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THE REEPHAM SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1987

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The front cover of this newsletter features David Puttnam, the C.P.R.E's President. Mr. Puttnam is one of the world's top film producers (remember Chariots of Fire?) and last year accepted the C.P.R.E. presidency. He is a keen conservationist and in this issue we have included an open letter from him in which he seeks the co-operation of societies like ours to co-operate as effectively as possible to make the conservation heard. He looks forward to hearing from you.

A full list is given of the events arranged by the Society for this year. Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 23rd April, 1987, and the second part of the evening features a Norfolk dialect "expert", John Kett, who will offer amongst his presentation some of the poems and verse he has written. Our summer outing in June is somewhat unusual as we have organised a combined coach and boat trip to end around (by water) How Hill gardens.

An application form to enable members to submit schemes for the 1987 Award Scheme is included. If you are aware of any scheme which you feel merits consideration, then please submit details for the sub-committee to consider.

Other items feature the Old Burial Ground Wild Life Garden which is our project for the Civic Trust Environment Week, and some comments (probably not the last) on the Reepham Local Plan.

Michael Black
Tel. 870936

Middlemarch,
Broomhill Lane,
Reepham.

The Reepham Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the issue of the last newsletter.

Dr. P. Bass
Mr. and Mrs. G. Morgan
Mr. G. Meek
Dr. and Mrs. H. Sims
Mr. and Mrs. D. Thomson
Mr. and Mrs. F. Rayment
Mr. and Mrs. D. Knott
Mr. and Mrs. L. Eden-Morris
Dr. and Mrs. B. Wright
Mrs. and Miss Mirams
Mrs. M. Ffrench
Mr. and Mrs. P. Limond
Mr. and Mrs. P. Underwood
Mr. R. Damman

WINE AND CHEESE - FRIDAY 14th NOVEMBER

What an evening! The most successful fund raising effort in the Society's history was enjoyed on Friday, 14th November 1986. I'm sure all of you who came will agree that the culmination of effort by the small band of organisers and helpers made this a most enjoyable evening indeed. It is our usual practice to sell as many tickets as possible, usually the numbers attending are less than the number of tickets sold but this year not only did everyone seem to turn up but a number of others turned up for the evening and paid admission at the door. The sheer numbers necessitated the entertainment being presented in two performances and our thanks to the players of the Reepham Amateur Theatrical Society who went through twice the amount of effort they had intended, their co-operation was greatly appreciated.

With such a large number all areas of sale made handsome profits, particularly the raffle and the sale of coffee. The amount of wine obtained was based on previous years' sales and it was hardly surprising that all the wine was drunk by about 10.30 p.m. and a number of guests kept going by putting some of the raffle prizes to a lubricating use.

It would seem that about 175 people attended and although the car parking was tight, the rooms crowded, the entertainment late in finishing and with the wine running out it seems that everyone had a good time. Our thanks again to those who organised and helped and particularly to Mrs. Pat Large who acted as our "co-ordinator" throughout.

The income for the event totalled £718.55 and with the expenses totalling £238.62 it left the Society with a net profit of £479.93.

During the evening the presentations were made by Mr. R. Loose to the winners of the Society's 1986 Garden Competition. Mr. Loose, a well-known local gardener, was this year's judge and visited those gardens entered in May and September. The winners were:

The John Stimpson Cup - Large Gardens

1st	Mr. and Mrs. W. Blatch	Valley Farmhouse, Whitwell
2nd	Mr. L. Winwright	The Folgate, Whitwell Common
3rd	Mr. and Mrs. Norbury	Wood Farm, Themelthorpe.

The Ewing Cup - Small Gardens

1st	Mr. and Mrs. N. Wood	Mill House, Ollands Road
2nd	Mr. and Mrs. V. Lunn	18 Ollands Road
3rd	Mr. and Mrs. R. Pochin	36 Ollands Road
H.C.	Mr. S. Kent	The Spinney, Whitwell Road

EASTERN DELIGHTS - 22nd JANUARY

This evening was devoted to a talk entitled "Eastern Delights" and was given by Mr. C. Hanson Smith who is the Regional Information Officer for the National Trust and is based at Blickling Hall. Eastern Delights was nothing to do with belly dancers or Turkish chocolate but was the title given to an illustrated talk about some of the properties administered by the National Trust in the Eastern Region. An interesting talk which gave details of some of the work being carried out particularly with relatively new acquisitions, the one which impressed most people was Wimpole Hall near Cambridge. This Hall was bequeathed to the National Trust by the previous owner who was the

daughter of Rudyard Kipling. Apparently she spent a lot of money on the furnishings and interior but unfortunately paid little attention to the outside buildings and grounds. The National Trust has over the past few years spent a great deal of time and money on the whole estate and have turned it into a day out for the family, the Hall, the outbuildings, the estate and a farm full of animals from the Rare Breed Survival Trust all add together to provide something for everyone.

