

Looking Back

by Chris Elliott

'Give people more say on city centre'

FROM THE NEWS 1995

CAMBRIDGE'S new city centre manager Lydia Bowman believes people are staying away because they are fed up with traffic problems, the way the centre looks or the attractions on offer. She said: "Some people are very frustrated with aspects of the city centre and some have actually stopped using it. I'm not sure the processes in place for looking at city centre issues are allowing people to have input on what is needed."

Ballet stars prance about on common

FROM THE NEWS 1979

MEMBERS of the Royal Ballet have appeared in Cambridge in an unusual role. For a few hours they ceased to be dancers and became fashion models instead, prancing across Midsummer Common hand in hand, standing provocatively, and nonchalantly studying music scores. One commentator felt the dancers did not make good models. He said: "Their poses are those of the dance and not the catwalk."

Housework made easier by science

FROM THE NEWS 1939

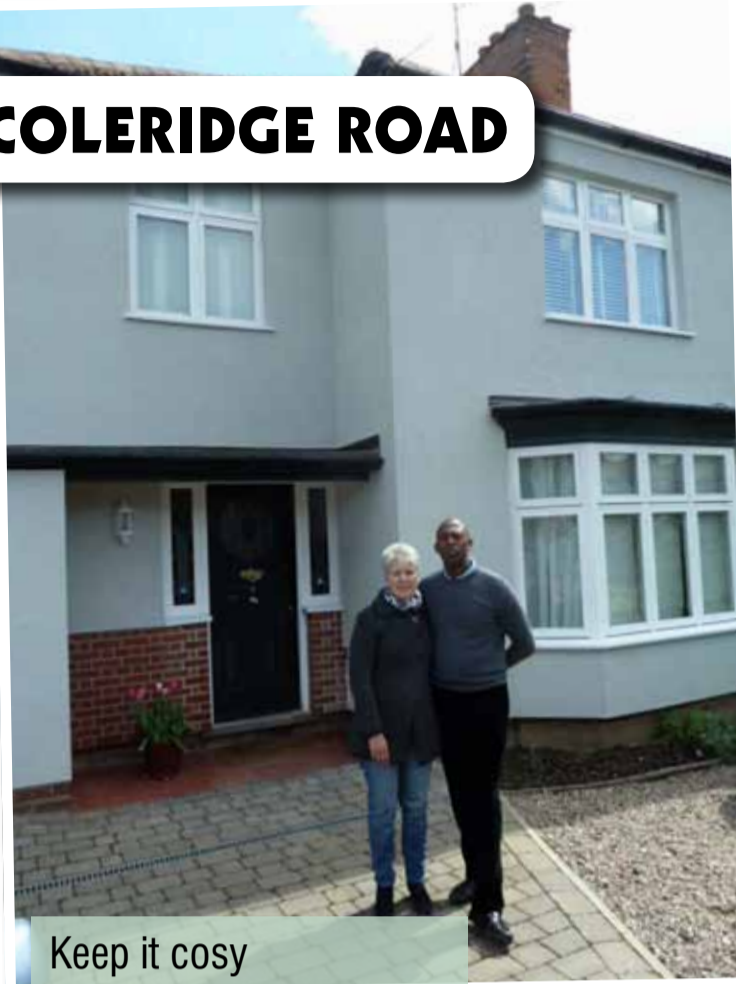
SPRING cleaning, "that sadistic domestic festival", will be helped by the scientific inventions to be seen at the British Industries Fair. There was one machine which could be used for polishing the floor, scrubbing it, picking up the dirty water, cleaning the carpet and shampooing it, avoiding the necessity for taking the carpet out into the garden. The fair marked a revolution in the kitchen too, a definite advance towards the emancipation of women.

Faked burglary to conceal a theft

FROM THE NEWS 1925

THE story of girl's attempt to divert suspicion from herself after taking £12 from her brother's bedroom, by means of a sham burglary, was told to magistrates at Shire Hall. The girl, aged 18, was charged with two offences of theft. When the brother discovered the money missing he noticed the frame of the window had been broken from the outside and prised open. The defendant had done this to make it appear someone had broken in.

