

1st May

Spring

SPOTLIGHT EAST

Newsletter for Members the East of England Area of
NAFAS

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of Spotlight East, celebrating the East of England's floral creativity as Spring bursts out after what seems to have been the longest Winter ever. The Met Office website confirms what we have all been saying - that rainfall in our region has been above average, as has average temperatures and there has been fewer hours of sunshine. Here in Woodbridge town centre (East Suffolk) I've recorded an amazing 218mm (8.6 inches) for the year so far. This is unbelievable. All the locals know that the rain usually goes round the bypass, leaving town centre parks & gardens parched & wilting. We have our own microclimate on the Deben.

As flower arrangers we are not only inspired by our gardens but dependant on them too, for the raw materials of our displays. I decided to ask a few enthusiastic gardener/flower arrangers how their gardens had survived the winter and it soon became obvious that there were notable differences in weather across the region and widely differing experiences related by the gardeners.

Gardening in the Rain

Hannah Shine Little Hallingbury Flower Club (Essex/ Hertfordshire border)

"It has been challenging! And now the sun is shining and I am out there, trying to catch up weeding all the perennials before they seed!

I have a wonderful moss "lawn" in the orchard which will soon be covered in red and yellow cowslips and primroses!"



Terri Potter Great Baddow Flower Club (south Essex)

“Here in Essex we have escaped quite lightly , though something weird has happened to my hellebores this year – the usual splendid show beneath the old apple tree failed to materialise completely – yet on other side of the garden they have been fine. ??! But haven’t the snowdrops been fantastic? “

Area Demonstrator, **Doreen Robinson**, lives in Lode Fen, Cambridgeshire where she grows flowers & foliage to use in her demonstration pieces, whilst trying to come to terms with climate change & nature.

“We are now experiencing extremes of weather that are affecting our gardens.

In 2020/21 and 2024 we had a very wet winter & spring.

In 2022 we had temperatures down to -9 degrees that saw plants like Phormium, Pittosporum and Eucalyptus gunnii suffer or die. My Eucalyptus appeared dead but did actually come back. Last year we had a very hot summer, that was challenging to say the least.

In 2024 some of my shrubs sat with their roots in water, such conditions can lead to anaerobic conditions. You often see wheat in corners of fields that have suffered like this. My *Griselinia littoralis* did not survive. I did use a fork to try and create aeration holes to aid drainage.



Doreen’s garden in Winter 2024 showing the flooded area where she usually positions her pots & containers.

To try and improve low lying beds, incorporate organic matter such as leaf mould and compost as well as grit to improve structure; or build raised beds but this will need hard landscaping -that comes at a cost.

My other big loss were dahlias. That could have been avoided had I lifted them and stored the tubers in boxes of sand. I remember this method detailed in the Grow you Own booklets that we had at home. To my detriment, to save time I covered the dahlias with a good layer of mulch; that can sometimes be adequate. But because of the very wet conditions my dahlia tubers rotted.

Growing plants in pots will obviously raise plants above any wet conditions. All my lilies and Nerines are in large pots.

For very wet areas a French drain can be constructed, a trench with gravel and perforated pipe to carry water away. As if all this is not enough, our furry friends, rabbits and deer visit our gardens when we are not looking.

Ho hum, I can hear my manager saying to me 'attention to detail'. This quote stays with me! It's always a learning curve, know your plants and the conditions they prefer to grow in.

Another quote from a meerkat.....'Simples.'

Doreen Robinson, Area Demonstrator

Area Demonstrator **Jenni Baker** lives on the Norfolk/Suffolk border.

"We have a large garden, that is fairly heavy clay. All the rain we have had recently has caused havoc in my garden. Our greenhouse has stood with several inches of water, which then leaves an algae film. Not very attractive. Our outer perimeter has a ditch. Ditch I say; it is more like a lake. The local farmer no longer cuts his hedges or clears his ditches, this is where my ditch should run into, but there is nowhere for it to go.



As a result this area of the garden has remained waterlogged. Even daffodils, once they have been submerged, fail to flower.

A huge Garrya elliptica, which was really useful for cutting simply died, complete with all its foliage and tassels. Now I see that I have also lost an hibiscus in the same area. What to replace them with? Something that enjoys the wet followed by baked hard clay soil.

Jenni Baker

Area Secretary, Sue Cooper lives in Moulten Seas End, in Lincolnshire
“We have been working in the garden the last few days (3rd week of April) so I’m
in a better position to tell you about the weather and gardening.

Due to the very wet weather in the winter we have suffered losses in pots mainly. Usually the bananas and the canna lilies are ok but we have lost the majority of them. We have 3 raised beds of dahlias (8ft x 2ft) which appear to have survived but are very late showing signs of growth.

The fruit trees in the orchard (18 apple, pear, cherry) are full of blossom, again very early and have suddenly come into flower. We lost one old lilac tree during the strong winds but the remaining one is again very early in flower - it will be showing full flower within the next few days and this is usually flowering in mid-May.



The Hosta collection - some 35 different varieties - are liking the current temperatures and putting new leaves up daily. All we have to do is protect them from the slugs but many are in pots which does help.

The magnolia has, like most things, blossomed early but will now have to be pruned drastically as will the camelia.

