big 'thank you' for sending the copy of the Breckland Society book. I've been itching to get my hands on a copy!" *David Gurney, Principal Archaeologist, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service*

"Very impressed with panels and the super publication." *Oliver Bone, Curator, The Ancient House Museum, Thetford*

"What a lot of work, beautifully presented and so worthwhile." *Rosemary Bryan, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England*

"Breckland Society exhibition is superb fabulous report." *Abigail Stancliffe-Vaughan, Brecks Partnership*

"Congratulations on the Breckland Society report - it is excellent!" *William Wall, who, as head of the Local Heritage Initiative's Eastern Region, gave us the grant for the project*

"Many thanks for forwarding the magnificent booklet ... it's a very high quality product and I am sure both you and the HLF are delighted with the result." *David Morgans, Historic Environment Branch, Essex County Council*

"Congratulations on a fascinating and attractive publication." *Clara Willett, HLF Traditional Building Skills Bursary Scheme*

And finally, the exhibition was at the Buildings Conservation Fair organised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in St Nicholas' Chapel, King's Lynn, on 15 September. There were over 600 visitors, some of whom filled in evaluation forms. The Breckland Society's exhibition was singled out as "the most interesting, informative and attractive". Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage and the keynote speaker, toured the Fair and instantly recognised the Society as having sent him the Report, pronouncing both it and the exhibition "excellent".



Massive response to CPRE Norfolk Open Days

"Inspiring." "Interesting." "Informative." This was the overwhelming response from visitors to some of the county's most energy-efficient properties whose doors were open to the public from 6 to 9 September. Over 400 people booked with the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Norfolk to take part in free guided tours of twelve 'green' buildings around Norfolk. CPRE Norfolk opened these buildings as part of the Heritage Open Days scheme.

Such public enthusiasm should come as no surprise. These buildings stand alone as fine achievements of pioneering energy-efficiency and architectural design, and many have received awards to that effect. Though it is true to say that most buildings on this scale may be beyond the pocket of the average person, they all go some way to demonstrating how people's living needs can coexist more harmoniously with the environment.

With so many column inches and air space given to green technologies, from photovoltaic panels and solar heating to wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps, it is easy to think that more people are generating renewable energy than is actually the case. CPRE Norfolk has been researching what is happening on the ground, and in 2006 published a booklet, *Green Buildings in Norfolk, 21 examples of renewable energy in action*. The number of people actually employing these



"Ralph's", one of the twelve energy-efficient properties open to the public during CPRE Norfolk's guided tour of "green buildings"

techniques is disproportionate, however, to the increasingly large number of people who are keen to find out how they can incorporate green technologies into a new build, conversion or renovation. The tours attracted such people, and many more besides, who wanted to know how they could fit green technologies on to their existing home. There was much note-taking and contact-sharing. Insulation came up many times over in visitors' comments as top of the list of recommendations for wise energy use.

CPRE Norfolk is the local branch of the national organisation which exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

Please contact the CPRE Norfolk office if you would like to be kept informed of future similar events.

CPRE Norfolk, 42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich, NR2 1NR
01603 761660; info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

DO YOU WANT TO HELP SAVE BRECKLAND'S SPECIAL QUALITIES?

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is looking for volunteers interested in helping its Breckland branch to monitor planning applications, work to prevent insensitive development and generally raise awareness of the need to keep Breckland special.

If you would like to know more, please contact James Parry on 01366 328676.

If you would like to contribute to the Breckland Society Newsletter please contact the Editor at
The Breckland Society
The Hay Barn, Hall Farm Barns
Oxborough, Norfolk PE33 9PS
Tel 01366 328190
info@brecsoc.org.uk
www.brecsoc.org.uk



SOCIETY BACKS CAMPAIGN TO SAVE LITTLE CRESSINGHAM MILL

A little-known but important part of the Brecks' heritage, Little Cressingham Mill is on a Domesday site, two mills being listed in the parish at that time. It was one of only two mills in Norfolk that were powered by both water and wind, the other being Burnham Overy Union Mill. Since 1980, efforts to restore the Grade 2-listed mill have been unsuccessful, and there is considerable local concern about its future.*

The mill has an interesting history, and there are numerous documents detailing various chapters in its past. For example, on 16 February 1782 *The Norfolk Chronicle* featured an announcement:

"To be sold or lett [sic], and entered upon immediately, a Water-Mill and Wind-Mill with six Acres of Lane, in Little Cressingham, in Norfolk, within two miles of Watton, and six of Swaffham. For particulars enquire of Mr Brown, Millwright, in Ber Street, Norwich, or of Mr William TRUNDLE, at the Mill, in Little Cressingham aforesaid."