Another Hall featured was Sheringham Hall, recently acquired by the Trust. The Hall is not really big enough to be a building which will be open to the general public but the gardens will be open all the year round and are well worth a visit in May and June to see the wonderful display of azaleas and rhododendrons.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by
NORFOLK DIALECT READINGS by JOHN KETT
23RD APRIL, 1987

The Society's Annual General Meeting is to be held on the above date and the format for the evening will be as in previous years. The formalities and administrations of the first part of the evening will hopefully be over by 8.30 - 8.45 p.m. and this will be followed by a more light-hearted second part, an hour or so with John Kett and the Norfolk Dialect.

I have received the following note from the Honorary Secretary concerning the first part of the evening.

On 23 April the Society is holding its eleventh annual general meeting and the election of officers and committee for 1987/88. Under the terms of our constitution all four officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) and the Committee Members relinquish their positions every year and are eligible for re-election at the annual general meeting. The Constitution requires nominations for Officers and Committee to be made at least fourteen days before the A.G.M.; each nomination must be supported by a seconder and the consent of the nominee must have been obtained. Will you please therefore let me have nominations for the four officers and the Committee Members (there are a maximum of twelve) no later than 9 April. The names of the 1986/87 Officers and Committee are on our Notice Board in the entrance to The Bircham Centre and in the Society's window of Johnson's Newsagents. At the time of writing I do not know which of the present Officers and Committee will be standing for re-election, but details will be put up on the boards. Copies of the Society's Constitution can be obtained from me.

Margaret Hemmings, Honorary Secretary, "Cheville", Whitwell Road,
Reepham. Tel. 870759

There are few people who can be called true exponents of Norfolk Dialect, people who can talk from a historical base about the subject, who have a depth and understanding that allows them to talk and write about it and who can write poetry and songs in the dialect. The few that readily spring to mind are perhaps Dick Bagnall-Oakley, Eric Fowler, Sidney Grapes, John Kett and perhaps today the increasingly popular Keith Skipper.

We are pleased, for the second part of our evening, to have the talents of John Kett for our enjoyment. He will give us a potted history of the dialect from its Anglo-Saxon origins up to today and will conclude by asking, or informing, us as to where it is going.

He will then conclude the evening by reading some of his "poems" and verse and perhaps sing one or two of his songs.

John Kett has written a number of books of Norfolk verse including "Watcher 'Bor", "Tha's a Rum'un, Tew" and "A Year Go By". Eric Fowler - better known to us as "Jonathan Mardle" once wrote of John Kett that he is "a writer who can capture in verse the rhythm, and the peculiar intonation and turn of phrase, of the East Anglian dialect, and moreover express the homely sentiment and strong local patriotism of Norfolk people - the Broad Norfolk of John Kett is the genuine article".

John Kett is someone who is well worth listening to - don't miss him on 23rd April.

EVENING EVENTS ARRANGED THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF 1987

Thursday 28th May - A talk by Mr. R. Hart on "The Russians, their language, culture and military strength".

Thursday 4th June - A coach outing to How Hill Gardens (including a short journey by motor cruiser whilst at How Hill).

Thursday 23rd July - An illustrated talk by Captain P. Elphick on "British exploration in the Pacific in the eighteenth century".

Thursday 24th September - A talk by Mr. R. Williamson on "Through Afghanistan to the Russian border in search of Marco Polo sheep".

Thursday 23rd October - Annual Wine and Cheese Party

Thursday 26th November - An illustrated talk by Dr. A.G. Irwin on "Behind the Scenes in the Natural History Department of Norwich Castle Museum".

All meetings, with the exception of the How Hill visit and the Cheese and Wine, will be held in the Garden Room at The Old Brewery House - all will commence at 8.p.m.

THE REEPHAM SOCIETY AWARD SCHEME

Members will recall that the 1985 Award was won by the Merchant Yard development and the presentation was made in June 1986 to the builder, Mr. D. Crane. The Scheme is a bi-annual award and we are therefore inviting nominations for the 1987 Award. Any member or non-member can submit schemes, and the full details covering the Scheme are outlined below.

I would ask that any nominations you may care to make are sent to

Mr. Michael Black	or	Mrs. Margaret Hemmings
Middlemarch		Cheville
Broomhill Lane		Whitwell Road
Reepham		Reepham
Tel. 870936		Tel. 870759

by no later than 31st May, 1987. It is hoped the schemes nominated will be inspected during the summer and it is intended for the Award to be announced in November 1987.

If anyone feels they wish to make a nomination but do not want to complete the application form details then a telephone call to either of the above two numbers will suffice.

Members and non-members of the Society are invited to submit schemes. The following examples are not definitive but include the types of practical work to be encouraged:

- i) Restoration of old buildings and structures, both internally and externally and, where necessary, their adaptation to a new use.
- ii) Replacement of obtrusive, excessively large or garish shop and other signs by signs better suited to the character of the surroundings.
- iii) Improvement of the surroundings of buildings and areas by landscaping, appropriate lighting and street furniture, and other means to create a more pleasing setting.
- iv) New construction, the design of which harmonises with the character of the surroundings.
- v) Repair, cleaning and repainting of buildings.
- vi) Open spaces introducing more trees, grass and flowers.
- vii) Repair and preservation of vernacular details.

