Over four sunny days in September, twelve eco-friendly buildings opened their doors to the public, taking part in CPRE Norfolk’s third Green Buildings in Norfolk Open Days event. Among the hundreds of visitors this year were representatives from local councils and housing associations, together with professionals involved in the building and construction industries, as well as members of the public seeking to green their own homes.

The diversity of properties participating and the range of technologies they demonstrate is undoubtedly part of the popularity of the event. Solar panels, photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, heat pumps (ground, air and water sourced) and the micro-hydro turbine at Itteringham Mill were all featured.

Those interested in rainwater harvesting visited Ingleside in West Norfolk where owners Tony & Stella Richardson have created a comprehensive system of pipes and water-butts to collect and re-use as much rainwater as possible.

For self-builders there was a choice of properties incorporating low-impact construction techniques. For example, straw bales were used at James Livingstone’s ‘Straw Cottage’ at Cawston, rammed earth was used at Michael Thompson’s stylish ‘Eco-Shed’ at Potter Heigham, and cob bale was used for the roundhouse studio built by Kate Edwards at Banham.

“The Open Days success as a campaigning tool is becoming increasingly evident.” said CPRE Norfolk’s Director James Frost. “We know that people come to this event because it is one of the few opportunities to get first-hand, independent knowledge about green technologies. That gives visitors confidence, as well as the inspiration, to apply these technologies in their own homes. We were also encouraged to see so many housing associations and construction professionals taking an interest in the event. The government is setting higher standards on energy consumption in homes and it is clear that this event is helping professionals to see how these standards could be met.”

For more on this year’s open days, see pages 4 and 5.

Carols, mulled wine and Christmas cake at Houghton Hall in December. For more details see the back page.

Also in this issue:

- Imagine an Eco-Town.... page 7
- CPRE Norfolk Awards page 8
- Christmas at Houghton Hall page 12
Many homes and gardens are closed during winter months, but Gooderstone Water Gardens near Swaffham is open all year round and, as with all properties featured in this section, offers discounted entry (2 for the price of 1) to CPRE members. The cafe at Gooderstone is, alas, closed from October to Easter, so bring a flask and, during your walk around this peaceful 6-acre garden, have a rest on one of the many benches provided.

Gooderstone Water Gardens were the creation, and labour of love, of Billy Knights and his wife Florence. Billy, a retired farmer, began designing and creating the Water Gardens in 1970 on a site which was too wet for cattle to graze. With its four ponds, waterways and natural trout stream, the gardens were open to the public for over 20 years, but on the deaths of Billy and Florence, were closed and became derelict and overgrown, until their daughter Coral Hoyos, in tribute to her parents, began an extensive restoration project in April 2002.

The gardens were re-opened in June 2003, with a new car park, refurbished tea-room and gallery, a toilet for disabled people and an 8-acre nature trail. There are numbered bridges to help visitors find their way around, and there has also been the addition of a kingfisher hide and a new plant sales area, bamboo grove and scented arbour.

Gooderstone Water Gardens are open daily from 10am to 5.30pm (or dusk if sooner). Admission costs £4.75 (Adults), £4.25 (Senior Citizens) and accompanied children £1.50. Please bring your CPRE membership card, to claim your discounted entry. Children under 5 years of age, free and dogs are welcome.
Chairman’s view
Politics and the Countryside

As I write the political conference season has just drawn to a close. Whilst CPRE is non-political and draws its membership and support from people with widely varying political views it is essential that we engage with all political parties in an attempt to influence them for the good of the countryside. CPRE National Office Executives are in regular contact with Ministers and MPs of all the major parties and we at the Norfolk Branch are in constant communication with our MPs and local politicians. We want to ensure that any decisions taken on development in Norfolk will not have a detrimental effect on the countryside.

Whilst developing our “2026 Vision” CPRE has been fortunate to be addressed by the leaders of the main opposition parties and a Government Minister.

David Miliband, whilst still at DEFRA, addressed us on his vision for 2026 and it made a refreshing change to hear a Cabinet Minister giving attention and thought to the future of the landscape and the countryside. He seemed to have a much clearer vision than most of his colleagues on what he wanted the countryside to look like, and with the exception of his approach to renewable energy and a desire to amend the planning system to speed up planning applications (which we believe is an attempt to side step local democracy), he seemed to endorse many of the views and hopes of CPRE.

