

GORLESTON

Reunion to mark 25 years for college

A quarter of a century of providing education to Norfolk youngsters was celebrated with a silver jubilee party and re-union on Saturday.

East Norfolk Sixth Form College in Gorleston only had 330 students when it opened but now has more than 1,400 youngsters on its books.

The anniversary party saw current principal Laurie Poulson greet his two predecessors John Adnitt and Andrew Thomson and meet a large number of ex-pupils, staff and teachers.

During the party former student Rachel Ridout played the saxophone and the current chairman of governors, Mark Duffield, officially received a jubilee plaque marking the college's 25th anniversary.

Mr Poulson said: "This has been a terrific event. The college has come a long way during the last 25 years and the future looks equally exciting.

"It was great to see so many people - governors, teachers and administration and technical staff - who represent that unending chain of support for local students."

POTTER HEIGHAM

Calls to defend Broads villages

The latest opposition has been lodged against contentious plans to surrender a large swathe of the Norfolk Broads to the North Sea.

Potter Heigham, near Yarmouth, has said that Natural England's proposals to abandon six coastal communities to the power of the sea in 50 years' time should be thrown out at once.

The village's parish council has drafted a strong riposte to the conservation body's scheme to give up defending the coastline.

A council resolution demands that the government 'honour their public pledge to hold the line of sea defences for the next 50 years'.

It continues: "The plans should be rejected in their present form and completely rethought."

The draft Natural England plan to give up sea defences is one of four flood defence policies for the Norfolk Broads it is consulting on.

Pub set to reopen

GELDESTON: A village pub which closed overnight almost three months ago is due to reopen today.

The Wherry Inn in Geldeston, near Beccles, closed suddenly in late January to the surprise of villagers as new licensees had moved in just a week before, after the departure of the previous tenants. Now the pub has been fully refurbished.

Kelly Kirby, who has taken over the running of the pub with business partner Dean Borrett said: "We've given the place a new lease of life. We hope all the villagers will come in and see it for themselves, then we'll start serving food again in the next couple of weeks."

Cat in roof rescue

SPROWSTON: A fire crew was called to rescue a cat that had become stuck on the roof of a building in Beaconsfield Road, Sprowston, Norwich, yesterday lunchtime. Fire fighters used a ladder to help the animal down just after mid-day.



ATTRACTIONS: A new event called Dock Dogs was among the attractions at the East Anglian Game and Country Fair at the Norfolk Showground.

COSTESSEY

Glorious weather sees thousands flock to country fair

It was the biggest crowd of a glorious Norfolk weekend, as thousands gathered for a pie and pint and some dramatic entertainment.

But it was not Norwich City's must-win clash with QPR, where 25,497 watched the Canaries clinch Championship safety with a 3-0 win.

That crowd was dwarfed by the total of 50,000 people who flocked to the fifth East Anglian Game and Country Fair at the Norfolk Showground at Costessey, near Norwich, over the weekend. The attendance added up to a record for an event that has grown from 24,000 in its first year to 43,000 in 2007.

Show director Andy Grand said:

"It's been a phenomenal weekend - our best show in the five years that it has been running. It has grown and grown every year. We bring more and more world-class attractions every year and it's a great family day out. "I think people love it because they can get involved in so many activities. There's lots

to do for people and lots to do for their pet dogs. People can come here for a good price and stay all day."

He added: "We try to appeal to all sorts of people - not just those who are

into hunting, shooting and fishing. "Temperatures were really high here for April. You can plan all year but you cannot plan or rely on good weather. This year we've been really fortunate.

It has been terrible up to now.

"I think people are just so keen to get out at this time of year after the winter."

The fair, in association with the EDP, included a new event called Dock Dogs, which began in the US in 2000 and was launched in England at the showground over the weekend.

People put their pet dogs forward and throw a throw toy in the air over a pool. The dog that jumps the furthest into the water is the winner.

Other attractions included helicopter rides and a shooting exhibition by five-times world clay pigeon shooting champion John Bidwell.



NORTH WALSHAM

Retired fireman pleads with NHS for cancer drug

Retired fireman Barry Humphrey saved lives during 25 years of service amid blazes and bombs in London.

Now he is pleading with Norfolk's health chiefs to prolong his own.

The 58-year-old has liver cancer and his only hope of delaying its spread is a new drug called Sorafenib.

But the county's health authority has refused to pay for it.

It is a decision which his local MP, and Liberal Democrat health spokesman Norman Lamb is battling to get reversed, saying he was shocked that a deserving case was being denied treatment.

The family, hospital doctors and politician are challenging why Mr Humphrey, from North Walsham, is not considered to be an exception qualifying for funding.

His rare condition, where the liver is the primary seat of the disease, affects just 1 in 100,000 people - making them feel he is exceptional, and not likely to open a funding floodgate for NHS Norfolk.

Mr Humphrey said: "They are playing with my life.

"Liver cancer is not a good one to get. Less than 5pc of patients are alive after five years.

"We are aware budgets are finite, but I am a rare case so it won't cost them a fortune. After paying my

By RICHARD BATSON

taxes all those years, you expect something back. At least let me try it to see if it works. It's the only hope we have got."

Last night NHS Norfolk said it could not comment on Mr Humphrey's case because of a confidentiality code.

But it confirmed it had turned down three out of five applications for the drug, with decisions based on clinical evidence.

Barry's fireman's days saw him deal with huge fires at Alexandra Palace and King's Cross tube station, the Clapham train crash, and bombs at the Stock Exchange and Moorgate. He and wife Hazel, a former fire service control room worker in Essex, retired to Norfolk in 2001.

Last November Barry was diagnosed with cancer, which was probably sparked by catching Hepatitis C from a casualty during a fire rescue. It caused cirrhosis, weakening the liver and making it more susceptible to cancer.

Consultants at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge told him the tumour was too big to allow either surgery or a transplant, and that the only hope of extending his life expectancy was Sorafenib, which



RARE CONDITION: Barry Humphrey.

slows the cancer cell growth.

Although it has done well in tests, it has not yet been approved by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, which vets the effectiveness of new drugs.

Mr Humphrey said consultants felt he was a good candidate because he was still relatively young and active fit, and neither he or they had received a good explanation for the refusal.

Their story comes just days after the EDP revealed how pensioner David Blackett from Bunwell in south Norfolk was refused funding for a drug to help his battle against lung and kidney cancer, leaving him to spend £3,000 a month of his retirement nest egg on treatment.

Doctors have told the Humphreys however it would be unviably expensive for them to foot the bill themselves, and could see them having to pay for all his other treatment.

NHS Norfolk's head of prescribing and medicines management Ian Small said that until the NICE study was completed, the authority would only sanction a drug's use in exceptional cases.

Where clinical evidence showed a treatment was not effective, or not necessary, NHS Norfolk would not normally fund it.

"There are finite amounts of funds and if NHS Norfolk funded treatments that are yet to have clinical evidence, it would not have the resources to fund other treatments which have proven effectiveness," he said.

Mr Lamb said he found it hard to accept the authority's decision, after clinicians had recommended Mr Humphrey should have the drug.

Pictures: NICK BUTCHER