

Brook Farm

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We worked most of the weekend with a team of about 34. New drainage trenches were excavated and filled with gravel and the whole site was levelled before laying the three lines of tyres which would form the new, more 'temporary' foundations for the building.

A floorplate was made and laid on top of the tyres. The floor was complete by dinnertime so we relaxed with beers around a camp-fire in the woods, and socialized!

Sunday saw the erection of the timber frame complete with roof trusses and perkins. By lunch time we had the plyboards, waterproof membranes and felt layers for the roof in place.

Now the time had come to infill and the straw bale frenzy began. Everyone was keen to have a go at building with the giant lego bricks and, before we knew it, we had a wall. Wasn't there supposed to be a window and a door in that wall?! After restraining orders were set, the serious work started and by the

end of the day my new house was beginning to look like a house.

Our final day came on Monday. Window boxes and door frames were made and the gaps between the straw bales were filled in ready for lime rendering. Following safety talks and a demonstration by Rob Buckley of D.C.R.S., we donned rubber gloves and goggles and got mucky applying the lime putty to the bales. Mike supervised the reuse of the cordwood log ends salvaged from the original building. They were then also rendered with lime putty.

At last, by Monday evening, we had a house. What an achievement! The BBC camera crew recorded the event throughout for their programme Inside Out. I believe that without this proof of our successful mission over that four day period, myself and my dedicated team of helpers may have wondered whether the whole event was just a dream... or a nightmare! I say we achieved the practically impossible and my heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who helped, especially the catering crew who kept us all sane!!

If you would like to see the finished project for yourself ring Caroline Barry on 01458 850243 for details of her next open day.

BULLETIN BOARD

For Sale:

Clements roof light. 1200x 800mm external, 840 x 560mm glazed area. New and unused – still in original wrapper. Cost £450 new, will sell for £350. For more information, please ring Alison Henry on 01625 426358.

Dates for your diary

Trust events

13th – 14th February 2004 Natural and recycled building materials fair

This two-day Recycled and Natural Building Materials Fair, aimed at both professionals and the general public, will aim to provide an insight into the range of alternative materials and products now available to us. It will give manufacturers and suppliers the opportunity to promote low impact products through exhibitions and demonstrations.

The fair will be held at the Somerset College of Arts and Technology in Taunton. The college has been awarded Centre of Vocational Excellence status for construction and sustainability. More details of the event will be posted in the next edition of re:news. We are looking to promote this event to a wide audience and would be grateful of any help to ensure that EVERYONE gets to hear about it. Please contact Corina at the office if you would like to help.

5th November First Wednesday Meeting

Update on the most recent plans for Great Bow Yard and Wharf. Further details will be sent to you nearer the time.

Other events

Sustainable Construction in Practice (SCiP) will be running one day workshops on **Using Secondary and Recycled Aggregates in Construction** at 10 countrywide venues including Exeter on November 26th 2003 and Cardiff on November 27th 2003. For more information email: conferences@trl.co.uk tel: 01344 770514 or visit: www.trl.co.uk/scip

An effortless tip for a sustainable healthy winter garden

Whether your garden is used for growing home produce or simply as a place to relax and benefit from a sense of well being, your best gardening intentions may actually damage the infrastructure of the garden leaving it unhealthy and more prone to diseases and pest attack. With winter now fast approaching, many a greenfinger will be itching to get out there to make the best of the winter garden.

Keep your garden healthy and surprisingly alive throughout the winter months and ready to sprout into action in spring by leaving it alone. Deadheading plants, pruning, and weeding exposes bare soil to

rain. Rain erodes the soil and reduces fertility, compacts the soil and kills helpful organisms. Try leaving the vegetation to die down over winter. It will create a healthy soil teaming with beneficial creatures. These creatures are next year's pollinators, fertilisers, soil conditioners, pest controllers, and food sources for other creatures in the food chain. They are a sustainable and healthy alternative to garden chemicals and all you need to do is let them get on with it! Doing less is definitely more.

For tips on sensitive gardening visit the BBCi website on www.bbc.co.uk and type in gardening (try the winter border).

Finally, it is nearly that time of the year again. The next edition of re:news will not be out until the New Year and for many of you, this may be our last correspondence with you until then. So, without wishing to create panic and with many apologies for being so 'fashionably' early, may we take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.

IN BRIEF...

