

YOU BUILD

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE WALTER SEGAL
SELF BUILD TRUST

7

INSIDE

First Segal Trust training
scheme for unemployed
self builders. p4-5.

Dec. 1991 80p



Frank Dobson and members of the Calthorpe Project at the opening of their new building.

EDITORIAL

The Walter Segal Self Build Trust

The Walter Segal Self Build Trust is a charitable trust offering advice, support and training to people, especially those on low incomes and in housing need, to build decent homes for themselves and their families.

We have been in existence for just 3 years and are just completing our development programme aimed at fostering and supporting self build groups throughout the country. The aim of this is to coordinate potential self builders, sympathetic local authorities and other landowners, financial institutions and knowledgeable architects to create a network of self build groups.

Following the very successful Segal method schemes involving council tenants and those on waiting lists which were supported by Lewisham Council in the late 1970's and early '80's, other councils, groups and individuals are now coming together to repeat this process.

In Brighton, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Derwentside, Devon, Greenwich, Islington, Leicester, Sheffield, Sutton, Telford and Walsall, Wrekin and other areas, groups are forming and local authorities are taking the initiative to tackle the housing problem. Most of these schemes are still at an early stage and have a long road ahead of them, but with the help of their local councils, other landowners, the building societies and the support of the Walter Segal Trust, they will achieve something they thought that they would never have — a home which they designed and built themselves.

As Barry Sussman of the SeaSaw self build group in Brighton put it: "I'm 50, I don't earn enough to buy a house, I have no building experience. And yet I can build my own home using this method. If I didn't have this opportunity, I'd face an old age without anywhere decent to live and without security. The Segal approach makes it possible to look forward to something different."

Latest news

One of the joys of working for a small organisation is that there is little demarcation in the work and you get the opportunity to do everything. In fact, you don't have any choice and the Job Descriptions for Una and myself consist of four words, "Get on with it!"

It is now just three years since I first started work at the Trust and I return from my annual holiday with my enthusiasm intact but with the usual frustration that what is basically a very simple idea — enabling people in housing need to build their own homes — can prove to be so difficult in practice.

It is an irony that, for those on reasonable incomes, the lead-in period during which they obtain land, finance, planning permission, etc can be relatively short (a matter of months) compared to the building period (up to two years). In contrast, those people in real need have to struggle, in some cases, for up to four years before getting onto site. Yet I am still asked how I can guarantee that these groups will stay together to complete their houses. It seems obvious to me that anyone who goes through that initial lengthy struggle to get on site is hardly likely to give up when they see their goal within reach.

It remains the Trust's aim to shorten this lead-in time drastically so that those with the least resources are given a fair chance. We have begun to achieve this aim, as the self build schemes currently going ahead at Birmingham, Greenwich, Islington and Lewisham demonstrate.

Finance and Funding

As those of you who are regular readers will know, the Trust operates with the minimum of staff (one full time and one part time) on a shoestring budget. Yet we cover the whole country and even respond to numerous requests from overseas. To our knowledge we have not yet turned away anyone who asked for our help, although we do receive some strange requests. (One recent phone call came from a man who had to vacate his houseboat and wanted to know if he could

from the Trust

get hold of a piece of land, lift the barge onto it and continue to live in it. We spent 5 minutes outlining the difficulties and suggested he consider building a Segal method house.)

Raising money to keep the Trust in business is a continual and worrying part of our work. Over the past two years it has been a very difficult part and there have been times when we wondered if we would survive. We still do! And as the recession cuts into company profits and charitable trusts' investments, there is considerably less money available to the voluntary sector in general and in particular for new charities, such as the Trust, pioneering innovative solutions to homelessness.

Despite all this, the Trust is now ready with plans to move up a gear. To do this we need more money to employ someone who can concentrate on fundraising. This post would pay for itself within a year but at the moment it's a chicken and egg situation. We don't currently have the money to employ someone to raise the money to take us into the next stage by which we can earn more money.

If you would like to help, please read the back of this newsletter to find out how you can support the Trust. Every penny will be well spent helping us to help homeless people to build their own homes.

