



Chairman: John Loughton 20 Woodland View Southwell Nottinghamshire NG25 0AG

Report from the Trustees 2025

It gives me great pleasure to present this annual report as I reach the end of my second year as Chairman of Trustees. I trust this brief synopsis of the last twelve months will give a flavour of the positive time we have spent, the fun we have had and the contribution we have made to support our unique town and the surrounding countryside.

Membership

Membership of the Society currently stands at 123 and I am delighted to confirm that following the challenge I set in last year's Annual Report with respect to increasing membership numbers we have welcomed 13 new members.

However, it is with sadness I confirm that two members have passed away during the year who have each given over fifty years of support to the Society. Peter Benson, former Principal of Brackenhurst Agricultural College, made a significant contribution to us especially in the area of social events and fellowship. Norma Blamey, both a Town and District Councillor, gave a great deal of support over several decades until health problems forced her to leave the area to be closer to her family. We send our condolences to the respective families and hold them in our thoughts.

Whilst our numbers can be described as "healthy" there is no way we can allow complacency to occur. Again, I invite all members to nominate new people to join us on a one for one matched basis as a personal commitment and self-challenge. The subscription, at £10 per year, is extremely reasonable (and due on 1st January each year, irrespective of joining date) and the benefits are boundless.

The Trustees

As Chairman I continue to be impressed by the commitment and time given by my fellow trustees to the benefit of the Society and I commend each one of them to the membership for the selfless contributions made, often unseen, but always effective.

We welcomed three new trustees to the Board this year. Giles Cox, Peter Scorer and Rose Thompson have all made significant inputs especially in the areas of social events, the Society's photographic archive and the Planning Committee.

This year I acknowledge and place on record our grateful thanks specifically to two trustees. Over many years Peter Kent has served as Treasurer and Mike Struggles has been Planning Committee Chair but they have now both decided to step down from these positions. We are indebted to Peter and Mike for the enormous service they have given through leadership in these specific roles and I am delighted to confirm they will both remain on the Board of Trustees. I am also happy to report that we are able to replace these two stalwarts with people of the highest calibre, but more of that anon.

Planning

Planning issues are dealt with by an appointed Committee which meets regularly. A great amount of time, and no little expertise, is given to ensuring appropriate responses are made to the consultation processes and I place on record my grateful thanks to Mike Struggles and his team for the exceptional work they undertake. I also commend two co-opted members of our Planning Committee, namely John Martindale and Margaret McCaskill, who bring additional knowledge and experience to this specific group of trustees.

We have yet to experience the full impact of the government's intentions to streamline the house building planning processes, but it is fair to say we are watching this space with interest. The spectre of reorganising local government along unitary lines will also bring potential challenges and we must play our part in ensuring that the importance of a local context is both understood and respected by decision makers coming from a larger geographical area than is currently the case.

As we said last year Societies such as ours need to embrace the good points of change but challenge the less than well thought out procedures that might lead to irretrievable environmental damage in the longer term.

Such is the importance and specialist nature of this work, the Planning Committee has prepared a separate dedicated report to provide further information for the membership.

Archive, Storage & Display

Our materials are now firmly ensconced in a cell within the former police station on the Burgage and we continue to acknowledge the help and support given to us by officials and members of the Town Council in using this secure store.

However, given our role as custodians of some particularly generous legacy donations made over time to the Society, the issue of wider general access to enable these artefacts to be shared and viewed is now acute. This has been one of our major items for consideration this year but no obvious solution has yet been forthcoming to find a venue that would allow good accessibility and safe display within the town.

Suggestions (or even offers of a venue?) from our membership would be welcomed! Please put on your thinking caps – we really do need to sort out this issue not only to acknowledge and show gratitude and respect to our generous donors but also to share some awe and wonder with our local community.