APPLICATION FORM

To: Hon Secretary, The Reepham Society.

I wish the scheme mentioned below to be considered for a Reepham Society Award . I have obtained permission from the owner, and occupier where appropriate, for this scheme to be entered.

Signed _____ Dated _____

Name _____ Address _____

_____ Telephone _____

Please complete accurately the following:

1. Name of Scheme and Address _____

_____ Date of Completion _____ (Schemes must be complete)

2. Name, Address & Telephone No of Owner _____

3. Name, Address & Telephone No of Occupier _____

4. Name and Address of Designer/Consultants _____

5. Name and Address of Builder or Manufacturer _____

6. Names and Addresses of any Organisation involved (state capacity)

7. Brief Description of the Scheme

NOTE: Any creative work which contributes to the quality and appearance of town-
scape or landscape is eligible. There will be no categorisation of entries. The
following points should, however, be noted: (a) schemes must be such that they
can be seen by the general public, (b) schemes must be fully completed (or if
in several phases this must be defined) and (c) entries consisting principally of
landscaping may need to be deferred for assessment if insufficiently mature to
allow an impression of the intended effect.

There is no limit to the number of entries allowed from any one source.

REEPHAM SOCIETY POSTCARDS

The Society has for a number of years offered for sale postcards of some of the more popular photographs that are held in our collection. Two more are now for sale and are currently available from The Chimes, The Fast Bat Press and The Old Brewery House (or from any Committee Member). The two new postcards show views of Reepham Market Place from the north, and from the east, further copies have also been printed of the Market Place from the south and north, ample supplies are therefore available of cards showing the four aspects of the Market Place.

CHURCHES AND PUBS

Many people have heard the comment that Norwich had "a church for every week of the year and a public house for every day". We can only presume that the person who made this statement had tried to visit each place and no doubt befuddled with alcohol and christian virtue, didn't get too far and was left to make a calculated but unfortunately an exaggerated guess.

The comment, however, does emphasise the point that in the past the community used and supported many more churches and alehouses than it does today and Reepham, like Norwich, is a prime example in this emphasis.

Reepham is perhaps, unique in housing three churches in one churchyard. Reepham comprises of four parishes, Reepham, Hackford, Whitwell and Kerdiston and each parish (excluding Kerdiston) had its own church.

The church of All Saints, Hackford was burnt down in 1544 and was demolished some time later although a small portion still remains and can be seen in the churchyard just to the north of the Town Hall. The two remaining churches are St. Mary's and St. Michael's. They can be easily remembered as St. Mary's is the larger of the two but has the smaller tower and St. Michael's is the church with the clock.

Reepham has in the past had thirteen inns or alehouses; it is said that beer was the common drink when tea was a luxury and a place like Reepham needed this number to support its thirsty residents. Many of these have gone and have mostly been turned into private houses.

The definitive list of inns, alehouses or drinking places is:

- The Crown
- The Kings Arms
- The Duke of York
- The Lamb
- The Greyhound
- The Swan
- The Sun
- The Star
- The George and Dragon
- The Black Lion
- The Lord Nelson
- The Farmers Arms
- The Folgate

Only two from the above list remain today, The Kings Arms and The Crown, although of course the town has a third, The Old Brewery House. As a hotel

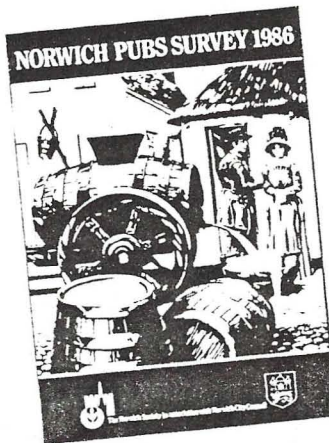
and current popular "drinking place", the Old Brewery is a recent addition to the town. Reepham could boast its own brewery which was situated in what was formerly the garden of the Old Brewery House and was in existence for about 100 years until the late 1870's. The house was a private residence until it was purchased and turned into an hotel and licensed premises in the early 1970's. In 1820 Mr. William Bircham, the owner of the brewery, built "The Ollands", a fine residence which was pulled down in the early 1970's to make way for the residential development now known as Ollands Park.

NORWICH PUB SURVEY

The British public house is a unique institution; from the centuries old coaching inns to the flamboyant Victorian and Edwardian gin palaces, they have a very special place in our architectural and social history. Unfortunately older pubs are particularly under threat from alterations, as breweries try to follow the whims of fashion by converting them into cocktail bars and restaurants, removing all the original fittings and even changing their names so that all their historical character is lost.