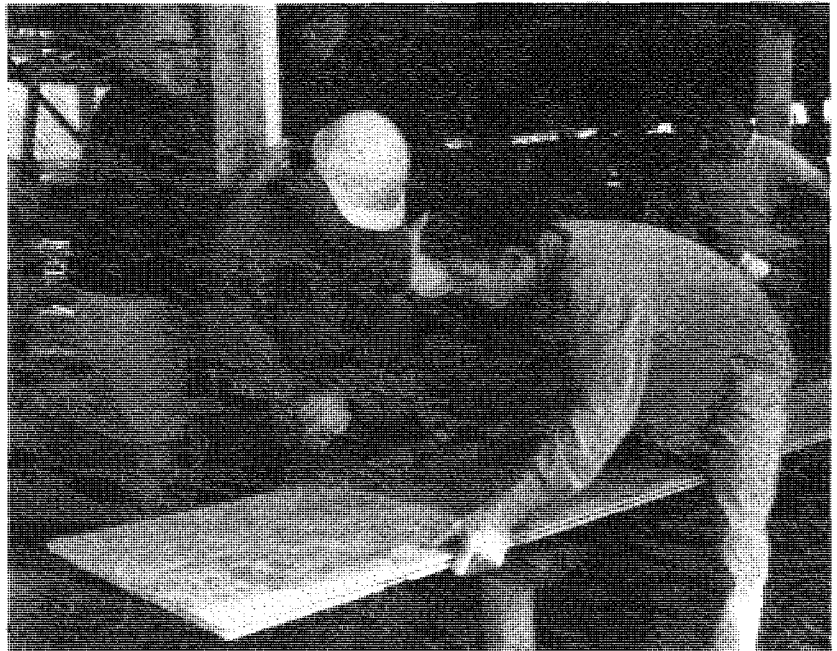
Funds Raised!

In our last issue we announced that Miranda McDonald had offered to do a parachute jump to raise money for the Trust. We are pleased to say that Miranda raised £500 for us and we are very grateful for her efforts and courage. If you are interested in helping in a similar fashion by organising a fundraising activity, please contact the Trust.

Training

The Trust has just held its third architects' seminar, a report of which appears in this issue of You Build. This lasted 4 days and covered all areas of self build including 2 days of actual building. This seminar differed from the previous two in that we managed to run it in combination with a weekend practical training for some of the groups of low-income self builders with whom we work. The whole training course went very well and was thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned.

The success of these courses has led us to investigate the possibility of linking in with the RIBA's proposals for Continuing Professional Development for architects. In addition we see the training area of our work being one which we would hope to expand given the expertise we have developed in the Trust. We are, therefore, keen to run more of these courses for those wishing to learn about the building method and the practicalities of self build either for housing or community buildings. If you are interested, please contact the Trust.



Young people from Telford Self Build Group learn the Segal method at CAT

Moscow Visit

Our last newsletter contained an article about the visit of a group from Moscow and the comments of an architect who was part of the delegation. This was organised by an English architect, Alan Spence, and was followed up by a group of community workers and architects from this country going to Russia to give advice.

Unfortunately, due to lack of funds, the Trust was not able to go. However, a series of successful seminars were held in Moscow and these led to plans being drawn up for the area concerned, the October District. These plans include some proposals for self build with which the Trust hopes to be involved.

On a sadder note, Alexei Mesherjakov, one of the architects involved who contributed to YOU BUILD 6, was unfortunately killed in an accident while in England. Our condolences to his family.

Building Societies

We continue to mail all building societies with our newsletter, as a result of which we have now been invited to speak at a number of their Valuers' Conferences in the New Year. This is an important step for the Trust, given the valuer's role in the mortgage process and the importance of the relationship between the cost and value of self built housing. We hope to gradually extend this area of our work and our contacts within building societies so that we can all play our role in helping to solve some of the nation's worst housing problems.

Self Builders' and Architects' Training

As part of our training programme, the Trust ran its first Self Builders' training course at the CAT, which we also combined with an Architects' Seminar. 12 architects and 10 self builders took part in a very successful weekend and gave glowing reports on the course and the venue. This is what two of the ringleaders had to say about the weekend . . .

ARCHITECTS' SEMINAR by Simon Yauner, architect

One long weekend in mid-September, 12 architects who had never met before got together to learn more about the Segal method. But this was no ordinary seminar; it was held at the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth (Ma'hun'leth, to you) in Powys, and I know that I speak for the majority when I say that the weekend left us not only confirmed Segal Methodists but also influenced to some extent by the Centre's 'green' philosophy.

The Centre is built at the site of a disused slate quarry and prides itself on being both a 'green' visitor attraction and an educational resource. The whole place runs on 3 kW of electricity, all of it generated by wind or sun. Serious as the Centre's aims are, they are served up with a generous dose of humour. They can be self-critical too: there is one exhibit — a few years old now — showing how a highly insulated Segal house is constructed. But it incorporates a type of insulation which uses CFCs as a blowing agent. Now, of course, we know better, and the search is on for an insulation material which is free of harmful ingredients and comfortable to hold and install. Current favourite is cellulose fibre (made from recycled newspapers)

which can be blown into cavities, and the next step is to find a way of converting the fibre into rigid boards.

It was in this environment of pragmatic experimentation and research that we spent four days learning and doing the Segal method. Sessions were broad-ranging, giving us a history and update on the Trust's activities, an introduction to the Centre, and a good deal of theoretical and practical work on 'The Method'. What many of us were looking forward to most of all was designing and building our own little building. And we were not disappointed. The only problem was we wanted more . . . more of everything and most of all, more time!

