



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
BEDFORDSHIRE

Living Countryside Awards 2010

The CPRE Bedfordshire awards scheme, now in its third year, aims to recognise landowners, individuals and commercial users of the land who are making special efforts to preserve the visual appearance and biodiversity of the county for future generations. Most of their work receives little public recognition and these Awards were therefore established to celebrate their achievements. Here are some of the best examples...

Landscape Improvement



Colmworth Country Park

A five hectare field has been developed into an informal, peaceful countryside space for public use. It includes a large quantity of new native tree planting, the creation of a wildflower meadow, enlargement of an existing copse and the improvement of a large pond. The project is the result of local consultation and fundraising, with all the work carried out by village volunteers.



Harrold-Odell Country Park Community Orchard

The orchard is run by volunteers and staff from the nearby Country Park with the aim of providing a place to enjoy the countryside, as well as preserving specific heritage fruit varieties and teaching orchard management skills. Now in their second year, the trees are established and will provide both a local amenity and an educational resource.



John O'Gaunt Golf Course ecology, Sutton

Demonstrating that manicured fairways and the surrounding natural landscape can co-exist very successfully for the benefit of wildlife, the club's groundsman continues to develop his 20-year experience of habitat management. This includes a large number of bird boxes designed to attract specific species, special features to attract water voles and otters and a well-planned schedule of planting and grass cutting to help wildflowers and insects.



Northwood End Farm, Haynes

The landscape of this farm has been steadily improved by its owner over the last 15 years with the intention of restoring it to its appearance before hedges were removed and ponds filled in during the 1960s. A large amount of planting has been carried out, ponds reopened and the traditional orchard is now revived. Neighbours have helped restore the farm's footpaths and public access has been greatly improved.

Landscape Improvement



Renhold Wildflower Meadow

A flower meadow which features an abundance of cowslips and many other native species was created by local residents alongside the new village hall. Their perseverance over seven years and scientific awareness - such as not introducing new strains of seed which would compete with the existing ones - is now rewarded with a carpet of colour which improves each year as the soil's fertility steadily reduces.



St Albans Woodland Burial Ground, Keysoe

The burial ground is a series of tranquil open spaces linked by woodland walks, all enclosed within a 60 acre plantation. The woodland is owned by a charitable trust which aims to provide an opportunity for burial in a way which does not pollute, but provides an opportunity to benefit the natural environment.



Thurleigh Community Memorial Garden

The garden aims to provide a peaceful place of reflection for visitors to Thurleigh church and a place to inter ashes. Its graceful form respects the contours in the churchyard and the views towards open countryside beyond and the imaginative design and skilled craftsmanship shown in its stonework serve to complement each other.



Vale Cemetery and Crematoria Memorial Garden, Luton

A striking memorial garden which uses contemporary design features and hard and soft landscaping techniques to provide a setting for the new Memorial Building. This is the first phase of a garden which aims to provide a tranquil space for contemplation for all faiths, as well as niche walls and open areas for the scattering of ashes.



Vandyke Curve Wildflower Meadow, Leighton Buzzard

The recovery of a piece of badly neglected land alongside the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway line has been undertaken by local volunteers over the past five years. Well presented educational materials for youngsters explaining the local ecology add to its value as a local amenity and many species of native wild flowers are now well established.



Wadelows Nature Reserve, Toddington

An extensive nature reserve located alongside the Poplars Garden Centre incorporates many environmental features including ponds, marshland, tree and hedgerow planting, a sedum roof and an artificial otter holt. The reserve is managed in collaboration with local authorities and voluntary groups and offers educational programmes for local schoolchildren, based in a purpose-built facility.

Historic Buildings and Landscape



Brickhill Pastures Farm Buildings, Maulden

A series of underused farm buildings are gradually being renovated and converted for use as small business units. The attractive brick structures now house a variety of light industrial and commercial workspaces, preserving their rural character but providing modern amenities. Appropriate original materials are being sourced or reused on site to preserve the coherence of the original farm layout.



Brogborough Manor Farm

The entry comprises the restoration of a substantial Georgian farmhouse, the surrounding fields and outbuildings which include a granary now converted for residential use. The farm is managed according to the Countryside Stewardship scheme with much new woodland planting and footpaths and bridleways provided along the Greensand Ridge.



Hinwick House and Gardens

The Grade 1 listed Queen Anne House is being sensitively renovated using traditional materials and methods and developed for careful use for special events. The parkland which surrounds the elegant building had been badly neglected but is now undergoing extensive work to restore its original appearance. The estate's boundary walls, hedges and fences all benefit from the use of recycled stone, bricks, cobbles and soil.



Queen Anne's Summerhouse, Old Warden

The Landmark Trust restored a derelict eighteenth century folly on the Shuttleworth estate to an extremely high standard, for use as holiday accommodation. Painsstaking research into the original materials and techniques used, combined with a creative flair and ingenious new constructions, have combined to provide a comfortable home which preserves the building's unique historical character.



St. Denys Church, Colmworth

A major restoration project undertaken by the people of the village, employing local craftsmen and making ingenious use of recycled materials to reduce cost and preserve originality. The woodwork in the church, which had suffered from extensive rot and death watch beetle attack, was skilfully remodelled by a local cabinet maker and the church interior, with its unique features, is now secured for future generations.



Shortmead House and Garden, Biggleswade

The owners of this small Georgian manor house have been meticulously restoring the house to its former glory over the past decade. The surrounding gardens, a mix of formal and natural areas with ponds, are also benefiting from historical research and the use of traditional and contemporary materials which attract a wide variety of amphibians and insects. The local community responded enthusiastically to the invitation to be involved in this ambitious project, which remains accessible to the public.



Stotfold Mill

The painstaking restoration of a 19th century water mill which was completed gutted by fire in 1992. The project was completed in 2009 by a committed group of volunteers who carried out the fundraising and construction, supported by a millwright and a builder with specialist knowledge of the structure. The mill is now fully operational and offers a fascinating experience for visitors and a unique educational resource.

Sustainable Living



Browns of Stagsden Farm Shop

As the only shop in the village, Brown's supplies a full range of foodstuffs, including locally produced vegetables. The farm's main most attractive features are the herd of shorthorn cattle and the pigs and poultry raised on the farm itself. Lamb and game for the shop come from other local producers and the farm encourages visitors with regular open days.



Garden Friends Farm Shop, Roxton

The shop is based in the grounds of Roxton Garden Centre and offers a wide range of locally produced food and craft goods in addition to running a successful vegetable box scheme. The meat, fruit and vegetables on sale are all local varieties and other products include sauces, jams, pickles, bread, honey, cakes and soft drinks. Locally produced wool, charcoal and even ointments are on sale in the shop, which provides a vibrant outlet for Bedfordshire suppliers.



Sustainable Oakley

An ambitious project involving many residents of the village in an effort to encourage sustainable community living. Their initiatives focus on energy saving, transport, open green spaces, local and home grown food and the reduction of waste through recycling. More than 80 local people were involved in the creation of the Linch Furlong nature area and many more in the new allotments and community orchard.



Wassledine, Gravenhurst

A small farm business run by a dedicated team who aim to make a viable living from the land whilst at the same time leaving it in as good, or better, condition in terms of productivity, beauty and biodiversity as when the project started. 70 acres of old water meadows, new hedgerows and commercial willow and hazel plantations host varied wildlife habitats and a herd of Red Poll cattle, whose beef forms one of the farm's main products.



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