

50 years of the Hadstock Society



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In November this year, the Society celebrates its 50th anniversary. It was formed in 1972 following a village meeting of 56 Hadstock residents in which the background to the formation and function of Local Amenity Societies was explained by Mr J Maitland, Chair of Henham Society and a Rural District Council member.

He noted that people were more conscious of their environment, were concerned about imposed large scale housing developments and bad design and wanted to influence local and regional council views on amenities in general. Hence the rapid growth in the number of Amenity Societies in England over the previous 10 years.

In the discussion, some residents saw little requirement for a Society which worked alongside the Parish Council but had no executive powers. However, the majority at the meeting was in favour due to the increasing Government pressures on new large scale house building and the fact that County planners had little knowledge of local issues and residents' views and needed help. The first Society meeting was held on 24th November 1972.

Registered with the Civic Trust, the Hadstock Society set out to work for the public benefit and to support and influence the decisions of both Parish and District Councils. A constitution was agreed which followed Civic Trust guidelines. The Society's aims were to stimulate public interest in the Parish, ensure high standards of planning and architecture, and conserve, protect and develop features of historical and public interest.

*Hadstock Green
area over 40 years
ago, c.1980*



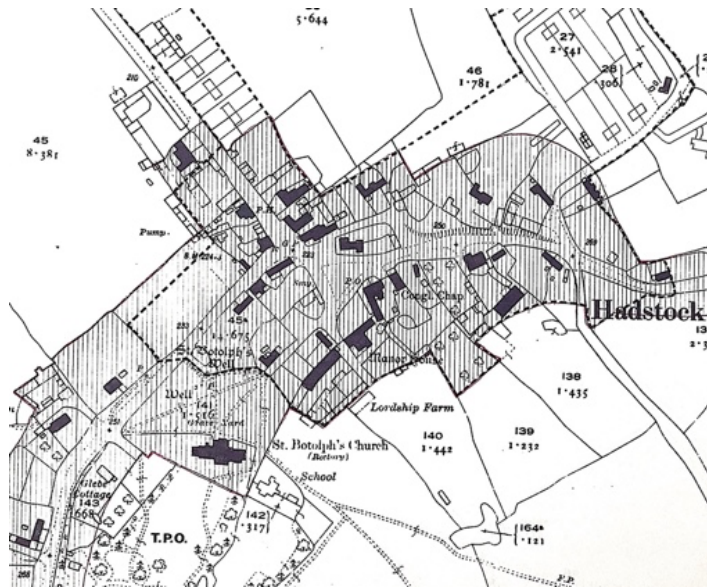
The Society planned to signal and recommend the best solutions for Hadstock when faced with large scale environmental problems, such as noise pollution from aircraft, heavy lorry traffic, and large housing developments. It would assist the Parish Council in making Hadstock's views known to the rather remote County Council decision makers in Chelmsford and give informed opinions on local planning and amenity issues.

This article takes a look at the Society's work over the 50 years. Based mainly on reading the minutes of Committee meetings and AGM reports, and with helpful clarifications from Patricia Croxton-Smith (Crocky), the first elected secretary of the Society, I have focused on the Society's main achievements in each of the five decades.

1972-1982

The first executive committee, under Chairman, Ron Amsden, set out to determine the priorities of residents through a village survey. A plan was developed which dealt with conservation matters, such as landscape, historic buildings, footpaths, trees, ponds, botany, hedgerows, and with planning issues, including village development limits, buildings, water drainage, and electricity supply.

The survey and resulting plan, directed by Donald Stewart, was discussed with the Parish Council, the Rural District Council and Essex County Planners. The Society became responsible for updating the Hadstock listed building information and supported the Parish Council when it applied for Hadstock to become a conservation area. A map was produced in 1974 showing the village building development envelope and proposed conservation area and was approved with modifications by the Rural District Council in 1976. This became the key reference document for future planning recommendations by the Parish Council until 1984, when some revisions were proposed and agreed.

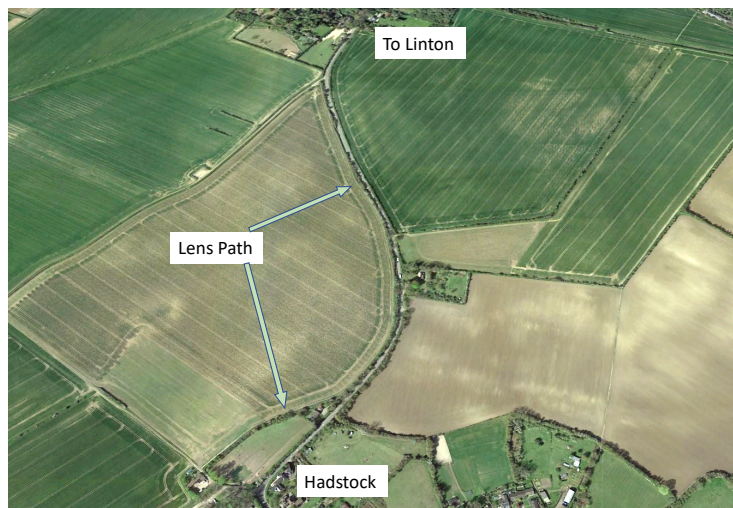


Map created in 1974 by Donald Stewart showing the proposed Village Conservation area (hatched).

