

**FRIENDS OF SUFFOLK RECORD OFFICE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OCTOBER 2020
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Our last AGM, which was held in May 2019, certainly seems a long time ago! The current, continuing COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it many challenges for everyone, including for the charity sector. Nevertheless, with your support through your annual membership subscription, we have been able to continue to bid successfully at auction for items relevant to Suffolk's history and heritage. We are grateful to many of our members who regularly give more than the annual £12 individual membership fee. One of our most significant recent purchases was a collection of nineteenth-century diaries and travel journals written by Lady Cullum of Hardwick House. Another very recent purchase is of a large collection of plate glass negatives dating from the early 1900s which feature everyday life in many east Suffolk villages and towns. Our success in acquiring such items at auction was made possible by financial support from interested societies and individuals. This allowed us to spread our funds wider, also acquiring some manorial documents, as well as an interesting account book by a prominent Lowestoft builder.

Ever the optimist, I am certain that better times will return soon, and they will bring the reopening to the public of the Suffolk Archives branches in Bury and Lowestoft. I also look forward to the day when the first researchers step foot inside the impressive new searchroom in The Hold in Ipswich. Despite the significant challenges of having to work from home until late summer, the Suffolk Archives team, led by Kate Chantry, has worked unstintingly to prepare for the challenges ahead in delivering a COVID-secure archives service.

At this AGM, we are proposing not only a name change, to bring us in line with the rebranded Suffolk Archives, but also a revised constitution. One of the main changes to the constitution is an expanded committee and officers' roles, aimed at spreading the workload more evenly across our hard-working committee members. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank members of our committee for their continuing hard work. In particular, I am grateful to Robert Houlton-Hart who is stepping down from the committee, and from his role as Secretary, after nearly seven years. I have valued his support and dedication to our cause. Since the last AGM, we have co-opted two new members on to the committee: Anne McGee and Neil Langridge. They are both experienced and enthusiastic users of Suffolk Archives, and I am so pleased that they have offered to become our new General Secretary and Membership Secretary, respectively.

Sarah E Doig