

## **Chairman's Report for 2018**

The Society has enjoyed an eventful year with yet another record-breaking Open Gardens and an interesting array of speakers at our open meetings. Our Spring footpath walk combined enjoyment of the countryside with the impact of a disappointing planning decision by Babergh District Council as our route passed along the bridle path leading to Beacham's Farm where permission has been granted for a substantial residential dwelling-house with the consequent impact on a much-loved bridle path (see planning comments later). The Court Knoll Project continues and we also enjoyed two visits to fascinating and historic properties.

**COMMITTEE:** It is with considerable regret that I must report the retirement of John Alexander from the Society's committee. Members will recall that John was the Society's chairman for 13 years until he stood down in 2016 and he kindly agreed to remain on the committee to ensure a smooth handover of management was achieved. John will be sadly missed from our committee meetings and I am sure all Society members will wish to show their appreciation for his efforts at the AGM. Additionally, Ed Fehler has indicated his intention to retire after some years of service on the committee and we also extend our thanks to him for his support. During the year Frank Warren has agreed to join the committee in the capacity of membership secretary so that the current committee composition is as follows: - Chairman Mike Hunter, Vice Chairman Martin Wright, Hon. Secretary Jill Slater, John Partridge, Tom Gardiner, Lucy Carpenter, Suzanne Cullen, Frank Warren and David Heigham, our Hon. Treasurer, all of whom offer themselves for re-election in 2019 -2020. I extend the thanks of the Society's members to the committee who, as usual, have done an excellent job over the past year.

Our President Barry Wakefield and our web site manager Lorraine Brooks continue to provide invaluable support to the Society and I must also thank the large number of volunteers who assisted with the events carried on by the Society during the past year and I pass my grateful thanks to all of you.

**COURT KNOLL PROJECT:** 2018 had a busy start with the Court Knoll Exhibition in February which was very well attended and gave the Society a chance to acknowledge its appreciation to the many financial and practical contributors to the Project. Special mention must be given to the Dedham Vale Sustainable Development Fund ("DVSDF") who have contributed a number of substantial grants. During the past year much of the work on the project is being carried out by experts and progress has been fairly slow but Suffolk Archaeology led by Jo Caruth continue to look after us well and it is hoped more substantial news will be released in 2019. During 2018 two further grants were obtained by the Society from the DVSDF and the Council of British Archaeology (Eastern region).

**OPEN GARDENS:** Open Gardens 2018 produced the second record-breaking event in a row as income of £3,460 was achieved beating last year's record by £219. A coach party containing members of the University of the Third Age, St Albans branch, boosted the number of visitors. Chris Hunt very kindly gave a number of their party a historical tour of Nayland.

Twenty-one gardens were open in addition to the Churchyard of St. James. It was pleasing to note that for the first time in a few years Alston Court opened their doors and congratulations must be passed to Barbara Bungay who has opened her garden for all but one of the 41 years that this event has been run. Other long serving garden openers include Richard and Patricia Cave

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.

**MEETINGS:** Your committee held eleven meetings in 2018 and we held three speaker meetings and a fourth joint speaker meeting with the Nayland Horticultural Society. Our speaker at the AGM was Mark

Bills the Chairman of Gainsborough House. He gave an excellent talk on the life of Gainsborough and the exciting future development at Gainsborough House. Our subsequent speakers, Bill Sergeant on Pargetting; Peter Minter on the Bulmer Brick and Tile Company and Dougal Urquhart on the Perils of Bird Migration were all excellent and well received.

**VISITS:** The Society arranged for private visits to two historically significant properties. In May 31 members made their way to Belchamp Hall a red brick mansion built in around 1720 and in early September we visited Coggeshall Abbey a remarkable medieval and Tudor property.

**LAND COMPANY AND THE MEADOW:** Members will 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. In January a number of Society members joined a working party organised by Emma Black of the Dedham Vale Project in the area known as Richard's Wood. The Land Company continues to ensure the Conservation Meadow is cared for and steps are currently being taken to carry out some work to the pond at the western end of the meadow.

**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:** This has been another busy and rather depressing year for the Society's committee. In my introduction I mentioned the grant of planning permission for the erection of a substantial dwelling at Beachams Farm abutting the bridle path running from Leavenheath to Gravel Hill. The consequence of this grant was the proposed closure of the bridle path for a period of six months. Bearing in mind this path forms part of the Stour Valley Walk and the St. Edmunds Way path, Babergh District Council ("BDC") and Suffolk County Council ("SCC") did not appear to have thought through the consequence of failing to object to this application. In the absence of an adequate forum for the public to express their frustration and displeasure, the Society arranged a public meeting in Nayland where representatives of BDC and SCC were present. By way of mitigation the bridle path was not fully closed for the six-month period as access was permitted at limited times.

The Society has lodged objections in connection with the application for 90 houses on the edge of Bures Hamlet and a further objection was lodged in connection with the revised Konings application.

The Government has started a review of our AONB's and National Parks and in November your chairman was invited to attend a meeting with other interested parties to discuss the current state of the AONB with the Government's representative Dame Fiona Reynolds. You will be heartened to hear that Fiona is very supportive of the aims and objectives of our AONB's and it is to be hoped that any subsequent legislation will result in more protection for our beautiful countryside.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:** The Society and some of its members has been pleased to support the Parish Council in the Spring and Autumn Litter Picks and we also assist the Village Hall Committee with our work on the garden area adjoining the car park in the seasonal working parties.

Finally, the Data Protection legislation has meant that our records have had to be dealt with in a more secure manner and everyone who receives emails from the Society is reminded on a regular basis that if they wish to be deleted from our data base we shall be happy to oblige. For the avoidance of doubt our membership list is not made available to anyone or any organisation outside of the Society.

*Mike Hunter*  
*January 2019*