

The Rooster

Roos Parish Newsletter

No. 138

October 2006

Roos Parish Council

Attendance

The monthly meeting on 9th October was attended by Cllrs Cheeseman, Cook, Dodson, Grant, Helliwell and Smales.

Apologies for absence had been received in advance from Cllrs Craggs, Kirk and Winter.

The Parish Clerk, Mrs Lesley Dearing, was in attendance.

Seven members of the public were present.

Declarations of councillors` interests

No changes were notified.

Minutes

It was agreed that the residents who had written opposing the affordable housing project should have their initials added : Mr M.A and Mrs J.K.Winter. The Minutes were then approved.

The following topics arose from the Minutes.

Streetscene visit : Greenacre Park. (See "Correspondence.")

Closure of Pasture Lane, Tunstall. Cllr Grant said that Mr Smales was not the only farmer inconvenienced by the siting of the barriers. All whose access was affected should have been consulted before the barriers were erected. It was agreed that Highways should be sent a strong letter making this point.

Beach sign at Tunstall. The sign had still not been replaced. The Clerk had already sent ERYC a reminder.

New roadside benches. The Clerk had contacted two suppliers for details and prices but had not yet had replies.

Parish website. A form had been received to apply for the parish to be included in the ERYC website. It was referred to the Parish Plan Committee for initial consideration as to content. The Clerk was asked to inform ERYC that an application would probably be submitted, though further advice might be needed first.

Broadband internet connection. Cllr Smales said that the company offering a wireless connection could be reached on 07762 - 876026. (This is the mobile number of Mr Guy Jarvis of Neocon : <http://www.neocon.com>)

(Mr D.Knapper of Hinch Garth says he has had BT Broadband in Roos for some months..

Anti-Wind Farm meeting, Skipsea. Cllr Helliwell said that Mr Mike Blanchard had attended the meeting and had provided a report for "The Rooster". (See later in "Letters".) No councillors from Roos had attended.

ERYC : South Holderness Area Forum, 14th November

Cllr Craggs would attend. Agenda items were requested 14 days in advance. No items were suggested at this point. Cllr Helliwell noted that relevant topics might arise during the course of the current meeting.

ERYC Winter Services. The Clerk had written about Southfield Lane, Tunstall, now a route for double-decker school buses. It was a dangerous road for large vehicles at any time but at present was not even included in the winter schedule for gritting and snow-clearing. Cllr Cook said that the same was true of Owstick roads, which were now also used as a school bus route.

Admiral Storr`s Tower, Hilston. A visitor had complained about the lack of footpath access. The Clerk had forwarded the Parish Paths Officer`s response. The lady had replied to express her appreciation and understanding.

The cutting of grass verges. It was confirmed that damage to verges had been raised during the Streetscene visit. Cllr Helliwell observed that complaints had often been made in the past when young trees were damaged and bulbs ruined. (Later in the meeting it was claimed that flooding had been caused by grass cuttings from verges being allowed to get into gulleys and block drains.) It was agreed to place the topic on next month`s Agenda with a view to compiling a consolidated list of criticisms. It could also be an item for the Area Forum Agenda.

Bulb planting. Cllr Dodson said that an order for daffodil bulbs had already been placed but agreed that crocus bulbs could be added. He would look into the matter.

Annual Parish Meeting, 12th September

At the Clerk`s suggestion, the Minutes were reviewed, rather than left for another year. Members of the public were allowed to comment.

Hodgson Lane & Lamb Lane

Members reaffirmed their concern about these roads, which were a hazard both to traffic and pedestrians due to insufficient footpaths. Hodgson Lane – a bus route and the access road to the surgery – had uneven levels due to frequent excavations and was often flooded because of poor drainage.

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Mr Willis Ainley said that he and other members of the Parish Plan Committee had met Highways Officers at County Hall and discussed Hodgson Lane. The officers were well aware of the need for remedies but had no budget spare for the substantial cost. In contrast, the Streetscene project led to relatively fairly cosmetic and cheap improvements to roads and paths and did not require major capital outlay.

Even so, members and residents wanted Hodgson Lane upgraded as a matter of urgency and the Clerk was asked to write a forceful letter to Highways to this effect.

Affordable Housing

Cllr Smales objected to having been described in *The Rooster* as "suspicious" of the Rectory Road project. She stressed that she did not oppose it but had wanted to know more about it.

Cllr Helliwell said that the project had been described fully in *The Rooster* and he himself had given a lengthy account at The Parish Meeting.

As Chair of the Parish Plan Committee, Mr Willis Ainley was allowed to provide a further explanation.