Norwich Society, aware of the effects of these 'modernisations' have been carrying out a survey of their city's pubs. This assesses the building's external and internal qualities, grades them on their general historic and architectural qualities, whether they retain such features as etched glass, carved woodwork etc, and also takes into account any alterations or additions to the pubs which might have enhanced or spoilt them. Not

surprisingly, the society found that the interiors have suffered more than the exteriors, such as the early 19c Cat and Fiddle - externally fairly well preserved, but inside altered beyond recognition. Among the best preserved pubs were Sir Garnet Wolseley and The Eagle. The society is now looking for sponsorship to produce a number of archive copies of the survey, with more detailed accounts and photographs of the pubs included.



REEPHAM OLD BURIAL GROUND WILD LIFE GARDEN

In a recent "Parish Council News" you may have noticed an item entitled "Norwich Road Cemetery" which informed that for the last two years the Council had ceased to maintain this old and unused cemetery due to the cost and that they had received a request from the Reepham Society to turn it into a nature reserve.

The present cemetery, on the Whitwell Road, was formed in 1856 at a cost of £200 for 1½ acres for Hackford and Whitwell at a cost of £450 for half an acre for Reepham and Kerdisten. The four civil parishes were united in 1935 to form the new parish of Reepham and the Parish Council took over the responsibility of the cemetery. It seems that the Norwich Road cemetery was redundant to the extent that a new burial ground was required in the 1850's, the old cemetery has therefore been a redundant area to be maintained for a long time.

In the Norfolk Chronicle the following article appeared in September 1954:

From the Norfolk Chronicle Sept. 1954

Norwich Road Cemetery is a headache reported the Chairman of the Labour Committee (Mr. B.G. Hall) at the bi-monthly meeting of the Reepham Parish Council at the Town Hall on Wednesday. Mr. G.F. Faircloth presided.

The observations arose on consideration of the reply from St. Faiths and Aylsham R.D.C. concerning a suggestion from the Parish Council whereby the cemetery could receive better attention by the levelling of the graves.

The R.D.C. asked a series of questions on the original provision of the ground, whether by the Parish Council under the Burial Act or by the Church authorities, whether it comprised all consecrated graves, when it was first used, and when did the last burial take place; has any person a perpetual right of burial there and what were the conditions imposed when permission was given for gravestones to be erected on various graves. Only in the light of answers to these questions could advice be given.

The Clerk (Mr. D. Kendall Chapman) said he had had occasion recently to consult the Minutes of the old Reepham Parish Council from 1894, and he had failed to find any reference to the provision of the ground and it must be assumed, apparently, that it was provided by the Church. There was also doubt as to whether perpetual rights of burial had been exhausted, and the Council agreed to let the subject lay on the table.

It is with little surprise that considering the questions posed by the St. Faiths and Aylsham R.D.C. that it was another 30 years before the Parish Council decided to off load this maintenance responsibility and we hope that the Reepham Society can come up with an acceptable set of proposals to turn this area into an amenity area.

The Committee has agreed that the Old Burial Ground Wild Life Garden should be a Society project for the Civic Trust Environment Week which is from 25th April to 4th May 1987. It is hoped that the formal opening of the garden will be during this week.

REEPHAM LOCAL PLAN

I'm sure that unless you have been in hibernation over the past few months you will not have missed the furore caused by the draft written statement of the Reepham Local Plan printed in November 1986. Not that the overall draft caused any particular concern but just one particular item; Item 3.3 recommended that an area of land of about 5 acres, to the south of the Primary school playing field should be allocated for residential development and it was felt that the site was capable of accommodating 50-60 dwellings.

The District Council had issued an earlier draft in February 1986, and this was followed by a public meeting and neither suggested that further residential development was desirable. Why therefore, did the November draft contain this "bombshell"?

Another public meeting was held on Wednesday, 11th February '87 and the reasons for this inclusion were explained. The November draft was intended to be the outline of the Reepham Local Plan for the next 10 years or so, if the current building rate in Reepham was to be maintained during this period there was insufficient land available within the current built-up area to allow this and additional land would have to be identified. Apparently it was the Parish Council who had pointed out to Broadland this possible shortfall and they asked Broadland to review possible areas for future proposed development. Broadland undertook detailed site investigations on 4 possible housing sites and recommended the Mill Road/Bar Lane site as the most suitable.

Unlike the first public meeting which was held to debate the first draft statement the public meeting on the 11th February was to debate the issue "Does the present rate of house building need to be maintained, if not then the allocation of land is not necessary".

About 300 people attended the meeting. Those who wanted residential development kept a very low profile indeed although Mr. A. Stimpson, the Parish Council Chairman, gave a creditable performance by making a speech which stuck to the Parish Council's reasons but which unfortunately was in opposition to nearly everything else said.

The opposition to the scheme was overwhelming and the District Council officers were left in no doubt that the overall feeling of the meeting was that this particular development was not desirable. Let us hope that democracy will prevail, that the voice of the people of Reepham will be heard and that the Planning Committee of Broadland will agree and pass the draft statement without the inclusion of this development.

Village 'not in need of homes'

REEPHAM was described as "a God-forsaken hole" when county councillors discussed its future.

