

Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society

Registered Charity no 268104

www.naylandconservation.org.uk

Chairman's Report for 2017 AGM

Looking back over previous Chairman's reports the preamble always mentions that we have had a busy year and 2017 was certainly no exception. Planning matters continue to occupy your committee and Open Gardens was our most successful in the Society's history. Our speaker meetings were well attended as were the May footpath walk and our visits to local historic houses. The Society remains in robust health and continues to attract new members – and long may it do so!

COMMITTEE: Save for the resignation of Andora Carver there were no changes to the committee this year and I express my thanks to my fellow committee members, our Hon. Secretary Jill Slater, John Alexander, John Partridge, Ed Fehler, Tom Gardiner, Martin Wright, Lucy Carpenter and David Heigham, our Hon. Treasurer, all of whom offer themselves for re-election in 2018 -2019. I also wish to mention the support I receive from our President Barry Wakefield, whose wise counsel is invaluable and for the tremendous assistance offered by Lorraine Brooks who tirelessly updates our web site and helps to produce our posters. Support is also supplied by a large number of volunteers in connection with events carried on by the Society during the year and I pass my grateful thanks to all of you.

COURT KNOLL PROJECT: The post excavation analysis continued apace during 2017 by both professionals and volunteers. Jonathan Oldham, Tim Dennis and Sally Bartrum gave particular assistance in dealing with the very substantial amount of ceramic building material, which required individual inspection, weighing and recording. Also, Rosemary Knox spent many hours transcribing data on to a spreadsheet. Financial support during 2017 was provided by the Dedham Vale Sustainable Development Fund and the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, both of whom made generous grants. Our professional advisors Suffolk Archaeology also offered a considerable discount in their fees. Additionally following the committee's decision to abandon the book to be written for the Society by architectural historian Leigh Alston, the Norman Scarfe Trust, which had made a grant available for the publication, very kindly agreed that the grant be redirected towards the Court Knoll Project. As members will be aware an exhibition of the finds and photographs of the excavations was planned for February 2018. It is anticipated that the final phase of the Project, which will include a report and the erection of an information display board at Court Knoll, may take place in 2019.

OPEN GARDENS: The 40th anniversary of Open Gardens coincided with perfect weather for our visitors, which produced a record-breaking profit of £3,210. Nineteen gardens were open for viewing and a number of exhibitors have opened their gardens for in excess of 25 years – a wonderful achievement. As usual a large number of volunteers gave their time and expertise to make this day such a success and I express the Society's thanks to all our helpers. Might I express special thanks to our Hon Sec Jill Slater who masterminded this highly successful event.

MEETINGS: Your committee held twelve meetings in 2017 and we held three speaker meetings and a fourth joint speaker meeting with the Nayland Horticultural Society. The internationally renowned architect Francis Terry spoke on the topic of Architecture and design in AONB's at our March meeting and in June, Darren Tansley, an Essex Water for Wildlife Officer, gave a superb presentation on the topic of Otters on the River Stour. In October the Society was fortunate to receive a talk from Dr. James Bettley, the author of the new editions of Pevsner's Buildings for Essex and Suffolk and finally at our joint meeting Pip Wright regaled us with a remarkable story of Joe Whistlecraft, a notorious poacher from the village of Rickinghall in Suffolk.

VISITS: The Society arranged for private visits to two historically significant properties. In May around 23 members made their way to Otley Hall, a delightful 15th Century moated manor house and in early September we visited the Elizabethan West Stow Hall.

LAND COMPANY AND THE MEADOW: Members may recall that the Nayland with Wissington Land Company was created to acquire and hold the Conservation meadow, which abuts the river and a smaller area of field, which abuts the Horkesley Road. The Land Company has its own board of directors and trustees and is an entirely separate organisation from the Society. However at the request of the directors I have been asked to mention two matters. Firstly there is an area of woodland located between the A134 and the western end of the Conservation meadow. For many years this area has been planted and maintained by Nayland resident Richard Wiles. Sadly, advancing years has meant that Richard is no longer able to undertake this task but the Committee have decided that Richard's remarkable achievement should be recognised and a presentation will be made to him at the AGM in March. Secondly the Land Company chairman John Alexander has very shrewdly recruited Dipak Warren, who lives in Bear Street overlooking the Conservation Meadow, to be the secretary and a director of the Land Company. Dipak has already made a significant contribution towards the running of the Land Company and I thank her for her efforts.

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: As members will be aware Babergh District Council ("BDC") lost its five-year housing supply with the consequence that the Council's local policies are now overridden by the National Policy Planning Framework ("NPPF"). Accordingly a number of applications for residential development have been made and passed which might not otherwise have been approved. Your committee have spent much time and energy making representations to BDC but sadly to little avail. This process has not been helped by the introduction by BDC of a new on-line planning portal, without any prior warning. However your committee have been active in pointing out its deficiencies and it does appear to have improved over the year. Objections have also been lodged against the Copella development and observations have been made in respect of the BDC draft local plan. It is to be deeply regretted that the Dedham Vale AONB no longer seems to enjoy the protection it merits and deserves.

MAY FOOTPATH WALK: Chris Hunt led a short but highly entertaining walk around Polstead based upon the tragic story of the murder of Maria Martin. Notwithstanding the sombre tale he managed to raise many laughs and the members enjoyed the afternoon thoroughly!

Mike Hunter
January 2018