The Trust in action

Planning policy to be strengthened – A report by the Trust to the Town and Country Planning Association has been used to argue the case for planning policy which promotes sustainable construction techniques. The full report will be published in October and copies will be available from STSD.

Sustainable Local Food – In collaboration with Somerset Food Links, research is underway to identify potential sites for a local food centre which will promote sustainable food and farming and exemplify the best in sustainable building in the countryside.

Local Timber supply – A Trust report has been produced with support from Blackdown Hills LEADER+. The report identifies the opportunity to support more local processing and marketing of timber from the Blackdown Hills. Full copies will be available from STSD.

Housing Associations go Eco – The trust has been supporting the SW Co-operative Housing Society and South Somerset Homes in developing schemes and policies for sustainable housing.

Springmead progress – Raglan Housing are just completing the purchase of the site in Chard which will be an exemplar sustainable development for social housing in the county.

Greenfield Way in Castle Cary – Eight houses built to very high environmental standards are being built in Castle Cary this year, they require practically no heating and in fact the biggest problem is finding a heating system small enough.

Dorset Councils embrace Sustainable Construction – The Trust ran two seminars for councillors and planners during the summer. They will now champion sustainable construction in their councils and work together across the county in a new partnership.



Great Bow Yard Party by the river

Approximately 60 people attended our 'Party by the River' at Great Bow Yard in July. The sun-baked venue proved perfect for an evening of summer socialising. Many locals and future neighbours of the GBY development enjoyed the opportunity to experience a taster of what the public space will have to offer and a glimpse inside the old warehouse before it is renovated. Three boats were launched from the wharf

Chris Black and his helpers for, amongst other things, clearing the site of bramble and debris to make places to sit; Rick Smith for providing his home-made charcoal and ensuring, with Ian and Lynn McNab, that there was an excellent barbeque provided; Bradfords Building Supplies Ltd who very generously donated £200 for the food and drink; Hugh Tripp from East Pennard who kept everyone merry with his kind donation of local organic wine... Thank you!



Left: The warehouse provided an interesting backdrop to a summer party.
Below: Relaxing by the river

providing an insight into the pleasure that the wharf will bring once reinstated. As the sunset was admired from the riverbank, the bonfire was lit and the evening came alive with music from local musicians returning from Frome Folk Festival. We are grateful to many people for their help in making a successful evening's entertainment:



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Photo courtesy of Stuart Black

STSD aims to make sustainable construction the norm rather than the exception in Somerset by 2010. STSD is supported by Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, South Somerset District Council, the Housing Corporation, Shell Better Britain and World Wildlife Fund (UK).



Great Bow Yard

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Great Bow Yard

Recent weeks have seen GBY inundated with engineers. Structural engineers have come via the Somerset Building Preservation Trust whom we hope will be taking on the renovation of the warehouse. Others have come via SWEH to look at the existing drainage and sewerage systems and to excavate the wharf wall to assess its condition.

Great Bow Badgers update

In July, we employed a specialist Badger Consultant to advise on and manage the task of relocating the GBY badgers. On the 11th and 12th July a specially designed sett was constructed just a few metres from the existing sett. The



Under construction. The new badger sett consists of many interlocking tubes and chambers specially designed with badger preferences in mind. The chambers are capped before the whole area is buried under a deep layer of soil and seeded with grass.

badgers have already begun to use the new sett with evidence of bedding visible outside the new entrances.

With Planning Permission for the 12 dwellings now granted, the next step is to seek another licence from English Nature to allow the final closure of the old badger sett. This will be done after our badger consultant has inspected the site to ensure that the badgers have taken fully to their new man-made home. Until this point, no heavy machinery will be allowed near to the setts in order to protect the badgers from disturbance.

Foundations being laid

The next phase of work on the GBY site will primarily be the sinking of piles and foundations for the two terraces of housing. This has been delayed slightly and is likely to be completed early next year and will be followed by the rest of the groundworks for drain runs and access roads.

No stopping us now!

At last, on the 12th September 2003, following months of negotiations between the planners and the design team and after an extension of public consultation, South West Eco Homes was granted full Planning Permission by South Somerset District Council for the erection of 12 EcoHomes at Great Bow Yard. The new designs have been drawn up by our architects Stride Treglown and the photos below indicate what the finished development will look like. To find out more why not join us at November's First Wednesday meeting.



Left: Cross-section of the east wing.

Below: View of how Great Bow Yard will look from the river.



STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

STSD goes to No.10!

