

## Essex & Suffolk host Country Link autumn weekend

Country Link is a nationwide, non-political social organization for rurally minded people and there is a group near you. Essex & Suffolk is just one regional group which arranges its own programming of events, and recently it was our turn, in East Anglia, to host one of the twice yearly weekends for all the national members.

We were based at the Belstead Brook Hotel in Ipswich, which is set in 9 acres of natural grounds with more than adequate leisure facilities. Magnificent breakfasts and sumptuous meals were provided and the rooms were pleasant.

This was the culmination of 18 months of visiting hotels across the region to narrow the choice down to one large enough, with adequate facilities as well as having that elusive wow factor. Belstead Brook fitted the bill and the staff were amazingly helpful. Once the hotel was picked Ros and Angie went into overdrive planning everything.

Goody bags were given to each guest on arrival and these contained locally sourced items like a bottle of Calvors lager, Copella juice and Fairfields crisps as well as notepads, pens, key-rings, Flavors of Suffolk, Farmers Guide, Essex Lifestyle, all very generously donated. On Saturday 100 copies of the East Anglian Daily Times arrived and other local companies like Brightlingsea Coop, Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd., NFU Mutual, Thompson & Morgan, P. Tuckwell Ltd, Wilkins & Sons in Tiptree were also very liberal with their support. Galloway Coach Travel couldn't have been more helpful.

Friday night saw the fancy dress party on the theme of red, white and blue; Flame Entertainments disco DJ picked the winners who were Drew Kerr (Ayrshire) as Super Mario and Gill Tweddle (Cumbria) as a tube of Aquafresh! The East Anglian Children's Hospices and The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution benefited from our fund-raising efforts and approximately £700 was raised for them. Saturday was a packed day with three visits: the first to Hollesley Bay Suffolk Punch Stud and Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge; the second to Westhorpe Lodge Farm (where the Barker family farm in a wildlife friendly way) and O.C. Jewers & Sons, Woolpit Ltd who store and process grain; the last to Bulmer Brick & Tile Company with a River Stour Trust boat trip and a Blue Badge tour of Sudbury. There was time for the AGM on Saturday before a Gala Dinner. During the evening a representative from EACH which supports families of terminally ill children gave a short presentation of their work and a Grand Charity Raffle was held. The first prize of a complementary stay at the hotel was won by a Yorkshire farmer. Iain rose to give a speech of praise for Ros and Angie and they were given a crystal vase each to show our appreciation for all their hard work in organizing the whole event. And then we danced the night away to The Poachers and 60's, 70's and 80's music.

Sunday saw three more activities: Home Farm, Nacton where organic vegetables are grown for Tesco and local Coops, Ipswich Transport Museum, Christchurch Museum and a 7 mile country walk. Country Link spirits were slightly dampened by the torrential rain but restored by a carvery lunch. The weekend was rounded off with a quiz and members' farewells before they scattered to all corners of England and Scotland. The next Weekend will be in Derbyshire in May 2013. For details Of country link phone Tony Paul on 01206 251515 or Ros Hardy on 01787 476581.



Meet and greet party- front Angela Wildman and Ros Hardy  
Back Helen Wyartt, Heidi Fowler, Tony Paul, Rachel Bowman and Iain Dingle (group treasurer).



Our group chairman Paul Peak and group organizer Ros Hardy.



Winners of the fancy dress, Drew Kerr and Gill Tweddle