The *Norfolk Chronicle* subsequently announced, on 31 October 1795, an auction in three lots on 4 November 1795 at 3 o'clock at the Crown Inn, Watton. Three separate lots, including a water corn mill

at Little Cressingham in the occupation of Mr J Pearson, a tower windmill, about half an acre near the water corn mill and a cottage. All were for sale with immediate possession as the owner "wishes to retire".

That particular mill was subsequently demolished, and the present structure was built in about 1821 on the Watton Brook, on the Clermont Estate. The mill was used to grind corn for local farms until the early 1950s. Prior to 1921 there was a water mill only on the site, but a windmill had been built opposite the White Horse Inn shortly before.

Various owners are documented, some more intriguing than others. Particularly notable, perhaps for the wrong reasons, was Samuel Goddard from Carbrooke, who hired Little Cressingham Mill in 1890.

The Mill, as partly restored by Norfolk Windmills Trust, 2003



WHAT'S ON

forthcoming Society events

Thursday 22 November

Ornithologist and wildlife photographer Alan Hale presents an illustrated talk, *Birding in Norfolk*. Beachamwell Village Hall, 7.30pm. Tickets at the door, £3 to include refreshments.

Saturday 15 December

Christmas Concert, featuring local young musicians. The Houghton Centre, South Pickenham, 7.30pm. Tickets in advance only, £13, to include glass of wine and light buffet in the interval.

Saturday 23 February 2008

Field-walking event, 10am-3pm
See page 2 for details.

Please contact Sue Whitley on 01366 328190 for information about bookings, tickets, etc.

His tenancy ended in tragedy on Christmas Day 1890, as a gravestone in the local churchyard testifies:

“In loving memory of Samuel and Elizabeth Goddard who died from suffocation Decbr 25th 1890 aged 36 and 37 years.”

It appears that on Christmas Day that year, it being a very cold day, the couple took up to their bedroom a bucketful of hot coals to keep themselves warm. They were found dead the next morning.

From 1908 a portable steam engine was used in the yard to drive a Blackstone mill with vertical stones in the cart shed in the range of outbuildings. This later made way for a Victoria single-cylinder paraffin engine as auxiliary power to drive the water-driven stones.

The mill as it was in 1905



The pumphouse, March 2003

Besides the waterwheel for the mill there is another, smaller wheel alongside. This operated a Bramah pump for raising water up to Clermont Lodge (Hall), where it was used for the water gardens and as a source of water for the fish ponds. The pump was later superseded by a hydraulic ram made by Green & Carter of Winchester.

The mill lost one pair of sails in 1911, but these were replaced in 1916. In 1940 the stage, cap and machinery down to the top section were removed and a flat concrete cover fitted. The clay lump outbuildings were demolished in 1975 and the mill pond was filled in during the early 1970s.

The mill was bought in 1980 by John Davies, who had been the resident land agent to Sir Richard Prince Smith Bt, owner of the Clermont estate from 1966 until 1976. In 1981 Mr Davies leased the mill to Norfolk County Council for restoration by the Norfolk Windmills Trust, at a peppercorn rent, in return for a commitment to restore the mill to as near full working order as possible, including fitting new sails. It was to be a ten-year project. The Trust has been unable to meet its original covenants and, some 26 years later, although modest repairs have been carried out, the main work of restoration has not yet started – and the estimated cost has more than doubled in the intervening years. There is now a move within the Parish Council to take responsibility for the mill back into local hands, with a view to securing its restoration.

OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS TO LEARN THE SKILLS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD-WALKING

In February 2008, there will be a wonderful opportunity for Society members to learn the skills of archaeological field-walking. Colin Pendelton, of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Unit, will start the day with a summary of how to recognise artefacts, explaining the techniques and purpose of field-walking.

Field-walking involves a straight line of people progressing slowly across a field, guided by positioned stakes, each person being responsible for looking intently at the ground in the immediate vicinity and placing any finds in the allotted bags. Afterwards, we will learn how to wash the finds, to identify and record them.

To do this, we need a field! Preferably, it will have been ploughed a few weeks beforehand as it needs to be 'weathered' to give any chance of results and, ideally, should be a known site of former settlement (or very near to one), because it would not be great training nor much fun if we found nothing. If there are any Society members who own such a field, or who could suggest a location, please would you contact Anne Mason as soon as possible. For reassurance, there will be minimal damage to the field and no disturbance to the soil as we look only on the surface.

Field-walking demands a certain level of fitness; there is a great deal of standing around, slow walking and lots of bending down, often in cold conditions, as it can only be done before the rising spring temperatures trigger the growth of crops. Please bear this in mind before booking a place.

However, field-walking is wonderfully interesting and adds to our knowledge of the history of the landscape. You may even find that it is addictive! You never know what you will find and there is always the thought that, when you pick something up, you may well be the first person to touch that object for four or five hundred years.

