Expos and events

Mudgee Small Farm Field Days

15–16 July 2011
Mudgee, NSW
www.arec.com.au

The Owner Builder attended the Mudgee Small Farm Field Days this year. The weather played along and the visitors behaved, so all in all it was a great two days out. Many regular readers popped in to say hello, including Kate and Allan all the way from Queensland!

The Days are becoming a regular on the 'sustainable building' calendar, with the site boasting a straw bale teaching workshop and a rammed earth studio in the process of being built. Over the two days, a variety of seminars and workshops kept visitors enthralled: dry stone wall demonstrations with Maurice Berry; rammed earth builder Justin Penney **(Penney Constructions, 0428 213 963)** demonstrated the construction of rammed earth walls; while Frank Thomas from Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow Strawbale Constructions **(02 4443 5282, 0408 415 806, www.strawtec.com.au)** and Sam and Simone Vivers of Viva Living Homes **(0450 480 460, www.vivahomes.com.au)** discussed building with straw bales.

Next years dates: 13–14 July 2012.

Earthbag Workshop

June 2011
Tasmania

Earthbag building is a construction method that is based on materials of warfare: sandbags and barbed wire. Very stable buildings can be produced at very low materials cost and using very easily learnt techniques. Great for places where labour is plentiful but materials are scarce. Earthbag buildings have been successfully constructed all around the world.

Chris Tolley wanted to use the technique for constructing garden seating and walls or raised garden beds. He was looking for a location where an earthbag seat could be built and where it could be easily shown to people. Westbury Community Garden in the grounds of Westbury Primary School fitted the bill perfectly.

Chris designed a circular seat in two halves with seating front and back. A one day workshop was held to build the earthbag seat. The weekend before the workshop, three volunteers dug the footing trench and laid the base earthbags.

The earthbag is a continuous tube of woven polyethylene material that is used for sandbags. A length is cut that is longer than you need, the end is folded under and the bag is filled with dirt. Clay dug out for an underground water tank provided the raw material. Cement was added to the clay to stabilise it.

After filling the bag it was tamped, shaping it and firming up the fill. Before the next layer was added a strand or two of barbed wire was laid along the tamped earthbag, holding the bags together along with the sheer weight.

As it was only a garden seat we did not worry about gravel in the footing trench or wrapping the bottom two layers in building plastic as a damp proof course which is what you do when creating a building.

Slowly the seat rose out of the ground. At the end of the day we were about two-thirds the way through the construction phase. Over the next couple of Wednesdays, when the Westbury Community Garden had their working bees, it was finished,

The next stage is the rendering, which will probably wait until slightly warmer weather arrives in Northern Tasmania and then we will hold another one-day workshop on how to render the seat.

See Sean's blog for more details: **http://greentasreno.wordpress.com** >search for 'earthbag.'

See **www.earthbagbuilding.com** for more information on the principles of earthbag building.

Master Builders Building & Home Improvement Expo

15–17 July 2011
Melbourne, Vic
www.buildexpo.com.au

'May I hug you?' It's not really the standard conversation you would normally have with a total stranger at a product exhibition.

But it happened this year at the **ecoMaster (www.ecomaster.com.au)** stand. It seems that many Victorians are now actively looking for solutions to reduce their ever increasing energy bills while improving their winter and summer comfort. Many people understand solar hot water and solar panels, however the area of energy efficiency is not really as well understood. ecoMaster offers a service that improves the energy efficiency of a home by improving 'the building envelope' in four ways: draught proofing, ceiling insulation, underfloor insulation and with secondary glazing.

This year's Expo attracted even more visitors than before. Interestingly, **Livos Australia (www.livos.com.au)** decided to move out of the 'green' area into the mainstream product area this year, and the position proved ideal. Those that wanted to find them made the effort to track them down, but they were also exposed to a wide range of visitors who may not have necessarily considered looking for an eco friendly alternative, like their plant based non-toxic paints and oils.

Paarhammer (www.paarhammer.com.au) had on display their energy efficient tilt and turn windows, sliding, bi-fold and entrance doors, as well as their bushfire products (BAL-40 windows and BAL-FZ shutters). Paarhammer attend expos primarily so that visitors can open and shut and touch and feel the products, as well as to answer lots of questions. Over the years they have noticed a change, with the public being a lot more educated about energy efficiency, sustainability, carbon, double glazing etc. Questions are a lot more specific and people a lot more knowledgeable on these issues. Over the three days of the Expo they had direct contact with around 1300 visitors.