David Cameron’s speech was listened to with great interest as the Conservatives are the bookies’ favourites to win the next election. The part of his speech that resonated most with CPRE members present was his commitment to a “renewed emphasis on localism – more powers for local government and greater rights for local communities to decide for themselves on issues that affect them.” He suggested that there would be an end to centralised decisions on housing numbers and that “local councils were best placed to know the housing needs in their area.” It remains to be seen whether he will get the chance to implement his promises but if he does, CPRE will be there to call him to account.

By the time Nick Clegg addressed us the recession had hit and economic pressures were very different. CPRE was particularly encouraged by his recognition of the intrinsic value of land ‘for its own sake’ and the importance of the environmental value of land.

Caroline Lucas of the Green Party meanwhile paid tribute to CPRE for its critical role in protecting the environment and said they share our views that changes to the countryside should not be based purely on economics. She also said that the Green Party are not in favour of renewable energy at any cost to the environment, citing their opposition to the Severn Tidal Barrage.

The leaders of the main parties say they share our vision for the future but, like all politicians, they often say what the audience at the time wants to hear. I encourage all of you, as we approach the general election next year, to press all the candidates seeking your vote to clarify their and their party’s position on any policies that affect the countryside.

Greg Peck, Chairman
gregp@cprenorfolk.org.uk

*All the speeches referred to above are reproduced in full on the CPRE National Office website www.cpre.org.uk along with a current 'on line' debate with Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

Dates for your diary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday November 17th</td>
<td>West Norfolk District Annual Lunch</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knight’s Hill Hotel, South Wootton, King’s Lynn with guest speaker Bill Jordan,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>owner of Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Gardens. (See p10 for full details)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 19th</td>
<td>CPRE Norfolk Awards Ceremony</td>
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<td>The Assembly House, Norwich, 7pm for 7.30pm. Members and their guests welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday December 5th</td>
<td>Christmas Celebration at Houghton Hall</td>
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<td>By kind permission of Lord Cholmondeley. Christmas drinks, seasonal canapés and</td>
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<td>carols. 7pm-9pm. Tickets £15 per head. Available from the Branch Office, Tel: 01603</td>
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CPRE Norfolk  Registered Charity No. 210706

Norfolk Voice  Autumn 2009  3
Green Buildings Open Days - The Inside Story

Our third annual season of guided tours at eco-homes in the county proved as popular as ever. With over 500 people attending and 84 tours taking place across the county, CPRE Norfolk were reliant on a whole network of support to ensure the success of the event. The Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre Anglia took bookings, a team of stewards assisted tours on the day and a number of partner organisations helped with promotion. But it was the homeowners who willingly opened their properties to the public that were the centre of attention.

Helen Baczkowska of End Cottage in Long Stratton conducted tours of a straw bale extension to her cottage in Long Stratton. “We had a huge range of visitors”, said Helen. “We had Wherry Housing Association staff, other people setting out on green builds and some who just seemed curious. People seemed genuinely interested on the whole and I learnt a lot too. Most seemed to enjoy the small scale and low tech of our project.” It was a similar story at Mill Lane in Kirby Bedon where Donal MacGarry was visited by “a wide variety of visitors including groups of architects, builders and local authority employees...the ones armed with clipboards were the most persistent”.

Although it is often the first time that owners have conducted tours of their ‘green’ homes, they are always willing to do it again. As Stella and Tony Richardson from Ingleside in West Walton commented; “We have had a wonderful time doing this. We really enjoy talking to people about what we’ve done, and sharing our pleasure with them. We will do it again, but next year we’d also like to go and see some buildings for ourselves!”

Assisting on the tours were a team of stewards, all volunteers, acting as CPRE Norfolk representatives. Some of the stewards were recruited through independent energy assessors Elmhurst Energy and these stewards were able to use the experience to count towards their Continuing Professional Development (CPD), as well as providing valuable knowledge and professional contacts on the day. Other stewards were recruited after advertisements in the local press and trained by CPRE staff before the event.

