

When we're not rounding up cattle ...

Jeremy Stacey Architects (left to right: Jane Snape, Jeremy Stacey, Rhona Fleming), Beachamwell, Norfolk

How did you establish the practice?

We moved from London to set up the practice in 1992. Our studio is a converted barn in a small village in rural west Norfolk. The practice consists of three architects, a part-time secretary and a bookkeeper who comes in once a month.

What kind of work do you do?

Our work ranges from domestic jobs and church repairs to a £2.5m council office in King's Lynn. One of the partners is a member of the Society of Garden Designers, so we also do work on private gardens and recently completed a sensory garden in a Norfolk seaside town. Some of our work, like a pig house for a local farmer, would be hard to find in a city.

How far do you travel for work?

We spend ages and fortunes driving around – the office motorbike is useful for short journeys. We have travelled as far south as London or as far west as Northamptonshire but mostly we cover a radius of 75 miles, which includes Cambridge, Norfolk and part of Suffolk.

Has new technology made life easier?

Computers and dog hairs don't go well together, but email means we can get information quicker and easier than by post – which doesn't arrive until after 11 am – and a scanner saves a 75-mile round trip to get a colour photocopy.

Have you been affected by foot and mouth?

Not much. Norfolk has been thankfully free of it, although there was a problem in moving topsoil on a landscape project. It has



meant we see more of our neighbour, who comes round to photocopy and fax cattle movement orders.

How do you get work and how important are relations with local planners and business people?

We always involve planning officers at the early stages of our projects, but the local business world is a mystery to us. We get new work by recommendation or by freak accident.

What are the highs?

Helping to round up escaped cattle makes a welcome break from sitting at a keyboard. Heading out at the front gate into fields and forests with the dogs makes the move from the city worthwhile.

And the lows?

Feeling a bit isolated and worrying that everyone else is having better parties.

Small is beautiful

Elaine Rigby will speak on rural practice at the RIBA's second Small Practice Conference at the Lowry in Salford on 15 November. Tickets cost £85 plus VAT. For further information, contact Julie McIver at Wentworth Consulting Group on 01257 278277 or email riba@wentworth-cg.co.uk