The tutors, I think, had as good a time as we did. The buzz was contagious. Mike Daligan and Brian Richardson were obviously enjoying themselves, and Ken Atkins was unstoppable. Pat Borer, architect of all the buildings at the Centre, handed down his wisdom and had us all doing structural calculations. And Cindy Harris, carpenter and builder at the Centre, displayed a serenity which only years of living at the Quarry can produce. Una Sapictis kept us all on schedule, although I think she suffered withdrawal symptoms and was caught more than once tuning into the radio. For the rest of us, it was pure escapism: no papers, no news, no TV; dawn swims in the lake for the hardy; evenings spent round the camp fire. I didn't want to leave.

The first thing I did when I got home was to have a good look at our roof. What was it to be? Solar panels — or turf?

SELF BUILDERS' SEMINAR by Phil Grey, Ridgeway Self-Build Association

The Centre for Alternative Technology is packed with a multitude of mechanical wonder — luckily we arrived early and had time to explore. There are gardens of all shapes, sizes and uses (they grow windmills and watermills to provide electricity) with greenhouses, organics, tropical fruit, animals, ponds, windmills, waterwheels, solar panels — see for yourself — it's well worth a visit.

The only items on the agenda which were as fixed as the Welsh mountains were the meal times. The food was wholesome, plentiful and vegetarian, but to an omnivore like myself the breakfast seemed like a choice between sawdust and shavings (is muesli a Swiss carpentry term?) so I settled for a gooseberry jam sandwich.

Saturday morning everything was moving well; after introducing ourselves and a chat about CAT, we moved on to the more practical aspects of the weekend. Setting out the foundations and ascertaining levels, then making jigs in order to facilitate drilling the frames were the first tasks; then onto reading Segal drawings and schedules. Saturday saw the frame of a Segal



'module' with joists and beams in place, which gives you some idea of the building process. Simplicity is the word which comes to mind when describing the building technique — learn to cut wood straight, hit nails (metal not fingers!) and screw screws and you too could build a Segal house.

Saturday also included building a model, on a 1:5 scale, of a Segal method structure which gave an impression of how the buildings work. Ross Fraser came to divulge information on funding and local authority powers to provide land — masses of useful information, presented comprehensively in plain English (rather than Architect Waffle which is similar to a Lancashire dialect but makes less sense). Nice one, Ross!

The evenings were spent around a small camp fire under a starry firmament with smiling faces and friendly chat. A strange mixture of intellect and Mike's jokes drifted through the dark (as did the consequences of a sharp change in diet).

Sunday morning (wot more muesli!?) saw a floor completed on the module, with a demonstration of a dry insulation using recycled newsprint. A section of wall was also built to form an example of all the aspects of Segal building. Much of the model was also completed and provided a good example of a finished frame. Tony was able to complete this to everyone's satisfaction thereby providing irrefutable and conclusive proof that even a complete idiot can build a Segal house.

Having the actual experience of working with the Segal method was, we found, invaluable — not only educational but enjoyable. A big thank you to the Walter Segal Self Build Trust for the opportunity and for the support they continue to provide us. Also thanks to the seminar staff; Mike Daligan, Una Sapietis, Ken Atkins, Brian Richardson and Pat Borer of the WSSBT, and Cindy Harris, Ewan Critchley-Barker and the cook of the CAT, all of whom were more than willing to share their knowledge, with a great deal of patience and expertise.

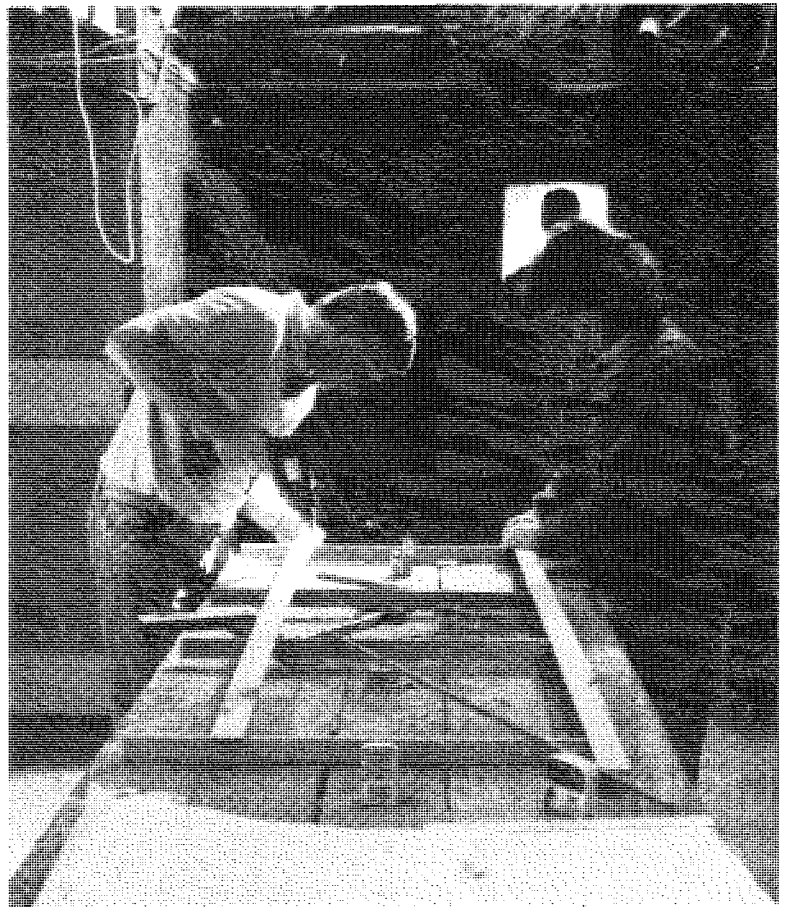
If you are offered the opportunity, don't miss it (but take some sausages to cook by the fire).