Over 20 parish residents needed affordable housing. The need had been demonstrated by an East Riding survey, by the Parish Plan questionnaire and by subsequent enquiries by Mr Roger Jones, "enabler" for Humber & Wolds Community Council. At the Parish Plan exhibition Mr Jones had met residents in need of such housing and had attended two meetings, most recently the Parish Council meeting in August, where he had given a progress report.

Such schemes were encouraged by government and carried out in liaison with the local housing authority. Exceptionally, such housing was allowed beyond the existing development limit.

A housing association could buy land at ten times its valuation as agricultural land, instead of at a much higher valuation as land approved for commercial development. This was why the properties would be affordable. They would be well designed and built to a good standard

There were strict criteria as to occupancy. Applicants had to be already living or working in the parish or to have strong family connections with it, e.g. if they had been born here and had family members living here.

There were safeguards to keep the housing affordable. Properties could be rented or part owned. In either case, when an occupant left, a property would remain with the housing association.

Mr Jones had explored seven sites suggested by residents at the Parish Plan Exhibition. The Rectory Road site was the only one that the owner was willing to sell.

Cllr Smales was grateful for the explanation.

Correspondence

ERYC : Smaller Settlements Development Plan

The Plan has been approved by the East Riding Cabinet and a copy will be sent. It is not yet clear whether Roos will be a "market village" and therefore likely to have rather more development. Cllr Helliwell referred to an

article about the plan in the current *East Riding News*, which referred to the East Riding website. A document there suggested that the preferred option was for Roos to be a market village but it was not clear whether this was the document recently approved or an earlier one. Until the printed copy arrives the situation is uncertain.

ERYC Budget Conference. Afternoon sessions are to be held at three venues. The nearest to Roos is at Beverley on 6th November. Two members from each parish council were invited to attend. No member offered to do so.

ERYC Streetscene. Steve Roberts, Parish and Area Liaison Officer, thanked members and other residents who took part. A list of work to be undertaken would be sent. (*Now received.*) Members discussed work already done..

Flooding at Dimples Cottage, South End

Mr & Mrs J.Cook had written to report flooding on their property and their unsuccessful efforts to induce the authorities to take action. They now sought Parish Council support.

Councillors were very sympathetic and discussed the matter thoroughly. The Clerk was asked to write an urgent letter to Highways (copy to Yorkshire Water) supporting Mr & Mrs Cook and asking for a survey of the drainage system and its problems and a meeting of officers and parish councillors. (*See the frame below.*)

Parish Council observations on flooding

- Flooding occurs because the drainage system, especially Roos Beck, cannot cope with heavy rain and water backs up.
- Sometimes blockages occur, often at the grilles before the watercourse enters a piped section, e.g. upstream of Lamb Lane, Dove Lane and the church. Blockages at the grilles are often cleared by nearby householders.
- Elsewhere the system now seems inadequate to deal with the additional surface water from new properties. The underground pipes / pots from the gulleys to Roos Beck may be too narrow in diameter.
- Cllr Grant thought this was true of surface water from South Park : it crossed South End Road and was carried to a gully to the north, which was often blocked. The pots passing under land at The Paddock were probably inadequate.
- When flooding occurs, it is often difficult to identify the cause and its location.
- Highways usually deal promptly with flooding on roads, even when the cause is away from the highway.
- As far as Roos Beck is concerned, riparian owners are deemed to be responsible for clearing debris from their section. However, responsibility is hard to establish since debris drifts away from its source. (Lamb Lane was once flooded because of a blockage caused by railway sleepers, used to retain garden soil, which had fallen in and been carried to the grille.)
- Grass cuttings from verges tend to get into the gulleys and block the system.
- The gulleys should probably be pumped out more frequently.

Purchase / rental of parish land at Tunstall

Mrs S.P.Quarmby and Mrs K.E.Brocklesby, daughters of the late Mr Sydney Kirkwood of Manor Farm, wrote about a plot of parish land hitherto rented as part of the farmhouse garden. They wished to purchase the plot or at least take over the tenancy.

Cllr Helliwell said that Mr John Quarmby had contacted him about the matter. The request seemed reasonable. The plot was of no other use to the parish and the annual rent was trivial. If members agreed, an independent valuation would be needed as a guide to a fair purchase price.

Members considered the legalities. When Tunstall became part of Roos Parish, the Parish Council acquired some plots that had formerly been common land. No member knew of any title documents but the fact that rents had been paid was perhaps sufficient evidence of title.

The Clerk was asked to make enquiries at the Land Registry in the former council offices at Skirlaugh. Meanwhile, she would inform Mrs Quarmby and Mrs Brocklesby that possible purchase was being looked at sympathetically.

