

### **Chairman's Report for 2016**

2016 was a year containing a mixture of considerable excitement and concern. The Court Knoll Project provided the excitement and Andora Carver's illness and absence from the Society has been a source of concern. As many of you will be aware, Andora, who has been the Society's secretary since 1983, was taken ill in November suffering from an acute migraine. Following a CT scan in Colchester Hospital she was taken to and treated in the Queens Hospital, Romford, for 2 weeks. The primary diagnosis was a subarachnoid haemorrhage. A repeat scan 2 weeks later was thankfully negative. Andora has been advised to reduce her workload and take life very easy for the next few months, so she has decided to take a sabbatical from the Society and other tasks in the community for the time being. I am sure we all wish her a full and speedy recovery.

**COMMITTEE:** During Andora's absence I am most grateful to Jill Slater for returning to undertake the duties of the Society Secretary and I am pleased to announce that Lucy Carpenter has joined the committee, having been co-opted in January. My thanks to my fellow committee members John Alexander, John Partridge, Ed Fehler, Tom Gardener, Martin Wright and David Heigham, our Hon. Treasurer, all of whom offer themselves for re-election in 2017- 2018.

Other assistance has been given by Lorraine Brooks, who does a magnificent job in so many areas, whether keeping our web site up to date or helping with the poster production and Jenny Hoskins who keeps an eye on our publications and products. Assistance is also supplied by a large number of volunteers in connection with a number of events carried on by the Society during the year and I pass my grateful thanks to all of you.

**COURT KNOLL PROJECT:** This project has become one of the largest undertaken by the Society in its history. Until her illness, Andora had controlled the project and she has been ably assisted by a huge number of volunteers. Three people deserve particular mention. Firstly Sally Bartrum who together with Andora attended every day of the six weeks spent on the dig. Furthermore in Andora's absence she has continued to provide a crucial link with the volunteers who are continuing to assist in the analysis of the finds. Secondly I mention Dr. Tim Dennis, as his expertise in the initial ground radar survey was crucial in obtaining consent for the excavations from Historic England. Furthermore he has also expended a huge amount of time and effort both during the dig and in the second stage of analysing the finds. Thirdly I want to thank James Carver for the invaluable support he gave to Andora during the dig.

I am delighted that so many villagers participated or attended our many open days to view the progress. I must also thank the Colchester and Stour Valley Archaeology Societies for their help and support.

As you are probably aware from the articles in the Community Times and from our own messages to members, the second phase, which involves the analysis of the finds, is already beginning to bear fruit. The most exciting news arises from the radio carbon dating of the small particle of bone removed from the grave that was discovered on the final day of the dig. There is a 68% chance that the bone dates from the period 989 to 1010; the first clear supporting evidence of a late Saxon settlement. As the work continues through 2017 I am sure there will be more exciting news to follow.

As you will note from this year's accounts the project has absorbed a considerable amount of the Society's funds. The initial budget presented to the committee projected an estimate of approximately £12,000 for the complete project. However as the dig progressed it became apparent that this figure will be substantially exceeded. Your committee are therefore endeavouring to raise further funds through all possible means. Some individual members have already made donations and we would welcome any further contributions. The Dedham Vale

Sustainable Development Fund, the Community Council and the Tendring Hall Estate have all made generous grants available to the Society.

Our professional advisers, Suffolk Archaeology, led by Jo Caruth and Linzi Everett have also been most generous with their time and have made substantial reductions to their fees.

I shall keep members informed of subsequent progress but it is hoped by the end of March 2018 a report will be produced summarising progress to that date.

**Open Gardens:** Despite the poor weather the Society's Open Gardens event on June 12<sup>th</sup> raised £1500. 17 gardens were open and the event attracted over 300 visitors. The proceeds go towards the Society's funds for future conservation projects. Many thanks for all the gardeners who worked so hard and to the cake makers, tea and ice cream helpers.

#### **MEETINGS:**

The Committee held 11 monthly meetings

There were, as usual, 3 Open Meetings with speakers on Bures Crop Circles by Anna Moore of the Colchester Archaeological Group, Reminiscences of Nayland presented by Chris Hunt and Court Knoll, Past present and future presented by Dr. Tim Dennis. At our Joint meeting with Nayland Horticultural Society Edward Martin spoke on the subject of Suffolk's lost gardens. All were well attended and, in addition to being very entertaining, added greatly to our local knowledge.

**VISITS:** The Society arranged private visits to two significant period properties the first at Crows Hall a 16<sup>th</sup> Century moated manor house near Debenham and the second at Columbine Hall a 14<sup>th</sup> Century moated manor house near Stowmarket. On each occasion around 25 members and friends were in attendance.

**MEMBERSHIP:** The Subscription remains £8 single and £12 double and the use of Standing Orders is encouraged to facilitate the collection of subscriptions. Life Membership remains £30 single and £45 double. Membership currently stands at about 260.

**PLANNING:** We continue to be vigilant and study all applications in Nayland and Wiston. Comments or objections are made where appropriate.

**The Greenhouse site, Great Horkesley:** It is to be hoped that the long running saga of the site, which initially was to be developed by the Bunting family, has been brought to an end. Planning permission for 12 houses and 4 affordable housing units has been granted by Colchester Borough Council although in the view of your Society this is contrary to the Local Plan and a number of National planning policies. The Society spoke against the application at the public hearing but the application was unanimously granted. It is to be hoped that this development does not lead to further residential sprawl in an area immediately adjacent to the Dedham Vale AONB.

**THE MEADOW** has continued to give pleasure to walkers and visitors to the village. The path is very well used. We are extremely grateful to Richard Wiles for continuing to look after "Richard's Wood" and the spinney close to Horkesley Lock.

**MAY FOOTPATH WALK:** It is becoming more difficult to find a route with any degree of novelty for members and local residents but we think we achieved it this year. A series of paths heading in a south westerly direction from the village and reaching Little Horkesley was complemented by a visit to Little Horkesley Hall the home of Mr & Mrs Eddis who kindly allowed a tour of their gardens and some refreshments thereafter.

*Mike Hunter*  
*January 2017*