"Thank you for organising such a wonderful weekend's course at MacThingy. My initial reaction was, why are we doing this here? I'm never quite comfortable with middle-class Greens. As things developed, the attitudes of people like Brian and Ken, and the beauty of the place made the course sheer pleasure, and far too short."

Paul Chamberlin, self builder, Bristol

"Just a short note to say "Thanks" to all your team who helped make the "Segal Weekend" at CAT both educational and enjoyable. I am now, more than ever, convinced that the Segal method offers more than just a 'house'.

John O' Byrne, COGB, Bristol



Questions of Perception

One of the hardest things to change in life is people's perception of issues. It's something that the Trust has had to do and is still doing. This has firstly taken the form of persuading those people who've never had any real opportunities and who see themselves as being unskilled, that they really can build their own homes and that this, although a lengthy task, is not necessarily as difficult as they imagine. We have then gone on to convince organisations and decision-makers that the people mentioned above really can do it and that they should be given the opportunity.

At seminars, meetings and workshops, we find that certain questions come up regularly to which we have to respond. So, if you are ever asked, we have drawn up that a list of the questions with indications of how you might reply.

Q. Will these buildings last?

A. You should point the Segal method is based on and very similar to the traditional methods of timber framed buildings that were common in this country until about 150 years ago; that these buildings are usually those which are most prized by homeowners; and that there is an example of one of these buildings at Purton Green in Suffolk which was built in 1250. I have a slide of this building which I use to make the point. Finally, the Department of the Environment accepted a minimum 60 year life span for the original Lewisham houses and most mortgages last only 25 years. You can also explain that Segal method buildings can be regarded as having an infinite life as their

components are easily replaceable. This fact is accepted by one of the major building societies.

Q. Isn't this an unusual way of tackling the housing problem?

A. Explain that today 2/3 of the world's population houses itself by self build; not only in the so-called underdeveloped world but in the industrialised countries as well. 2/3 of American family housing is self-built, usually timber framed, and some European countries have government departments set up to help people build their own homes. Finally, even in the UK in 1987 there were 12,000 self built homes, more

homes than were built by any single building contractor.

Q. Aren't these buildings a fire risk?

A. The building are designed to the normal planning and building regulations control. This allows for a 30-minute fire resistance to the structure. Unfortunately, the fumes from your furniture will kill you within a matter of minutes. Indeed, the Norwegian experience is that the frequency and danger of fire is not noticeably higher in a wooden house than in a house built of stone. This is clearly reflected in their insurance premiums which are very low for houses regardless of construction methods. Also statistics in Scandinavia show that there is no difference in the number of fires occurring in timber houses compared with other types of housing.

Q. Couldn't a burglar use a hammer and smash through the wall panels to break into the house while I'm at work?

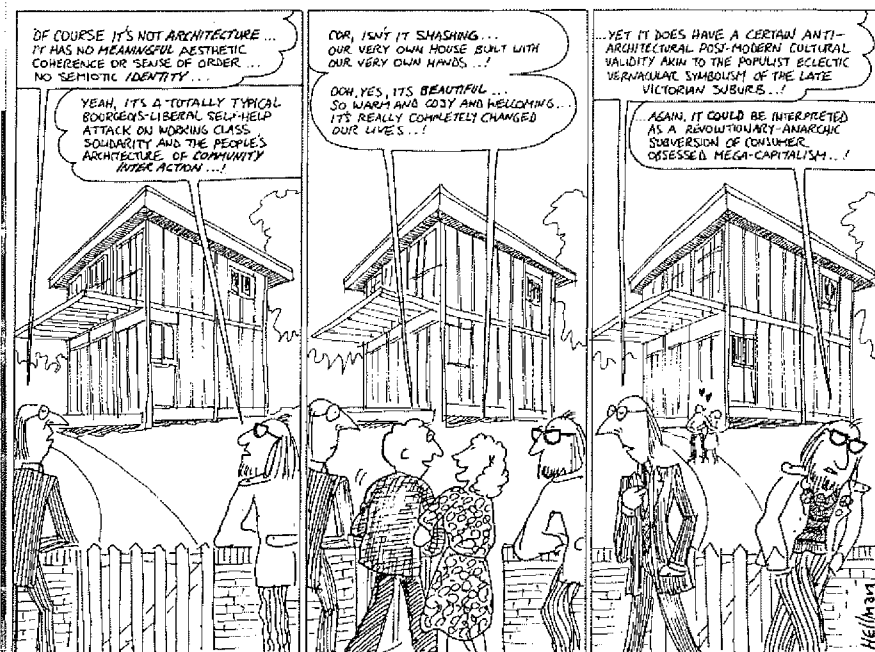
A. Yes, but if a burglar really wanted to break in he would find the window an easier means of entry. The problem is one of overall security of the building rather than any one material.

