

WHITWELL HALL COUNTRY CENTRE

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OWNERSHIP and SITUATION

Whitwell Hall Country Centre is owned by Forest School (1938) Ltd. a company limited by guarantee all of whose profits are held for the further development of the Centre. The organisation is registered under the Educational Charities Act. The Centre has a resident warden and is governed by a Council of Management of seven members, all of whom are concerned with education both in their own specific fields and in its broadest sense.

The Centre is situated centrally in Norfolk in a predominantly arable farming area, thirteen miles north-west of Norwich. The nearest settlement with a relatively large population is Reepham which is one mile from the centre.



THE ESTATE

Whitwell Hall stands in forty acres of parkland and woods. The shape of the estate is roughly that of an equilateral triangle, with the Hall and the rest of its buildings at its western tip. This is the highest part of the estate and is 110ft. above sea level. Surrounding the Hall itself are belts of broadleaved and coniferous woodland, an ideal situation for the study of kestrels, tawny owls and the many other species of woodland birds that nest there.

From the western tip the ground slopes down to about 70ft. above sea level, where two streams cross the estate from north to south, the level then rises slightly to the long eastern boundary. All of the high ground is open to parkland, while the lower ground becomes boggy with some peat and curious chalk outcrops.

On the lower end of the northern boundary is the remains of a tannery which worked from the eighteenth century. To the east of the tannery lies an old mill pool and the remains of a sluice and mill race. It is thought that along this corner of the estate a section of a Roman road runs from Caister to Denver, though this has not yet been opened up.

Along the gently rising ground between the stream and the eastern boundary are many bumps and hollows which are thought to indicate the site of the old village of Whitwell. On Faden's map of Norfolk (1797) there is a footnote 'demolished' under the name Whitwell.

The ground along the southern boundary is entirely different in character to that of the rest of the estate. Springs break through to the surface from the underlying chalk and over the past centuries many drainage channels have been dug to carry off the surplus water. Here alders flourish and where the water channels have been blocked off bogs have formed providing a base for typical flora.

A group of the larger springs were artificially embanked to form a reservoir from which water was pumped to the Hall by an hydraulic ram. An interesting point to note about the spring is that results of tests show that the water comes up from the chalk at about five degrees centigrade all the year round. Thus the spring pond has never been known to freeze over and so becomes the habitat for much wildlife during the winter months. It is a possibility that these springs were the original 'White well' that gave its name to the locality and later the parish.

Since 1946 some seven acres of the south-eastern corner of the estate have been fenced off to provide a reserve where wildlife can develop undisturbed.

THE HALL

As it stands now Whitwell Hall has at least three main stages of building in addition to the minor alterations that have been carried out by more recent owners. The largest and most recent part of the Hall is built of white brick and is roofed with slates. The then owner of the estate, Robert Leamon (1787 - 1859) demolished some of the earlier Hall to make way for the new part of the building which he commissioned. Thus the new front of the Hall faced east, across the valley, and the old driveway to the west front became the back entrance. A new driveway was made through the wood from the road to a carriage sweep serving the east front.

The parts of the Hall that are red brick are eighteenth century but are also of at least two stages of building and were originally roofed with pantiles. In 1840 these were replaced by slates to make the new construction.