COLERIDGE ROAD



Keep it cosy

Since they bought their Coleridge Road semi in 1995, Kim and Charlie have completely eco-renovated the property: the result is a warm and welcoming family home.

By using natural materials – such as solid wood and slate flooring and wooden replacement windows – the couple kept the carbon costs of refurbishment to a minimum. And the loft conversion is double-insulated: layers in the roof space, roll-downs in the eaves.

But the biggest energy-saving improvement is, without doubt, the external wall insulation, aided by a £9,400 grant from Action on Energy Cambridgeshire and finished with attractive brick 'slips' along the front wall.

"We've visited a lot of Open Eco Homes and have now implemented low energy measures ourselves," says Charlie. "As a result we're now able to set lower heating temperatures – and maintain comfort."



One of a kind

Heavily insulated – with recycled newspapers, no less – this wood-framed home on Mowbray Road is Cambridge's first PassivHaus (which means it meets a highly rigorous standard in energy efficiency).

Thanks to mechanical heat-recovery and ventilation, the property requires almost no heating; plus the ventilation filters also cut pollen from incoming air, a bonus for hayfever sufferers. Rain collection reduces the carbon cost of water usage, too: rather than being flushed with top-quality drinking water, the toilet system works on rainwater.

"I used to work in bioenergy and am acutely aware of how difficult it is to take carbon out of transport fuels," says host Bea, "and how comparatively easy it is to lower the carbon footprint for buildings."

Going for g

Cambridge Open Eco Homes lets us look inside some of the most eco-friendly properties – and find out how they tick. Alice and Charlie have five houses about to open their doors for the first time.



Grand design

Constructed from timber panels, and fitted with state-of-the-art water-saving, heat-recovery systems, Lingrey Court is a true carbon home.

Built by Hill just last year, this modern and stylish semi is home to Bea and her three young children. Bea won a competition to live rent-free, in return for the house being used for zero-carbon living.

"The house is so peaceful and the triple-glazed windows and insulated walls, despite being on a busy road," says Lorna, "are a far cry from a traditionally-designed house. And the air ventilation system means the house feels fresh without the need for open windows. It's comfortable and family-friendly: we love it."



MOWBRAY ROAD



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Now in its sixth year, the Open Eco Homes event is run by the charity Cambridge Carbon Footprint. Running across Saturday, September 19 and Sunday, September 27, the event gives members of the public a chance to view a wide range of energy-efficient homes – spanning retro-fits and new-builds, simple and hi-tech, owned-occupied and rented. Visit openecohomes.org.



SHERLOCK ROAD

Major makeover

When owner Antony embarked on the renovation of his 1930s home, he wanted not only to create more light and space – but also to increase energy efficiency and decrease running costs.

An engineer and project manager with a love of DIY, Antony worked closely with the builders – spending two days a week on-site – who added a bedroom and two en-suites, along with internal wall insulation, triple-glazing and mechanical heat recovery and ventilation.

"The renovations are newly completed," says Antony, "so we hope they will stand up to the job as anticipated!"



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TOPCLIFFE WAY

Family way

By installing cavity wall and exterior wall insulation, solar thermal panels (to heat the water) and solar photovoltaic panels (to produce electricity) – at a total cost of £20,000 – the owners of this house on Topcliffe Way have seen a radical reduction in energy bills.

Rob, an electronics design engineer, and Anne, a biologist, wanted to create a low-carbon home for themselves and their two children; along with the insulation and solar panels, they've also introduced rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling systems, which have almost halved their water use.

"I started measuring the gas and electricity we used, and decided to take control rather than ignore it," says Rob. "I identified each significant energy use and researched how to reduce it. Most of the insulation and airtightness work has been DIY – which I've actually really enjoyed doing."