

## **Secretary's report for 2015.**

A successful year has laid the foundations for the club's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

A small committee, led by Jonathan Deane, has secured generous sponsorship for the summer party on Saturday, June 18. As plans progress, members will be invited to spend an evening at How Hill Farm by invitation of Peter Boardman.

In financial terms, the club was able to make a total of £900 in donations, including £500 to RABI's Cumbria flood appeal and £300 to the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association for staging the Spring Fling.

Following the decision to increase subscriptions from July 1 last year to £20pa, the membership secretary, Jason Cantrill, and the secretary/treasurer, Michael Pollitt, have managed to secure new revised standing orders from about half the total membership. It would greatly assist the task if members, who have paid a half-rate of £10 would pay the balance promptly for 2016 and amend standing orders from January 1, 2017.

The club made a modest surplus of £582 in 2015 – after last year's deficit of £2,226 resulting from purchase of a new stock of silk ties. Costs for the website and meetings were much lower and were more than offset by higher tie sales, £387 and slight increase in subscription income to £1735.

Other highlights – CPD points were also claimed by members at two meetings including a first at last year's annual meeting. And 3 BASIS points may be claimed at the annual meeting tonight, Wednesday, February 17.

The website continues to go from strength to strength – total number of visits since the launch in January 2014 has exceeded 35,000. Thank you to webmaster Tim Papworth. It appears that either every member visited the website 100 times last year or a number of non-members are taking a close interest in the club's activities.

A number of new members have joined the club, which has seen an overall increase in membership over the past year. Sadly, some long-term supporters have died including Dr Ronnie Gibbs, the Father of the Club, Gavin Paterson and Cecil Callow.

A new engraved gavel and base, in memory of the late president, David Ritchie, was presented to the club by his widow, Marion, at our first autumn meeting. A photograph is featured on the club's website.

The competitions have again been well-supported and all the results will be announced at the annual dinner next month. In the potato competition, for the first time in decades, a different variety was entered by every grower.

Club members have also been making headlines too – not least Tim Papworth, of LF Papworth, for winning the potato grower of the year award. And Emily Page was appointed by the Norfolk-

based mental health awareness charity, YANA, as its first Young Ambassador. The RNAA's show president, who hosts club members in May, presented the Timothy Colman Award for making an outstanding contribution to promoting the understanding of food, farming and the countryside in Norfolk to Robin Baines.

There was success too for Stalham members in Norfolk's farm business competition. James Chapman was reserve champion in the 36<sup>th</sup> annual awards while Richard Hirst won the diversification award and the Stuart Chapman Memorial Award.

The chairman, Luke Paterson, was in the honours too.

The summer programme included a visit to a 50-year-old garden gem at Corpusty followed by supper, and then in October, the ghost walk and supper was also well attended.

The autumn season started with Caroline Drummond, of LEAF, and then Rob Ferguson, talking about his unique holiday business in December. Overall attendance was higher this autumn since moving to the Norfolk Mead.