All Amenity Societies were able to receive copies of local planning applications from 1977 onwards, and so, alongside the Parish Council, the Society became an Uttlesford Planning consultee, a position which is still holds.

In 1973, a safe path to Linton was opened alongside the B1052. This is now Len's path named after Len Rowlandson who for many years worked for the Council as a lengths-man on paths, ditches, fences and other Parish land. This was the first successful project completed by the Society following negotiation with local farmer, John Crawley. Later in 1975, a chance meeting between Committee member Lettice Dawson and the Head of Eastern Electricity on a bus led to Hadstock's nest of power lines in the centre of the village being put underground and a large number of wooden poles became available for good causes.

A safe path to Linton – Len's path was created in 1973, and named after Len Rowlandson



For the first 10 years, the Committee organised a series of open meetings with outside speakers to help develop background knowledge on subjects such as Essex landscape, nature reserves, tree planting and woodland management, listed building issues, and local archaeology. Committee meetings dealt regularly with around 5 Parish planning applications each year, although this increased to nearly 10 per year in the early 1980s.

Major projects were developed to meet requirements at the time, such as, developing the village plan; assisting the Parish Council with the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, including gifting by the Society of the Queen's oak tree planted at the corner of Moules Lane; studying Parish footpaths and their legal status; investigating thatched house rating valuations; and opposing the proposed six-fold passenger expansion at Stansted Airport in 1980.



*Queens Silver Jubilee
Celebrations 1977*

*Left: Oak tree planted by
the Hadstock Society -
Moules Lane*

*Right: Tug of war - children
vs parents - the children
won!*



Occasional outside visits were made by Society members and a Society newsletter was circulated to all residents for the first 3 years. The Society membership was typically around 75 in this decade.

1982-1992

There was a continuing focus on new planning applications, the committee dealing with around 5 each year, but this period was notable for the completion of an award-winning film by the Society which was submitted as evidence to the Stansted Inquiry in June 1982. Titled "A Portrait of Hadstock - environment in danger" and directed by Donald Stewart, the Inspector praised the film although later he approved the Airport expansion. The award came from the Essex Amenity Societies Trust.



*Title page of film produced
and funded by the
Hadstock Society.
Can be viewed at:
archive.hadstock.org.uk*

The Society continued to organise 6 or 7 speaker meetings each year, but audience numbers dwindled and in the mid 80s, there were fewer events of this type. However, the number of members remained around 70.

The Society assisted the Parish Council in developing a village tree planting plan in 1983 and helped with some revisions to the conservation area and development limits in the following year. An open day was held for 3 of the village's large medieval barns and Crocky continued with her research of Parish history and gave an update at a village open meeting in 1989.

In the mid-80s, the Society's turned its attention to road safety and the need for signage to reduce traffic speeds through the village. Working with the Parish Council, signs were eventually erected in 1989 on the Linton Road approach and later, on the Walden Road. The Society opposed a planning application to increase the lorry movements from the airfield industrial park, and in 1992, welcomed the Highways Authority decisions to restrict lorry weights to 17.5 tons from the airfield, and to remove the road sign on the A1307 in Linton directing lorries to Walden via Hadstock.



Heavy lorry passing the village stores and Post Office in Hadstock in the 1980s

In this same period, continued pressure from the Society through direct contacts with the Eastern Electricity Board led to a more reliable electricity supply for Hadstock. A representative from the Board attended the Society's 1988 AGM public meeting and explained the imminent upgrading of the Linton power line, and the plan to upgrade the Walden-Ashdon-Bartlow line by late 1989. This enabled Hadstock to be supplied directly from Linton by underground cable, or in the event of faults, from Bartlow. The following year there were no power cuts.

Particular help in dealing with large scale planning applications that could potentially impact Hadstock came from advice from the CPRE, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England to which the Society was affiliated. Crocky had made a valuable contact with the then Chair of the CPRE, Lady Walker.