Reepham county councillor Sally Marshall argued at yesterday's meeting of the county planning sub-committee that the village did not need any more house building for a time.

The population had grown substantially but there was no employment locally to absorb it with most people commuting to Norwich to work.

Graham Gotts commented: "When you see the rates people have to pay in the city of Norwich you can understand why people move out to a God-forsaken hole like Reepham."

Mrs Marshall said the Reepham local plan should not include an allocation of another five acres of housing land near the primary school. There should be a halt to building in the area for a time.

The head of planning, John Ayton, said Broadland District Council had responded to concern at Reepham about more house building and a public meeting had been organised for February 11.

The sub-committee approved Reepham's draft local plan with the proviso that "it is important to release land for development only at a rate compatible with the town's capacity to absorb it".

Fury of a town scorned

A CHORUS of protest rang out from Reepham yesterday after a leading Norfolk councillor branded the town "a God-forsaken hole."

"The very last thing Reepham is forsaken by God," said the rector, Canon Gordon Dodson. "Life in the church is quietly thriving."

Townfolk were reacting to a comment made on Wednesday by Graham Gotts during a county council debate about the town's future, reported in yesterday's EDP.

A repentant Mr Gotts, speaking from his Mundesley home, said yesterday: "Please forgive me, Reepham."

Tasteless

"I made the remark in the heat of the moment. I have very pleasant memories of Reepham. Far from being a God-forsaken hole, Reepham is a pleasant Norfolk country town."

But Reepham Society chairman, Anthony Ivins, said he found Mr Gotts comment, made at a meeting of Norfolk planning sub-committee, "inaccurate and tasteless."

"God-forsaken hole is the last expression I would have thought of for Reepham. I would say the town has developed well, and has a good mixture of people. The fact that the Reepham Society has 330 members shows that people take an interest in the place."

Canon Dodson told a reporter: "There are a lot of good things going on in the community at large and in the church as well. There is a good community spirit here and several clubs and organisations. Overall, it is a very happy place."

Parish council chairman Mr Anthony Stimpson accepted that Mr Gotts had probably made the remark in the heat of the moment. "The sooner we forget it the better," he added.

Still alive and kicking hard

NEARLY 30 years ago, a lively controversy ran in the EDP on the question of whether or not Reepham was a dying town. While not of the view that it was actually dying, the rector wondered if it might be sleeping.

Modern Reepham is far from dead, and is passing through sleepless nights. It is not the fear of stagnation that troubles the citizens, but the dread of urbanisation. This week some 300 assembled in the High School to tell Broadland District Council officers of their opposition to the parish council's claim that further land should be allocated for housing.

Reepham, as district councillor Gavin Graham pointed out, has grown dramatically over the past 15 years, and requires time to grow into a community and to establish facilities presently lacking. More pointedly, David Knott, chairman of Residents for Rural Reepham told the chairman of the district planning committee, "Reepham doesn't want, nor will it tolerate, more building at this time."

It may be that local traders are in favour of what the parish council chairman termed gradual growth, but an estate development across five acres would greatly exceed this emollient description. Reepham is fortunate in having both a Civic Society with 330 members, and another body of resident non-political activists, to express a distinctive voice on these matters.

As Mrs Jean Ogden, secretary of the Norwich Society remarked this week, more Norfolk towns and villages are in need of watchdogs to scrutinise building and development plans. Their value is likely to increase as the county lives through a period of unprecedented growth.

Village wants to keep rural flavour

RURAL Reepham wants to stay that way.

Almost 300 people gathered at the town's high school to tell Broadland District Council officers they did not agree with the parish council's claim that more land should be allocated for houses.

Speaker after speaker was warmly applauded as they stood to oppose the designation of a five-acre site near the primary school for residential purposes.

An organisation called Residents for Rural Reepham has been formed to fight the plan. Its chairman, David Knott, handed in a 560-name petition which contended that Reepham needed

parks and gardens, not bricks and mortar.

"Be in no doubt," he told Sheila Ashford, chairman of Broadland's planning committee, "Reepham doesn't want, nor will it tolerate, more building at this time."

He also handed in a copy of a letter from MP Richard Ryder which supported the opponents of additional residential development.

Broadland's head of technical services, Roger Colver, said the district council's original view was that with existing allocations, infill development and planning consents already passed, Reepham had enough housing land. It had

identified a further site for housing, however, following approaches from the parish council which said that if the current rate of building, around 25 homes a year, was to continue more land would be needed.

Residents argued that the infrastructure of the proposed site, public transport and employment opportunities were inadequate and laughed at suggestions that the existing schools could cope.

Sue Thomson pointed out that the primary school was already overfull and children had to use a mobile classroom.

Local district councillor Gavin Graham said Reepham had grown

dramatically over the past 15 years and needed time to grow into a community and time to establish the facilities which were lacking.

In response to a plea from Mrs Ashford for views in favour of land allocation, parish council chairman Tony Simpson, said the 36 members of the Reepham Traders' Association, whose livelihoods were inextricably tied up with the growth and thriving nature of the town, were in favour of gradual growth.