Being relatively close to the sea we suffer very little with frosts and this has been true this year.”

Sue Cooper

Everyone knows that Sue is a very busy person, taking minutes & circulating all those documents, so we were very pleased that she had time to contribute to this piece. Also delighted to find out that she has time to tend & enjoy her beautiful garden. For more of what Area officers get up to when they're not being "official" see page 30

This year our members weren't inspired by the usual seasonal festivals in February such as Chinese New Year & Valentines Day, but we did notice that there was a musical theme circulating the clubs at that time, so instead we'll go with

"If music be the food of love..."

Feering Flower Club

For our March meeting we welcomed to the Club for the first time, the very talented and hugely entertaining **Jennifer Allen-Thompson** from Spalding. Jennifer's designs based on the theme of **'Let there be Music and Flowers'**, were beautiful - her placement of flowers was superb and were so complementary & balanced. Thank you Jennifer for a super evening of flowers and your entertaining chat.

There were very happy raffle winners leaving the hall - me luckily being one of them!

The members comp was **'A Song Title'** – again bumper entry again, very creative, well done all. (photos below)



As well as our usual feast at half time (Jennifer commented that if she lived nearer, she would join the Club for the refreshments alone) we also had an Easter Egg raffle - again I won! I'll be checking my lottery ticket closely tonight!

Words & photos Sylvie Cooper, Feering Flower Club

Wroxham Flower Club

For our February meeting we had the absolute joy of **Jennifer Thompson** demonstrating “**Let there be Music and Flowers**”

We were entertained and enthralled with beautiful flowers depicting different genres of music including Disco to Musicals ,and we finished with a tribute to Mary Poppins.



We all really enjoyed the evening and would highly recommend going to see Jennifer Thompson if you get the chance. We can't wait to invite her back!

The musical theme was also picked up by Herts & Essex Boundary Flower Club after the formal business part of their Annual General Meeting.

Herts & Essex Boundary Flower Club

Our first meeting of the year was our AGM. Reports were given by our Chairman, Outgoing President and Treasurer.

The presentation of President badge to Sue Holman was made by Carol Giffen the outgoing President. Trophies were handed to the members who had gained the most points for the competitions last year. Novice – Rosemary Green. Intermediate – Hannah Shine . Advanced – Leoni Braz. Pat Woodward, who has been a member of our club for 50 years, was presented with her 50yr badge. Congratulations Pat on a great achievement.

(photos of the presentations on next page)



Top row, left to right: Sue & Carol, Pat & Rosemary; Bottom row left to right : Rosemary with Leoni, Hannah, Carol

Following the AGM six members entertained us arranging flowers to music. The idea came when some of our committee attended an evening presentation during the NAFAS National show in Gloucester last year.



The members were given the same flowers and foliage and had just under 4 minutes to create their designs - a bit like Ready Steady Arrange. As the music started the atmosphere in the hall was full of anticipation from both the arrangers and the audience



It was great fun enjoyed by arrangers and members. Thank you to our volunteers for taking part to make such an enjoyable evening. Louise, Lois & Linda went first followed by Julie, Hannah & Stuart.

We also welcomed two new members. We are lucky to have such supportive members in our club and we look forward to a full year of demonstrations & working evenings.

Beverly Moore <https://www.facebook.com/boundaryflowerclub>

And here is another interesting idea for an AGM.....

Wisbech Flower Club held their AGM on 17th March. Ann, John and I were invited to be "the light entertainment" for our fellow members. Our friend Paul had done "a supermarket sweep" of flowers ahead of Mothering Sunday. We had no idea of what he would bring along and did not see his selection until we stood up. We had brought along various vessels and mechanics to vary the designs.

We managed 9 pieces for the raffle. Sadly one is hidden in the group photo. (next page) Ann is creating an all-foliage design with John assisting while I bunched the remaining flowers. A fun and challenging evening for us and the audience.



PS... You are viewing over 150 years of floral experience but we are all still young at heart!

Lesley Beeton, Wisbech Flower Club

Cambridge Group Open Spring Meeting

I attended the afternoon session of the Cambridge Group Spring meeting on Saturday 21st March. **Morgan Douglas Nuth** was the demonstrator; “**Botanical Flair**” his title.

Morgan is a highly successful UK based florist who has worked in retail for over 30 years. He comes from a family of florists and is known for his international design and flair, which has earned him a position as one of the UK’s leading floral designers. Morgan is an ambassador for Floral Fundamentals, a platform that connects growers and florists; a flower magician and host for Flower Circus, as well as being a council member of the Good Florist Guide.

It was interesting to listen to all of his stories and achievements over the years and how he has been involved with many flower shows around the world including Philadelphia, Hong Kong & Singapore.

Morgan was full flair throughout his presentation, using interesting sustainable mechanics - A cat scratcher, plaster of Paris bandages and a huge branch for a hand-tie are just some on the materials he used.

The final stage was certainly full of flair from this very talented gentleman.



All of the designs were raffled and came complete with all the mechanics (with the exception of the glass vases).

A most enjoyable afternoon and on Sunday 22nd March Morgan hosted a workshop using some of the mechanics that he used in his demonstration.

Words & photos Beverly Moore, Herts & Essex Flower Club

Unfortunately we do not have a report or photos of **Vicky Dume's The History of Belly Dancing** from the morning session. We can only imagine ...