Q. How can you guarantee that the self build group will stay together and finish the scheme?

A. It will take quite a while for a low income self build group to organise itself, acquire land and finance and get all the necessary approvals — probably a year or 18 months. Anyone that can stay that slog is very unlikely not to stick it out during the building process.

Q. Yes, but do you really believe that this method can really work and that people with no previous experience can do it?

A. Explain that it was done very successfully on four sites in Lewisham in the late 1970's and early 1980's by people on the council waiting list; that groups in Birmingham, Greenwich, Islington and Lewisham are building their own homes this year; and suggest that they contact the Trust for more details.



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How Local Authorities Can Assist Self Build

Since the Trust started work, we have been keen to gather as much relevant information as possible and put it together in readable form for use by those individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in low-income self build. Thus we produced the first ever "Guide to Self Build" for those in housing need and created a mutually supportive national network.

We also saw our role as one of explaining to these interested parties how the Segal method could help to solve some of their problems. As our work grew, our role changed slightly as we were being asked a wider range of questions, usually related to changes in legislation and the circumstances this created. Hence our continuing work with community and environmental groups who wish to use the method and our involvement in training.

It has also become obvious that local authorities needed to see a wider picture of where self build fitted into their plans and what resources and powers they might have across their whole range of activities to enable it to happen. Consequently, earlier this year we commissioned Ross Fraser to carry out the necessary

research and produce a report which is now in draft form.

The report is titled 'How Local Authorities can assist Self Build' and it outlines the powers available to local authorities who wish to assist with respect to sale of land, use of planning powers, provisional financial assistance and other general considerations. It also looks at the policy context in which local authorities might apply these powers and looks at how self build groups can advocate their requests for assistance in the context of competing priorities for scarce local authority resources.

The finished report should be available early in 1992 and eventually it will form part of a revised edition of our Guide. With this report, the Trust will be able to assist local authorities in incorporating self build for low-income groups into their housing strategy programmes.

If your local authority would like to make use of this consultancy service or would like to purchase a copy of the report, please contact Mike Daligan at the Trust office.

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Project

Not Segal, but Segal-method

Brian Richardson, Trustee, reflects upon the terms we use to describe our work

"Walter Segal's main interest, the promotion of self-help housing through co-operative action, is kept alive by the Walter Segal Self Build Trust whose main aim is to encourage more people to build houses for themselves.

It was the involvement of the *occupant* in the design and construction which was fundamental to Segal's intentions — the technical method deployed was important but secondary. The timber frame technique he devised is particularly suitable as it demands no special prior skills of the builder while producing high quality houses.

We at the Trust advocate the adoption of Walter Segal's approach to house design and construction and it is tempting to use the term 'Segal house' for the finished result. This would be wrong.

Segal started a train of thought which other designers have continued with and developed since his death. The results are their own responsibility and should be attributed to them.

There is, though, a way of post-and-beam timber framing with rigid bolted connections, and with wall panels made up of a dry sandwich of weatherproof, insulating and inner-lining materials clamped into the structure, that is so distinctive that it is right to call it 'Segal-method' building. Other typical characteristics are weather protection by overhanging eaves and fast-draining joinery detailing, thorough ventilation of the structure and ultra-simple foundations.

This method does not belong to anybody, not for instance the Walter Segal Self Build Trust. Nor does it belong to Architype (the architect-cooperative that includes Jon Broome who was Walter's associate at Lewisham); not to Pat Borer who has designed many buildings in this way at the Centre for Alternative Technology; and not to C J O'Shea Construction Ltd, the first large-scale contractor (to my knowledge) that has used it.

It is available to all.

It is not the only way for self-builders to work, nor in all circumstances necessarily the best, but it does have the great advantages of speed, of flexibility, of economy, of simplicity and of easy construction. It can produce fine buildings. We love it!"

Calthorpe Project, Kings Cross

The Calthorpe Project celebrated the opening of the new UNDER FIVES AND COMMUNITY BUILDING on Sunday 22 September with an international festival. The Project has struggled for the last 8 years in dilapidated huts with leaky roofs and rotting floors. This is probably the last building to have been funded by the Greater London Council. Before its demise, the GLC bequeathed funds for what should have been a jointly funded building with the London Borough of Camden. The original scheme was abandoned due to enforced cuts by Camden. The Project then decided to go for cheaper, more modest accommodation using Segal-method timber frame construction. The community succeeded in raising alternative funds from trusts and business.