Visitors come from far and wide to attend the Green Buildings Open Days event as it is one of the only such events in the country. Tours of eco-homes take place in Stroud, Mendip, Brighton and Oxford every year, although our scheme in Norfolk seems to be the only one to offer booked personal tours with homeowners, architects and builders. It is also a great opportunity to introduce a wide-range of people to the wider work of CPRE as over 90% of people that book are not members of the charity. Over £1000 was raised in donations, reflecting people’s appreciation of the unique opportunity to visit pioneering green buildings.

The popularity of the event was also reflected in the positive media coverage received across the county. With features over six weeks in the Eastern Daily Press and Evening News, an article in the Sunday Telegraph, interviews on BBC Radio Norfolk and KLFM, and local press in the Lynn News, Wisbech Standard and Norwich Triangle Magazine, the event reached a wide audience. In addition, we were contacted by the New York Times (planning to run a feature on the event) and ITV (planning a documentary series on green building). It helps that the tours run in conjunction with the Heritage Open Days which attracts national media coverage.
Speculate to Accumulate

People would pay more for a greener home

So why are the Open Days so popular? For many people, there is a core desire to reduce their carbon footprint, but there are increasing number of ‘light green’ people who recognise that saving energy is also good for their pockets and the longer term value of their home. Research carried out earlier this year by the Energy Saving Trust has shown that over a third of people in the Eastern Region would pay more for a home that has been fitted with a renewable energy source, such as wind, solar or hydropower.

Philip Sellwood, Chief Executive of the Energy Saving Trust, said: “It seems people are willing to pay more for a home with a renewable energy source so investing in a solar panel or a wind turbine could add to the resale value of a property and could be as attractive to house hunters as a new kitchen or solid wood floors.”

“However, the research also revealed that 60% of East of England residents said that the price of renewable energy is putting them off investing, so the importance of the Energy Saving Trust in promoting access to suitable grants is vital.” he concluded.

The Energy Saving Trust is the UK’s leading organisation set up to address the damaging effects of climate change by helping everybody to cut carbon dioxide emissions – the main greenhouse gas causing climate change – from their homes by promoting the efficient use of energy and a lower carbon lifestyle. In East Anglia, as well as taking bookings for the Green Buildings Open Days event, staff at the EST call centre give impartial advice on all aspects of energy use, including the grant schemes available towards the cost of purchase and installation of renewable energy. Householders can call the Energy Saving Trust’s free-phone helpline on 0800 512012 to find out more.

CPRE Norfolk would like to formally recognise the support of the Energy Saving Trust, the John Jarrold Trust, Shape East and RG Carter Construction Ltd in making this event happen.

Case Study - Saffron Homes, Diss

It is difficult to single out any one of the twelve properties that opened their doors to the public, as all of them are inspirational in their own way. But in terms of the long-term future for mass house-building, it is interesting to look at the Saffron properties in Skelton Road, Diss, which are expected to create approximately 1.5 tonnes of carbon per annum, compared to 6 tonnes in a typical home.

As a Housing Association, Saffron Housing Trust has developed almost 350 homes in the last 5 years. Housing Trust properties are required to comply to higher energy standards than those built by commercial housebuilders, so Saffron are investigating ways these standards can be met. “We have completed a range of buildings that address sustainability issues in different ways, and the two in Diss that were opened this year, are the latest in this programme and the most productive.” explains Saffron Housing Trust’s PR Officer, Rachael Trezise. It is anticipated that Saffron will adopt this style of homes on other projects across the county. So what makes the properties so successful in environmental terms?

“They are designed to comply with the “passive” homes concept so the home needs minimal space heating.” says Rachael. “They are oriented to the south to achieve the best solar gain, and have triple glazed doors and windows to reduce heat loss. The homes are provided with an air source heat pump, which supplies hot water for the occupant’s needs, and the minimal space heating. They also have low volume baths and showers and dual flush toilets to reduce water consumption.”

Saffron Housing Trust’s David Daniels starts the tour at Skelton Road Diss
Planning

Size is Everything

The Sheringham Supermarket Saga Takes A Further Twist

As widely expected, Tesco have submitted a new application for a supermarket in Sheringham in North Norfolk. This follows the November 2007 refusal of the previous application by North Norfolk District Council, and the decision to uphold this by the Planning Inspector following a three week public inquiry held in July 2008.