Cambridge Group Workshop with Morgan Douglas Nuth

Morgan enthusiastically created four designs for us to choose; then we decided what we would like to create.

Designs included constructions made from colourful pipe cleaners or strips of wood, creating mechanics through which you could thread plant material.

Other designs used test tubes wired onto a canvas decorated with wire or wool and then an amazing use of a cat scratching mat!.

A very refreshing and enjoyable day.

Roger Woolnough, Area Vice Chairman

One of the workshop participants was **Moira Neville, Area Demonstrator** who told us that she used items that were recycled from her shed, "stuff" from her store & garden materials, She bought a minimal amount of tulips & roses, saying that she is always amazed what people buy to excess to participate in workshops.

She felt the pipe cleaner technique would adapt well to other things and be useful for demonstrating. "What a bonus to win his orange hand tied in the raffle!"



Main photo- close up of Moira's design. Top right Moira's design using pipe cleaners to create the structure; bottom right Morgans example

The 23rd February was a fantastic day! Talented demonstrator Terri Potter shared her knowledge & expertise, holding a workshop with 3 fabulous eco designs as a fundraiser for the "**Essex Floral Showcase**" – a project in which the Floral Art Groups of Essex are coming together to create an inspiring flower festival, celebrating the beauty, creativity & wellbeing that flowers bring to our lives. The organisers are Essex clubs who are in the neighbouring Home Counties Area of NAFAS, but we're only too happy to support their efforts given the proximity of our members (like Terri) in the Chelmsford area.

Terri told us "the two team leaders **Sylvia Kittel & Tracy Beaumont** have such drive and ambition; it's so refreshing to see 'younger' flower enthusiasts with so much passion to spread the word about our wonderful world of floral art."

(workshop photos next page)



Terri Potter's eco workshop

The **Essex Floral Showcase** will take place on 4th & 5th July at Runnymede Hall, Thundersley SS7 1TF More details available on their Facebook page.

Brampton Flower Club

Another very enjoyable Saturday morning workshop in the company of 15 lovely members. We used a candlestick and created trailing one- or two-sided designs All different depending on the height and shape of the candlesticks and choice of flowers. Brampton are celebrating their Golden Anniversary year with a series of events throughout the year. We hope to include a round-up of these occasions later in the year



Brampton Flower Club workshop

What a great morning at the **Norwich Group of Flower Club meeting** yesterday (March 17th). Hosted by **Jacquie Aldous** and the Committee, many Clubs were represented at the short formal meeting followed by a members workshop led by Area Demonstrator & Judge, **Rachael Borenkova**. Rachael talked us through creating a **supported hand-tie** with an aluminium wire framework. Cue lots of concentration resulting in beautiful Spring designs. Photos below of members creating the frame and some of the finished articles.



Jacquie has transformed the Norwich Group of Flower Club events with more Clubs attending each meeting. There were also celebrations for her **birthday** with flowers and a cake provided on behalf of attendees.

Words & photos Helen Evans, President Dereham Flower Club

Newport and District Flower Club

New year for the club started in February by welcoming back the much talented **Gill McGregor** with her demonstration entitled '**The Romance of Flowers**'. Her displays were gorgeous, as ever, and included spring flower designs including hyacinths, tulips, iris and narcissi as well as beautiful rose arrangements and a stunning display using just a few anthurium set off with magnificent foliage and leaf manipulations.

Our **March workshop** was a great success with 20 members and visitors carefully following **Lorraine Gagen's** instructions on how to create a crescent arrangement. All materials were provided including containers, flowers and foliage but it was amazing to see so many different interpretations. Once our displays were complete, Lorraine showed us to how to 'manipulate' leaves to create interesting forms, inspired by those created by Gill McGregor, that can be used on their own or within arrangements.

We all managed to produce a cone using a large aspidistra leaf into which a single bloom such as a rose could be added but the plaiting of a palm leaf remained a challenge for most of us – much laughter ensued, however, as we all tried our best. More practice needed!



Later that month, some club members attended the **Cambridge Group** of Flower Clubs Spring meeting at Chesterford Community Centre where the renowned **Morgan-Douglas Nuth** demonstrated his 'Botanical Flair' using some very original mechanics such as cardboard cat scratchers and plaster of Paris bandages! Morgan also held a workshop the following day. (see pages 10&11)

April 15th was our AGM and a fun quiz ,with sweet and savoury nibbles followed the business element of the evening.

Our next club meeting will be in the evening of 17th May where we welcome, for the first time, **Julie Richardson**, all the way from the Isle of Wight with her demonstration '**Night at the Movies**'. Visitors are always welcome and we are delighted that several have now joined as members. To contact us, please use the NEW email address ugleybunchflowerclub@gmail.com and follow us on Facebook: .Ugley Bunch Flower Clubs – third Wednesday of the month, Ugley Village Hall, Cambridge Road, CM22 6HR, . 7pm for 7.30pm start

Sandra Honour – Programme Secretary

New Creations Floral Design Club

Our March workshop was an “In House” affair, led by committee member **Naomi Wells**, who also happens to be an Area Demonstrator & Judge. The theme was mossing techniques, but simple willow manipulation was also included to create the supporting mechanics. There were four designs on offer: mossed willow baskets, mossed containers, kokedama & living wreaths, which could be combined to produce endless variations. And we certainly did!