However, Elizabeth Rowson said that even the traders did not call the allocation of five acres for estate development "gradual growth".

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND

The Society has recently received an open letter from the C.P.R.E.'s President, David Puttnam. In this letter he identifies two natural conservation issues which are likely to cause major concern during 1987 and he feels that the C.P.R.E. should be able to reflect any resulting public concern in its discussions with Ministers and other political leaders.

This letter is reproduced in full and members of the Society are asked, if they feel strongly enough, to write to Mr. Puttnam indicating that they share the particular C.P.R.E. concerns his letter identifies.

4 Hobart Place, London SW1W 0HY
tel: 01-235 9481

*Patron: Her Majesty the Queen President: David Puttnam CBE
Chairman: David W. Astor Director: Robin George White*



Dear Friend,

In a 1986 New Year letter twelve months ago, I wrote, as President of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), to the leaders of the country's main political parties, about a number of key conservation issues. All of them replied in detail - and CPRE made these responses public.

With the possibility of a General Election in 1987, I now intend to write to them again. But first, I need your help.

The English countryside will face unprecedented new pressures over the next year or so. I should like to know that CPRE has your particular support for its attempts to ensure that the country's political parties put countryside conservation more securely at the centre of their priorities.

Two prospects are particularly troubling.

First, the future of British farming is now in the melting pot. This will have enormous implications for patterns of land use up and down the country.

There is wide official consensus that our farming industry and its EEC counterparts are now producing too much food - strange though that seems in a world in which famine is a continuing tragedy. British farmers are therefore likely to be encouraged officially, to stop increasing the production of crops and animals. But because yields per acre will inevitably continue to rise, one result will be pressure to take a lot of farmland - millions of acres, maybe - out of production. In the process, this land, perhaps up to 20% of England's surface area, could become available for new uses. This in turn would create the conditions for an inevitable swathe of new urban development across much of the lowland England which we have successfully kept green until now.

In Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels, options of this kind are being vigorously discussed. Perhaps they should be, though they are far from the only priorities.

But the key question is: are the interests of conservation and public enjoyment of our countryside at the centre of this debate? CPRE's experience is that they are not - because public opinion is not yet fully aware of what is at stake. We need your help to change this.

Our concern is all the greater because of a second massive change now in prospect for the countryside. This concerns the future of strategic land use planning in England and Wales.

The Government has recently published proposals for abolishing county structure plans - the instruments used by county councils for the strategic planning of land uses in their areas. Its intention is to hand over all formal strategic planning to the 333 District Councils in England and Wales. At CPRE, we recognise that some changes to the way in which land uses are planned may well be necessary. But surely, strategic responsibilities ought to be placed at a level higher than the districts, who in many cases have fairly narrow short term horizons? How, otherwise, are we collectively to decide where necessary new developments are to be distributed within individual counties in everyone's interest? And how are we to ensure that the interests of natural heritage are given adequate long-term priority.

Over the next few months, many conservation organisations, national and local, will be responding to the Government's consultation paper on this matter, The Future of Development Plans. My concern is to underline to you the close relationship that exists between this issue and the other, broader, question of the future of British farming.

Bluntly, the risk is that more and more of our farmland may become available for ill-considered development up and down England and Wales, at the very moment at which the country's long-established strategic planning system is being weakened. That is a recipe for chaos and controversy - and would be bad news for everybody.

This is not a political matter in a narrow party political sense. CPRE has always been strictly non partisan in its dealings with the parties - and all of them will now face the same dilemmas in addressing these major changes in agriculture and the future of land use.

What is important is that those of us involved with long-term environmental concerns should make the conservation issues felt in the crucial debates on these questions in Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels. If we fail to do so, narrow sectional interests and short term economic arguments will prevail.


Of course, in certain respects, conservation now counts politically more than at any time in recent memory. The importance of Green Belts, nature conservation and pollution control has never been more widely acknowledged. But we must ensure this continues in an election year.

If you share these concerns please write to me - David Puttnam CBE, President, Council for the Protection of Rural England, 4 Hobart Place, London, SW1W 0HY. Knowing that we have your personal backing will strengthen us enormously in our forthcoming discussions with Government Ministers and others.

The fact is, ultimately it is your local countryside that is at stake.

I look forward to hearing from you.

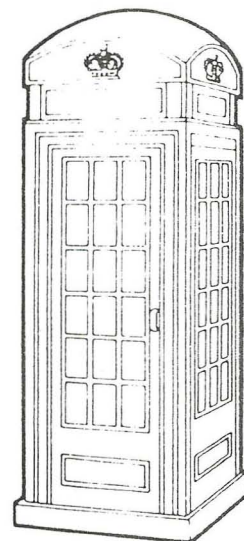
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Puttnam', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

David Puttnam
President

The Case of the Disappearing 'Phone Boxes

All over the country our familiar red telephone boxes have been disappearing at an alarming rate. Unfortunately there is no mystery involved – they are the victims of British Telecom's campaign to replace them with lightweight PVC housings. Despite numerous appeals to save them, the DoE has only listed ten boxes, so is this the end of the line for Gilbert Scott's famous design?