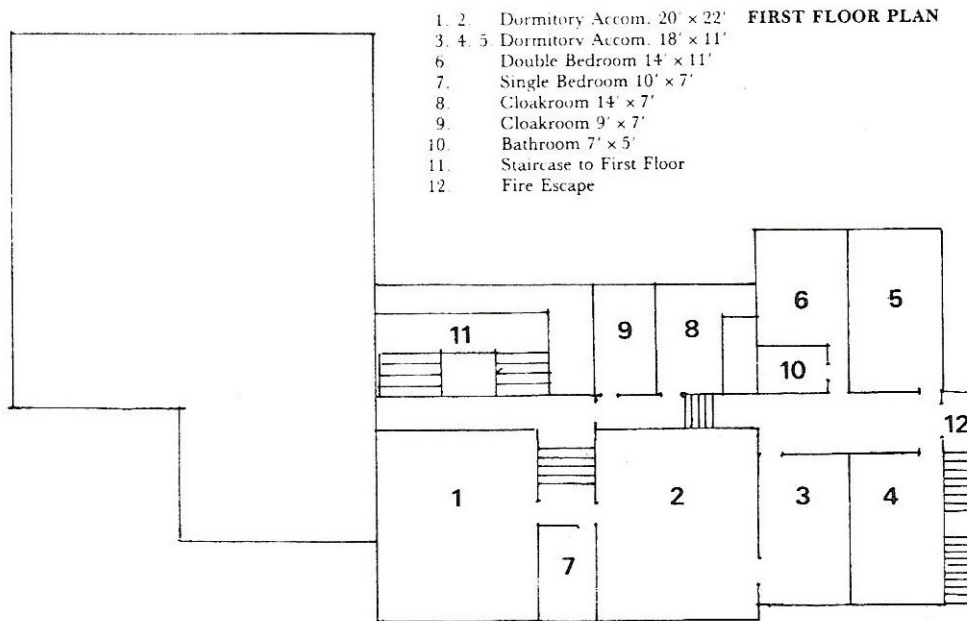
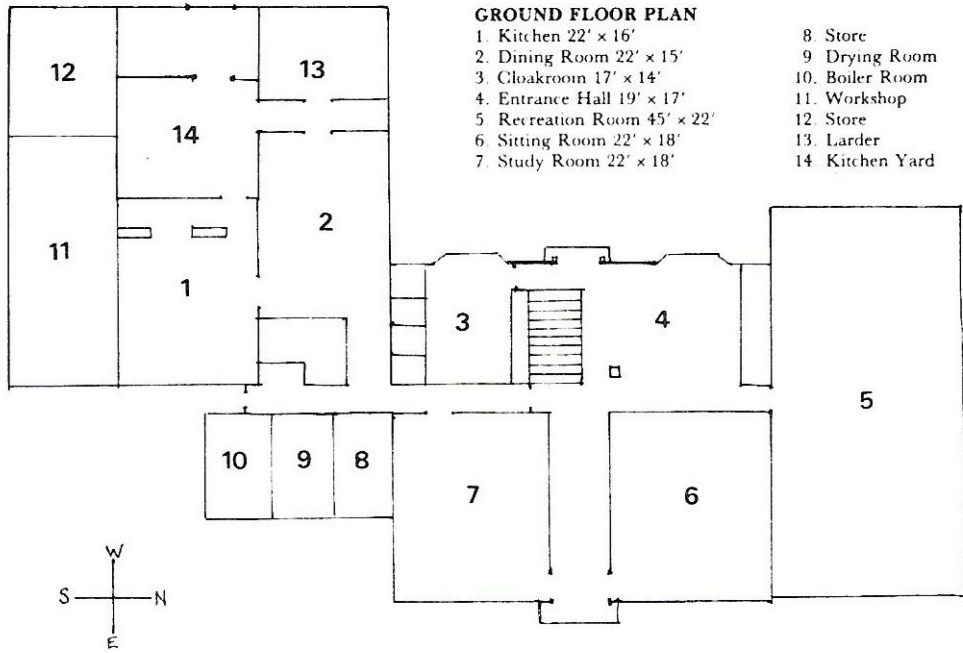
Captain E. Barclay, owner of the Hall in the late twenties, closed the carriage drive and made the gravelled carriage sweep into a lawn, as it remains today. This meant that the main entrance to the Hall was, once again, on the west side.

The entrance hall serves as both access to the ground floor and to the main stairs to the first floor. It is carpeted and furnished with easy chairs, making a useful sitting area and meeting place.

The recreation room opens from the entrance hall on the north side of the Hall and contains three standard size table tennis tables and two billiard tables. This room is also used as a music room and a conference room.

