



Lee Moor Newsletter February 2006

Ian visits Welsh Assembly

On the 23rd February 2006 Ian Brown had a chance to visit one of most famous buildings to date to be heated with a wood fuelled boiler. The new Welsh Assembly building is being heated from waste wood taken out of Cardiff Bay, dried and chipped. This is only one of the features of this innovative and green building. See <http://www.wales.gov.uk/assemblybuilding/development> for further information.

Ian says: "I was at the annual conference of Environment Agency chairs in Cardiff on the 22nd and 23rd February and once we had completed the conference we had a short time to pop down to the Bay and see the building - which is very open and transparent - this is I'm sure a living metaphor." The theme of this year's Environment Agency conference was the Marine environment, ahead of government legislation on the subject. Further themes will be around water and agriculture, both are subjects close to Ian's heart.

Lee Moor

Since last month we are seeing signs of spring, the willows are budding and the snowdrops push on, even though as the last day or two prove winter can easily return. It is worth reporting a bit on the farming system in operation at Lee Moor by Percy Farms - the farming operation of Northumberland Estates. Lee Moor is no longer a viable unit and so the Estate farm it with a larger area and have a system of cropping that involves year and year about wheat and set-aside. This means that the 2005/2006 cropping year sees the farm not growing a crop but resting the soil till the autumn when a crop of winter wheat will be sown. To be fair this is also very good for wildlife, especially the endangered grey partridge whose numbers the Duke of Northumberland is trying to boost. The Game Conservancy Trust is monitoring the progress and you will see feeders filled with grain dotted around the farm. There were also a number of acres/hectares of crops left for the birds at harvest time.

Heating/woodfuel

The willow will be left one more year to thicken out before being chipped, but it may be possible to harvest a small area by hand to see how it performs as fuel for the new boiler. The poplar will be pruned in March to keep them straight and growing tall. We have a PhD student hoping to carry out a wildlife survey on the energy crops, more of this next time.

Sad news to end with: Robert Rippengal and his partner Kate Stokes died in a mountaineering accident in Spain. Robert was a partner with me linking his company [Econergy](http://www.econergy.ltd.uk/) (<http://www.econergy.ltd.uk/>) to my company Toasty Heating. At 39 Robert died with far too many unfulfilled dreams. I think I might just try to deliver one or two of them for him if fate will let me.