Planning

Decisions on previous applications

5 Becksid Manor, Roos. Request to prune a neighbour's overhanging tree granted subject to conditions.

5 Becksid Manor, Roos. Application for a single-storey extension refused owing to its "size, bulk, design and prominence" and its detriment to the next-door property.

New applications

Land south of Poplar Farm, Hilston Road, Roos

Application by Mr Mark Waterson, Senior Engineer, to relocate field access. Members realised that previous access had been blocked by the new road layout at the Aldbrough crossroads. Approval was recommended.

Mayfield Farm, Hilston (Mr & Mrs Cox)

Full consent requested for a two-storey extension to the rear and an atrium roof-light over the existing extension. Approval recommended.

Grange Farm, Tunstall (J.Wright & others)

Change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to four holiday homes. Approval recommended.

18 Pilmar Lane, Roos (Mrs S.Dearing)

Construction of dropped kerb. Approval recommended.

4 Hinch Garth, Roos (Mr & Mrs Thompson)

Two-storey extension to rear. The site plan lacked dimensions. Members recommended approval provided that the neighbouring property to the rear would not be unduly overlooked.

8 Becksid Manor, Roos (Mr & Mrs Russell)

Full consent for two-storey extension to front and side. Rejection recommended since the objections to the extension to 5 Becksid Manor would equally apply.

Accounts

The Treasurer was absent but had nothing to report.

Members approved payment of the Parish Clerk's salary and expenses for three months : a total of £283.10.

Any other business

Roos Parish Plan

Cllr Helliwell said that the Parish Plan had now been published. The last section comprised an Action Plan to implement the recommendations, already approved in draft by the Parish Council. He said that he and the Clerk

had discussed implementation and they recommended that The Parish Plan should be an ongoing Agenda item at subsequent meetings. Members approved the proposal.

Affordable Housing

Cllr Helliwell said that *The Rooster* would report Cllr Smales's clarification of her views on the matter.

Streetscene

Cllr Grant said that the subsequent clearing of footpaths had been well done but the spoil had been used to fill potholes at the edges of roads. This was foolish and dangerous since the first rainfall washed the soil out again. The edges of Rectory Road in particular needed repairing with substantial hardcore and a surface of tarmac.

When Rectory Road was widened the bollards were not moved back. This had caused an S-bend and should be remedied.

PUBLIC SESSION

Parish Plan

Mr Willis Ainley said that copies of the Plan would soon be delivered to households and supplied to local organisations who had collaborated in its development.

The Plan recommended that the Local Development Plan should *not* designate Roos a "market village". The Parish Council needed to make its own views clear. Cllr Helliwell said that the Parish Clerk had already written to correct a previous decision. Another letter might be necessary.

Roos Parish Council
Monday 13th November
7.30 in The Memorial Institute
ALL WELCOME

Roos Parish Plan

Roos Parish Plan will be distributed to households throughout the parish in the next few days. It sets out a number of recommendations, establishing a programme for implementation by the Parish Council in collaboration with others over the next 5 - 10 years.

Unfortunately, for reasons of cost, it is not possible to include for everyone the detailed analysis of the questionnaires on which the Plan's recommendations are based. However a limited number of copies are available on request.

The Plan is based upon the views and aspirations of residents of Roos, Tunstall, Hilston and Owstwick. It has been subject to widespread consultation e.g. with Officers of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council, and as far as possible it conforms with national and regional policies. The ERYC assure us that it will be taken into account when issues affecting the future of the parish are considered.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who have contributed to the preparation and production of the Plan, not least members of the Committee and the Chairman of Roos Parish Council who has lent his support throughout.

Willis Ainley
Chairman
Roos Parish Plan Committee.

The Rooster

The Rooster Association

Committee

Chairman	Tim Newton, The Old School, South End, Roos, HU12 0HE.	STD 01964- 671659
Vice-Chair	Ann Coupe, 56 Pilmar Lane, Roos, HU12 0HN	671383
Treasurer	Ken Cross, Tall Trees, 1 Hinch Garth, Roos, HU12 0HR	671732
Secretary & Editor	Leslie Helliwell, Canwick, Lamb Lane, Roos, HU12 0LB	670291

Other members

Willis Ainley, Alan Bowden, Jackie Cracknell, David Craggs,
Alec Dodson, Bob Feetom, Kay Newton, Colin Wilson.

The Committee has been in place since July and has had two meetings. Several roles have been taken over from the Editor, not least that of Treasurer – Ken Cross has opened a bank account in the name of the Association at Lloyds TSB, Withernsea.