1992-2002

Over the next 10 years, the Society continued its regular review of local planning applications, usually less than 10 a year. Membership numbers grew to over 90.

Several open meeting talks and outside visits were arranged annually, and the Society began to archive the history of Hadstock by creating a village photograph and document collection, which was exhibited for the first time in 1997 at a Heritage exhibition in the village hall, part of the Civic Trust's National Heritage weekend.

In this period, there was an exhibition of field finds by local farmer and metal detectorist, the late John Barker, several historical talks including one on Hadstock's 1805 Enclosure Act, and a display of past and present photographs of St Botolph's church at an English Heritage Open weekend.

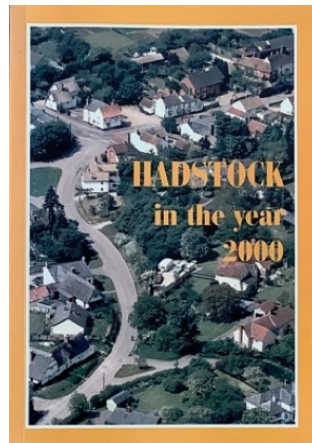


Roman Coins found in Hadstock Parish by the late John Barker

At the 1997 AGM, the silver anniversary of the Society was celebrated with a special cake, in the presence of most of the founder Committee members, who reminisced on the previous 25 years of Society activities. A Society scrapbook of village events and newspaper cuttings was started in 1998 and continued for 6 years. Two such scrapbooks are in the Society's archive and are available for browsing and research.

The Society then commenced a major new project to celebrate the 2000 millennium, the production of a 'Domesday' book of Hadstock Parish featuring residents and their houses, along with other information about the Parish. It applied for and won a £5000 Millennium grant, and the book was successfully printed and distributed free to every household. The booklet proved a valuable local document and was consulted regularly by residents over the next 20 years.

Millennium book produced
by the Hadstock Society in
2000



2002-2012

The 2000s saw several major archaeological projects initiated and completed. In 2003, samples were taken from the north door for dating with dendrochronology by Oxford

University, following a grant from the Society of Antiquaries, and showed a date range 1040-1070. A film was produced of the procedure.



St Botolph's North door being removed for dating by dendrochronology in 2003

The following year, and initiated by the Hadstock Society, a major seminar on the history of St Botolph's was held in the church and attended by many experts, including Dr Warwick Rodwell, who had carried out an extensive church floor excavation in 1974.

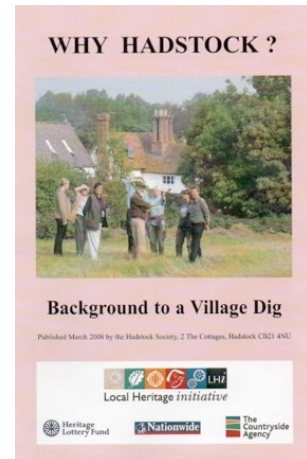
This seminar led to a 2005 geophysical survey and archaeological dig in two nearby fields, funded by the Society and won through grants. Carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit and assisted by voluntary help from residents, young and old, significant numbers of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval artefacts were collected, classified and archived. A booklet 'Why Hadstock?' was produced describing the dig and given to every resident.



*2005 Dig
Bantons Field*

*Left: Volunteers in
Trench 7*

*Right: Booklet
distributed to
Hadstock
Parishioners*



The dig was followed in 2007 and 2010 with field walks by Society members on a grid system laid out in Bantons Field, followed by professional classification of finds. All the artefacts from the dig and the walks remain in the possession of the Society, but despite these various studies, there are still questions on the origins of St Botolph's church. However, the evidence of an early church dating to before 900AD found in Rodwell's excavations was reinforced in 2018 by the results of a carbon dating analysis of mortar taken from the lowest flint layers of St Botolph's south nave wall. This amazing result is still to be followed up with more research.

A new 5-year Parish Plan was developed by the Parish Council in 2007 based on a questionnaire to all households and views expressed by residents at meetings. Covering issues including housing, employment, traffic and green issues, it set out revised Planning guidelines for considering new planning applications. Society members were on the steering group and supported the Parish Council throughout the development of the plan.

Planning applications in this 10-year period were being reviewed by the Society as usual, typically 10-15 each year, and a detailed objection was lodged against a new wind farm of 8 turbines planned in Linton Parish, just west of the Hadstock Parish boundary. The proposal was eventually withdrawn. Occasional speaker meetings and outside visits continued to be organised and Society's membership remained around 70 in this decade.

