



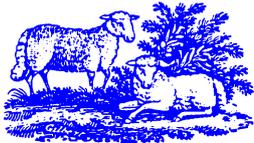
MOVING TIMES



A Seasonal Newsletter from Dakin Estates

Winter 2005

DAKIN ESTATES NEWS



Reports of a crash in house prices appear to have been greatly exaggerated and The Old Stableyard at Dullingham sold, (despite solicitors!), in record time. (Thank you and welcome to Mr and Mrs Hughes).

We have also exchanged on the barn to the rear of Tilbrook Farm with TC's parents.

After Dullingham, we are off to a victorian farmhouse and barns just off the A11 south of Norwich.

It also looks as if a consent on a second barn at De Freville Farm in Shelford may be forthcoming in the near future.

Finally a warm welcome to Gary who recently joined our team and a *Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.*

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FOLLOWING THE FASHION

Do barn conversions go "in and out of fashion" as some people say?"

"Not as such", we say but there are reasons why demand for barn conversions seems to wane in certain periods. Many people set out to look for a period home without considering a barn conversion but, as the Georgians didn't build enough houses to satisfy today's demand (despite owning all the best development land!), people sometimes cannot find a period home they like. Only then do they start looking at barn conversions.

However, during the recession of the early nineties there was a glut of period homes on the market and so, for this reason, demand for barn conversions appeared to wane.

The most popular conversions are, no doubt, flint with timber framed barns a close second place with their magnificent interiors. Redbrick barns are a moveable feast and can either be converted to a high tech 'Canary Wharf' type dwelling with every modern gadget and the inevitable spiral staircase or to a more period finish such as those of Dakin Estates.

The advantages of a barn over a period house? Low maintenance and value for money in terms of space. Both advantages which will, surely, remain in fashion for a long time to come.

Erratum - Sugar Mice!

Our last issue contained an article saying that you never see sugar mice anymore. We were highly amused, therefore, to receive a sugar mouse (complete with string tail), sent by Brigid Martineau of Bidwells.

Apparently you can still buy them at a shop in Stanton.

Thank you Brigid for this unusual, (and tasty!), feedback.



The Children's Tale

ND examines a mysterious tale of Suffolk in the dark ages



If you pass through the pretty Suffolk village of Woolpit just off the A14, pause for a moment and look at the village sign which at first glance, appears, oddly, to depict two children and a dog.

Actually there is a little more to it - The "Dog" is in fact a wolf for the village name literally means Wolf Pit (or trap) and the two children are the famous "green children", a boy and a girl, found by villagers around the middle of the 12th century. The children wore strange clothes, spoke an unintelligible dialect and their skin was an odd shade of green. The boy and girl were taken to the house of a local squire Richard de Calne where, sadly, the boy died but the girl eventually lost her greenish hue, learnt to speak and grew up as a normal child.

Written record of this mystery was not made until forty or fifty years after the event and many theories and explanations have grown up around it.

The green hue could be explained by diet deficiency but, for those who favour the "babes in the wood poisoned by a wicked uncle to gain their inheritance" theory, there is another possible explanation - arsenic could also cause a greenish hue.

Theories since have included the children coming from a parallel universe or emerging from an underground kingdom or even another planet. A more mundane explanation could be that at the time there was a large influx of Flemish people in East Anglia which had caused local resentment and resulted in some being killed. Did some of them leave behind two children who turned feral and ended up, malnourished, at Woolpit? Certainly this could explain the strange language and unusual clothes and greenish hue.

Other theories are that the children were actually from quite nearby, (possibly Fornham St Martin), and had become lost in the tunnels of a flint mine emerging eventually near Woolpit. The strange language could be accounted for by dialects then being very localised - it was noted that the girl picked up "Woolpit" English fairly easily.

Interestingly, there is an almost identical legend in Spain "The green children of Banjos".

Having grown up, the girl eventually married well and lived to a ripe old age in Kings Lynn. There are even people around today who claim to be descended from her.

(All, we presume, of normal colour!).

After midnight,in the West Wing

While visiting an old school chum for a weekend's shooting TC makes an extraordinary discovery.

To say that the house, which has been in the TC's chums family since the 16th century, is enormous would be an understatement. A recent re-roofing project cost nearly half a million pounds and took years. The family only occupy one wing of the house managing with just the 20 bedrooms contained therein. The rest of the vast house is disused with one wing having been locked and boarded up since anyone can remember - even TC's chum has never been inside it.