Because Naomi knows us well – our capabilities, interests & individual approaches to flower arranging – she was able to present us with a real challenge. We all arrived with a car full of plant material & floral sundries as prescribed on the workshop list, without really knowing how they were to be used. Many of us left with quite a lot of the items still unused, but full of ideas as to how they were going to be employed in future designs (if only we had time!)



She demonstrated basic techniques and outlined ways of incorporating them into a finished design, always encouraging us to create our own version. We were certainly very productive and the display table was packed with originality as we laid it out for Naomi’s critique at the end of the workshop. Her comments were perceptive, really helping us to develop our ideas and learn from each other.

Lindi Carrington.

Who doesn't love a Spring basket?

A hands-on March club night could only mean one thing... beautiful Spring baskets in the making!

Following the usual Club notices, members enjoyed a short and inspiring demonstration from **Lavinia Pirret, our new Chairman**, who showcased a charming basket design using chicken wire. Then it was time for everyone to get creative. Around 30 members rolled up their sleeves and set to work, surrounded by an abundance of materials thoughtfully provided by the Committee - baskets galore, mountains of fresh foliage including birch twigs and hazel, plus a selection of sundries and accessories. Members and guests added their own personal touch by bringing along their favourite flowers.



It wasn't long before the room was filled with chatter, laughter and that unmistakable creative buzz. Designs began to take shape—some big and blousy, others delicate and naturalistic, alongside delightful tulip-inspired creations. Each one reflected the individual style and flair of its maker.

To round off the evening, the finished arrangements were gathered together for a celebratory photo-call - a stunning showcase of creativity and springtime colour. Without exception, every design was a triumph, and members left feeling inspired, accomplished and thoroughly uplifted after a joyful evening of flowers and friendship.

Helen Evans President, Dereham & District Flower Club

Holbrook & District Flower Club

On 24 th March the club held an Easter Wreath making workshop. This was well attended by members and some stunning door wreaths and table decorations were made.

All the equipment, wreath rings , greenery and decorations were provided by the committee as well as a lunch which was enjoyed before the workshop.

Special thanks to Sheila Cooper who gave guided tuition.

It was a lovely afternoon and everyone went home with a beautiful wreath for Easter which they thoroughly enjoyed making .

Sheila Skeet, Chairman



Church Flower Arranging at Easter

We are so fortunate in the East of England to have the opportunity to arrange flowers in some of the most beautiful, and often significant, places of worship. One of these is the **Anglican Shrine at Walsingham**, which early in the year is surrounded by acres of snowdrops.

Lady Richeldis de Faverches, an Anglo -Saxon noblewoman and widow , is traditionally credited with establishing the original shrine to the Virgin Mary in Walsingham, after a "Marian" vision. The shrine became an important place of pilgrimage but was destroyed by the reforms of King Henry VIII. In the 1920's the Anglian vicar of Walsingham ignited interest in the pre-Reformation pilgrimage.

It was his idea to create a new statue of Our Lady of Walsingham based on the image depicted on the medieval seal of Walsingham Priory. In 1922 the statue was set up in the Parish Church of St. Mary and regular pilgrimage grew in popularity. As in previous years, members & friends of **Fakenham Flower Club** had the honour of decorating the shrine for Easter.



The Walsingham Shrine



The High Altar at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Area Demonstrator, Vicki Hease created the High Altar pedestal for Easter at **St. Edmundsbury Cathedral** (see photo previous page) using Longiflorum lilies with Choisya "Aztec Pearl, Escallonia, Hebe and Hedera helix canariensis from her garden. The cross is made from green Cornus; the crown of thorns is made from Meuhlenbeckia also from her garden. The foam free mechanics are 2" mesh in a large black bowl.

Members of **Dereham Flower Club** regularly decorate their parish church, for the major festivals, so were pleased to have the opportunity to provide advice & information about foam free mechanics to other Norfolk Church flower arrangers.



Spreading the foam-free word with Church flower arrangers

What a wonderfully warm welcome we received at Foulden All Saints Church in West Norfolk recently. Our Club had received a request for help with foam-free techniques as the Church explored a more sustainable approach to their arrangements.

Three of us had the pleasure of chatting with local church flower arrangers from the village and surrounding areas, sharing fresh ideas and inspiration for foam-free floral designs.

From chicken wire and moss rolls to tubes, grids and the new fully compostable Renewal foam, we explored a range of more sustainable techniques — followed by live demonstrations of pedestal, windowsill and altar arrangements, all of which were met with such enthusiasm!

A lively Q&A rounded things off, with lots of thoughtful questions, kind words and genuine interest.



Top row Committee members Helen, Penny & Lavinia; the church flower arranger audience .

Bottom row: examples of church designs created using foam free mechanics

The feedback from the Church Warden afterwards was lovely. *“A very big thank you for coming over to Foulden church and giving us such a wonderful demonstration of foam-free flower arrangements for churches. So many people attended and said how very inspirational your demos had been. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you all very much.”*

It was incredibly rewarding to connect, share ideas and support fellow flower arrangers in the community. Let’s keep the conversation (and creativity!) growing.