Social Events

Four interesting Talks were arranged this year together with a local site visit of significant importance and a wonderful Gathering in the Garden. My thanks go to Jan Richardson and her team for providing such excellent fare. The unseen work put in by so many people behind the scenes must be seen to be believed and we are all beneficiaries as a result.

After the AGM in October 2024 there was a special presentation by David Turnock and Ian Green, Chairs of Peterborough and Oxford Civic Societies respectively, on 'Balancing Heritage and Growth'. They introduced us to a report recently produced by the Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns and other partners funded by Historic England on the planning issues and challenges confronting heritage communities such as ours here in Southwell. Grateful thanks were given to David and Ian, not only for the excellent talk but also for undertaking the significant journey they had made to attend the meeting.

In January 2025 Peter Scorer gave a most informative talk on the Society's Photographic Archive.

Peter has spent an enormous amount of time cataloging the archive to ensure that it is in a logical and easily accessible format. As a matter of interest he also produced excellent photographic displays for specific events and we are indeed most fortunate to have a person of such creativity in our midst. It is fair to say Peter's presentation reinforced the need for us to find a more permanent home for our archive to allow increased display possibilities for the ultimate benefit of both Society members and a wider audience.

In June 2025, at the kind invitation of Vanessa and Ian Johnston, we had a Gathering in the Garden at their hugely impressive grounds of Park Farm situated on Crink Lane. It was a marvellous afternoon with excellent weather, a superb photographic display from our archive, wonderfully tempting strawberries, cake and cream and a garden to stroll around that must rank amongst the best in the Midlands and well beyond. Vanessa and Ian were incredibly helpful and generous in supporting the organisation of the event and everyone who attended had an afternoon to remember.

Later in June the Society hosted an evening exploring Vernacular Buildings based around the Saracens Head and Kings Street. Members of the Newark Civic Trust were in attendance and well represented and it was also pleasing to host members of the Southwell Community Archaeological Group. Splendid presentations, tours and talks were given by a selection of specialists from a team of Jane Holt, Andy Weaver, Dave Johnson, John Laycock and Chris King. The evening will live long in the memory and as a matter of interest under the guidance of Stephen Bamforth (our trustee link with Newark Civic Trust) it is hoped to arrange a reciprocal visit to Newark next year.

In July 2025 Kevin Hender, a former Minster Head Steward, gave a most enlightening talk on Woodwork in the Minster. All sorts of surprises were shared concerning the various places containing wood within the Minster from the mischief of mice created by Robert "Mousey" Thompson to the 14th Century Misericords situated in the Quire. Kevin had obviously put a great deal of work into the preparation of his well-illustrated talk and the result was an evening of discovery that simply flew by.

Our series of talks ended in September when Derek Jackson gave a fascinating presentation on Southwell as an original Fair-Trade Town becoming Southwell a Fair-Trade Community. Again, a great deal of preparation had taken place and Derek, who serves on the National Fair-trade Council, had also involved the Southwell Co-op who provided and sponsored several fair-trade goods for display. Jamie Bostock, a member of the Town Council, explained how STC aims to support fair-trade in the town and everyone present was invited to an "Afternoon Tea for Fairness and Faith" event supported by the Fair-trade Foundation "Brew it Fair" campaign. The evening provided a sound base for further thought and action and those fortunate enough to be present were indebted to Derek for the immense amount of information he so skilfully shared.

In Conclusion

My thanks go to everyone involved in the delivery of our Society's aims and to all members who have supported our events in any way over the last year. We still need to encourage more people who care about our lovely town and glorious locality to join SCS and do not forget the issue of archive storage and presentation needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Can you help? Please consider any contribution you could make and do not hesitate to share your ideas and views in terms of future presentations, visits or planning issues that would contribute to our fellowship and civic effectiveness within our local community.

Thank you for your encouragement, support and friendship over the year. I commend this Report to you.

John Loughton
Chairman of Trustees

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

BALANCE SHEET at 31st July

Date: 24/10/2025