

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK IN EG

20 December 1997

Fuzzy performances by the new boys at the DETR...

...Barclays outsources property work...

...and modern life offers a room with a hangar...

...as well as a use for the internet

Could do better

Deputy prime minister John Prescott has been distracted by his mission to save the world from global warming.

Richard Caborn has distinguished himself by publishing a white paper on regional development agencies, although it was light on detail. Michael Meacher, despite his erudition, has avoided making any policy decisions at all.

Conclusion: the DETR must try harder to provide the property industry with some direction – oh, including on just how RDAs are going to work.

Surveying sold off

Barclays Bank is to axe 250 jobs at Barclays Property Holdings next year as part of its plans to outsource the bulk of its property operations.

The restructuring will reabsorb a core staff of about 220 as a division of the bank.

Facilities management, capital projects, and property services – including detailed general practice surveying – will all be put out to external suppliers. Barclays Property Holdings looks after the £1bn of real estate currently owned by the bank.

Park your plane

A unique airpark scheme in Somerset is awaiting consent. The development will consist of 25 houses, each with a hangar, offices, double garage and a taxi strip to the runway. They will be sold for £107,000 each.

Long before eBay

Longden & Cook Commercial has claimed to be the first agent to post its full auction catalogue on its internet website.

Auctioneer Howard Gooddie said: "People want to know what's in the catalogue before it's published."

25 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK IN EG

18 December 1982

Silence as South Bank hotel becomes offices...

...estates outside cities are neglected...

...but you'll still do well to buy your home there...

...and planners puzzle a letter writer

No staying power

One of the running South Bank sagas was partly resolved when environment secretary Michael Heseltine agreed to allow the ill-fated King's Reach hotel to be wholly converted into offices.

The building, designed by Richard Seifert, is a prominent and now notorious Thameside landmark in its unfinished state.

Despite the importance and controversy around this, the DOE has not issued a press release on the decision – a sure sign that the minister is keen to avoid drawing attention to the issue of office development in the capital.

Peripheral vision

The level of unemployment and social deprivation in many outer estates is as high as it is in the inner city areas.

Unless something is done, the level of unemployment in these estates could reach levels that would "shatter the social stability" in these communities.

Redistribution of wealth

The government describes the right to buy as "perhaps the most massive redistribution of wealth and property ownership that the people of this country have ever seen".

Early eco-houses?

Now that the quiz season is with us, it seems appropriate to ask for help in solving a mystery I have been contemplating.

At a meeting with a chief planning officer, I was advised, when discussing the possibility of a town centre redevelopment in a sensitive location, that the requirement would be for a "cluster of organic buildings".

I felt too embarrassed to seek an explanation, not being totally up to date with the in-planning jargon. Are there any ideas as to what should be submitted with our application?

100 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK IN EG

14 December 1907

A woman with a gun "declares war" on Surrey council...

...Oxford's windmills are vanishing...

...why asking 'What's your poison?' is just too true...

...and EG recommends some festive reading

Defending space

Miss E.M. Long – she is slightly over twenty – has set up a moveable little wooden hut on "a poultry and cabbage patch".

The Council have forbidden her to sleep there and served upon her a summons for building a habitation. Probably some kind friend or admirer will present the young lady with a caravan or disused railway carriage.

It certainly does not seem a particularly desirable site for the residence of a lonely girl, granted the double-barrelled shot-gun and fierce dog that she maintains for her defence.

Grinding to a halt

The disappearance of the old windmill at Brill and the similar mill at Charlton on Otmoor draws attention to the fact that windmills are a vanishing race.

The Brill mill, built between 1680 and 1690, is curious in possessing crosses and marks on its wall – probably to keep off the Evil Eye. The mill at Compton Parva was pulled down by the barbarians to make a bonfire for the King's Coronation in 1902 – a piece of vandalism, for it was an old post-mill, and almost certainly dated from the early seventeenth century.

No fears over beer

The proceedings opened with the delivery of "Arsenic in Hops". The Principal of Wye Agricultural College said that a man would have to drink 50 or 60 gallons of beer a day for a considerable time to be affected by the arsenic from the hops.

Just what you wanted

Books suitable for Christmas gifts: *Law of Compensation*, Two Volumes, about 2,000 pages. To sum up the advantage of this work, it contains far more matter than any other book on the subject.