The Inspector rejected the appeal by Tesco on the grounds that the size of the store would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the viability and vitality of the town centre, and on the character of the town. She also found the layout and design of the building to be poor in terms of both its function and the ‘architecture’ in relation to the site and the town centre as a whole.

Although the new application appears to address these issues, on closer inspection there is much to concern CPRE. Although the size of the actual sales floor space was stated to have been reduced, the design now includes a mezzanine floor and details of five adjacent independent retail units. In total, there is still approximately 1500sqm sales space on site, equivalent to the original application. There is also the potential to extend the mezzanine floor in the future or simply re-design non-public areas to create additional sales space.

Furthermore, two contradictory statements within the plan leave 470sqm of gross floor space unaccounted for and a question over whether this could also become sales floor space at a later date.

CPRE has fought the Tesco proposals since 2003 on the grounds of its size (too large for a small coastal town like Sheringham), location (edge-of-town and out of character with the existing town) and its impact on existing retailers (Sheringham has a rich network of small independent traders that we believe would be severely adversely affected).

Our stance is drawn from and backed up by the national Planning Policy Statement on Town Centres and Retail (PPS6) which seeks to protect the vitality of existing town centres and takes a sequential approach to location (with out-of-town stores being least favourable). We referred also to the North Norfolk Local Development Framework (LDF) which sets an indicative upper limit of 750sqm floor space for any new supermarket application in Sheringham.

Although the Tesco application offers little to appeal to CPRE, we found ourselves in a dilemma when an alternative supermarket application was tabled by a local businessman. The Greenhouse Community Project seeks to encourage a major change in society’s approach to food shopping, preparation and sourcing and provide an innovative alternative to major supermarket retail. The project will incorporate a supermarket in an energy-efficient building, a Food Academy to offer practical cookery education to community groups and schools, and allotment space for residents to grow their own vegetables and fruit.

CPRE has written to North Norfolk District Council to express support for many of the key elements of this application. We are very supportive of the aim to engage consumers with basic cookery skills, raise awareness of food sourcing and nutrition and use regional and local suppliers to lessen reliance on global supply chains. We also support the efforts to reduce the carbon impact of the buildings themselves.

Nevertheless, essentially this is still an application for a large out-of-town supermarket with a sales floor space much greater than that recommended for the town. Despite the encouraging elements of the Greenhouse Community Project application, the location and scale of the plan still give us concern. The planning system may also offer limited support for such an application and CPRE has to work within this framework to provide a consistent approach to all applications it views. In fighting an out-of-scale, Tesco supermarket for over 6 years and in seeking to protect the viability and vitality of the existing high street and character of the town centre, our principles are well defined. Size matters, in all cases.
Here today, gone forever?
CPRE Norfolk Director James Frost considers the prospects for the Rackheath countryside

Imagine waking up in your brand new eco-home in Norfolk’s new eco-town. Imagine walking into your shower with water heated by solar panels, go out the door to catch the high speed rail link into Norwich, back in the evening to take the children to the local wildlife area. 21st century living has never been better.

Or has it? Although the Government has announced plans to build a new eco-town in the village of Rackheath between north-east Norwich and the Broads, CPRE Norfolk remain unconvinced. Let’s start again...

Imagine waking up in your brand new Barrat Home in Rackheath. You open your window to the sound of traffic from the nearby Northern Distributor Route. At the same time, 10,000 other people are waking up in this new settlement - a town the size of Cromer (but without the history or the sea) and many will, like you, be travelling by car to a job on the other side of Norwich. You’ll drive back in the evening, to your well-insulated house with all the mod-cons, feeling slightly guilty about your energy use and supermarket purchases - you have a feeling that something should be different here, but you are not quite sure what. Maybe it’s true what they say in the old neighbourhood, that all this used to be green fields and that Rackheath used to be a sleepy village in the countryside.

Wherever your imagination takes you, Gordon Brown’s idea of an eco-town is a carbon-neutral settlement with good public transport links, affordable housing and lots of green space. High aspirations indeed but in reality, will a new town at Rackheath be genuinely sustainable and provide a true exemplar?