Donations

Many thanks to the following for recent donations from :

Mr & Mrs A.H.Dodson Miss G.Grantham
Mrs C.I.Farrington Mr & Mrs T.B.Lambert

A healthy bank balance was carried over from 2005 and 145 households (27.4% of those that receive copies) have now donated £708.00 for 2006.

However, a six-page newsletter costs about £75 to produce and more contributions will be needed if we are to match this year's income to likely expenditure.

Suggested (per household) : £3.00 - £5.00 (maximum).

If you intend to contribute but have not yet done so, please place your donation in an envelope marked "Rooster" and either leave it at the Roos Store or deliver / post to :

Ken Cross, 1 Hinch Garth, Roos, HU12 0HR.

Cheques should be payable to : The Rooster Association.

Journalists wanted

"The Rooster" needs a new Editor (unpaid! – but expenses reimbursed.) It may be that the Parish Clerk will be able to provide a report of Parish Council meetings. Offers to Tim

Newton at The Old School, phone 671659.

Corrections

Wrong number

The September issue should have been No.137, not 136.

August issue

Mr Mike Blanchard says that his letter criticised E.ON but not *The Rooster*. It is true that although all four of the letters printed attacked the turbine companies only three attacked *The Rooster*. I apologise to Mr Blanchard for this.

September issue, p.4

Mr Blanchard also points out that under the sub-heading *Scepticism* he was not the one who mentioned Greenacre Park (Sorry, again, Mr Blanchard), though he agreed with the opinion reported and did express scepticism later.

L.H.

ROOSTER DEADLINE

Please supply news, photographs, reports,
letters, notices, grumbles, etc., by

Friday 10th November

to Leslie Helliwell, Canwick, Lamb Lane, Roos

01964 - 670291

or to the Roos Store

Coming events

October

20 All Saints, Roos. 7.30. The Melsa Consort.

November

- 1 Roos WI. Memorial Institute. 7.30. Annual meeting.
- 10 Deadline for Rooster material.
- 13 Roos Parish Council. Memorial Institute. 7.30.
- 20 Horticultural Society Whist Drive. 7.30. Memorial Institute.
- 25 Christmas Shop. Memorial Institute.

Annual Christmas Shop

in aid of

The Friends of Roos Church

The Friends of Roos School The Memorial Institute

25th November : 10.00 - 2.00

Crafts & produce stalls. Christmas gifts.

Seasonal refreshments

PLEASE SUPPORT THESE LOCAL GOOD CAUSES

Roos & District Horticultural Society

WHIST TOURNAMENT

Monday 20th November

7.30 in The Memorial Institute, Roos

Admission : 50p including Supper + a Raffle

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Church News and Views

Anglican : Roos United Benefice

Garton-with-Grimston, St Michael. Hilston, St Margaret.
Roos, All Saints`. Tunstall, All Saints`.

From Rev Gordon Smethurst, Roos Rectory

Our PCC. lost control of its church land before the last World War. The Church Commissioners buy and sell land in the best interest of their holdings. None of the money gained from selling a piece of land goes back to the original parish but is re-invested.

Congratulations to Tim Newton and The Friends of Roos Church for his dedicated work on behalf of the roof appeal. Thanks also to the regulars and visitors to Tim and Dorothy's Saturday-morning Charity Shop in the Institute. Tim bears this heavy duty with patience and good humour.

Congratulations to Tina and friends for another successful Horse Blessing at Tunstall, and to all who worked so hard, not least the lonely stewards around the route taken by horses and riders after the short service on the village green. Congratulations to Mr Peters who rode from Winestead and back again to take part in the blessing.

Visitors delighted in such a bright Church, made especially lovely for the previous day's wedding between Ann-Marie Cawkwell and her Sea Captain Richard Dunn.

At Roos church the previous Saturday not even the rain could dampen the romance of Hannah Earle and Steven Taylor her groom, in their well-thought-out ceremony, with its adequate sound system in church and a Scottish piper outside adding to the romance of the day.

We look forward on Friday 20th to another visit from the Melsa Consort who maintain their quality performances.

The Friends of Roos Church

The Friends met on 20th September and are pleased to announce that they now have full charity status – No. 115726.

The Friends aim to help maintain the graveyard and fabric of All Saints` Church for the benefit of the people of Roos. Whether or not services continue at Roos, if the building is fittingly maintained it can still be used for weddings, funerals and other events and the graveyard remains open for burial or the interment of ashes of anyone with Roos connections, regardless of their religion.