The Shooting Party

As TC's chum's parents were away, TC's chum, TC and several other young blades (and bladettes!) had the run of the house and, after a hard day's shooting, took full advantage of the generous hospitality on offer. Conversation turned to the house and its considerable history with TC's chum recalling that the house was requisitioned in the war and was used as "something to do with bomber command" who had erected an arial in the orangery and then "as some sort of hospital for the Americans".

The topic of the locked and boarded wing came up and, in the spirit of the evening, it was resolved to try and take a look inside it.

The Lift Shaft

This proved easier said than done as the wing was very securely locked, barred and boarded up but TC's chum thought that a disused former lift shaft in the cellars might lead to the wing. The assembled party trooped down to the cellars to investigate and managed, not without difficulty, to ascend the lift shaft and emerge into the darkness of the locked wing and, by the light of their torches, were astonished to find dark cavernous rooms with rows of wartime hospital bedsteads.

The windows, boarded up from the outside, were still crisscrossed with air raid precaution sticky tape and there were offices still with desks and chairs and the names of their wartime occupants stencilled on the doors, a mess room with table and chairs and, in the corners of cupboards, packets of powdered eggs and Birds custard powder. The whole place was exactly as it had been left in 1946.

Eventually, thoughtful and somewhat sobered, TC and Co emerged from the cellars after their Harry Pottersque expedition "It was the eeriest place I have ever been" says T.C.

After the War

Occasionally requests are received from elderly American ex-servicemen visiting the UK inquiring if they might visit the house where they were stationed or hospitalised. For reasons of their own the estate usually refuses permission for such visits (as they are perfectly entitled to do).

In recent years such requests have dwindled.



Soon there will be none.

(The Tradesmens' Entrance!)

VIEW FROM THE HEATH

Tis the Season.....

"You shouldn't have to queue up to buy Champagne!" exclaimed an indignant acquaintance of ours having just returned from a well attended race meeting at Newmarket.

It was a cry from the heart with which many agree disliking formal race meetings for their notoriously poor catering as well as queues and crowds - a large number of whom seem only interested in the event as a fashion parade or an excuse to get as drunk as possible.



However, for those genuinely interested in horses and racing for their own sake, there is an alternative.....

POINT TO POINTING

There are a number of point to point courses on farmland throughout East Anglia, each one hosting a couple of meetings, each organised by a different hunt. Each meeting is traditionally the race meet or steeplechase of the individual hunt and every horse raced has to have been hunted that season to qualify. Jockeys are amateur and unpaid and can be owner riders or riders of horses owned by other people who, like racehorse owners, don't ride but love the sport.

Point to Point meetings are held from January to May all around the country. They are very informal and dress, particularly in the earlier months, is geared to keeping warm and dry rather than dictated by fashionistas. Meets are friendly and if you go to your local Point to Point, you will almost certainly bump into someone you know with many taking picnics and their own liquid refreshment (to ward off the cold!).

On course catering, provided by a bar and catering vans, is adequate but basic but, unlike some professional racing venues, doesn't pretend to be otherwise. For those who enjoy a flutter, there are on course bookmakers taking bets in all weathers, (as ND knows, having once backed a winning horse in a howling gale and, returning to collect his winnings, found that the bookmaker's stand had blown away!).

The 2006 Point season starts with the Cambridge Harriers Hunt Club meet, sponsored by Cheffins on Monday January 3rd. First race is 11am and, as it's a bank holiday, is a very good excuse to get some fresh air at the end of the festive season. Furthermore, it won't cost you an arm and a leg and you certainly won't have to queue at the Champagne bar, (there isn't one!).

See you there.

See: www.pointingea.com for up-to-date information on all East Anglian meets.