Dereham & District Flower Club Committee members

Stowmarket & District Flower Club, January 2026 Meeting.

Our January meeting is held over lunchtime despite our Club being an evening Club. This decision was taken a few years ago when we noticed the low attendance in the January evening meetings and the increasing unpredictability of the weather with Demonstrators having to come out on dark, wintery evenings.

At this lunch, the committee provide soup and bread/butter with tea and biscuits afterwards. It is a bit of a social event as well. The meeting is usually taken by member/s of the Club and this year it was my turn.

We had been unable to find a suitable venue for our Christmas Club Competitions and turned the January meeting into a mini-Club Competition. I am a qualified **Area Judge** and agreed to run a session concentrating on explaining some key aspects of Competition Work and Judging.

The three classes members chose from before the meeting were as follows:

A petite – “Time for Tea” to include a teacup.

A foam free exhibit – “What A Tangled Web We Weave”

An exhibit – “A Winter Wonderland”



Photos: Top Left Gill Selby 2nd Time for Tea ; Bottom Left Julie Head 2nd Tangled Web Centre Helen Allum 1st Tangled Web; Right Carolyn Rud 1st Time for Tea

Before lunch, I gave an insight into what a judge looks for when judging competition work and the most common pitfalls when competing. Over lunch and into the afternoon our members completed their exhibit. Once they had finished, I

gave verbal feedback on each exhibit. I also included ideas on how to improve the staging of exhibits. Finally I gave First, Second and Third place in each Class, explaining why.



Photos: Left Maureen Johnson 2nd Wonderland; Top right: Carolyn, Ann & Helen with Caroline Barnes; Bottom right Ann Bunker 1st Wonderland

We had a great turn out of members and in all had over 20 entries across the three classes. The petite was the most popular class, but all classes had entries. When giving feedback on each exhibit, I gave one good aspect to the design and one area for improvement. The members asked questions throughout which was very helpful to myself and others in the audience. I try to be diplomatic and give constructive criticism. Being a judge doesn't always make you popular and these were my friends and Club members so I was on tenterhooks. However, we only improve through advice and we can all improve. I had some lovely comments back afterwards so I hope that I got the balance right. I always say that anyone who competes does well because it is a daunting thing to do and we all gave everyone a round of applause for taking part.

Our first placed members in each class were:

“Time for Tea” – Carolyn Rudd

“What A Tangled Web We Weave” – Helen Allum

“A Winter Wonderland” - Anne Bruncker

Congratulations again to all those who took part.

Caroline Barnes, Stowmarket & District Flower Club

Photos Julie Head

Celebrating Our Club Talent

It was a real pleasure at our March meeting to recognise the wonderful talent within **Little Hallingbury Flower Club** with the presentation of our annual competition awards.

Chair Judy Evans was delighted to award cups to two members, in the Advanced and Intermediate classes.

Huge congratulations to all this year's winners — Hannah, Danielle and Elspeth — a fantastic achievement and very well deserved! We are proud of the creativity and enthusiasm shown by all who take part.

At each demonstration evening, members are invited to take part in a floral competition, creating an arrangement to match a given title. Entries are welcomed across three classes — novice, intermediate and advanced — and are judged by our visiting demonstrator, with points awarded throughout the year. The points are totalled at the end of the year, and cups awarded to the winners. We look forward to another year of beautiful, creative entries and friendly competition from our talented members



Judy presenting awards to Hannah (left) & Danielle. Elspeth received her presentation at the March meeting.

Feering Flower Club spent a lovely evening of celebration on Tuesday 21st April.

Not only were we celebrating the super talents of our members at our **Club Show**, but we raised a glass or two, to our **President Brenda Taylor** whose 90th birthday was the next day.

Brenda has worn many 'hats' over her 50 years at the Club and we wanted to show our appreciation for all she has done.

A special celebration cake was made by our former Chair Sue Bunting and a basket of flowers were arranged by our Secretary Sylvie Cooper.

Members then enjoyed a special buffet, while we waited for the votes to be counted, and the Best in Show to be announced.

We also had a presentation of Area Long Service Certificates for three members - Rosanagh Colquhoun, Shirley O'Connor and Brenda Taylor; together their combined membership totalled 162 years, what a fabulous achievement !

Sylvie Cooper



Brenda, on the right, with Rosanagh & Shirley

Results & photos of the Club show are on the next page.



1st Prize winners from Feering's Club Show

Top row right – left Earth Day (Best in Show) centre: Ode to Shakespeare (Runner up to Best in Show) left: Happy Birthday

Bottom Row right to left Tea Time, Continental, judging by Club members who are taking the task very seriously.

March Area Council – Presentation by NAFAS CEO

Richard Abraham was a charming, engaging speaker – very professional & upfront. He has been in “Change Management” for the whole of his career. His last major role was in transforming Portsmouth Cathedral from a poorly attended place of worship running at a deficit, to a vibrant cultural venue which is also a thriving place of worship, producing a healthy income - good experience from which to regenerate & “rebrand” NAFAS.

Interestingly, he identified the main problem with NAFAS as one of “communication” rather than majoring on our dire financial circumstances. He said that people do not know who we are or what we stand for; our “brand guidelines” (image) do not reflect what we do now. We do not know how many members we have, we don’t know who they are so we can’t communicate with them in a meaningful way. (This is set out more fully in the presentation pack which has been circulated to all clubs) The organisation needs to be “more flexible & nimble....”

