

# Lincolnshire Life Best Build Competition 2009/10



*The votes have been cast and the shortlist drawn up and Lincolnshire Life can present the three finalists chosen by our readers.*

All twelve entries were highly impressive and Lincolnshire Life would like to congratulate each development for their

achievements. We are pleased to reveal the finalists below, who will be entered into the next round, to be judged by our expert Heritage Committee.

Lincolnshire Life would also like to thank all the readers who took time out to cast their valued vote. The winner will be announced in the July issue.

## FINALIST NUMBER ONE TOP HOUSE FARM, CAISTOR

Top House Farm, Caistor was formerly an eighteenth century drovers inn, well known for its sheep fair which is well documented in the historical records of this area. Indeed the sheep fair was reportedly the largest fair in England during the nineteenth century. The site is set in ten acres on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Boasting stunning views across the Lincolnshire Wolds, the site originally comprised tea rooms, holiday cottages, a tractor museum and residential accommodation. Lincolnshire Montessori took ownership of the former Fleece Inn in September 2008 and following substantial investment in a project with architect Ric Blenkharn and contractors F A Would, the site has been transformed into a twenty-first



century learning environment.

With financial support from the Lindsey Action Zone and Redundant Rural Buildings programme, the site now comprises nursery, school, out of school club and Montessori Teacher training centre.

In addition, a library, kitchen and

multi-purpose hall has been converted from former tractor barns.

Glazed cloisters now link the previously separate cluster of buildings, creating two grassed quadrangles for safe play.

Outdoors has seen a grass amphitheatre, pleached hedging and a willow dome planted. With views of the Caistor Water Hills and four counties on a clear day, the setting proves an inspirational learning environment.

## FINALIST NUMBER TWO HILL FARM COTTAGE, BRINKHILL

Hill Farm Cottage in the village of Brinkhill was bought in 2005. The Grade II listed house was believed to be one of the oldest houses in the village, the cottage being made of



mud and stud. A two storey brick extension was added in more recent times. The intention of the owner from the outset was to restore the building to its original state. Later embellishments such as the corrugated iron roof would be replaced by a thatched roof. However, whilst waiting for restoration the building caught fire. Fortunately the owner and his family were on holiday at the time. They returned to find the building razed to the ground. All that was left standing of the original building was the smoke hood and chimney. The brick extension survived the fire but was badly damaged.

This was a huge setback as the building would now have to be reconstructed. Local expert on mud and stud buildings, Robert Ley, was able to salvage timber and mud to reuse where possible. The process of rebuilding has been undertaken in the same manner as when it was first constructed using local craftsmen and local materials. Indeed, by the standards of today, such ancient methods are considered to be eco friendly. It has taken three years to complete, more time than it might take to build using modern methods. But Mud and Stud buildings are unique to Lincolnshire.

## FINALIST NUMBER THREE THE MANOR HOUSE STABLES, MARTIN

Built in the late eighteenth Century, a redundant stable block in Martin near Woodhall Spa has been restored using a unique combination of traditional building methods and environmentally-friendly materials. Original features including doors, windows, timber beams, stable stalls and mangers have all been repaired, and modern eco-friendly materials have been used to up-grade the original hayloft and the downstairs stables to warm cosy living accommodation.

The owners used natural, eco-friendly, breathable and traditional materials such as wood fibre board for floor and roof insulation, battens of hemp/cotton for insulating walls, re-cycled glass and limecrete for underfloor insulation and environmentally-friendly paints and varnishes for finishing doors and windows. Natural materials were also used in the interior design - re-cycled cotton mats, sheep's-wool organic mattresses, cotton sheets, wool rugs, hand-made wooden furniture and kitchen units and even a wooden bath!

A wood pellet boiler was chosen for the 'carbon-neutral' heating system which uses small pellets produced from waste wood. This boiler works in combination with three solar panels to provide all the hot water and heating (underfloor and cast iron radiators). There are also wood-burning stoves in the accommodation and electricity is all green from 100% renewable resources. Rainwater is collected from the roof and stored in underground storage tanks for use in the garden.

The Stables are let out as holiday accommodation and guests are able to stay in a healthy building set within a natural environment.



THE ROOFERS AT WORK  
ON MULBERRY HALL

## Diary of a new build

*Karen Johnson continues her journal as the house begins to make good progress in Fenton.*

Words: Karen Johnson

A lot of work has been done on the roof timbers (4/5ths of the timbers are on now). We are just waiting for the middle section to be completed. This part of the roof has several different pitches and gables and will need to be constructed on site. Again, there is a delay whilst the structural engineer designs a suitable steel frame for the large feature windows over the front porch. Some of the steel frames for the large polygon windows are now in place but did take a long time to sort out and install. The attic trusses were straightforward and were lifted into position by a crane and then braced.

Where the trusses are on and braced, the bricklayers have built up the gable end brickwork. The detailed corbling brickwork has also been finished on all parts of the house.

The guttering has been fitted to the garage part of the building with temporary downpipes to take the rainwater to the ground whilst the roof is completed. At the end of February the roofers arrived and started work on the garage roof, felting and slating. We now need the middle section of roof to be erected to enable the roofers to continue and get the whole roof slated.

Once the roof is finished the windows and doors can be fitted and we can finally remove the scaffolding - that will be a vast improvement and at last we will be able to see the house properly.

We are, in the meantime, still working hard on planning the next stages for the inside so when the time comes, everything is chosen and organised to avoid any further delays!"