It is easy to forget that the eco-town will primarily comprise a series of new brick housing estates set on concrete foundations built over green fields in the countryside. And although the homes will be well-insulated and some will use renewable energy, much tougher standards could have been applied. The Government’s own Code of Sustainable Homes sets out guidelines from 1 to 6 (highest) and eco-towns only reach to 4. There are plenty of local examples of low-impact buildings (see our Green Buildings Open Days write-up on page 4-5) yet we do not expect to see them represented in the eco-town.

Elsewhere in the eco-town, 40% of land will be devoted to ‘green infrastructure’ such as urban parks, wildlife corridors and community areas. But does this really compensate for the irretrievable loss of ordinary countryside? Although CPRE Norfolk supports the provision of allotments for local food production and some recreational space within built up areas, this should not be at the expense of access to the wider landscape. The countryside should surround the town, not the town surrounding a pseudo-countryside.

So where will people work? CPRE Norfolk expects there still to be a significant environmental cost borne from additional private transport journeys and traffic congestion, as people travel to and from work in Norwich. In fact, according to local councils, plans for Rackheath are dependent on delivery of the Northern Distributor Route (NDR) - the controversial 4-lane bypass that will join with the Southern Bypass and run around the East and North of Norwich. CPRE have fought plans for the NDR since 2003 and long predicted that massive housing expansion will one day be served up to fund the road. That day is now here, under a supposed ‘green’ ambition.

In summary, CPRE questions whether greenfield development on this scale (4,000 dwellings) could ever be called ‘eco’. We will continue to fight for a reduction in total housing numbers for the area, together with a greater concentration of housing on previously developed sites, genuine delivery of affordable homes for local people and a uniform approach to energy conservation in all new and existing buildings. But, if plans for Rackheath come to fruition, we will study the details of the planning application next year and argue our case.

Until then, we can only imagine...
CPRE Norfolk Awards

The 2009 CPRE Norfolk Awards Ceremony takes place this year on Thursday November 19th at The Assembly House in Norwich and once again the judges have selected a fine choice of outstanding projects, representing excellence in conservation, restoration, education, landscape and architecture. Here’s a taster...

The Green Pavilion at Lower Gresham

This lovely little building is green in more ways than one. It has been sustainably designed using natural materials in construction, has solar panels for water heating and high insulation levels. Visually, it appears to sit in the meadow, blending comfortably with the surrounding environment and connecting well to the natural surroundings. As a holiday let, it is hoped that visitors will be able to appreciate and interact fully with their environment during their stay.

The new nave roof at St Peter's Church, Strumpshaw

The work of Nigel Sunter and Iain Walker of Purcell Miller triton, the new nave roof has been designed to match the original medieval roof and includes a new lighting scheme for the entire church. The design enabled the tower arch to be exposed and the installation of a new high-level stained glass east window.

Fairhaven School Garden & Gardening Programme

A true community project involving staff, children, parents, the Broads Authority, Royal Horticultural Society and the Fairhaven Garden Trust. The garden has been developed further to now include raised beds which have been filled with soil and ready for planting. Plants and trees have been trimmed back and special signs have been made by the children. The school has been selected by the Royal Horticultural Society to develop a programme of gardening.

New Judges

CPRE Norfolk are pleased to welcome two new judges to the Awards judging panel this year.

Caroline Davison is a conservation officer and a writer. She has worked for Norfolk County Council for over twenty years, and in recent times project-managed the conversion of the café-wing at Waxham Barn, and the repair and conservation of 11th century wall paintings at Houghton-on-the-Hill, both of which won CPRE Norfolk Awards. She is also active in promoting practical measures for improving the energy efficiency of traditional buildings, and in finding imaginative, sustainable new uses for redundant rural buildings.

Michael Reynolds is architect and director of a North Norfolk-based private practice of 30 years standing. He is passionate about both the natural and built environment, with work embracing a wide range of conservation and contemporary projects in the Anglia region. His practice has won national competitions and several design and conservation awards, including three CPRE Norfolk Awards.