The Parochial Church Council has hitherto maintained the church and graveyard but declining church attendance has now made the expense too high for the PCC to meet alone. The Friends aim to give as much help as they can.

Annual membership costs just £5.00 per person. Please join now and help save this wonderful building for the future. Not one penny of the money raised goes into the church's own funds.

For further information or to join please contact :

Mr Tim Newton The Old School, Pilmar Lane 671659
or Ms Linda Bleasby The Old Surgery, Rectory Road 671653

Anglican Services, etc.

Key : HC =Holy Communion. MP = Morning Prayer.
BCP = Book of Common Prayer (Old Prayer Book)
CW = Common Worship (New Prayer Book)

October

13	Fri	2.15	Roos School Harvest in church.
		6.30	Roos. Harvest Thanksgiving in church. Harvest Supper in the Memorial Institute (provided by The Friends of Roos Church).
14	Sat	3.00	Roos. Holy Matrimony : Christopher Andrew Brawley and Maryjane Mason.
15	Sun	9.00	Garton. Mattins. BCP.
		10.30	Roos. Morning Prayer. CW.
		3.30	Hilston. Harvest Thanksgiving followed by refreshments in church.
20	Fri	7.30	Melsa Choir concert in Roos church, followed by "wine and nibbles" at The New Rectory.
22	Sun	9.00	Tunstall. HC. BCP.
		10.30	Roos. HC. CW.
		6.30	Garton. EP. BCP.
27	Fri	6.30	Tunstall. Harvest Thanksgiving, followed by refreshments in the Village Hall.
29	Sun	10.00	Roos. Benefice Service. HC. BCP. CW.

November

5	Sun	9.00	Garton. HC.BCP.
		10.30	Institute Service with Methodists.
7	Tue	11.00	Eastfield Social Centre. HC.CW.
12	Sun	9.00	Tunstall HC.CW.
		10.30	Memorial Institute. Remembrance Service.
		11.00	Memorial Gates. Laying of Wreaths.
		3.00	Garton. Evensong. BCP.
			<u>Afterwards</u> : Friends of Garton Church AGM.
15	Wed	7.30	The Bailey. The Friends of Roos Church.

Methodist Services

October

15	Sun	10.30	Roos Memorial Institute	Mr T.Butcher
22	Sun	-----	<i>No service at Roos</i>	
29	Sun	10.30	Roos Memorial Institute	Ms E.Coombe

Christmas Shop : 25th November

The Annual Christmas Shop held in the Memorial Institute raises funds for three local good causes : The Friends of Roos Church, The Friends of Roos School and The Memorial Institute itself.

Three craft stalls have already been booked and this year the emphasis will be mainly on crafts, though we shall still have the popular Tombola and Bottle Pull.

Table centres and flowers will be available to order. There will be a stall selling inexpensive pocket-money items and one selling produce. "Produce" will include not only Christmas ideas but buns, cakes and anything that people have produced to sell.

We need supplies for all the stalls. They may be passed to The Old School, the Saturday Charity Shop or members of the various groups. Please fetch perishable items closer to the date but do let us know what you will be offering. If you bring produce, please mark the items with what you consider a fair price. Unsold items can be returned to the provider.

**If you can help in any way
please let us know as soon as possible**

Letters to the Editor

From Mike Green, Linden Lea, Lamb Lane, Roos

Sponsored run for Cancer Research

On Sunday 8th October I took part in and completed the Castle Howard 10km Run in aid of Cancer Research.

The run was held in the grounds of Castle Howard and over 1500 runners took part, all well supported by several hundred spectators all along the circuit.

It was my intention to try to raise around £2,000 for Cancer Research and I am pleased to say that, due to the kind response and generous nature of the people of Roos, my friends, family and work colleagues, we have exceeded that amount. At the last count, with some pledges still to come in, the total is around £2,200.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Cancer Research and myself to thank all those people who sponsored me, along with my campaign manager, Otto, whose tireless work has certainly boosted the figure. Also my gratitude goes out to all at Melbourne Butchers, Roos Village Store, The Roos Arms and The Black Horse for displaying sponsor forms on their premises.

My thanks go to Jim, Heather, Stewart and Julie for allowing me to tag on to their runs. Their encouragement and support got my running up to an acceptable level.

Finally – just to put the record straight – Gemma (dog) did not complete the run. In fact, she did not take part, opting for a lazy Sunday in front of the fire with a chew stick.

Thank you all again.

From Kevin Barnard, Amboseli Holdings, Burton Road

Wind Turbines

I wonder if the people who are in support of the proposed wind farm projects near Roos are really aware of the full impact it will have on our area.

