Get back to nature with conservation group events

Nature enthusiasts are being challenged to get their boots dirty in the great outdoors and give a boost to wildlife.

North Norfolk District Council's Countryside Rangers are looking for volunteers willing to join them and get involved with the regular Muddy Boots Conservation Days.

These sessions will be held at Holt Country Park, Pretty Corner Wood near Sheringham, and Soddens Wood near North Walsham. Conservation days are spent at the different council-run countryside sites.

Volunteers carry out practical outdoor conservation work to help improve habitats for wildlife.

As well as taking part in physical work, volunteers can also learn new skills, including tree planting, pruning and making homes for different aspects of wildlife.

Muddy Boots volunteers meet at Holt Country Park every Wednesday morning from 10am - noon and at different locations every Thursday from 10am - 2pm.

All equipment is provided, including gloves and refreshments, but people must bring their own boots.

For further information and details about the Thursday meetings visit www.northnorfolk.gov or email anne-maria.kanoria@north-norfolk.gov

Children can also get involved with conservation activities and win awards for their efforts. Call 07920 589648 for more information.

Classical recital gets an encore

A landmark moment in the life of renowned British classical music composer Benjamin Britten happened in 1964 when the he returned to his former school, Gresham's at Holt, for a recital with his life partner and singer Peter Pears. The event was recreated on the same stage, as part of the programme of events marking the centenary of his birth.

Thomas Hobbs and Mark Jones, Gresham's School, Holt

In 1964 Benjamin Britten accompanied Peter Pears in a song recital at Gresham's, his old school.

He was a man who generally preferred not to keep up links with his past, and the then headmaster had done well to persuade him to come back.

Last Friday with Mark Jones, Gresham's director of music, at the piano, the tenor Thomas Hobbs repeated the programme that the composer had performed with his friend on that famous occasion.

Air by Purcell, Arne and Handel came first. The familiar words and tunes seem refreshed in deft versions by Britten. His prowess as a pianist was on display in Schubert's 'On the Bridge', just as The Questioner was well chosen to reveal Pears' distinctive style.

'Though he did not try to mimic it, Hobbs knew how to echo it while still retaining his own vocal characteristics,' said one critic.

In Winter Words, a sequence of eight poems by Thomas Hardy, he caught the moving drama of brief episodes that showed the power of music to transform life's sorrows. The tensions created by the impressionistic orchestration of the last song dissolved by a final group of four arrangements of traditional English songs. They were still perfectly recognisable, but somehow always intriguingly different, with interest repeatedly switching from voice to piano and back again in the most entertaining way.

Christopher Smith

Character and quality at the end of festival

Britten Sinfonia Ensemble
St Michael's Church, Aylsham

Different in sound, original in programming, seven players from the Britten Sinfonia gave distinct character and real quality to this Aylsham Festival closing event.

They started with Mozart - always a good idea. Lively and cheerful, the opening of his First Flute Quartet soon gave way to a movement in which Karen Jones seemed to caress the slow notes. Then she led the way in the playful Rondo.

Sally Price was the soloist in the Suite for Harp by Benjamin Britten. He wrote it in 1986, quite late in his career, in a style that respects the traditions of the instrument.

The section with the title Nocturne was particularly expressive, and variations...