If you are aware of, or involved in a project, which you would like the judges to consider for next year’s CPRE Norfolk Awards, please contact the Branch Office. Application Forms will be available from January.
Pride in Norfolk
Focus on Great Massingham

It is easy to understand why the EDP Pride in Norfolk judges awarded Great Massingham the prize this year for the Best Village with Under 500 Residents and also the Green Spaces Award, both of which categories are sponsored by CPRE Norfolk.

This beautiful village near Houghton Hall looks at first glances like a typical, picturesque village, complete with church, duck ponds and a village green in its centre. But as Sue Nash, Secretary of Gt Massingham Parish Council says – “We compare ourselves to a swan - we may look good, but we are also paddling furiously underneath!”

This furious activity is amply demonstrated in an extensive range of village amenities and in community activities. Gt Massingham is lucky enough to have the ‘holy trinity’ of village services - a school, a pub and a village shop with post office. It also has a doctor’s surgery with pharmacy, a village hall with a busy programme of events, mobile library, mobile fish and chip van and regular bus service.

These are the tangible factors which undoubtedly help the well-being of the village and its residents. But the community aspect - the intangible - of the village is in well evidence too. There is a community car scheme operated by volunteers, an annual village fete and numerous clubs and activities for all ages - all of which help make this a thriving, lived-in village. Some of the activities are organised, or co-ordinated by the parish council, but many events are led by individuals. Typical of this is the Christmas lights appeal, which aims to raise enough money to buy 5,000 lights to decorate the large tree in the centre of the village. The appeal is run by a relative newcomer to the village, and already has raised almost 75% of funds needed.

Gt Massingham does not escape the problem of second homes which characterises many chocolate-box villages, but the parish council is actively taking steps to address the issue, by selling off some under-utilised allotment land specifically for affordable homes. Significantly the council has imposed criteria on the allocation of these, so priority is given to existing Gt Massingham residents, or those whose family came from the village. A second phase of affordable homes, including one bedroom flats and family homes, is planned, which meets the challenge of ‘Homes for Life’, and helps keep young and old people in the village.

So what is Great Massingham’s secret? How can such a small village achieve so much and have such a strong community identity? “It's simple,” says Sue Nash. “You need to have a lot of people putting in a little effort.” Sue’s right - it is simple. Yet surprisingly difficult to achieve.

Does your village offer as much to its residents as Great Massingham? Is there something else that is special about your community, or that gives it a particular “buzz”? If so, why not enter it for the 2010 Pride in Norfolk Awards?

There are various categories dependant on size, and there are also special Awards - the CPRE Green Open Spaces, as well as two new categories the ‘Community Buildings’ sponsored by Norfolk Rural Community Council, and the ‘Forward to the Future’ Award sponsored by the Norfolk Federation of Women’s Institutes.

Entries for the 2010 Awards are accepted from January and the closing date is 31 March. Further information about the awards and the entry process is available from EDP Pride in Norfolk, Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 1SG, or by e-mailing helen.wiggins@norfolk.gov.uk, or by telephone on 01603 222705.
Obituaries

It is with great sadness that CPRE Norfolk reports the deaths of four valued and long-standing supporters this year, including our longest-serving Trustee Nicolas de Bazille Corbin and Vice-President Dr Paul Ashbee. We also say farewell to Aubrey Buxton, Patron of the charity, and South Norfolk District Committee member George Beckford.

Nicolas de Bazille Corbin was CPRE Norfolk's longest-serving trustee having been a member of the Executive Committee since 1948. He was also a Vice-President and played an active role as one of CPRE's representatives on the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust. In 2003, he was awarded the prestigious CPRE Countryside Medal for his contribution to the charity.

His interest in land, countryside and historic buildings was extensive, having trained as a land agent at Queens' College, Cambridge, before joining the National Trust with responsibility for its properties and 10,795 acres in Norfolk. During his 30-year career with the National Trust, he was credited with restoring the fortunes of Blickling Hall, and widening public access to the whole of the National Trust's East Anglian estates.

Nicolas was also a member of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association's council and was awarded an MBE in the 1996 New Year's Honours for his services to church conservation in Norfolk.