In 2010, Rick Albrow and a team of volunteers completed a Society project to record the inscriptions on all the memorials in St Botolph's church and churchyard. This contains the names, dates and ages of many Hadstock families and the location and a photograph of each memorial. It is now accessible by the public on the Parish website

All graves and church memorials were recorded at St Botolph's



2012-2022

In this period, the Society's work was greatly influenced by two Millennium Celebrations associated with Cnut of Denmark becoming King of England for 18 years; the Battle of Assandun in 1016, thought by some experts to have been fought near Hadstock, and the consecration of Cnut's minster in 1020, again thought by some specialists to be St Botolph's church. The Society supported both these major events and initiated new research into historic documents relating to the battle. Crocky, in a published paper in the Saffron Walden Historical Journal 2002, had placed it in Hadstock's Red Field.

Information on the discovery of many skeletons during the 1862 construction of Red Field's railway cutting was found in 1888 Kelly's directory. Some indications suggesting several burial pits were seen from a geophysical survey of Red Field in 2015 which was funded by a grant to the Society. However, later in 2019, after a limited ground excavation, no physical evidence of historic burials was found.



Red Field, where many skeletons were found in 1863 associated with the railway

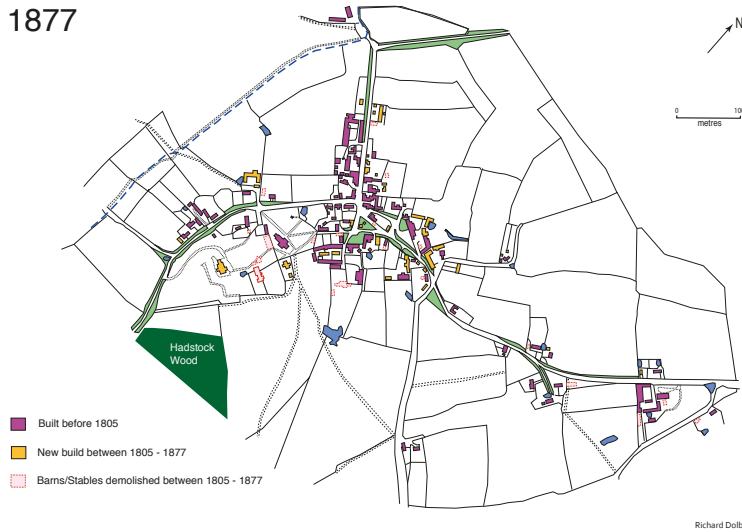
New evidence emerged in 2019 that a 14th century wayside cross near Saffron Walden could be linked to Assandun and Crocky updated her earlier paper on the Battle with an Essex Journal publication in Spring 2022. In late 2021, the Society became a team member of a new Essex Battlefields Trust Project studying the site of the Battle of Assandun. All candidate battle sites in Essex are represented on the team, and it is hoped this joint approach will make progress. The project may not complete until 2024.

The computer played a major role in the Society's activities from 2017 onwards, and several new projects were initiated involving digital recording and illustration of the history and heritage of the Parish.

The Society had previously joined the Essex Place names project, aimed at the local recording of historic map names and related information, and stimulating further research. However significant progress was only made when computer spreadsheets were employed to capture and analyse the data. The two local maps chosen for the project were those associated with the Hadstock Parish Inclosure Act of 1801, both available from the Essex Records Office in digitised form. Between 2017-2022, and led by Rick Albrow, all place names, and their grid reference, type, value, area and owner/tenant, as seen both from the pre- and post-inclosure maps and the Inclosure Award document itself, were recorded by the Society. The spreadsheet, which contains well over 200 place name entries, is now available for future research.

In 2020-2022, over 100 digital maps were created by the Society to illustrate the history of the Parish landscape from 1777 to the present day. Electronically traced from 6 published online maps of NW Essex, these show the changes over 250 years in the Parish boundary, roads, woods, paths, fields and field systems, and the Parish built environment, including houses, barns, the Gt Eastern Railway line (opened in 1865),

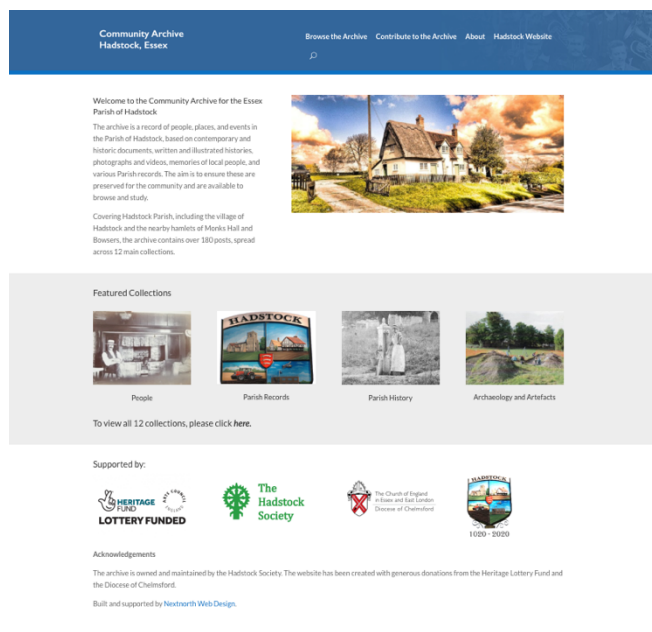
and the USAAF airfield (opened in 1942). The digital maps are now available as individual prints for exhibition, PowerPoint presentations with explanatory text, booklets and three separate website presentations.



