

ECOBUILD 2009

The bombardment began months before the event, the bombardment of e-mails that is, announcing the coming of Ecobuild an event/exhibition that has been growing year on year (this was its fifth year). It is hard to believe that it is only 3 years ago that Landscape & Arts Network splashed out money on a stand at what was the second Ecobuild, in the hopes of drumming up interest and members.



The Landscape & Arts Network stand at the 2006 Ecobuild exhibition

In 2006 it was a very small exhibition (less than half its present size). I recall trying to find information on ground and air source heat pumps and could only find one company supplying such equipment, and they



The Zero Carbon House - in cut away view of course so that it is possible to see how it is all done. To see a time lapse video of it being constructed go to www.ruralzed.com/video.php

In fact the first zero carbon house to be built in this country was at the Building Research Establishment in 2007 for more info try the following links :-

www.lighthousebypotton.co.uk/

www.carboncommentary.com/2008/01/14/69

www.treehugger.com/files/2007/06/first_zerocharbo.php

were only interested in installations in new buildings. This year I lost count of the number of company's offering various versions of this brilliant and low CO² emitting heat recovery system.



A central feature of the exhibition is the 'The Arena' a large central stage and seating area used for public debates between specialists, celebrities, and politicians. On the day I was there James Naughtie of Radio 4's Today programme was the host and ringmaster for the day. I arrived in time to catch the last part of a presentation from Leo Johnston the co-founder of a company called Sustainable Finance, who had a great deal to say about the need for changes to the world's financial systems to help in the global effort to limit climate change. A short while latter Leo Johnston was joined on stage by Frances Cairncross and Nigel Lawson, ex-conservative chancellor and author of a **An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming** a book that apparently leans heavily towards the climate change doubters. For an interesting critique of the book by Robin McKie Observer science and technology editor I refer you to :-
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/apr/20/scienceandnature.climatechange>
This particular combination of 'celebrities' lead to some quite heated exchanges of view though it didn't do much to halt global warming.

Wandering about the numerous stands (there were in fact over 750 exhibitors) I came upon a kitchen made entirely from recycled materials (that does not include the oven, fridge, etc.). There was also an amazing sheet and block material made from recycled plastic waste that could be cut, drilled and generally worked just like wood and it never rots and any waste can just be recycled again. Another thing that I looked for in vain back in 2006 was small scale wind generators, this time there were several a sure sign that the market for these products is beginning to take off.

I later returned to the arena to hear from three political grandees. Michael Meacher, Michael Heseltine and Tim Yeo what was truly remarkable about their responses to questions from the audience was how closely they agreed about the need for action on climate change, clearly only politicians that are no longer in positions of power can give truly honest responses.



