



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 3 OCTOBER 2024
CHAIR'S REPORT**

It has been a challenging, frustrating and disappointing time for users of Suffolk Archives for some years. Then earlier this year, Suffolk County Council took the decision to close the Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds branches, and to centralise its archives service in The Hold in Ipswich. Members of the FOSA committee have taken every opportunity to voice their opposition and concerns regarding the closures. We have attended recent working party meetings for key stakeholders in Bury and Lowestoft, and we remain committed to engagement with Suffolk County Council councillors and staff to try to ensure that the resulting centralised archives delivers an efficient and accessible service for all users (and potential users).

We remain committed to seeking to buy documents related to the history and heritage of Suffolk. It has always been an important part of our work and one for which academics, as well as local and family historians, are grateful. Many of the documents we have purchased have been used as the basis for books and articles or have enabled researchers to complete an otherwise incomplete picture of their local area or their ancestry. Since our last AGM, we have had considerable success in acquiring documents for the Suffolk Archives' collections. Some of these are due to success in public auctions, others were bought through specialist booksellers and private acquisitions. Among items purchased recently were:

- A large collection of documents and correspondence relating to the Pocklington family of Chelsworth Hall, 1866-1910
- An album of photographs and postcards of the 1907 Pageant in Bury St Edmunds
- A court roll for the Manor of Thorney Hall, Stowmarket, 1581-92 [Stowmarket Local History Group and Stowupland Local History Group contributed to the cost of this purchase]
- A Gooch family game book for the Benacre estate, 1944-1968
- A bound volume of plans of Stoke College, 1793.

In addition to the money spent on acquiring these documents, we regularly pay the cataloguing costs so that Suffolk Archives' project archivist catalogues our deposits without delay, so that these items can be accessed by researchers.

I am grateful to the current committee for their hard work and enthusiasm. I would particularly like to thank Sue Spiller who recently stepped down from her roles as General Secretary and Minutes Secretary. We desperately need more people to join the committee if we are to continue to operate effectively. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to ask for volunteers to step forward to help keep our small but worthwhile charity going.

Sarah E Doig