K2

The cast-iron red telephone box is part of Britain's everyday civic dress. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in two versions (K2, 1924 and K6, 1935) it was one of the first architect-designed items of street furniture, reflecting the classical decorum of its time and the solidity and permanence expected of a public service. The boxes were also sited in streets and villages with regard to the existing buildings.

Seeking a new image, British Telecom has for 18 months been carrying out a campaign of replacing all old boxes with lightweight, reputedly vandal-proof, housings. The only way of stopping this has been the listing of boxes by the DoE – latest score 10 out of 60,000 boxes listed. The Thirties Society has suggested the inclusion of telephone boxes in the conservation area protection, but the DoE refused to change the law to include street furniture. A circular sent by the Society to all local authorities nonetheless produced an encouraging response. Many planning officers have attempted to reach informal agreements with British Telecom regional payphone managers for the retention of boxes in key areas, but BT is under no obligation to discuss the question or abide by agreements. Cases have been reported of the removal of boxes which have been agreed for retention.

As the campaign of destruction continues, with hardly an original box left in the North-East, the Thirties Society has received many appeals from individuals and local civic societies for help and advice. At present, only the K2 model, the larger of the two, with squarish panes and a pierced crown in the spandrel over the door, is likely to be listed. These are found mostly in London.

The K6, with horizontal glazing and a low-relief crown, can only be listed in exceptional circumstances if the installation can be proved to be before

1940. As the design remained in production unaltered until 1968, this restriction is meaningless and arbitrary. The dating is very difficult to prove, and will exclude many boxes which contribute to their surroundings. As a result, from being the most common type of telephone box, the K6 could soon become the rarest. Listing may be a cumbersome process for the large number of kiosks suitable for preservation, but failing a change of heart by BT or an alternative method by the DoE, it is the only available recourse.

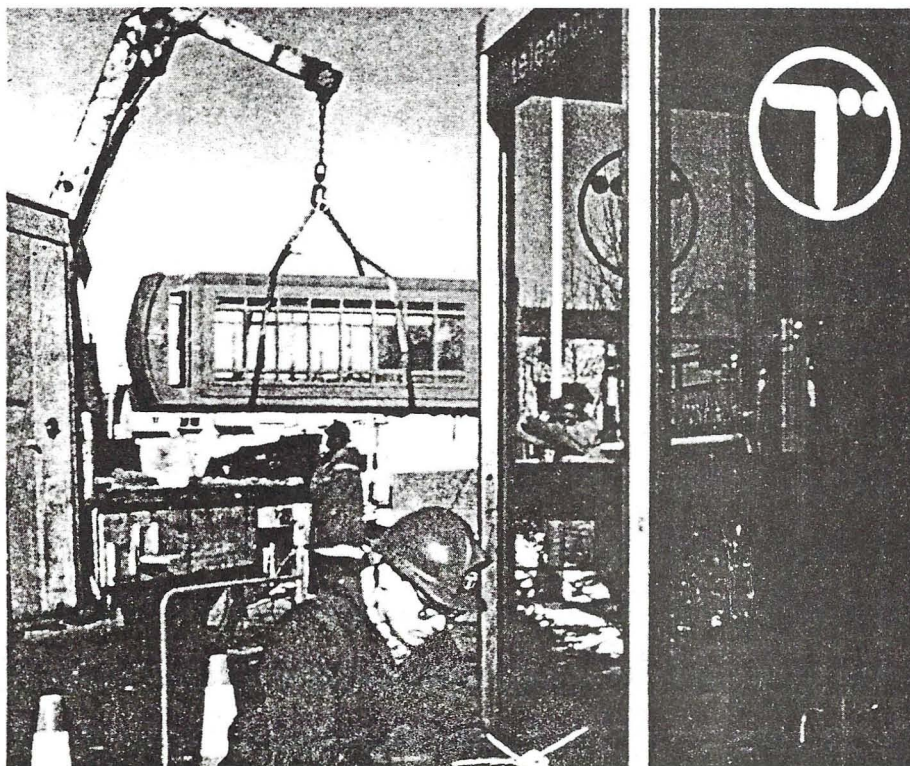
There is no doubt that BT's high-handed and inflexible attitude is widely condemned. The sale of old boxes to America at high prices for use as shower cabinets and other kitsch accessories adds insult to injury. The advantages claimed for the new boxes could easily be achieved by a judicious mixture of old and new, for the Giles Scott boxes can be fitted with the most modern equipment. All that is required is proper maintenance.

The choice should be available to the community. Some local authorities have carried out model consultation exercises with parish councils. Urban authorities like Westminster, Camden and Hackney have tackled BT and the DoE and succeeded by hard negotiation in keeping the boxes they believe are an asset to the street-scene.