The study room is situated on the east front along a short passage from the entrance hall. It is furnished with large tables and chairs for groups of up to thirty-five in number.

The sitting room, also situated on the east front, is carpeted and furnished with easy chairs making an ideal discussion room as well as one for quiet reading and relaxation. Colour television and video recorder are available on request.



The dining room is situated on the west side of the Hall. It contains five dining tables and seating for thirty-five.

The downstairs cloakroom contains four lavatories and wash hand basins.

There is a drying room containing racks and lines where wet clothes may be hung.

The kitchen is situated on the east side of the Hall. It is a large room with cookers, fridge and work surfaces. Self-catering groups are welcomed by prior arrangement with the warden.

On the first floor the bedroom accommodation consists of two large dormitories (maximum 10 persons in each), three smaller dormitories (maximum 6 persons in each), a single bedroom and one twin-bedded room.

There are two shower rooms with shower, wash hand basins and lavatory and one bathroom containing bath, lavatory and wash hand basin.

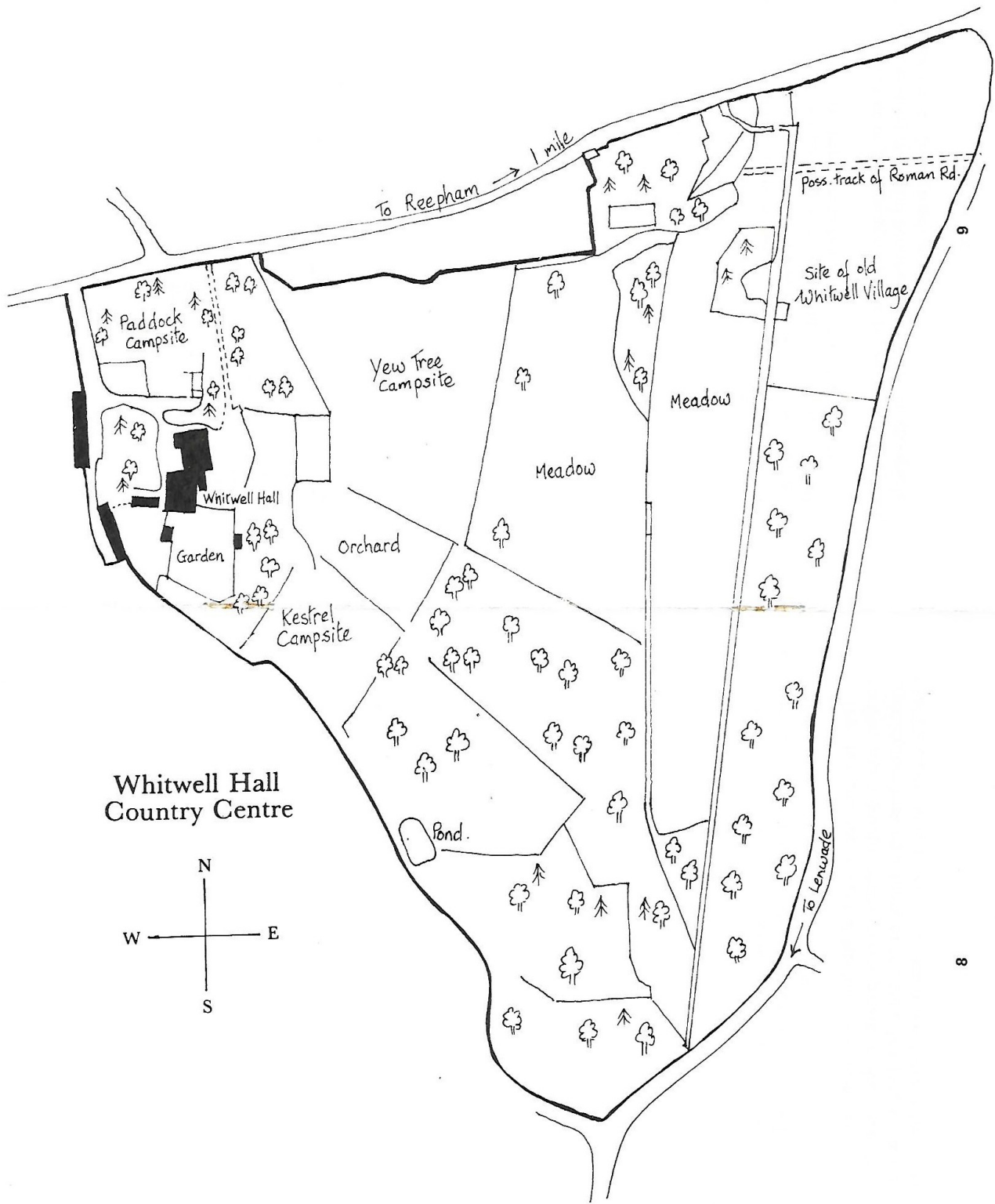
The fire escape is situated on the north side of the Hall.