As this edition of re:news goes to press, Julian will be shaking hands with the Prime Minister and Mrs Blair after receiving a formal invitation to an event intended to give public recognition to the positive and important role played by the people who work to promote sustainable development and improve their local environment. 200 guests have been invited. The list was compiled by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as the department with lead responsibility for sustainable development and the environment, and regional offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is a significant step of recognition for the Trust and we will let you know if anything arises from this in the next edition of re:news.



Grants

Making you Warm and Well through energy efficiency

Householders can claim between £100 and £3000 grant assistance through the new Somerset Warm and Well scheme, starting this October. All homeowners and privately renting tenants in Somerset will be eligible for a grant or discount to install loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and other energy efficiency measures, regardless of income level.

Free advice and information on energy efficiency measures will also be available. For further information, or to apply, call the Bristol & Somerset Energy Efficiency Advice Centre free on 0800 512 012.



Helping people make sustainable construction a reality...

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills

Set in the Blackmore Vale's beautiful countryside, DCRS, the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills, provides training and information for a range of traditional building skills including the use of lime, cob construction and repair, masonry and timber work. Particular attention is paid to sustainable building practices such as straw bale construction and low-cost, ecological methods of building. DCRS has identified a need for such skills having grown itself out of a network of people involved in building and renovation work in Dorset over many years.

In-house and invited specialists run lectures, talks and open days on complementary subjects such as solar heating, energy and water conservation, the effects of building on wildlife, nesting birds etc, and environment friendly insulation. All courses are open to any individuals and organisations wishing to understand and implement these skills and technologies. DCRS's two lecture rooms are both available to outside use within the ethics of the centre. Other courses covered include pottery and blacksmithing.

Developments at Brook Farm

by Caroline Barry

So what did you do August Bank Holiday weekend? We took down the house and rebuilt it! It was intense, traumatic and a lot of fun!

Eight years ago I sold my neat safe stone cottage and bought a field in Butleigh. It is only 3.5 acres in size but it's amazing what you can do on a small parcel of land. After putting up stables and barns, I began rearing calves, rare breed pigs and had my own flock of pedigree Dorset sheep. During this time my living quarters consisted of the stable, a tent and a caravan until, three years ago, I applied for planning permission to build a house of straw bale & cordwood.

I was granted a two year temporary planning permission which was then further extended for another year by the Inspectorate.



Above: The salvaged cordwood logs are reused

Right: The first row of tyres are positioned



Following the advice given to me by the Building Regulations officials, we built the house on the minimum 2' x 2' concrete pad foundations. Unless we did so the house, we were told, would not be recognised as a house and I would not be able to live in it!

Since then, Brook Farm and its development has been in and out of planning. We are now on application

007! The reason?... The permission that had been granted was for temporary accommodation. However, the planning department considered the house to be permanent due to the concrete foundation pads. This led to an enforcement notice being served, stating that the house had to come down by the 23rd August 2003 due to it being in breach of Planning Regulations.....So it did!

On Friday 22nd of August, armed with a team of 26 willing participants, we began a four day mission to dismantle and rebuild the house piece by piece.

Due to it being built of a timber frame with straw bale and cordwood infill, it came apart like a sliced loaf! However, the pressure was on. The JCBs that were coming to smash and dig out the concrete pads were arriving at lunchtime and we had to have a clear site by then. I have never seen so much fun being had from a demolition site! The workload was extreme, but the promise of a hearty lunch ensured

that we achieved the goal. Mind you we had a taskmaster for a boss - my very good friend Mike had taken it on his shoulders to be site manager, and had a strict time-table. By 6pm on the first day the house and all materials, including the concrete, had been

removed from the site.

Saturday arrived as did more workers. The re-build was an opportunity to re-orientate the new building to take advantage of a full south-facing aspect. It would also prove to the planners that the concrete had, indeed, been removed.

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Incidentallythe Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is keen to monitor the performance of community buildings that have been constructed using materials harvested from non-food crops (in particular: straw bales, hemp fibre, composite boards made with crop fibre and rape seed resin, and wool/flax insulation) against traditional methods. A formal demonstration programme will be introduced from April 2004, but they are keen to identify some pilot models as soon as possible, so funding may be available in the short term to help support the construction of buildings using these materials. If you know of such a building, or future plans for one in your area it may be worth your while contacting Carole Garfield at ACRE on 01285 653477 or email c.garfield@acre.org.uk for further details.