The application and details for the 11-turbine project at Sunderland Farm can be viewed on the East Riding Council website under Application 06/05692/STPLFE. It contains some interesting facts that you will not see at their Village Hall presentations.

These 126.5 metre high turbines are among the biggest in the World. For each one the concrete standing requires 200 to 300 cubic metres of concrete, brought in by 50 lorries, along with 50 to 60 tonnes of reinforcing steel also transported on lorries.

The turbines themselves come on eight low-loaders. Now the density of concrete equates to 2,300 kg / cubic metre, which means that each standing plus its steel reinforcement will total approximately 750 tonnes. Multiply this by 11 and you have 8,250 tonnes.

This means 640 lorries (*lorry loads*) for the construction of the turbines alone. There will be 3,400 tipper lorry movements needed to deliver the stone for the construction of the tracks, compound and crane hard standing. (The cranes require 378 cubic metres hard standing each). The sub-station compound is 60 metres by 45 metres and additional site traffic requires 100 lorry movements. Add all this to the 20 cars/vans on the site at any one time and we see the true scale of things.

The cables are to be run either underground through trenches or overhead by poles from the Roos sub-station to the Burton Pidsea sub-station for which additional excavating work will be required across those two miles of landscape.

Is this what the Friends of the Earth mean by saving the planet and reducing pollution?

And when they come to the end of their working life, can we really fool ourselves into thinking that RES will remove 8,250 tonnes of steel-reinforced concrete and put the landscape back to how it was? By then we will still be trying to convince ourselves whether we all made the right decision or not in the first place!

(This letter was dated 31st August but was not received until 20th September – too late for the last newsletter.)

Report by Mike Blanchard, Pilmar Lane, Roos

Wind Turbines

The meeting at Far Grange Leisure Centre, Skipsea, on 18th September (courtesy of Mr Mike McCann) was well attended, about 300+.

Professor David Bellamy and Mr Bob Graham (Chairman of Highlands against Wind Farms) gave factual information with regard to wind farms.

Professor Bellamy stated that these monster wind turbines would make no environmental difference to climate change or global warming.

Mr Graham said that there were currently about 370 wind turbines planned for the East Riding.

Many groups, including local parish councils, SHOWT, The Green Party and Friends of the Earth attended but sadly no Roos parish councillors attended.

The general feeling from the meeting was that everyone supported renewable energy but not these monster turbines.

We believe the information presented to the meeting indicates that wind turbines are not as effective as stated by the wind-turbine companies.

"The Rooster" has been informed that some supporters of wind turbines turned up at Skipsea with placards – one of them dressed as a caricature of David Bellamy as he was giving a television interview.



St Nicholas of the Fens

This article appeared in "The Shooting Times" two or three months ago. Because a good deal of it is about wind turbines (our current preoccupation) Mr Dudley Hulme of Hinch Garth passed a photocopy to "The Rooster". However, it is so well written and so informative about wildlife conservation that it is copied here in full. I hope most readers will enjoy it. - Ed.

Rising like giants from the flat land of the Fens, Nicholas Watts's wind turbines are as impressive as the conservation record of their owner. Robin Page meets an eco-warrior.

Many years ago when my father refused to let me work on our small farm – I was the second son – I had to get a job in the big wild world. I ended up, briefly, as a special investigator for the former National Assistance Board and one of my areas was the Fens. What a nightmare.

Every block of wild fen looked the same; every dyke was straight and never-ending, and every drove road looked impassable after rain. Finding farms and isolated houses was challenging and time-consuming. Thank goodness I was sacked – and my only crime was breaking the Official Secrets Act.

Consequently, when I decided to go and meet Nicholas Watts MBE, deep in the Fens, somewhere called, appropriately enough, Deeping St Nicholas, I was filled with trepidation. Would I ever find him? I need not have worried, for in one of the flattest landscapes on earth Vine House Farm can be seen from many miles away.

Nicholas Watts is one of those rare individuals who practises what he preaches and is not ashamed of it : a "green" farmer and a shooter. How do you locate him these days? You make for the three huge wind turbines growing out of his black soil. A neighbour has another five and it has to be conceded that, in that fen landscape, the addition of eight wind turbines is actually attractive. Eighty-eight might be over the top but eight seems about right –and even aesthetically pleasing. How my anti-windfarm green friends – and even Lulu, my wife – are going to hate that. In days gone by, I suppose, they would have been waving placards against windmills.

Nicholas has no doubt about the place of "green" energy : "As a conservationist, I think we are raping the world, not conserving it," he told me. "I want to do my bit to show what needs to be done."