At present, the statutory controls on BT's destructive programme are far too weak. Time is short, and only persistent pressure from groups and individuals will prevent the privatisation-drunk company from forcing the dreams of its marketing executives on a reluctant country.

Alan Powers, Caseworker of the Thirties Society.

The Thirties Society report *The British Telephone Box – Take it as Red* is available from 3 Park Square West, London NW1. Price £3.50 incl. p&p.



Right: As fast British Telecom are removing them, overseas buyers are snapping up our traditional cast iron telephone boxes.



The Norfolk Naturalists Trust

JUBILEE YEAR FULFILS ITS AIM

The Norfolk Naturalists' Trust was 60 years old last year. When the celebrations were planned, the objective was quite clear: This was to ensure that the trust profile was heightened throughout the county so that membership and funding would increase. This in turn would give the Trust the support it needed to expand its activities. These expectations have been amply fulfilled thanks to all the support we have had from all over Norfolk.

We take this opportunity to thank all our many supporters — members of the public, members of the Trust, wardens and their helpers on the 36 trust reserves, staff, MSC teams, Norfolk Conservation Corps, sponsors and grant-aid organisations and others who help us in kind, volunteers at our Cley and Ranworth Visitor Centres and shops, helpers in our Gift shop in Cathedral Close, organisers of our local members' groups and of our WATCH junior groups, birdwatchers, graziers on our reserves, purchasers of other produce from our reserves (reed, sedge, timber, etc.). The list is long.

To all these people and many more we send our warmest thanks.

Because of your support we have achieved: Our highest recruitment in many years (nearly 1500 new members); the purchase of 90 acres of the Salthouse Marshes almost entirely through donations; the creation of a new woodland; the continued improvement of visitor and educational facilities on our reserves; the extension of our work to sites of local conservation importance outside trust reserves.

The accent of the numerous events throughout the year was on public participation: Open days at all our major reserves and some smaller ones, town walks and large public events. These were all so successful that the trust plans to repeat these over the next few years.

Highlights of the year were certainly the Ted Ellis Jubilee lecture and Wildlife Gardening Exhibition in March, the David Bellamy lecture and WATCH day in October, the film "Norfolk in Trust" shown by Anglia Television in September, and the new Reserves Handbook published in July.

The Trust, established in 1926, was the first ever county conservation Trust. There are now 46 throughout the British Isles operating under the umbrella of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. Cley Marshes were the first reserve to be bought by the Trust, closely followed by Starch Grass (at Martham) and Alderfen near Barton.

The Trust now manages 6000 acres of excellent wildlife habitat, owning 5000 of this acreage. It safeguards such unique and endangered species as the marsh harrier, avocet, bittern, otter, swallowtail butterfly, spiked speedwell, maiden pink and many other plant and animal species.

We are proud of our

achievements over 60 years and look forward to even greater ones over the next 60.

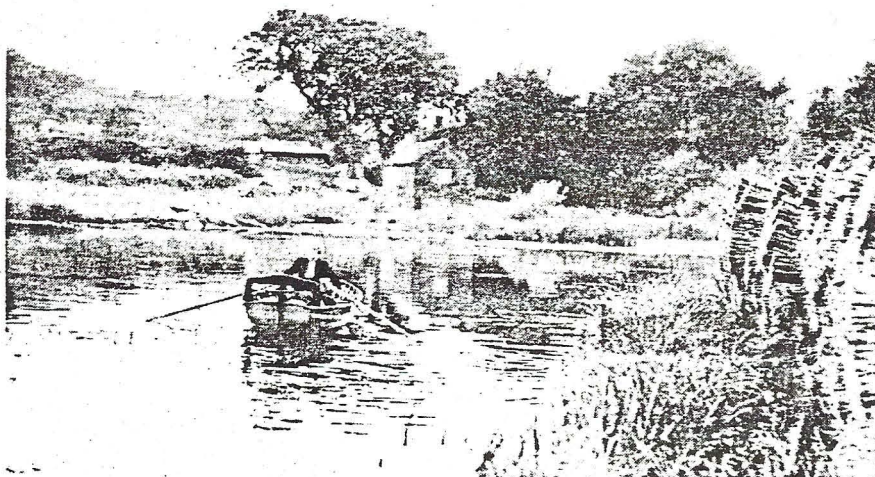
But we still need your help! We still need £15,000 to cover the costs of purchasing the marshes at Salt-house.

We still need nearly £150,000 every year to manage our Nature Reserves for the benefit of their wildlife and you, the visitors.

We still need another £100,000 every year to extend and develop our work in existing and new fields.

Above all, we still need members. Our staff at 72 Cathedral Close, Norwich, can give you all the information you need to join (telephone Norwich 625540).

Please help us to help Norfolk's wildlife and wild places.



Barton Broad — Miss Constance Gay, a past secretary of the Trust, rows to Barton Turf, owned by the Trust since 1945.

REEPHAM MARKET PLACE, EAST.



REEPHAM MARKET PLACE, NORTH.