The warden's accommodation is situated on the south side of the Hall at the first floor level.

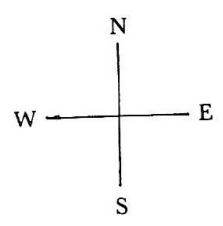
ORGANISATION

The staff at Whitwell Hall Country Centre promote those activities which are designed to educate young people to be self-reliant members of the community and to understand and enjoy the countryside.

The Hall, situated in central Norfolk, is an ideal centre for school parties, youth groups, social service groups, clubs, societies and any organisations making a study of the area. The long stretch of the Norfolk coastline is all within a reasonable distance for a day's visit.



**Whitwell Hall
Country Centre**





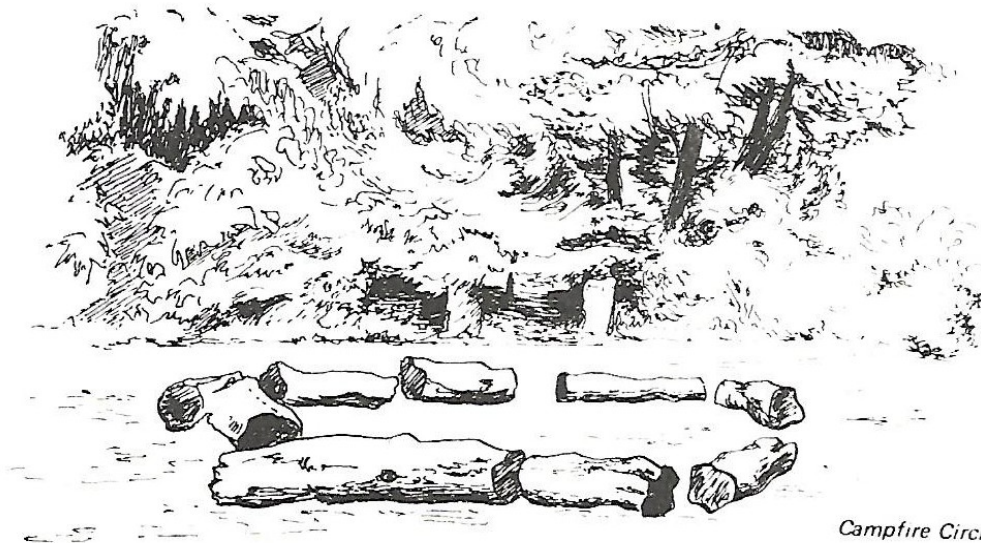
Swings in the Yew Wood

The resident wardens, Brian and Sue Evans, are always on hand to help groups with their arrangements.

The Centre is available throughout the year for concerts, lectures conferences, summer schools, camping, field studies and for any similar purpose.

There is only one group in the Hall at any one time and they are required to look after their own bedrooms and to keep the rest of the Hall reasonably tidy. Bathrooms and public rooms are cleaned by the Centre's staff. All cooking and washing-up is done by the staff. A certain amount of help is required on the day of departure.