He said that setting up a database of members is crucial- we need to know how many members we have (some individuals belong to more than one club) and who our members are (demographics, attitudes etc.) It is the key to the NAFAS renewal programme Without a database it hasn't been possible to organise block insurance for example, or to offer discounts. At the moment information is "cascaded" through the levels of the organisation from national executive via area chairmen, club chairman, club committee to members, with a lot lost on route. A database would enable direct communication with individual members.

A website overhaul is one of the key aspects of the renewal programme with protected areas solely for members, where for example policy documents will be available to download. These will be professional prepared by specialists to ensure that we are in step with developments in legislation. (Health & Safety, Safeguarding etc.) He was keen that there should be exclusive benefits for members. At present important content (like guidelines, codes of conduct) are freely available to any organisation.

He made it clear that the current affiliation fees will not be reduced. But the considerable costs of the regeneration are to be funded by a restructuring of investments.



By the end of the presentation I felt that Richards appointment has been a real step in the right direction. He has the experience & the commitment to make renewal work, but as I drove home I couldn't get the image of a "flexible, nimbler" NAFAS out of my mind!

Lindi Carrington, Editor

Sue Brinton's Skydive –“I have always liked adventure but this one is MEGA!”

Sue said that the skydive from Beccles Airfield was her “mad idea” which turned out not to be so mad after all. “it was great and happened a bit quicker than I thought; - it was brought forward to yesterday (14th March) as very high winds were expected today. As the photo shows it was a wonderfully clear blue sky and an incredible experience, 13,000 ft up down through the clouds, the views were amazing, I was last in the plane to jump and once the plane had gone it was so quiet and tranquil just beautiful, such a buzz and a great landing too.

Also I am thrilled to have raised just over £1,500 for the hospice. I could not have done without all the support; thank you.”



Sue's charity skydive was to raise funds for Tapping House, an incredible charity that provides compassionate care and support to people living with life-limiting illnesses and end of life care. The Facebook **Just Giving** page is still open.

Demonstrators refresher day Mildenhall, Saturday 7th March

The JDS&E team had done an excellent job of organising this refresher day, enlisting the very talented **Beryl Cotton** as the facilitator.

The room was buzzing within moments of demonstrators arriving, we do like to talk!

As each person was invited to speak about a favourite foliage, it was evident that there was a vast amount of experience and talent in the room, ranging from over 35 years to the newly qualified, and it was good to meet people from across the borders. No, I don't just mean Norfolk.

We were tasked with producing a design that we may be currently using or something we might be developing to include. Sixteen stunning designs emerged, using every kind of mechanics and as many different plant materials. I couldn't help but think how lucky audiences would be, to be seeing these in future demonstrations. Especially as we grouped and staged combinations of the designs.



We discussed the do's and don'ts of flower arranging and yes it has to be said, we also discussed the challenges that demonstrating presents. The code of conduct, plant material, blue forms, and many other things you are not told about when you sign up for training!

As the day drew to a close, many also took advantage of the sales table and some free to a good home items, trays, stands, chickens, camels and the odd reindeer, were all seen heading to a new lease of life!

I'm relatively new to demonstrating, but I do enjoy learning and facing new challenges, and this day afforded me the opportunity to do both. A certificated day, ensuring the **continued professional development** of your demonstrators. With many thanks to the other participants, the committee, volunteers and Beryl Cotton.

Naomi Wells, Area Demonstrator

Judges Refresher Day - Striving for Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Investing time in CPD is essential across all disciplines of JDS&E – and never more so than in Judging, where standards, style and interpretation are constantly evolving.

Last month, Area Judges, enthusiastic competitors and those considering Judge training enjoyed an inspiring and thought-provoking day in Kent. Expertly organised by **Sue Shaw, JDSE&P Chair from Kent Floral Art**, the event was led by NAFAS National Judge and Instructor for Judges, **Michael Bowyer MBE**.

From the outset, the day struck exactly the right tone – warm, welcoming and full of purpose. Michael opened with an engaging introduction before guiding us through key aspects of judging, including the elements and principles of design, competition manual points and the ever-important criteria of artistic and practical merit, interpretation and distinction. His carefully pitched questions challenged us all, encouraging reflection, discussion and – most importantly – growth. As a relatively new judge, I found it incredibly valuable and came away with many insights to strengthen my own judging skills.

The practical element of the day brought both creativity and a touch of nerves! Each attendee presented two exhibits: a petite entitled “When the March winds doth blow” and a larger exhibit based on one of two evocative titles. These were judged by the group, with placings awarded across all classes. While it can feel daunting to have your work assessed in front of your peers, the shared experience created a supportive atmosphere, and Michael’s constructive guidance ensured everyone left feeling encouraged and better informed.

After a relaxed and sociable lunch – filled with shared experiences and plenty of floral conversation – we moved on to plant identification and a hands-on session exploring materials and accessories. Lively discussion centred on what would be accepted, rejected or questioned in competition work, offering invaluable practical clarity.



