

## Report of Council 2012-2013

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great sadness that I begin my report by announcing the deaths since our last meeting in 2012 of two of our vice-presidents, the Rev Professor Owen Chadwick, who died this summer, and Professor Hassell Smith, who for many years was Chair of Council and, of course, the moving spirit behind the five volumes of Bacon papers that we have so far published. Many of you attended the memorial lecture given in his honour at UEA in April this year by the Rev Professor John Morill, who provided a fitting tribute to a remarkable man. The death of Paul Rutledge, who, with consummate professionalism and exemplary patience, edited and saw through the press a long sequence of the Society's early modern volumes, has deprived us of another distinguished scholar. I am, however, delighted to inform you that although Raymond Frostick has just resigned his place on Council he has - subject to your approval - agreed to serve as a vice president. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank him for everything that he has done for the Society and, indeed, for the promotion of local studies across the region.

Thanks are also due to our honorary treasurer, John Barney, who will be making his final report to you in a moment. John is being replaced by our new treasurer, Dr Roger Ryan, and I'm delighted to say will continue to serve on Council, where his financial expertise and sage advice will continue to be much appreciated. As you can see from his report, after a buoyant 2014 we sustained a deficit this year, although our overall position remains fundamentally sound. It's the exorbitant cost of postage that makes all the difference, which is why, as we'll see under item **nine** on the agenda, we've decided to raise overseas subscriptions to £20, while keeping those in the UK at £12, which by any reckoning represents an *absolute bargain*.

Our ability to continue offering such generous rates in the long term is, as I pointed out in my last report, dependent upon the recruitment of new members, which is tricky at the best of times and has proved especially hard in a recession. We remain immensely grateful to you all for your continuing support, but are acutely aware of the fact that we've sustained a slight fall in numbers over the last three years and badly need to attract new young blood! The promotional leaflet to which I referred in 2012 has duly been produced; it's visually very striking and copies are available for you to take away and give to any young relatives, neighbours, colleagues or friends who you feel might be attracted by the prospect of supporting the work of the Society, which, of course, extends to the preservation, as well as the publication, of records concerning the county of Norfolk from the earliest times to the present day.

But it is for our publications that we are best known, and the volumes that we offer continue to meet the highest academic standards, garnering enthusiastic reviews, while covering a wide range of topics and chronological periods:

Since our last meeting we have produced three volumes:

Volume 77 – Ellie Phillips and Isla Fay, *Health and Hygiene in Early-Modern Norwich* (a dual volume containing editions of accounts of the Great Hospital – not so long ago accorded UNESCO Memory of the World status - and of the city's rivers and streets)

Volume 78 - Frank Meeres, *The First World War Letters of Philip and Ruth Hewetson* (as might be expected, given the centennial commemoration of WWI in 2014, this volume has sold extremely well, not least in Jarrolds, and only a few copies are left from the initial print run. We may arrange a reprint if orders continue to come in: interest may revive in 1918.)

Volume 79 – Elizabeth Griffiths, *'Her Price is above Pearls': Family and Framing Records of Alice Le Strange, 1617-1654*, to be launched this evening.

When I first joined the Society in 1993, the publication schedule tended to be a rather suspenseful affair and there were one or two memorable cliff hangers when it seemed quite a challenge to bring out an annual volume on time. I'm delighted to report that we are now faced with a positive embarrassment of riches, with a firm publication schedule up to 2021 and a queue of editors jostling for pole position thereafter. This is in part due to the pressures of the REF, which obliges university-based academics to publish regularly, although our editors come from a pleasingly wide variety of backgrounds and are by no means all chained to the scholastic treadmill.

Next year sees the publication of Jo Margerum's edition of the medieval cartulary of Binham priory: it's a long time since the Society published a cartulary and it will be a welcome addition to our catalogue. Then, in 2017, comes another volume of the *Norfolk Hearth Tax*, following on from that which appeared in 2001. It is being edited, like the previous one, by Peter Seaman, and will also be published jointly with the British Record Society. Next comes my own edition of the Norwich Chamberlains' accounts for the period immediately after the Dissolution, when the city resembled one large building site, as monastic houses were demolished or converted for communal use. A sixth volume of Bacon papers, edited by Alan Metters, Elizabeth Rutledge, Barry Taylor and Vic Morgan follows in 2019; and we end the decade with the Letter Book compiled in the 1670s by the Norwich cloth merchant, Thomas Baret. The 2020s get off to what is, quite literally, an explosive start with a collection of documents on the Great Blow of 1648, edited by Andy Hopper, who, you may remember, produced the diary of the Quaker mariner, John Secker, in 2011.

So I can end my report on a very positive note, secure in the knowledge that our stature as a county record society remains high and that, despite the financial constraints that beset almost all such bodies, we are generally in excellent health.

Carole Rawcliffe  
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