You will need warm clothing, strong shoes, boots or wellingtons, and a hot drink is a good idea too. Details of the location will be sent to all those who have booked, no later than ten days before the date.

The walk will take place on 23 February from 10am to approximately 3pm. If you would like to book a place, please contact Anne Mason 01760 755685 or email Anne@providence28.fsnet.co.uk

RECENT EVENTS

Cattle droving and the Horsham St Faith Cattle Fair

On 11 October Society members were treated to a splendid talk by local historian Janet Smith on cattle drovers in Norfolk. The droving of livestock was an activity of great economic importance to the whole county and to Britain as a whole. Droving routes are found in most areas, including Breckland, and in her talk Janet focused on the annual droving of cattle from Scotland south to East Anglia and thence to Smithfield Market in London.

Winters are hard in the Scottish highlands, and shortage of stored feed made it difficult for farmers to sustain their cattle throughout the cold months. The solution was to drive the animals long distances, on foot, to sell at trysting fairs throughout England, where there was great demand for beef. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was not only a growing population to feed, but the long series of wars with Spain, Austria, America, and of course Napoleon and the French, meant that there was a large navy to maintain, and salted beef was important to the navy.

Although there is earlier evidence of Scottish drovers travelling through England with cattle, horses and other merchandise, it was in the seventeenth century that this trade really began to flourish. Local men would travel around the highlands, buying cattle from poor tenant farmers, until they had gathered a herd of at least 100, sometimes as many as 2,000 animals. They would then head off on the journey south, which was long and hard; rivers must be crossed, and their way often led over trackless mountains. Rustlers might try to steal the cattle.

The drover would start his day with a breakfast of oats, perhaps washed down with whisky. He might from time to time supplement his diet by drawing blood from cattle to mix with his oatmeal, to make into an impromptu black pudding.

The herd would cover perhaps 10 or 12 miles a day, resting in enclosed ground at night, the men themselves bedding down with the animals, or perhaps staying in rest houses (many old inns called The Black Bull recall this history). It was common for a horseman to ride ahead of the herd when approaching a settlement, sounding a horn so that local people could gather their own herds safely in to avoid their own stock becoming enmeshed with the arriving herd. There would have been plenty of noise, cattle bellowing, dogs barking, throngs of people, and the drovers would be bringing much appreciated trade to the community. It was not unusual to see drovers knitting as they walked, and they would sell the gloves and stockings they made to the rural communities they passed through.

The cattle fair at Horsham St Faiths, now the site of Norwich Airport, was an important market, and one of the biggest in the country.

An animal similar in type and colour to the cattle brought from Scotland to England by the drovers



It started on 17 October every year and continued for three weeks; it was effectively the Royal Norfolk Show of its day. Norfolk diarist Parson Woodforde described it as "a very large fair for all things". Following the show, cattle were fattened up on the East Anglian pastures before being driven south to Smithfield.

Drovers were often trusted with important financial transactions, many acting as government agents taking ship money to London. Highway robbery made carrying cash a risky business, and so this was rarely used, commissions being paid instead from the proceeds of the cattle sale at the markets and fairs. Such transactions became a feature of droving life and led to the establishment of drovers' banks, which were part of the basis of our modern banking system.

Droving flourished for about two hundred years – until the coming of the railways brought a dramatic change. It became easier, quicker and cheaper to move stock by rail, and the annual migration of thousands of animals along the country's roads slowed to a trickle. With the move to the trains, a whole way of life died out, almost overnight, the drovers moving into other areas of employment and the market at Horsham St Faiths dwindling to a shadow of its former self.

The Society hopes that next year Janet Smith will return to talk to us about the remarkable story of the droving of geese and turkeys through the Brecks along what is now the A11.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE PROJECT EXHIBITION

The thirteen panels of the Breckland Society's Vernacular Architecture Project Exhibition have already been to EcoTech, Swaffham; The Ancient House Museum, Thetford; The Forum, Norwich; Beachamwell Village Hall; and Mildenhall Museum. It is currently at Forest Heath District Council Offices, also in Mildenhall.

Next spring, we are hoping that the exhibition can tour other village halls throughout the area. If you think your village hall is a possible venue, please would you contact Anne Mason, who will make the necessary arrangements. It would help enormously if you could provide Anne with the name and contact details of the person responsible for bookings. We should like to publicise the presence of the exhibition in the appropriate village magazine, so if possible please provide the name and address of the editor.

The exhibition has been extremely well received – see page 4 of this newsletter for examples of the enthusiastic feedback.

Please contact Anne Mason on 01760 755685 or email Anne@providence28.fsnet.co.uk

The exhibition on display at the Buildings Conservation Fair, organised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in St Nicholas' Chapel, King's Lynn on 15 September