Domestic arrangements - Housegroups are provided with breakfast, packed lunch, evening meal and bedtime drinks. Full lunch, special diets and meal times - by arrangement.



Campfire Circle

TENTED CAMPS

There are three campsites on the estate which are used intensively by school groups during term-time. All are available from March to September. The Centre provides a camping package for groups which includes a site, fire shelter, tents, groundsheets, catering equipment wood, food and canoe session. Tents are scout-style ridge tents accommodating four-six children with a range of smaller tents for staff.

Each campsite has a hard area with a central wood fire and cooking grid. This is covered by a large open-sided awning to facilitate catering in wet weather. Dining shelters and store tents are erected on each site. wood piles are conveniently situated and each site has its own water supply. Details of the food supplies are available on request. Sites are well screened and distanced from each other (see map of estate) and only one group is allocated to each site, to ensure freedom of activities and operation.

Washing and toilet facilities are located in permanent buildings in the grounds. There is a coin operated hot shower for camping staff and an efficient drying room for wet clothing.

Self-catering groups are welcomed. See fees list for variations on the full camping package.

Lightweight cooking equipment is available should groups wish to give their members an opportunity to cook individually.

There are two permanent campfire circle areas. A wooded area is set aside for recreation and contains rope swings, climbing frame and scrambling nets. An assault Course is planned for the near future.

Canoeing - The Centre owns a number of lakes at Lenwade, a short distance from Whitwell. A permanent canoeing base is used to teach children and adults basic skills in a safe situation. Canoes, lifejackets and all equipment is provided by the Centre. All canoe sessions are supervised by experienced staff. Canoeing activities, if required, must be arranged with the warden prior to groups visiting the Centre.



Manor House Site

Studio - an old coach house has been converted into an art/craft studio measuring approximately 32ft. by 20ft. This may be booked by prior arrangement with the warden. Working pottery sessions are available with the warden - Brian Evans, N.D.D. A.T.D.

Emergency wet weather accommodation is available in the tent loft.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The Centre arranges a programme of summer camps for children from seven to sixteen years of age. These are open to young people from all over Great Britain and abroad. All camps and activities are supervised by Brian and Sue Evans. Additional staff are recruited by the Centre and are either parents, teachers, student teachers or have been selected for their interest in and commitment to young people. The staff child ratio on summer camps is 1:5.



All age groups are involved in a packed programme of activities including, light-weight cooking, canoeing, swimming, trips to the coast, orienteering, pottery, crafts, music, campfires and games.

Enrolment - Any parent wishing to enrol children for Summer Camps should contact Sue Evans at Whitwell Hall for full details.

PLACES of INTEREST

Whitwell Common - This is an area of fifty-two acres which has been designated on the nature reserve list as a piece of land of special biological and scientific interest. The Common is adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the Whitwell Hall estate.

Bawdeswell Heath - The heath is an open area of heath and bracon approximatley four miles from the Centre. Old sand diggings can be found amongst the birch and scrub oak.

Alderford Common - Five miles from the Centre, the Common provides an excellent picnic area. Open areas of bracon with many old sand diggings.

River Wensum and the Lenwade Lakes - Three miles from the Centre.

Norfolk Wildlife Park - Two miles from the Centre. Mr. Phillip Wayre's collection of birds and animals offers a chance to see mammals and birds in their natural surroundings.

Norfolk Broads - Approximatley twenty miles from the Centre providing pleasant scenery and the opportunity to see some interesting wildlife.

Gressenhall Rural Life Museum - Seven miles from the Centre providing an interesting insight into rural life in Norfolk during the last century.

Cley, Marsdon and Blakeney Point - Approximatley twenty miles from the Centre. These are coastal areas of great natural beauty.

Castle Acre - The site of a former Cluniac Priory, said to be the best monastic remains in the East Anglian Region. Situated twenty-five miles from the Centre.