Aubrey Buxton

CPRE Norfolk Patron Lord Buxton died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 91 at his home, Stiffkey Hall Farm. He was greatly respected for the creation of the Survival series and as a founding director of Anglia TV in 1958. This was driven by his life-long passion for wildlife and birds. The programmes reached audiences worldwide, and made a huge contribution to public interest in wildlife.

I first met Aubrey Buxton some 12 years ago, when we jointly and successfully opposed a proposal to allow off-road 4WD vehicles the right to drive along the track from Stiffkey to Morston Greens, which would have had a huge impact on a sensitive landscape. This led to wider contact on the conservation work he had carried out at the 500-acre Stiffkey Hall Farm, including the creation of Stiffkey Fen. The Fen is a 35-acre field which was dug out to leave islands and then flooded, to become a valuable site for over-wintering wildfowl and waders.

In recent years Aubrey had not been able to keep cattle on the river meadows and had observed at the same time a fall in the numbers of waders. He concluded that this was likely due to a decrease in insect life associated with the cattle - an important part of the birds' early diet. We were able to introduce him to a grazer with Highland cattle; a tiny 'payback' in respect of what we had been able to learn from his example.

By Ian Shepherd

Dr Paul Ashbee

CPRE Norfolk Vice-President, Dr Paul Ashbee, who died in August, was an active member of CPRE's South Norfolk District and the Loddon & Chedgrave Society.

Professionally, he was considered by some to be the most talented postwar archaeologist concerned with the excavation of prehistoric British burial mounds, working on many of the highest profile digs in the country. He was an archaeologist at the Centre of East Anglian Studies, at the University of East Anglia from 1968 until his retirement and wrote numerous and well-received books on his subject.

George Beckford

George Beckford was one of CPRE South Norfolk District's most active volunteers. Even in his later years he was keen to be involved in CPRE Norfolk's recent campaign on litter and fly tipping and often helped out at litter picks throughout the county.

His interest in the countryside and the environment was deep and long-standing and was considered to a leading light in environmental issues, particularly in the village of Hethersett where he served as Parish Council Chairman for eight years. He was also chairman of the Hethersett Society and a founder member of the Hethersett Environmental Action Team (HEAT).

His memorial service at St Remigius Parish Church in Hethersett will be remembered by many, with members of George's family paying tribute to him in song and poetry.
District News

CPRE West Norfolk keep the bees buzzing

Dr. Clive Wakes-Miller, a beekeeper for over forty years and a Trustee of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, gave an excellent lecture on bees at the CPRE West Norfolk Autumn Supper in September. Attended by over 70 people, the lecture in Snettisham Memorial Village Hall brought to life the world of bees and their importance to human civilisation.

Although most people think only of honey, bees actually pollinate a third of the food we consume (such as almonds, pumpkins, cucumbers, raspberries, avocados and alfalfa). As well as this essential contribution to global food supply, bees also pollinate the cotton which makes our clothes and plants which produce our medicines. They are essential to the world’s agriculture.

Civilisations through the ages have revered bees, recognising the essential role that they play. Tomb decorations in Aegean cultures, bee motifs on Mayan ruins, stories in Greek mythology and paintings on Egyptian temples signify the importance of bees to ancient people. In fact, evidence of beekeeping dates back over 4,000 years.

Despite their significance and long association with human endeavour, bees are on the decline. Beekeepers have reported losses of up to 80% from commercial hives from various locations around the world and a third of UK bee colonies have been lost over the last two years. Pesticides, climate change, disease, varroa mites and shifts in flowering patterns could all be playing a part in the decline of honey bees.

Although the Government has offered £5 million to look into the scientific causes of the collapse in bee populations, Clive encouraged the audience to take an active part by planting seeds or taking up beekeeping. He said, “It is time that we did something ourselves - why not start at home? Something effective but simple, cheap and not physically taxing, undertaken by all ages. If we can encourage every member to help create a more natural environment locally, the effects of reducing pesticides and of spreading wildflower seeds by planting them in our gardens can have a significant result at a national level.”

Clive recommends the book ‘A World Without Bees’ - Alison Benjamin and Brian McCallum, on sale at all good bookshops.