A key focus of the day was the art of writing effective comment cards – an essential skill for judges. Clarity, accuracy and positivity are paramount, and we practised crafting comments that were not only grammatically correct and legible, but also constructive and encouraging. Michael’s guidance helped us refine our wording, ensuring feedback highlighted strengths while clearly suggesting areas for improvement.

Overall, it was an excellent and rewarding day – absolutely worth the journey from Norfolk. It was also lovely to share the experience with Elaine Boobier, one of our much-loved Area Demonstrators.

A truly worthwhile investment in learning, confidence and continued development.
Helen Evans NAFAS Area Judge

Holbrook & District Flower Club enjoyed another great afternoon club meeting in April. Over 40 members and visitors attended a demonstration given by **Giovanna Roberts & Pat South**, as the duo put aside their "Area Officer " duties for some fun with flowers. Giovanna is **Chairman of East Suffolk Group & 2nd Area Vice Chairman**. Pat is **Area Flower Arranger Officer**, responsible for ordering & distribution of our favourite magazine.

Holbrook meet on the second Tuesday of the month at Holbrook Village Hall from 1.30, Why not come along . They also have a newly created Facebook page.

More is More

My friend Jenny and I are vice chairman of **Werrington and District Flower Club**. We absolutely love watching the demonstrations and creating our own arrangements. Over the last 2-3 years we have started to work more and more with flowers. We are both mobile hairdressers who work alone, so the last couple of years we've teamed up for our 'Christmas do' We are both in our 50s and I've been hairdressing for longer than we care to remember. We both still love our hairdressing but we wanted to explore a career in Floristry to run alongside our hairdressing.

The Cambridge Flower School offered a week-long Career course which covered all aspects of Floristry from costing flowers, social media, funeral arrangements to bridal bouquets. So we decided to give this a go. We stayed in a cottage 6 minutes away from the school in Waterbeach.



The staff of 4 Sarah, (the owner) Emma, Elle and Alice were all wonderful. We were in a class of 11 from all areas of the country and all ages. Everyone got along fantastically, and we all learnt such a lot as well as having fun along the way. We came home with an array of flowers; all costs of materials for the course were included in the price.

The course has given us the confidence to move forward with our new business '**More is More Bespoke Flowers**' alongside our hairdressing. The school run a number of different courses from one day workshops, through to week long career change courses. So there is something for everyone. We will definitely be back.

Clare D Orbell - Hairdresser to the stars

Spotlight East is always interested to hear about your personal projects & floral adventures. You may inspire other members to step outside their comfort zone.

NNHS Spring Show – April 2026 – Floral Art – Report from the Floral Co-ordinators

Once again NNHS and Norwich Group of Flower Clubs joined together to put on a Spring Show at St Faith's Centre, Horsham St Faiths.

There were three classes in '**Spring has Arrived**' The floral art exhibits were judged by NAFAS Area Judge, **Rachael Borenkova**.

Class 1 Fresh Beginnings attracted 5 exhibits

1st Helen Evans - also won Best in show and The Jocelyn Steward Challenge Cup

2nd Tricia Loades; 3rd Jill Clarke; VHC Su Mace; HC Jacqueline Aldous

Class 2 Spring Swing attracted 4 exhibits

1st Helen Evans - Runner up to Best in show

2nd Jill Clarke; 3rd Jacqueline Aldous; VHC Su Mace

Class 3 Going Potty attracted 39 exhibits. The children who entered were 5 and 6 years old from Stibbard Primary School. Christine Hardman kindly supplied the flower pots. These were decorated with dried flower material and shiny coloured paints.

1st Rowan; 2nd Florence; 3rd Seth; 4th = Poppy and Millie

It's hoped that we can include something similar at the Norfolk Show to complement the existing Children's entries.

The standard of entries was very good. Unfortunately, one exhibitor failed to turn up but the show bench looked stunning, so well done to all who entered.

Plans are well underway for the schedules for shows next year. Look on the website for full details as they will be available at the beginning of 2027.

Gloria Goodley and Jacquie Aldous Floral Art Co-ordinators



Left: Fresh Beginnings Jill Clark 3rd (top) Sue Mace (middle) VHC ; Spring Swing (bottom) Jill Clark 2nd

Centre – Presentation to Helen Evans ;
Right: Helen's Fresh Beginnings (top); Spring Swing

Herts & Essex Boundary Flower Club

The April meeting was rather different from our normal demonstrations of flower arranging. We had a theme of fashion which included a wonderful array of clothes from St Clare Hospice shop, and a competition of flower arrangements depicting 'A Fashion Icon'.

Four members of the club (3 female and 1 male) acted as very glamorous models and showed off some very attractive garments and accessories, walking down the catwalk bordered by beautiful flowers. Ladies from St Clare's joined in and showed us what high quality clothing they have for sale in the shop. There were also 5 beautiful and original arrangements for the competition which were judged by members and commented on by our resident NAFAS judge. All the flowers bordering the catwalk were raffled off at the end of the meeting so members went home having had fun both with flowers and clothes and also raising some valuable funds for St Clares Hospice.

(photos of show on next page)



Herts & Essex Boundary

Despite roadworks closing the road at our venue we were delighted that we managed to attract visitors.
 Thank you to Danielle for taking the photos & videos (well worth seeing on our Facebook page) and also Hannah for close up photos of the exhibits.
Rosemary Green - Chairman.