The fact he is a serious ornithologist and still has wind turbines on his land is also interesting, as many other conservationists claim wind turbines mince up wild birds. Nicholas does not believe it, as I was to find out.

Once in the farmyard, the great contradictions that make Nicholas Watts such a superb advertisement for shooting and conservation are immediately obvious.

After being guided in by the most modern



of high-tech advances, the first thing to be seen in the farmyard is the farming museum, in which Nicholas has assembled a fascinating collection of farming by-gones. By-gones? I still use some of them on my small farm.

Then there is the farm shop, full of wild bird food, most of which Nicholas grows himself. From a fascination for wild birds of all kinds, including pheasant, alive and roasted, Nicholas Watts has developed a thriving bird food business that allows him to spread his enthusiasm to the general public. Astonishingly, the birdseed business now has a higher turnover than the traditional farm.

Nicholas farms 2,000 or so acres and was born there 63 years ago, on the same farm where his father and his grandfather were born, as well as his three daughters.

At the moment he has an incredible 41 crops planted : 9 of these are in blocks of at least five acres, with an additional 22 grown on a small scale for the farm shop. His crops include traditional wheat and barley, various vegetables that he grows for Waitrose and Marks & Spencer, the two most farmer-friendly supermarkets, and then birdseed, including 90 acres of millet and 155 acres of sunflowers.

He employs as many as 30 people, including six on the farm, all of whom have been with him for more than 25 years; there are two in the office, two working on birdseed and the rest are

part-time. This excludes Nicholas, of course, who still works flat-out and turns his hand to anything that needs doing. For his vegetables he uses imported labour, as he cannot find young English people willing to get their hands dirty. Nicholas is sanguine about the situation. "It's a shame we can't get the English to work any more," he says, "but the young people we get from abroad are willing workers and intelligent." His seasonal workers consequently come from Slovakia, Poland and Romania.

During the summer, in fact, Nicholas works a longer day than anyone else on the farm. He is up at 4.30am ready to go birds' nesting – finding the territories of the birds on his farm by their songs during the dawn chorus and also locating their nests; with the help of a friend, he also acts as gamekeeper, controlling crows, magpies and foxes.

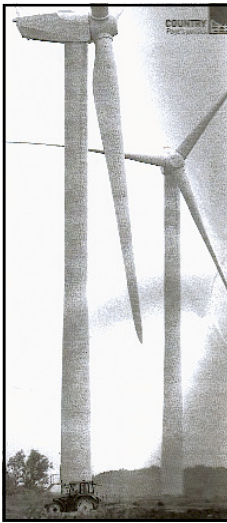
"The trouble is," he admits, "these days they are all being served a fresh breakfast on the road – roadkill – in winter, too, and so their numbers are increasing all the time. Another problem is that the crows are getting more difficult to catch. It seems we've caught all the foolish ones, and the wise ones breed wise ones." Nicholas has always been interested in wildlife and shooting. In 1982, he wanted to know what birds he had on his farm and so began to record numbers of breeding birds. By 1992, he realised that the populations of many species were in meltdown : skylark numbers had tumbled by 60%, corn buntings by 90%, and so he decided to try to do something about it.

He believes that the intensification of farming has caused much of the problem. "We have destroyed so much habitat and use far more chemical. In the 1960s we sprayed one herbicide; now we spray three herbicides, three fungicides, two insecticides and two growth regulators. Then we wonder why we have no birds. We are starving them of insects. I hope it is different on this farm now – it certainly is around the edges, though probably not in the middle. Organic farming is not necessarily the answer either, as modern rotovators must destroy many eggs, chrysalises and larvae."

As a result, Vine House Farm is a farm for birds as well as crops. Nicholas has co-operated with Emorsgate Seeds to

develop feed mixes for wildlife strips and conservation headlands around his fields. Unsurprisingly, his farm is full of wildlife and quality crops.

A ride around with Nicholas is educational – even the electricity crop is amazing, with each 2,900 horse-power wind turbine producing enough energy for 1,100 homes (when the wind is blowing). They are huge, nearly 300ft high; each blade measures 135ft in length and weighs eight tons. The noise they make is minimal.



The wind turbines are not the only constructions on the farm as Nicholas has also erected some "barn owl towers"; he has at least five breeding pairs of barn owls but the towers can also take tawny owls, kestrels and stock doves. Bat boxes, artificial house-martin nests and even bumble-bee nest boxes are also attached to them.

One conservation achievement Nicholas rates among his greatest was being elected on to the local Drainage Board. Once installed, he managed to

persuade them to stop cutting the reeds on both banks of the drains every year. "Now they just cut one bank. I have saved them thousands of pounds and we have a pair of reed warblers every 50 yards." He reckons there are 300 or so pairs of reed warblers, seven of which had a cuckoo's egg sneaked in last year.

