

A ROUND-UP OF OTHER EVENTS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Thursday 18 June

CPRE Norfolk/NALC Planning Conference, Swaffham Assembly Rooms. Topics for discussion/debate will be Housing Provision in Norfolk, Planning and Biodiversity and The Planning Portal. More details to follow.

NORFOLK HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Tuesday 10 February

7.00 pm for 7.30
Room 01.02, Elizabeth Fry Building, University of East Anglia, Earlham Road, Norwich
The Rebirth of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital in the 1870s
by Dr Jeremy Taylor

Wednesday 25 March

7.00 pm for 7.30
Thoresby College, South Quay, Kings Lynn
Urban and rural vernacular buildings in Northern Germany: Comparisons with East Anglia, by Dr Adam Longcroft.
Both events free to NHBG members, £2.00 to non-members.

ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM, THETFORD

Walks and Talks for Feb to April 2009

Memories of the Thetford Overspill Project

Thursday 19 February, 3pm
Afternoon talk. Join local historian and author David Osborne as he recalls the changes in Thetford; from small market town, with many maltings and traditional buildings, to the thriving overspill development full of new industries and families from London. Free, advance booking essential due to limited places

Growing Thetford in the News

Thursday 26 March, 4.30pm
Afternoon talk. What was making the headlines during the 1960s and '70s as Thetford was rapidly growing in size? Listen to stories from retired local journalist John Kitson. Free, advance booking essential due to limited places

Thetford Tree Walk

Thursday 23 April, 2-3.30pm
Afternoon walk, starting from Ancient House. Join Gilbert Addison, Tree and Countryside Officer, for a walk around Thetford and discover the variety of our local trees and the impact they have on our environment. £2.50/£2 Museum Pass holders or Friends, advance booking essential due to limited places

westacre river studios
and summer theatre



01760 755800
www.westacretheatre.com

The Cocktail Jazz Band *Valentine Special*

Sunday 15 February 12noon - 2.30pm £15
Treat that perfect partner to a special helping of the ever popular band together with a cocktail and light lunch.

Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads*

Friday 20, Saturday 21, Friday 27, Saturday 28
February and Friday 6, Saturday 7 March 7.30pm £12
Another chance to see six monologue masterpieces over three weekends. Featuring Issy Huckle in *Bed Among the Lentils* and *A Woman of No Importance*, Irma Bullough in *A Lady of Letters* and *Soldiering On*, Andy Naylor in *A Chip in the Sugar* and Lesley Mardle in *A Cream-cracker under the Settee*.



Other Places

by Harold Pinter
Friday 20, Saturday 21, Friday 27, Saturday 28 March
7.30pm £12
The second in an occasional series featuring classic one-act plays by the Nobel Prize-winning author. Featuring *A Kind of Alaska*, *Family Voices* and *Victoria Station*.

To book your tickets, to request a brochure or for more information please call the box office on 01760 755800 or visit www.westacretheatre.com

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

Newsletter 23 — January 2009



SOCIETY'S PROJECT UNCOVERS THE LOST WARRENS OF BRECKLAND

The Breckland Society's Warrens Project, which began last summer with funding from English Heritage and in partnership with the Forestry Commission, got off to a flying start. We are pleased to report that, thanks to a highly dedicated band of volunteers, the project has continued to gain momentum and is already producing exciting results. These include the discovery of a whole range of fascinating new material related to the area's warrens and their history.

With over 20 volunteers surveying the landscape and trawling the region's archives, it was bound to happen: the unearthing of material and evidence about the Brecks' warrens that was either unknown or imperfectly understood. However, we could not have imagined that only a few months into the project some startling new discoveries would have already been made: sections of warren banks hitherto unrecorded or thought lost; two possible 'new' warrens and at least one new lodge site, together with all sorts of information about warren management practices.

A project 'update session' was held at Oak Lodge, High Lodge Forest Centre, on 24 January. This forum gave volunteers the opportunity to talk about their research and field visits, exchange information and discuss any problems or difficulties they had encountered. Rachel Riley and Neal Armour-Chelu from the Forestry Commission were present, as many of the former warrens are on FC land. Volunteers Sue Pennell and Peggy English talked in detail about what their site visits and documentary research had revealed about Beachamwell Warren; Tim Bridge did the same for Broomhill; Diane Jackman for Snarehill and Jackie Collins for Thetford. Other volunteers then described what they had found out so far for their particular warrens, and there was also a general discussion with the main problem - or, rather, the only real problem - faced by researchers being the difficulty of reading documents encountered in archives and written in Latin or Medieval English! If any Breckland Society members have or know of anyone with expertise in this field, please would they contact Anne Mason, as more help would complement that already available to the researchers.

The oral history component is underway too, with a training session in early March for those interested in carrying out interviews with former estate and forestry workers and with those who worked in or who have family connections with the fur processing factories in Brandon and Thetford.