The building accommodates the under-fives facility, community classes and workshops and children's activities. It will also be available to let to local groups. The building is 260 sq.m. including verandahs and cost £150,000 approximately. It has a grass roof and all timber finishes are organic.

Everyone is delighted with the results. Not only is it dry, warm and convenient, but it provides a cheerful, sunny environment that also compliments and enhances the garden.

Annika Miller Jones, Calthorpe Project



Meadow Well Estate tenants recently visited the Calthorpe Project and other Segal method buildings in London in a series of meetings with the Trust and the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. Following the recent troubles in Newcastle, the group are drawing up plans for the revitalisation of their estate, including community centres and housing using the Segal method.

News

London Wildlife Trust

A new Interpretive Centre has been recently completed at the London Wildlife Garden Centre at 28 Marsden Road, Peckham.

It was designed by Architype Design Co-operative and is a development of the Segal method incorporating ecological building principles. It uses natural materials requiring little energy and no toxic waste in their manufacture, including insulation made from recycled newspaper.

It is designed to relate to the local environment in form and material, with the roof sloping down to a low level against neighbouring gardens and being planted as a volunteers' project by the Wildlife Trust with a grass meadow.

The construction of the building utilises a 'breathing' wall construction, which combines creation of a healthy internal environment by enabling carbon dioxide/oxygen exchange through the wall, with the elimination of condensation in the wall construction.

The building is finished throughout with natural organic stains, paints and waxes, which avoids the problem of toxic vapours emitted by normal paints and positively enhances the internal atmosphere. It is 90 sq. m. and was built in 11 weeks by O' Shea Construction at a cost of £50,500.

Jonathan Hines, Architype

Mill Lane Open Space Community Gardening Project

Planning permission for this gardening project for people with learning difficulties has been granted in record time and we hope to start building in March 1992, to finish by September. We have put together a draft lease for the West Hampstead site which we hope Camden Council will be signing soon, and we are discussing different types of temporary enclosure

which would allow the site to be used through the winter. At the moment we are relining the pond and working on planting and landscaping.

We will be interviewing prospective building supervisors in December and are looking for people experienced in the Segal method. A Training Project Worker will also be appointed to work with the volunteers who will be building the office.

The new building will consist of one large workroom, with small office and kitchen as well as tool storage space. The overall space will be 150 sq. m. and the building will be fully wheelchair accessible.

Simon Yauner, architect

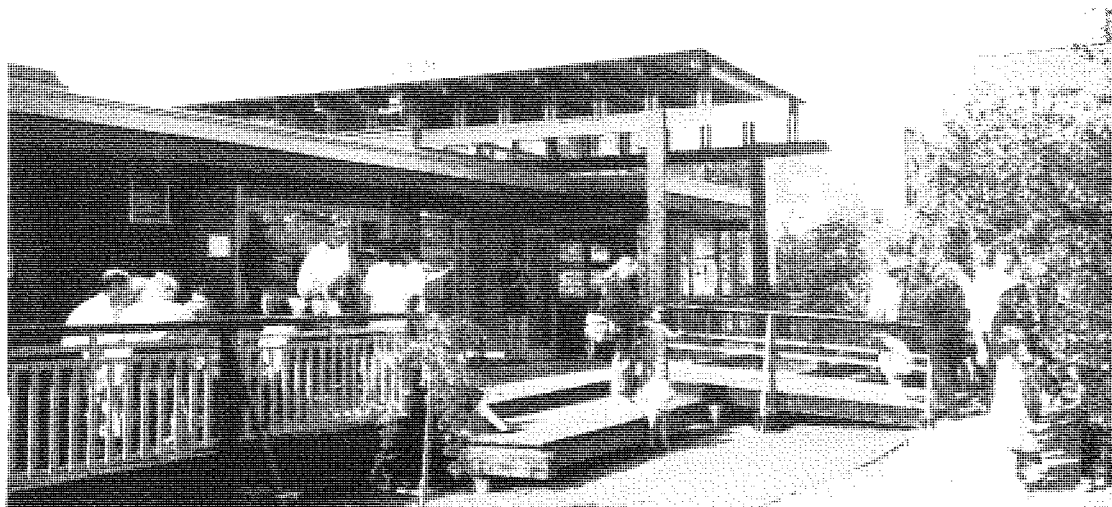
National Federation Of City Farms HQ Building

The NCF building has received outline planning permission from Bristol City Council and detailed plans will be drawn up in Jan/Feb 1992 — we should have full planning consent by May '92. Subject to a funding appeal just to be launched for £190,000, with the Duchess of Devonshire as Patron, we hope to build in Autumn '92 or Spring '93.

The building and its surrounds will allow NCF to demonstrate many of the City Farming and Community Gardening philosophies without resorting to a strict 'model' farm or garden. Boundaries will be hedges that reduce pollution levels, the roof grassed, and some intensive organic growing techniques suitable for people with little or no garden will be demonstrated.