*Coco Chanel
 Leoni Braz - 1st*

Herts & Essex Flower Club



*Marilyn Monroe
 Carol Giffen - 3rd*



*Mrs Gertrude Shilling
 Naomi Wells - 2nd*

Wickham Market Flower Club celebrated their **Diamond Anniversary** on 23rd April with a special demonstration from an old friend **Jacqui Arnold**, National Demonstrator from Kent Area of NAFAS.

Jacqui posted: "I had a wonderful evening at East of England Area Wickham Market Flower Club yesterday. Returning for a third visit and having the honour of demonstrating in celebration of their Diamond Anniversary. Humbled by the standing ovation I received with many familiar faces. So many congratulations for 60 years being part of NAFAS!! What an amazing achievement!"



Striking Gold!

What a truly dazzling evening as we celebrated **Dereham & District Flower Club's 50th Anniversary** in style this month! The room was absolutely brimming with members and visitors, all adding to the wonderful atmosphere.

We were treated to an unforgettable demonstration by the fabulous **Vanessa Wellock**, a National Demonstrator, whose presentation "Vivienne – Love Her or Hate Her" wowed us all with bold creativity and stunning floral artistry. There was a real buzz throughout the evening, with the raffle, tombola, and shopping stalls proving hugely popular—plenty of excitement and treasures to be found



A special mention to Beverley Broad, our new Programme Secretary, who did us proud with a beautiful celebratory cake, and to everyone involved in capturing the moment with the traditional Committee and VIP Guests photo. We were lucky enough to have Gloria Goodley, Area Chairman and Jacquie Aldous, Chairman of Norwich Group of Flower Clubs join us for the celebrations.



Main picture: cake by Beverly Broad, Top right – 1st Helen Evans, Bottom right – Vanessa Wellock on stage

Our Club competition, "Golden Splendour," which was judged by a public vote was a particular highlight. The standard was incredible, with 13 members truly rising to the occasion and showcasing some amazing designs.



Joint 2nd - Jean Burge, centre; Leanda Hudson bottom left; Sandra Carmen – right
Lavinia Pirret – 3rd top left

An evening full of celebration, creativity, and community - one to remember!
Helen Evans,
President Dereham Flower Club

Spring Area Day – 25th April

A full house and a real buzz of anticipation set the tone for a fantastic Spring Area Day at the Jubilee Centre in Mildenhall.

The morning session brought a fascinating and flavour-filled start, as **Martyn Davey, Head Grower from Nurtured in Norfolk**, introduced us to the intriguing world of edible flowers. From delicate micro herbs to vibrant blooms supplied to top restaurants and hotels across the UK, it was a real eye-opener discovering just how much of the plant world can grace our plates... and what's best left off them! A highlight for many was the chance to sample some of Martyn's offerings – a true treat for the senses.

The afternoon session was nothing short of inspiring. National Demonstrator **Jo Purdy**, travelling from near Scarborough, captivated the audience with her stunning '**Botanical Gallery**' of designs. Each piece brought creativity and artistry to life on stage, holding the audience spellbound throughout. The rousing standing ovation at the end said it all – with a well-deserved cheer too for her husband Stuart, whose behind-the-scenes support did not go unnoticed.



Left :foyer arrangement Julie Head; centre Jo Purdy; top right Caroline Farrell, Artist; bottom right Cathy Hudson, Tomfoolery
Photos Julie Head

Whilst all the action was going on in the main hall, six hopeful & ambitious arrangers were busy competing to decide who would go forward to represent East of England at the next level – the UK-wide NAFAS elimination competition in July at Shrewley, in Warwickshire. . The eventual winner of that competition will represent NAFAS at the 14th World Association of Floral Artistry (**WAFA**) Show in Australia in March 2027.

The title for this first round competition was ‘Land of My Fathers’ and was judged by **Stephanie Laing**, Area Judges Representative. All the entries were quite outstanding and drew much attention and comment from the attendees. **Jenni Baker** from the **Norwich Group of Flower Clubs** was awarded **first place**. Congratulations Jenni! We wish you every success in the next round of the competition.



Photos Julie Head

Grateful thanks go to the Executive Committee and Group Representatives for their hard work in organising such a successful day, and for keeping everyone refreshed with teas, coffees and a popular raffle.

A truly memorable day of flowers, flavour and friendship.

Helen Evans
Area Media Representative

And so we end this edition of Spotlight East on a high note of excitement & anticipation for the next round of the Wafa competition, for the County & local Shows, your Summer Open Meetings & garden events. Don't forget to take photographs of these happy occasions and send them in with the a few details of what's going on (and with the agreement of the photographer & members of course) to newsletter.nafaseast@gmail.com Please ensure that the photos are in JPEG format & of medium size (not HUGE or tiny) and that they are email attachments not embedded in the text. The copy deadline for the next edition is **Friday 24th July** for publication 1st August. If you have an important event close to the deadline, please let us know in advance that you would like an extra couple of days and we'll see what we can do.

We're planning to do another round up of club outings, as it gives clubs ideas for their future outings, & members' Open Gardens in the Summer & Autumn editions

Meanwhile enjoy your flowers & the friendship that comes with them.

Lindi

Lindi Carrington (editor) & the Media Team.