What has been consistently wonderful since the project began has been the interest, enthusiasm and commitment of all the volunteers. It was apparent that, even as everyone gathered at the beginning of the update session, information was being exchanged and maps looked at and compared. Project manager Anne Mason reported that, "One of the most rewarding aspects of the session was the informal atmosphere of general discussion and mutual support. One person would mention an aspect of research or something they had discovered and another person would say 'Oh yes, that explains what I've just found out or was puzzling over'".

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WHAT'S ON

forthcoming Society events

Saturday 14 March

Morning walk in Thetford Forest to listen to early spring birdsong, especially woodlarks, and to look out for displaying goshawks. Details from Sue Whittley.

Friday 24 April

7.30pm. Gareth Price, headmaster of Thetford Grammar School will give a talk on Thomas Paine in Old School, Thetford GS. £7.50, to include a glass of wine. Please book in advance with Sue Whittley.

Friday 22 May

6.45pm. Society AGM at The Nunnery, Thetford, headquarters of the British Trust for Ornithology. A talk and tour of this fascinating building will be followed by the AGM and a light supper with wine. Full details in April newsletter.

Friday 26 June

Evening visit to The Old Rectory, Fincham, a delightful private garden. Details in April newsletter.

LIVING AND BELIEVING IN THE BRECKS



Part of the recently surveyed warren banks on Beachamwell Warren

Most of all, it is the breadth of the research undertaken by the volunteers that is so impressive. The collation of such large amounts of documentary material will complement the fieldwork being carried out and help ensure that this project makes a very real contribution to our understanding of the history of warrens in the Brecks. Volunteers have made visits to the Record Offices in both Bury St Edmunds and Norwich, as well as to other archives, including Cambridge University Library and Christ's College, Cambridge. The fieldwork surveys are already yielding impressive results too, especially now that the vegetation is at its lowest seasonal level and so warren-related features such as banks are more visible, particularly after the hard frosts we have had this winter.

There is little doubt that the next few months will continue to reveal all sorts of exciting new material about the history of Breckland's warrens.

Further information about the Warrens Project is available from Anne Mason on 01760 755685.

THOMAS PAINE, 1737-1809, FAMOUS SON OF THETFORD

"The principle of an equality of rights is clear and simple. Every man can understand it, and it is by understanding his rights that he learns his duties; for where the rights of man are equal, every man must, finally, see the necessity of protecting the rights of others, as the most effectual security for his own." Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*

June of this year marks the 200th anniversary of Tom Paine's death. A seven-month programme of celebratory events is planned, centred on Thetford, beginning on the bicentenary weekend. Celebrations will include drama, exhibitions and concerts, as well as a series of autumn lectures at venues around Thetford.

Tom Paine was born in Thetford, the son of a poor Quaker corset-maker. He attended the local grammar school, but left aged 12 to be apprenticed to his father's trade. Tom did not take to it, however, and went off to sea. Following his return to England he worked as an exciseman in Lincolnshire, then briefly as a schoolteacher in London, before settling down in 1768 as an excise officer in Lewes, Sussex. It seems he was not a success in this occupation, twice being dismissed from his post.

In 1774 he met Benjamin Franklin in London, and Franklin advised him to emigrate to America, furnishing him with letters of introduction. Paine landed in Philadelphia at the end of November, 1774. He quickly became aware of the spirit of rebellion in the Colonies, as well as of the injustice and inhumanity of slavery. In the spring of 1775 he published his *African Slavery in America*, and in the following year produced *Common Sense*, a pamphlet outlining his ideas on American independence. In his words, the case in favour of America's independence from England was "nothing more than simple facts, plain argument and common sense". Paine had an important influence on the Declaration of Independence of 4 July 1776.

During the War of Independence Paine served with Washington's armies, and also began writing his highly influential *American Crisis* papers, which were published between 1776 and 1783.

In 1787 he returned to England, and soon became deeply involved in the French Revolution. Between 1791 and 1792 he published various editions of his *Rights of Man*, seen by many as laying the foundations for democracy, in which he defended the French Revolution and analysed the discontent that had led to it. It was due, he said, to arbitrary government, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and war. His opposition to the execution of Louis XVI upset the revolutionaries, and he was imprisoned by Robespierre in 1793. It was during this time in prison that he worked on his book *Age of Reason*, questioning the truth of Christianity and praising Newton and the achievements of the Age of Enlightenment.

He was released from prison in 1802, when he sailed back to America on the invitation of Thomas Jefferson. He found that his *Age of Reason* had antagonised a large number of people there, and that his former popularity had dwindled, his contribution to the Revolution all but forgotten. He continued his critical writings until his death in New York City on 8 June 1809, by which time 1.5 million copies of *Rights of Man* had been sold in Europe. Ten years after Paine's death, William Cobbett, the radical reformer and pamphleteer, dug up the bones and brought them back to England. The whereabouts of his remains are unknown today.