The building will provide a good demonstrable example of an adaptable design for meetings, training, office, exhibitions, resource library and research centre. It will be a cost-effective building, environmentally sound and incorporating as many energy conserving and reducing techniques as possible.

Ian Eginton, NCF



The new Calthorpe Project building

Group News

South-East Self Build Progress

22 Segal-method units on three sites in Lewisham, Greenwich and Brighton will be produced for three self-build for rent co-ops during 1992/3.

The development is funded through South London Families Housing Association's 'Tariff' subsidy system, and development is being carried out by CHISEL Ltd, a secondary housing co-op based in Brockley.

These are: Greenwich Self Build Housing Co-op, Fusions Jameen Housing Co-op and Brighton Diggers Housing Co-op.

Three sites in Lewisham and Greenwich have been bought and planning permission obtained. Terms have been agreed on the fourth site in Brighton, and planning permission is pending.

The Lewisham and Greenwich self-builders are currently undergoing a pre-building training programme. This will conclude early next year and the two schemes will probably go on site around February/March of next year.

In the meantime, fine tuning of the self-build development agreement is taking place. One of the recent amendments is the establishment of a cost 'ceiling' for the schemes, which will ensure that 'value for money' is achieved.

Another area of enquiry has been the potential tax liability incurred by self-builders on any 'loan stock' received by virtue of their labour input. Although it is likely that, given current Inland Revenue regulations, Revenue Tax will have to be paid, we are trying to ensure that the tax liability does not arise until the 'loan stock' repayment is actually received.

The properties will be let to self-builders under Assured Tenancies or Contractual Co-op Tenancies (if the Co-ops become registered with the Housing Corporation) and rents for all the schemes will be at National Federation of Housing Association 'Indicator Rent' levels, discounted by 30% for the original self-builders.

If self-builders leave the properties, they will be able to cash in their loan stock, and the vacated dwellings will be let to prospective members (who might be homeless persons) at NFHA Indicator Rents.

Further bids are being made this year for Self Build for rent, for a second site for Greenwich Self Build through London and Quadrant Housing Trust's Tariff Programme, and for Greenstreet Housing Co-operative through SLFHA.

Jose Ospina, CHISEL

Islington Self Build H A

We are hoping to start work in April 1992, building 16 houses. These will be 3 traditional Segal-method bungalows in Nicolay Road N19 and 13 terraced houses in Sussex Way, which will be 2- and 3-storey houses in 3 blocks. These will be modified Segal method 'cross-wall' houses, using timber frames with

concrete party walls.

HAG allocation has already been made on the basis of shared ownership funding and this is now going forward for project approval. Islington Council have been very supportive in holding the land for us and Constructive Individuals will be carrying out training before and throughout the building process.

Nirup Lawton

Kings Norton Self Build Co-op, Birmingham

KNSB Co-op is building 7 Segal-method detached houses as part of a rolling development programme, Phase One of which started in late September. The road and drainage works are now complete and the self-builders are now starting work on their houses.

Jon Broome, Architype

Telford Self Build Group

Since the last report, the membership of the group has enlarged from 6 to 11, all young people in housing need. Two members of the original group spent 2 days at Machynlleth in September attending the latest Segal Self Build Course. They came away much enthused and encouraged in their ability to build their own home. Thanks go to the Segal Trust.

The Local Authority architects are getting to grips with the design and costing of the scheme so that progress can be made towards the submission shortly of a bid for Housing Association grant under the Self Build for Shared Ownership model by the Housing Association supporting the scheme.

Meanwhile the group themselves are beginning to consider such matters as: registering as a Self Build Housing Association; a working agreement; how to share out the 'sweat equity'; what further skills they need to acquire; and from whom they might seek training.

Margaret Wilkinson, NIF

Woodways Self Build H A

Two words have shattered our expectations for another year. 1992 was to have been our year of hard graft and blisters, or so we had hoped and thought. However we were informed on 23 October that our application for HAG would not be submitted this year because our project falls outside the 'value limit'.

To express our thoughts at this time into print would benefit no-one, especially self-builders so instead we will just say — watch this space next year, hopefully for better news.

To those whose applications are going forward this year, we wish the very best of luck. We also hope the winter will not be too long and cold for those groups already on site.

Jack Johnson

Ridgeway Self-Build Association

Our keenest contributors Phil and Tony sent us this review of the progress of the Ridgeway Group. Other groups — please take note and follow suit — send in that novella now — deadline May 1992.

As you can see from the title, the Ridgeway Group Self-Build Housing Project has acquired a new name.

Over 5 years ago, the Ridgeway Group was formed, by Barbara Furniss and Barrie Clarke, Senior Management of the Wyvern Centre, Leicester, as a curriculum-based educational programme of personal, social and professional development. The objective of this programme was to enable each member of the Ridgeway Group to experience significant decision-making powers over their lives. All members of the Ridgeway Group had experienced a situation of long-term unemployment and an experience of the education system which ranged from bad to even worse.