Hadstock Village in 1877, one of many illustrations created to show landscape changes in the Parish over the last 250 years

Many of the St Botolph's Millennium celebration events in 2020 were affected by a COVID 19 outbreak, and some funds from the Millennium Group, led by the Revd Paula Griffiths, were diverted to create a Parish digital archive. Designed by Nextnorth and the Hadstock Society, a new community archive website, separate from the main Parish website, came into being, and the Society uploaded nearly 200 posts into 12 main sections, including over 100 digitised photographs, along with many historic and contemporary documents and some videos. The archive website can be found at archive.hadstock.org.uk

*Home page of Hadstock's community archive launched in 2020:
archive.hadstock.org.uk*



One of the uploads was a flip book titled 'Hadstock through the Centuries'. Originally written by Pat Croxton-Smith as a series of Hadstock magazine articles between 2008 and 2016, it was edited by a Society team to create a single paper with Appendices. It presents Crocky's unrivalled knowledge of the history of the Parish from pre-history to modern times.

To help celebrate the millennium of St Botolph's church in 2020, the Parish produced another 'Domesday' booklet recording residents and their houses. The Hadstock Society contributed £1000 to the booklet production.

Planning applications continued to be reviewed in this period, typically 10 per year, and the Society revised its Constitution twice, the first time in 2014 principally because the Civic Society had gone into administration, and the second time in 2021, to take account of improvements in administration of the Society, including online working. Hamish McIlwrick led the Society during much of this decade in which membership remained around 60, and he focused particularly on planning matters, networking extensively in the local region to make Hadstock issues clear to all.

Reflections

As a Planning Consultee to Uttlesford District Council, the Society reviewed more than 500 Parish planning applications in the 50 years from its formation. Objections or supportive comments were regularly submitted to Uttlesford Planning, or no comment made, depending on the application. The Society also contributed to a series of District and village plans concerning development limits and conservation areas, and played a significant role in regional planning issues, particularly the proposed growth of Stansted airport in 1979 and the Linton wind farm in 2009.

Although several Society members served regularly on the Parish Council, occasional tensions clearly developed between the Parish Council and the Society in the early years as the role of the Society was defined. However, the Society gradually widened its activities and took on new projects dealing with the research, recording and publishing of knowledge on the heritage and history of the Parish, while still fulfilling its original objective of providing informed opinions on local and regional planning matters. I think past minute books show the Society worked hard to inform and support the Council on all major issues.

Society projects have generally been of two types. For the first 20 years, these were focused mainly on developing responses to many different planning issues, including conservation, improvements to amenities and keeping the Hadstock character. The Society had the appropriate skills in Ron Amsden, an agriculturalist interested in conservation, and Donald Stewart, an architect/artist familiar with planning matters and planning authorities.

In the next 30 years, the Society turned to projects more concerned with the history and archaeology of the Parish. Crocky, who was Committee secretary at the first meeting in 1972, became well known in the region for her knowledge and mastery of everything to do with Parish history. This led to a succession of archaeology related Society projects concerned with St Botolph's church and neighbouring fields, as well as the Assandun battle site. Much of her knowledge was committed to paper in the form of articles and Journal papers.

The computer skills of several Society members then led to a new raft of projects in the last 10 years. Several were concerned with capture, analysis, illustration and storage of historical information related to landscape history, but perhaps of greatest significance was the creation of the stand-alone Hadstock archive website in 2020. This will enable much greater public engagement with the Parish history and heritage and stimulate new research. The Society needs to continually upload new, interesting and relevant content.

Looking ahead, the Society is well placed to continue its current role as an Uttlesford consultee on local planning issues. However, it is also a volunteer group with specialist knowledge and interests in the history of the Parish landscape, its built environment including our famous church, and the people and families that have lived here. There will be new projects on these topics in the next 10 years but documenting and explaining more of the social history of the Parish needs to have greater focus in this next phase of activity.