A variety of commemorative events, including an exhibition at the Ancient House Museum, *Paine of Thetford*, featuring a Paine portrait recently acquired for the nation, and

Corsets and Furbelows, an 18th-century costume workshop and display. Events are planned at Thetford Library, the Grammar School, the Guildhall, the Carnegie Room, King's House Gardens and elsewhere in the town.

For more information on all these and more, visit www.tompaine200.org.uk

On Friday 24 April at 7.30pm Gareth Price, the headmaster of Thetford Grammar School, will be giving a talk about Tom Paine to Society members at the school. Please contact Sue Whittlely on 01366 328190 for further details.



The statue of Tom Paine that stands outside the King's House on King Street, Thetford

THE WOODLARK – HARBINGER OF SPRING

*Through the velvety wind V-winged
To the nest's nook I balance and buoy
With a sweet joy of a sweet joy*

This quotation is from an unfinished poem by Gerald Manley Hopkins, entitled The Woodlark, and this is the bird we are hoping to see and hear on our field trip into Thetford Forest on 14 March. The Forestry Commission's Conservation Officer, Neal Armour-Chelu, and Woodlark expert Ron Hoblyn will take us to an area of the forest where Woodlarks are present and will help us to identify them. March is the best time of year to hear the Woodlark's delightful fluty song, regarded by many as being superior to that of its more famous relative, the Skylark.

The Woodlark is a streaky-brown bird with buff-white eyestripes that meet on its nape and a dark brown-and-white mark on the leading edge of its wing. In flight, its short tail and broad, rounded wings are distinctive, at times almost resembling the silhouette of a bat. Equally characteristic is its habit of flying high in wide circles while singing, before dropping to the ground. It feeds on insects in short grass and is also ground-nesting, laying three to five eggs.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Woodlarks bred in all but the northernmost counties of England. During the twentieth century, numbers declined, due mainly to the destruction of its heathland habitat, and it was placed on the 'Red List' of endangered species. However, work by wildlife organisations to recreate suitable habitat has helped its recovery and it is now breeding in more counties than for many decades. In particular, the Forestry Commission manages its harvesting programme to ensure that there are always areas of clear-fell, providing exactly the type of open habitat that the Woodlark requires. In 2000 Thetford Forest Park had 456 breeding pairs – 22 per cent of the total population in the United Kingdom.



Artwork by John Davis

Though the Skylark is rightly celebrated for its song, the Woodlark's is just as beautiful and captivating. The male gives a series of 'lu, lu, lu' notes as it floats to the ground or sings from a perch to mark its territory. This lovely song is reflected in the bird's Latin name *Lullula arborea* and in the French *Alouette Lulu*, and on a clear, still morning in the forest, it is the very essence of spring.

For details of this field trip, please see 'What's On' on page 1.

ECO-HOMES IN BRECKLAND — DO YOU KNOW OF ANY?

The Campaign to Protect Rural England in Norfolk (CPRE Norfolk) would like to hear about houses in Breckland that have been renovated or refurbished to save energy.

Have you renovated an existing house to include renewable energy or harness rainwater? Do you know of a homeowner or architect who has retrofitted an existing house to be more energy efficient? Have you insulated your own house to the highest standards and changed the way you live to conserve energy? If so, CPRE would like to hear about it.

CPRE runs an ongoing campaign to highlight examples of energy-efficient homes in Norfolk. Through publications, exhibitions and tours, CPRE provides opportunities for members of the public to learn more about buildings that conserve energy and people who have adapted their homes, gardens and lifestyles to live in a more sustainable way.

James Frost, Director of CPRE Norfolk, says, "We already have plenty of examples of eco-friendly new-build, barn conversions and self-build schemes in the countryside. But what about more 'ordinary' properties in market towns or in the cities – do you know of any eco-style renovations that could, in some small way, inspire or educate others to adapt their own homes? We would be keen to include examples of low-cost solutions, or solutions applied to existing properties, in our Green Building Open Days event later in the year".

CPRE Norfolk has produced a publication, *Green Buildings in Norfolk*, which is available for £5 from the Greenhouse on Bethel Street in Norwich. Guided tours of local eco-buildings are organised by CPRE Norfolk as part of the Heritage Open Days event in September. To put your name on the mailing list, please send your contact details to info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

To let CPRE Norfolk know about an energy-efficient property, please contact 01603 761660 or info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR HISTORIC BARNs

Almost 60 Society members braved the cold and ice to enjoy a fascinating talk by Dr Susanna Wade Martins at the Houghton Centre on 6 February.

Speaking on Norfolk Farm Buildings, Dr Wade Martins traced the history and evolution of such buildings across the county, looking at the wide range of different styles and building materials.

The lecture was also attended by representatives of English Heritage, Natural England and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).

David Kenny of Natural England used the occasion to announce the availability of grant aid towards the restoration and adaptive non-residential re-use of traditional farm buildings across the East of England. Up to £500,000 is available annually until 2013 for landowners under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Further information for Breckland applicants is available from Natural England's West Suffolk and Breckland Land Management Team on 01284 762218.