Unemployment and poor education were only the tip of the iceberg for all of us. When the group began in 1985 none of us had anywhere permanent to live. We were all 'on the streets' and experiencing the sort of things that go along with that lifestyle. We lived from day to day.

By 1989 we had achieved some startling things. We began with in 1985 by walking the Ridgeway Path together, 100 miles in a week. Since then we had made a film, written a play and teachers' resource pack, written part of a document for Leicester Education Authority (issued to all school-leavers in the county), studied a whole range of subjects from sociology to botany, and participated in a range of meetings with professional people in a range of settings.

In October 1989 Babs and Barrie asked us very casually if we would like to attend a conference in London. It turned out to be a conference on self-build.

We returned to the Wyvern Centre and began to

negotiate with Barrie and Babs how we could best get involved with self-build. We were very enthusiastic. The previous four years of study had changed us all quite a lot. Our aspirations had changed, we recognised that the process of self-build would provide us with a unique opportunity to put the knowledge base and skills we had acquired into practice, whilst providing us with further educational opportunities to learn and develop new areas of knowledge and skill. We argued our case very strongly. Barrie and Babs agreed with us and suggested that we should start immediately and that they would help us devise a curriculum. The fact that Babs seemed to know rather a lot about self build already made us raise the odd eyebrow at each other and when the bloke at the reference library recommended a work on housing allocation by one Barrie L. Clarke, we knew that they'd been 'at it again' and that it was going to be more brain ache!

We met lots of people from all areas of the housing market. One in particular was, and still is, an inspiration to us. A 'chunky' fast-talking character (*shurely shome mistake — Ed*) who could motivate snails and tortoises to build their own houses and whose quick sense of humour hides real kindness. The Ridgeway Group have learned that support is about doing things rather than saying things. Mike Daligan has done a lot for all of us. In a way it's a pity that Mike is a 'one-off' — if there were more people like him, there would be a lot more people self-building.

Seven months ago, the Ridgeway Group moved from the Wyvern centre to its own office (you call this an office?) but we still retain close contact with Babs and Barrie through the 'Advice and Support Group' which continues to meet regularly.

The seemingly endless problems of figures, red tape, legislation, funding and negotiation which face all self-builders have kept us all very busy this year but we really believe that the Ridgeway Group has nearly climbed the hill. We know that a new life exists on the other side of that hill in the sort of community we would choose to live in. We're going to be there.



The Ridgeway Group exercising their decision-making powers over a length of timber.

Walter Segal Self Build Trust

The Trust is a registered charity which gives advice, support and training to those who wish to build their own homes and to those who can help them to do this.

We are available to talk about how to do this and we can give a slide show or video presentation.

In order to continue to offer these services, we need your support. If you would like to become a member of the Trust and receive this newsletter, please fill in the form and return it to us with a cheque for the relevant amount.

Membership

Individual £10.00

Funded Organisation £15.00

Unwaged individual/ Unfunded group £5.00

We also have available:

- 'YOU BUILD — A Guide to Building Your Own Home' £17.50 incl. p&p.
- 'The house that Mum & Dad Built', 30 minute video
- For sale £40.00 incl. p&p
- To rent £10.00 plus £30.00 deposit (please send 2 cheques, one for £10.00 and one for £30.00. The latter will be refunded to you upon return of the video.)
- Architects' Journal Special Issue on the Segal method £2.00 per copy
- Portable exhibition (loan only)

If you would like any of these, please send a cheque for the relevant amount, made payable to the Walter Segal Self Build Trust.

Name

Organisation

Address

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For further information, please contact us enclosing an s.a.e.

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A P P E A L

Since its inception the Trust has operated with the minimum of staff on a very small budget with no reserves of money. Furthermore we actually have to raise sufficient funds ourselves each year to ensure that we can continue our work in the following year. As you can imagine this takes a lot of time and effort, some of which could be better spent working with those who really need our help.

We are, therefore, trying to do two things:

1. Generate more income.
2. Build up a small reserve fund.

You can help us to do this in a number of ways:

1. Become a member of the Trust.
2. Make a donation, no matter how small.
3. Make a covenant to the Trust. This can be as little as £50 each year for a minimum of 4 years. The Trust can then claim back any tax you have paid on this money.
4. By making donations using the Give As You Earn scheme direct from your wages or salary. This can be as little as £5 per month and needs no long term commitment. As you have already paid tax on this money, a monthly donation of £10 would comprise £7.50 of your wages and £2.50 that you would have paid in tax. It, therefore, makes any donation worth more to the charity at no extra cost to yourself. You will need to speak to your employer about this. We can send you a Give As You Earn form.
5. If you are making a will, please consider the Trust.
6. Organise a fundraising event for the Trust either on your own or with your friends.

If you need any information about any of these, please contact the Trust.