

Kent on Sunday - 17 May 2009

Festival set to build on architects' foundations

THE county's architectural gems are to be highlighted in a major month-long festival.

It covers the whole of the South East and takes in nine counties, but organisers say Kent will have the lion's share to offer lovers of buildings, as well as those who are simply curious, with many attractions free.

Of the 80 events planned with funding from the Arts Council, 26 are Kent-based and all have the theme Better Places, Better Spaces.

The organiser, the Royal Institute of British Architects, said people often ask themselves questions like what is it made of? what is that for? and why is it designed like that? Well, this is the opportunity to find out.

There will be guided tours of new buildings by their architects, the chance to see places you pass every day in a new way, and the opportunity to get a new perspective through artists' eyes. You can also take part in family workshops to help spot the stars of the next generation of architects.

The South East event was launched following the end of the nationwide Architecture Week, which ran for a decade from 1997.

Helen Wren, director of RIBA South East, said: "People in this region have a huge appetite for architecture-related events... we live in a beautiful part of the country, with amazingly varied buildings."

Architects have created Look Up, Look Around fun quizzes to download from the website, for children and families to dis-

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cover building details across the region.

One novel aspect of the festival is called Architect in the House. This lets home owners quiz a RIBA chartered architect for a donation to homeless charity Shelter.

Here's a run down of what you can expect.

- In the Ashford area, stained glass window designer Alex Le Rossignol hosts a celebration of creativity in the ancient church of St Mary's, Smeeth, in its newly-built oak room.

The church features a window by Ms Le Rossignol and she will show recent work she has done with other architects.

Examples of work by Stephen Foster will also be on show: he created carved and gilded doors for the church. During the Festival Ms Le Rossignol is also opening her own studio, a beach hut in the garden of Smeeth Rectory.

- Also near Ashford, two artists inspired by architecture are opening their studios in Brabourne Lees: Sue Chapman will show photographs and art inspired by local buildings; and Liz Garnett will display her architectural photographs, and explain the advantages of using a large format camera.

- In Canterbury there will be an online buildings quiz by local architect Khirstie Myles.

The city also has two schools of architecture and visitors can see the work of final degree students at both, as well as an exhibition by students at Canterbury Castle.