The Rector's Tale

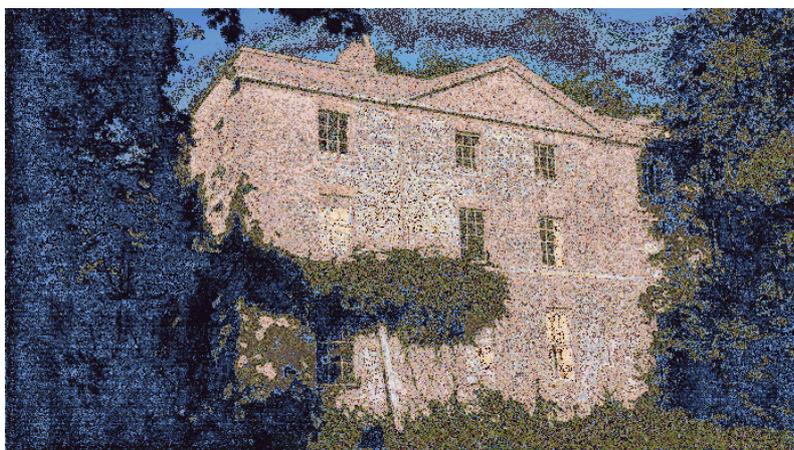
Last year ND was approached by Ann, a friend, about the restoration of her family home, The Old Rectory, near Cambridge.

In youth, ND had been a frequent visitor and knew that it was no ordinary family home but a vast rambling mansion with accommodation so labyrinthine that even the most battle hardened property professionals have only been able to vaguely estimate its size at "between eight and ten thousand square feet" (subject to survey, of course!) During the 25 years since ND last visited the house dry rot and damp have taken their toll and some years earlier, as floors, ceilings and passageways started to collapse, the family members had simply abandoned the Rectory and all moved to smaller and more manageable houses in Cambridge leaving The Rectory derelict and forlorn.

Kipling's Visit

The family have owned the house since the 1930s when Ann's grandfather arrived in the village to take up the post of Rector. The Rectory did not come with the job but he bought The Glebe Estate, which included the Rectory, together with farmland and cottages at auction for £5,000. The Rectory had the only running water and only telephone in the village.

The Rector and his wife were well known figures in the literary world and many leading authors of the day visited the house. There is a photograph of Rudyard Kipling on The Rectory lawn and when Ann had to study E M Forster's Passage to India for O Level, she was given a copy of the book from the Rectory library – signed, by E M Forster!



The Rector and his wife were philanthropists and the Rector could often be seen driving local women to market in Cambridge (his being the only car in the village!). He even allowed villagers to come to the house for a bath. However, despite this progressive philanthropy there was an acknowledged pecking order and woe betide any villager or tradesman who had the temerity to use The Rectory's front door.

In the 1960s three generations of the family all lived in The Rectory together and Ann recalls her grandfather as well as his gardener 'Reg the Poacher'.

The Silver Room

On a winter's day ND, accompanied by JD, approached the huge empty house for the first time in 25 years, (a contractor having been hired to cut passage through the undergrowth around the house to facilitate access!). Inside the interior was unchanged from ND's memories of the 1970s. There was even some furniture in the lower house rooms although everywhere was the smell of damp and decay and some rooms had simply collapsed although, surreally, the electric lights still worked throughout.

As ND was given a guided tour he realised that, in youth, he had only seen a small part of the house. There was a "silver room" with iron bars and a stout lock for storing the church silver and a puzzled ND was ushered into an under stairs WC constructed in the 1960s, ("I don't think you've ever seen this part of the house..."), on the far wall of which another door opened into a huge servants' hall with the remnants of a cooking range and a number of other large rooms beyond - all of which could only be accessed through the under stairs WC!

The Hauntings

Today, a year after ND's visit the family are still finalising plans for The Old Rectory's future but the hope is to restore it to its former glory and all move back in.

Meanwhile, however, work has already started as dry and wet rot are tackled and the original Georgian house is revealed. Ann is adamant that one item which must feature in the reconstruction schedule is a thorough exorcism to expunge the house of several ghosts and spirits.

Ann explains that there is "The Mysterious Woman" seen about the house, (who the builders say moves their tools around). Then there is "The Top Floor Poltergeist" who mysteriously switches lights on and off on the second floor as well as "The Mysterious Spirit" on the ground floor which once frightened Ann's Spanish mother so badly that her children arrived home to find that she had locked herself in the pantry. Many of these manifestations occur in broad daylight and visitor's dogs have been known to howl uncontrollably.

What about the ghost heard walking outside on the gravel path every night? (ND inquired, recalling a story Ann had told him years ago).

"Oh yes, I'd forgotten about that one" says Ann, but, having grown up in the house, she doesn't find it at all frightening or spooky and when she was younger did not consider living in such a house at all unusual,

"We thought everyone lived like that"