Bill Jordan, MBE

Bill Jordan, MBE
CPRE West Norfolk’s next event is their Annual Lunch on Tuesday, November 17th at Knight’s Hill Hotel, South Wootton, King’s Lynn. Guest speaker at the lunch will be Bill Jordan, owner of the Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Gardens, now one of Norfolk’s most popular and, following BBC's Springwatch, most high-profile nature reserves and attractions. Bill will be giving a talk on ‘Pensthorpe – Past, Present & Future’.

Bill Jordan’s interest in food, farming and nature was started at an early age – growing up at the family flour mill in Bedfordshire. While travelling in the United States in the late 1960s Bill encountered the fledgling whole foods movement and was left with a deep impression of the importance of whole grain cereals in a healthy and balanced diet.

On his return to the UK, and despite their father’s advice, Bill and his brother David founded Jordans, making whole grain oat based cereals from the back of the Jordans family flour mill. The company grew quickly and in 1981, at a time when sales of chocolate confectionary were the norm, Bill launched the first cereal bar in the UK – The Original Crunchy, which is still on sale today.

In 2003 Bill and his wife Deb decided to pursue their interest in conservation further and bought Pensthorpe. The farm on the estate grows Conservation Grade® cereals which are used in Jordans products and has allowed Bill to see how the conservation system works at all levels. Bill now divides his time between Pensthorpe, where he lives with his family, and Biggleswade in Bedfordshire where the cereals are still made.

The West Norfolk District Annual Lunch starts at 12.15 for 1pm and costs £17.50 per head, including the two-course lunch. Tickets are available from Mrs Pat Robinson, 46B Goodwins Road, Kings Lynn, PE30 5QX. Tel: 01553 776442
Knowing your Place

Foreword by Richard Mabey

This anthology is both a celebration of the region’s wide skies and watery landscapes and a testament to the many writers who, according to Richard Mabey, “have sought nourishment in the austere air of East Anglia”. Knowing Your Place is published by Norwich-based Black Dog Books, and follows progress from the illimitable mudflats of the Wash, by way of Breckland’s badlands, to the crumbling cliffs at Dunwich; and from the debatable ground of the north Norfolk coast to the Halvergate flats and the watermeadows of the Stour valley.

Contributors include incomers to the area who have put down roots, many of whom are distinguished nature writers, such as the late Roger Deakin, Mark Cocker and Mabey himself together with Adrian Bell and George Ewart Evans before them. Others contributors such as Virginia Woolf, Henry James, Edward Thomas, John Cowper Powys and Sylvia Townsend Warner were ‘exotic migrants’ who left their impressions in letters, diaries and essays.

There are also, of course, the thoughts and work of native East Anglians – including Alfred Munnings, George Crabbe and Mary Mann (whose work CPRE members will be familiar with, following the tribute to her work by Patience Tomlinson at Wolterton Hall last year).

Readers will also recognise the name of contributor Caroline Davison, one of the new CPRE Norfolk Award judges, whose perspective on Breckland is encapsulated in “A Lamentable Tragedy”.

Usually selling at £16.99, CPRE members can buy copies of Know your Place at the special introductory price of £15.99 incl p+p. Send your name, address and cheque, made payable to:

Black Dog Books, 104 Trinity Street, Norwich, NR2 2BJ.

Further details from 01603 623771, blackdogbooks@computekmail.co.uk or from the Black Dog website www.blackdogbooks.co.uk.

A CPRE Christmas at Houghton Hall

CPRE Norfolk is holding a Christmas Celebration at Houghton Hall in December by kind permission of our patron Lord Cholmondeley.

With Christmas drinks, seasonal canapes and carols, this is a fantastic opportunity to see behind the scenes of this magnificent Palladian residence, the home of Great Britain’s first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The evening will include a personal history of the Hall by a guest speaker, and local carol singers will also be getting guests in the festive spirit!

The Christmas Drinks evening takes place on Saturday December 5th from 7pm-9pm with gates opening at 6 30pm. Tickets cost of £15 per head and numbers are limited, so to guarantee your place, please send your name, number of tickets requested at the earliest opportunity to CPRE Norfolk at 42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich, NR2 1NR. Please make cheques payable to CPRE Norfolk and enclose a SAÉ. Further information from 01603 761660.