

Wiveton House

north Norfolk

Wiveton is one of few villages on the north Norfolk coast unspoiled by development and protected by the conservation area. A small community, united by an annual street party, where neighbours support one another but privacy is respected. Verges are managed by the Parish Council for wild flowers, as is the churchyard. There are neither street names nor lamp-posts. A dark skies policy is maintained, out of respect for wildlife and to enjoy the night sky. The bridge over the Glaven by the church is the second oldest in the country and looks over the old harbour.

People have lived on the site of Wiveton House & Barn for at least 2,000 years, probably much more. There are many traces of Roman occupation and various finds include a rare Octavian coin. Foundations of a substantial 14th century building lie buried in the wood.

In the 16th century part of the current house probably belonged to a wealthy merchant, evidenced by a dig in the walled garden organised by Cambridge archaeologists. Many of the garden walls date from this time, and there are traces of change and alteration over the years. Photos from about the 1880's show three cottage doors and a lane up through what is now the rose garden.

The Barn is one of the largest barns in Norfolk - and one of the few to remain unconverted. The main beam carries the date 1756 and in the centre of the building is the original wooden threshing floor.

In 1909 the whole house was 'made over' by Smith & Brewer, well-known Arts and Crafts architects and became a substantial home, totally private and protected from winds and neighbours by its high walls. The architect's drawings are held by the University of Texas library.

Derek and Carolyn Newman bought the house, with Carolyn's parents, in 1976. The previous owners lived here for 25 years, established the gardens and updated the house which had been requisitioned by the transport corps during the war. The 'playroom' had been Lady Scarisbrick's table tennis room when she was the UK champion.

The gardens have been managed without insecticides and are planted to encourage wildlife. Over 100 species of birds have been recorded, with several rare visitors. The wood is being allowed to go wild and is home to nesting buzzards and intrepid hens.

Wiveton House been home to numerous dogs, ponies, pet pigs and even a Jersey cow; it has also been focus of numerous memorable parties. In the 80's there were huge annual November 5th bonfire parties, followed by supper in the barn. The celebrations for Rebecca and Jeremy's wedding in 2011 stretched over three days in perfect July weather with five huge tents and music all night with the support of charming neighbours. Recently 100 adults and 70 children enjoyed an amazing day long birthday party.