Brown hares were everywhere as we wandered around : one ducked and ran off as marsh harriers swooped low over it.

Nicholas's style of wildlife-friendly farming suits the pheasants. All his birds are wild and he has four shooting days a year, with 10 guns shooting 150 or so birds a year. Being wild birds, they fly strongly and make a very good meal.

In fact, Nicholas is the complete modern hunter : he rarely buys meat; his freezer contains pheasants, French partridges (English do not do well in the Fens), rabbits and pigeon. His gathering does not end there, as he usually picks 90lb of blackberries in late summer, which are his favourite breakfast dish.

He attributes his healthy game population and the abundant wildlife to good predator control, but again he is one step ahead because he has another bird on his farm that conservationists love and it does well solely because it is protected from crows, magpies and moorhens – yes, moorhens. Just past old

farm buildings where the now rare tree sparrow still breeds, Nicholas has old gravel diggings where he has constructed a hide for all to enjoy the wildlife. There, from his hide, can be seen a naturalist's dream – an island containing 56 active nests of the common tern.

There are other gravel plots in the areas that are completely tern-less, some owned by conservationists, but Nicholas keeps the predators of terns and their eggs to a minimum. He removed the moorhens last year after watching them taking tern eggs. This year he has been rewarded with the doubling of the colony, helped by the fact that he has sprayed the island with Roundup to remove all the vegetation, so that the moorhens have no cover and are dive-bombed away. As we watched, a pair of Canada geese and their six goslings were chased away. On to this bare island Nicholas has sown poppies, mayweed and pansies. "I love taking photographs and the young terns among the flowers should make wonderful pictures."

Nicholas is an extraordinary man. Not only has he shown that farming and conservation can co-exist but also that they are actually good for one another. Perhaps we should all club together and buy him a peerage, for that is what he deserves.

(The article is by Robin Page, a regular contributor to "Shooting Times".)

Children`s Playground Update

The Children`s Playground Committee thank THE FUN GIRLS FOUR for their wonderful effort in the police Lifestylers project this summer, raising £370.20 for the playground. Well done! – Emilie and Hollie Farnhill, Georgia Sennett, Maisie Hollingsworth, their little helper Emily Sennett, and Mrs Sandra Cole, organiser.

In September workers erected in the play area a 30m aerial runway, junior swings and a log walk at a cost of £12,257.89. If we receive more funding in future we shall add further equipment.

After paying for the recent additions we have a little over £1,000 in the bank. This will be needed to meet the cost of maintenance, ROSPA inspections and insurance premiums.

Ann Coupe

Roos WI

The President, Mrs H.Boynton, welcomed members to the meeting on 5th October. Mrs M.Stephenson, Secretary, read the Minutes and gave a report on the recent Group Meeting in Hedon at which next year`s Rally was discussed – details in the New Year. Items from the Newsletter were read.

Drax Power Station. Members who went on the visit enjoyed it. Mrs Barbara Stephenson gave an interesting report. As the President lived very near to it for many years, she was pleased to hear about it.

Spurn Point walk : 4th November. We do this once a year on average and enjoy each other`s company.

Speaker. Mrs Chris Lee showed us slides and samples of "Textiles and Goldwork". The stitching and patterns on robes and garments were wonderful, some dating back hundreds of years. Sylvia Turner gave the vote of thanks.

Flower of the Month : Prize won by Jennifer Grant.

Next meeting, the AGM : 1st November.

New members very welcome

Heather Boynton (01964 - 670461)

Cutting passed on by Jackie Cracknell, Hilston

Age-old reflections

Everything is farther away than it used to be. It is twice as far to the corner and someone has added a hill.

And have you noticed the smaller print they use nowadays in newspapers, on maps and in the telephone directory? There is no sense in asking anyone to read the words aloud – everyone speaks in such a low voice that I can hardly hear them. The material in my suits is shrinking too, especially around the waist. Even people are changing – they are much younger than they used to be when I was their age. On the other hand, people of my age are much older than I am.

I got to thinking about this while combing my hair today and, in doing so, glanced at my reflection in the mirror and – Would you believe? – they don`t make good mirrors like they used to.

P.Anderson, Hornchurch, Essex

As a maturing person myself I also notice how the world has changed. When I bend to pick something up the ground has been moved farther away than it used to be – and it's twice as far when I try to stand up. Any similar observations by other local wrinklies? – Or is this print too small to read? L.H.