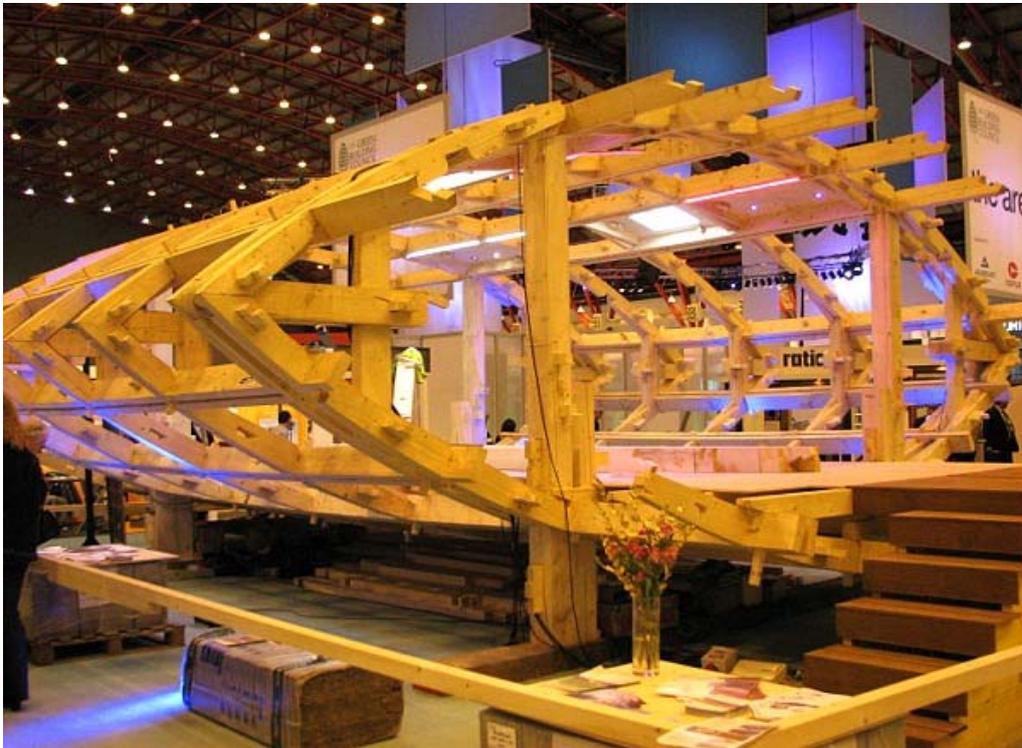
A wind generator that can be mounted on a roof top, is whisper quiet, generates 1.5kW in a 12m/s wind and the manufacturer claims will pay for it self in 5 years, more info www.renewabledevices.com



A big feature of this exhibition was the large number of seminars aimed at professionals but open to all. There were 9 spaces set aside for seminars with 3 a day in each and each seminar had 4 or 5 speakers, at a conservative estimate that's well over 300 speakers over the 3 day period. The subjects ranged from 'Retrofitting for wa-

ter efficiency ...' to 'The future of urban trees – its serious!' via 'There's no haus like Passivhaus'. Yes, Passivhaus is something developed in Germany like so many developments in these areas products from Germany and the Scandinavian countries featured very prominently at this exhibition.

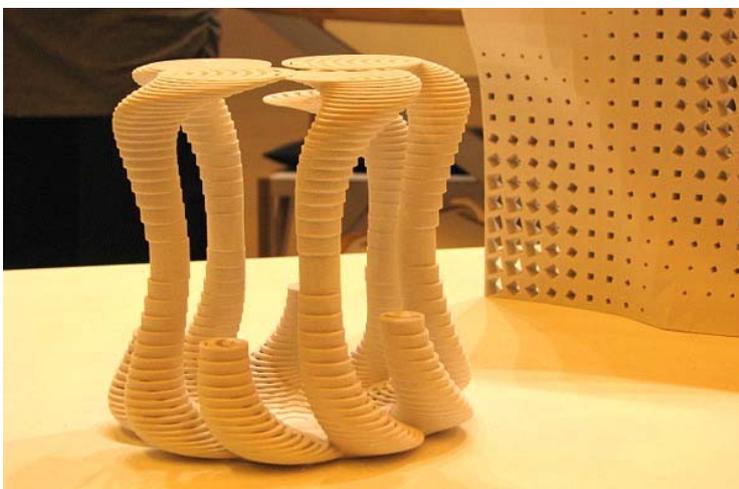
But one of the most interesting and exciting structures as far as I was concerned was developed by a British company called Zedfactory www.zedfactory.com they had on display a beautiful timber skeleton of a small scale building called a landARK to quote the manufacturers own publicity 'All you need is a rubber mallet, a tape measure, screwdrivers, a powerdrive drill, and enough peace to read the manual. If you can build a flat pack sofa, you can probably master your own rural escape pod.'



The landARK described as a Zero carbon off grid home ie not connected to any services and does not require any foundations. Below artist impression of the finished article



Finally some remarkable images from the Architectural Association School of Architecture stand that I will allow to speak for themselves.



I can recommend Ecobuild as a truly interesting, exciting and informative day out. If you visit the Ecobuild website and register, in about nine months you will get bombarded (I exaggerate a little) by emails but you will be able to get in for free, go to :- www.ecobuild.co.uk

Photos and text
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