

# Around the Round House with Phyl Shaw

Born in 1922 in the Square Mile of London where her father was a six foot police sergeant, Phyl was the youngest of 7 children. Phyl worked in London as a Civil Servant and during the War, also served with the Auxiliary Fire Service where she became fire safety conscious. Later, married and with a boy and a girl of her own, the family moved to Essex and then to Surrey where they particularly enjoyed a more rural environment.



**1970 - Phyl comes to Suffolk** Many of her siblings had begun to settle in East Anglia and Phyl joined them, bringing their elderly mother with her to keep the family together. But what attracted her to the Round House? "Well it's full of character" she says and of course she is right!. With her partner Harry, they set about the challenge of its restoration.

## **History of the house and the story of the poacher's**

**revenge** Built around 1880 as a tied cottage for the use of the 12th Duke of Hamilton's employees, the house was one of five built. Four now remain, the fifth was burnt down, allegedly by an irate poacher getting revenge on the gamekeeper who resided there. However, this story has not been confirmed in the village records. It is more likely that a hot cinder from the chimney caught the thatch roof alight, but that is not such an interesting story!

The quality of the build is very high indeed and the corbelling that supports the lower edge of the thatch was designed to throw rainwater away from the house. As a result, there was no need for guttering. The pointing, finished in black, delineates each mellow red brick. Whoever the architect and the bricklayer of the house were, they knew their trade.



Phyl carried out changes to both the interior and exterior of the house and these were always in sympathy with the original concept. Porches were built and finished with thatched roofs and solid oak doors and period door furniture. In addition, unobtrusive secondary glazing keeps Phyl warm without compromising the nicely painted casement windows.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find any part of of the buildings that have not had due care and attention, including the re-thatching of the roofs of the house and picturesque outhouse that originally housed the privy, separate coal and wood stores and a surprisingly large tool area.



Left, The Outhouse



Right, the marque of the Hamiltons, these appear above the bay window on all round houses

## Internal rearrangements

Phyl bought the house in 1970 but it was two years after building renovations before she was able to move in permanently with her 87 year old mother who, incidentally, lived for a further ten years. The large bay window faces almost due south and as a result the house is bathed in good light for most of the day. The builders in 1972 added a second toilet/shower room, a dining room and an en-suite bathroom to a downstairs bedroom for Phyl's mother. Following advice from the Fire Brigade, original doors and under the staircase areas were upgraded to fire protection Class 1 or better. In 1990, the conservatory, built by Harry's brother, designed by his nephew and approved by the Council, is a wooden construction built on low brickwork. "The double glazed casement windows do require careful maintenance" says Phyl but believes that, "it is a small price to pay since white painted timber and matching brickwork is in sympathy with the house" even though it is a modern addition.



**Conservatory**

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## A love for gardening

Phyl and Harry, with their mutual love for gardening, set about the garden's restoration in 1972 with the removal of many dead or dying trees and others that were past their best. One particular challenge was what appeared to be a pond that was full of smelly stagnant water, dead trees and leaves which had accumulated over many years. In this primeval soup only mosquitoes bred.

Having spent months digging out, removing and disposing of all the rubbish, Harry then discovered that in fact it was not a pond at all, but was in fact a drainage channel whose outlet had become blocked long ago. Fortunately, Harry worked for the local water board and used his expertise and labour to reinstate the flow of the channel and, as a result, forced the mosquitoes to find alternative accommodation!

## A sunken Spring Garden

Slowly the ground began to recover from its enforced immersion and once it had, the old pond area began its rehabilitation.

Phyl and Harry turned the area into a spring garden and in 1974 they planted in the newly grown grass three thousand Snowdrops along with many King Cups and Bluebells where they all continue to multiply today. To bring extra light into the area, the boundary hedge with the road was reduced in height and as a result, casual passers by are welcome to look into the lovely spring garden and enjoy some of the first flowers of the year. When they do, they give Phyl a satisfaction that the creative work she shared with Harry is being quietly recognised!

## In the community

Phyl worked both as an accounts clerk and as an office manager for two local companies before retiring twelve years ago. In addition to this she served as a Clerk to both Easton Parish and the Parochial Church Councils. As if this was not enough, she, with others, tended the garden along the wall by the village green.

Nowadays Phyl attends any Easton event that's going, plays whist in the winter at Brandeston and goes to the movies there whenever she can. Otherwise she dotes on her grandchildren and misses her granddaughter Katherine when work takes her far away to St Petersburg in pursuit of her career, especially as she takes Phyl's seven month old great grandson with her. Meanwhile, until their return at Christmas, much of her time is spent either reading or working out cryptic solutions in crossword puzzles in her cosy **Round House**.



*Peter Farley Sept 08*