North Elmham - Situated eight miles from the Centre. Here the remains of a Saxon Cathedral can be found along with the diggings uncovering part of a Saxon village.

Great Yarmouth - Autumn and spring are the best times to visit this large coastal town. It is at these times that its status as a port can be best appreciated. Twenty-five miles from the Centre.

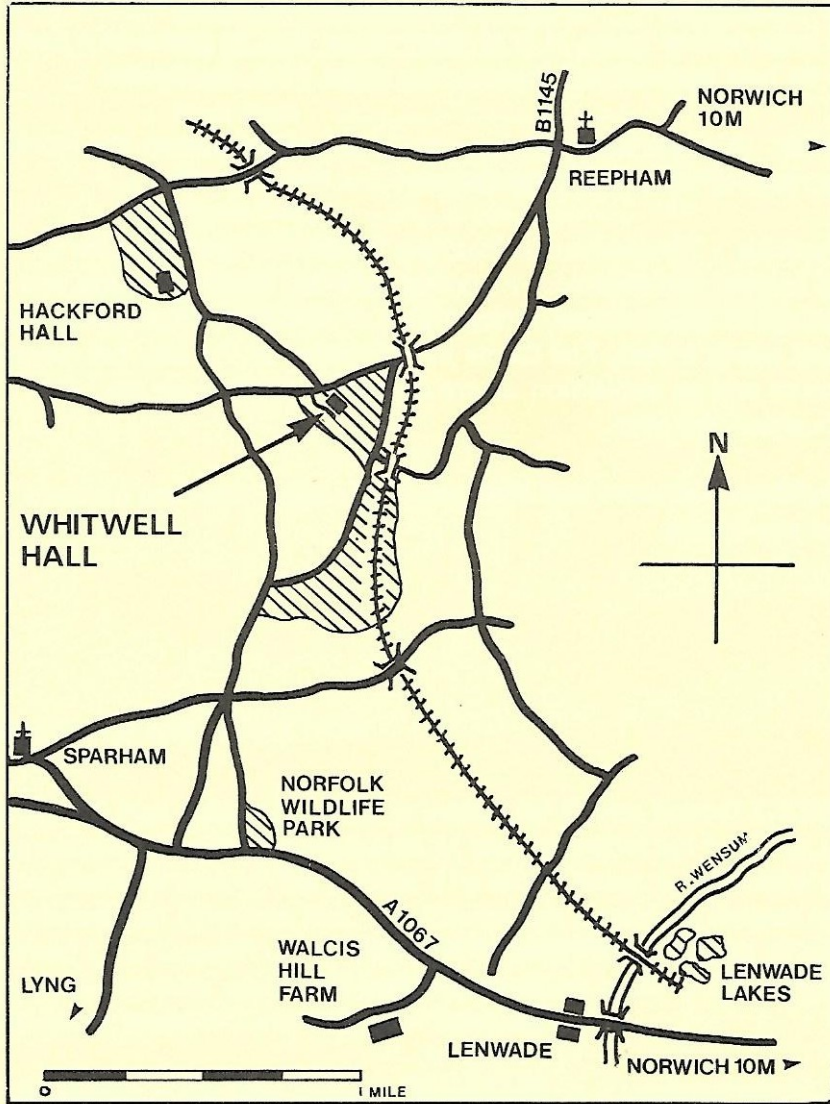
Wells - A relatively small but very interesting town on the Norfolk coast twenty miles from the Centre.

Norwich - Thirteen miles from the Centre. A fine city with a large market and extensive shopping facilities. Many churches and buildings of architectural interest and, of course, the Cathedral which is well worth a visit. The Castle in the centre of the city has its own museum and an exhibition centre where art exhibitions are held throughout the year.

Aylsham, Dereham and Holt are within easy travelling distance from the Centre.

For further information contact:-

Brian and Sue Evans,
Whitwell Hall Country Centre,
Reepham



HOW TO GET TO WHITWELL HALL