



Welcome to your annual newsletter from the Coddenham Centre, in which we have some particularly important (we think) changes to share with you. So, the publication is a little earlier (and longer), than usual.

As you may already be aware, my fellow founding member and Treasurer Ray Collins will step down in January 2026. I will follow as chair and trustee, in February.

More on this later, although if you want to skip looking back, head for the end of year details!

The Year

After nearly six years, continuous progress and improvement did not let up in 2025.

Our hugely successful winter '**Soup Socials**' continued, enhanced by a series of Community Lunches, all supported by Mid Suffolk District Council's 'Keeping Well in Winter' campaign. We were also able to re-tool the kitchen and expand our catering offer. Trustees and volunteers signed up for an in-house food hygiene course, designed by Centre Manager Gail Springett and in February, the Centre secured its own 5* Hygiene certification. Our '**Cooked in Coddenham**' offer, including support for local entrepreneurs and low food miles, went from strength to strength.

Staying on food, **George Egg** entertained us in February with his hugely comical 'Set Menu' supported by Creative Arts East. We welcomed the return of the **Coddenham Quiz Night**, with the help of Roy & Linda Goodacre, and launched the 'Greg Forrest Trophy' sponsored by Tracey Forrest, in memory of our former quiz master. The event was repeated last month, with Tracey personally presenting the trophy to the winning team, 'The Primates.' More details on our website.

March brought the return of the '**Three Rs**' events in conjunction with Coddenham Parish Council, extolling the benefits of Reduce (waste), Re-Use, Recycle.

Also in March, local resident Julie Cartwright held the second of her successful **Antiques Fairs**. These are now established with both the trade and local customers as a smart choice for quality antiques. The next Fair is on 15th February 2026.

We held another of our **Sunday Brunches** at Easter and in May there was a **VE Day** celebration with entertainment from 'The Three Chordettes' and a fish and chip supper.

We were delighted to host the **Coddenham Fete** in July, a welcome first return since COVID, helped by a huge cohort of volunteers coordinated by (now CC Trustee) Rachel Carter, family and friends.

Our '**Suffolk School of Nordic Walking**' celebrated its 5th birthday with an afternoon tea for all the walkers and partners. This accessible exercise for all has created its own lively community, many of whom volunteer at the Centre.

This autumn we saw the '**East Anglian Traditional Music Trust**' successfully present a music, song, and dance event, adding a new flavour to our occasional musical entertainments.

It was also great to see **Coddenham Athletic Football Club** launch their 'Under 15s' team at the start of the new season. We are working hard on adding a general youth offer to our portfolio alongside that for babies and toddlers, and hope to pilot some new activities next year.

The Centre sponsored a new **Halloween 'Pit Stop'**, led by both Rachel and new team member Kathryn Lillingston plus local volunteers. Lots of free innovative fun for youngsters, and imaginative dressing up by our volunteers and some fantastic decorations by local resident, Helen Irving.

The **Christmas Fair** was here last month and our first **Wine Tasting** event hosted by Adnams was a great success. We will be hosting a **Community Christmas Lunch** (Cooked in Coddenham again), on 5th December.

The Help

Our armchair exercise classes **Love to Move** are into their third year, sponsored by the British Gymnastic Foundation and the Coddenham Centre. We have been delighted to receive some recent added support from 'Suffolk Community Foundation, West Grantmaking Fund.

We were also grateful to our local authority, through the 'Community Infrastructure Fund' support, along with contributions from the local **Day Foundation** and **Gardemau Trusts**, for a major makeover of our children's play equipment. Project management is a collaboration between the Centre with Trustee Debbie McDonnell and Parish Council members. To promote a balanced investment across all those activities we try to serve, we secured last minute funding to restore our damaged tennis courts, with the guidance of the MSDC Grants team. This exciting development will also introduce a permanently marked pickleball court and in the summer, local association Netball.

These are just some of the projects alongside a busy schedule of training; meeting facilities; weddings; wakes; kitchen startups and regular activities from ballroom/ballet/tap dancing to badminton, bowls, yoga, pilates and many more, all in the interests of health, wellbeing and the Centre's sustainability.

All our events are intended as catalysts for a constant pursuit of positive social engagement across the community and its surrounding areas.

The Environment

Efforts for the environment continued with the planting of more trees, including replacing some of those in the car park, with supplies from the Mid Suffolk Biodiversity team. Local youngsters, Alfie and Jake Hall did a great job volunteering to keep them watered for us in the drier months. Our wildflower areas continued to flourish too. We also installed a bike maintenance unit at the centre with the help of Mid Suffolk District Council's sustainable travel team. Our car charging facilities, part of Suffolk County Council's 'Plug In Suffolk' network, were relaunched and with the help of solar power, we are currently offering the cheapest rates in the region.

And finally....

When we first we announced our intentions to step down on our fifth anniversary last year, 2026 seemed a long way, away. Nonetheless, the work to prepare a refreshed team for transition has dominated life for some of us, for much of this year.

We have always said that we are only one of the many chapters in the long life of the Coddensham Centre, previously the 'Coddensham Village Hall.'

There have been many before us, but the facility was in a very unhappy place despite best efforts, when I took the project on and established the charity in 2019. Legacy issues relentlessly continued to emerge, then along came a global pandemic! Our appeal for community support produced a huge response one evening in 2020 and made us realise the effort was going to be worth it. 'The Coddensham Centre,' with its new name, moved into a new era of being respected and a platform for community cohesion. Its environmental credentials flourished, reducing its carbon footprint by 91%, becoming an award winner and referred to by local government as an 'exemplar'. Alongside other community groups in the Coddensham Community Response Group, we like to think we have helped put the 'unity into Community.'

Ray and I also want to pay tribute to all those who have helped the Centre financially, be it a major grant, small donation, public or private. Plus of course, our thanks to fellow Trustees past and present, our fabulous employees, super Centre Manager Gail and Charmaine Hall, plus of course all our loyal customers, faithful suppliers and supporters. Thank you to our Community Shop and Paul Taylor at Byte who have been with us all the way.

There are many battle anecdotes/scars, but the successful initiatives, all with those fantastic volunteers' and stakeholders' help, have been huge. However, as always, we look ahead. Anticipating even greater stability from 2026, and several new projects successfully under way, it is time to step back.

We leave the Centre with a sound balance sheet, financial reserves, a promising future, structure, opportunity and new resources for expansion. For example, you can still find the outline plans prepared with Community Action Suffolk's Prohelp and architect Paul Weston I first shared in 2023, for repurposing our 900 square metre bowling green still online; we have already mentioned the children's play area project; our Pavilion is in line-for a replacement and we even have fully made up plans to convert the Centre's first floor should we one day wish or need to do so. We also have a costed opportunity to generate more solar power to perhaps sell to our neighbours!

All of this will still need volunteers and continued support, so please pass the message on!

The 'final' step we have taken is not only to replace the Chair and Treasurer positions, but to increase the team by 50%, as befits an increasingly vibrant Coddensham Centre and future productivity.

Our expanded team are nonetheless committed to respecting our shared legacy and protecting our assets from transfer or disposal. If you have invested time, energy, money or just support, we are confident the Coddensham Centre is in safe hands.

Joining Charmaine Hall, Debbie McDonnell, Gail Springett and Elaine Thomas, have been David Ward, more recently Rachel Carter, administrator Kathryn Lillingston, Treasurer Designate John Whitehead and last but by no means least, from 1st December, an established TCC volunteer and supporter, Nick Mills as Chair Designate. Treasurer handover will be the 1st January, and Chair, 1st February.

More details about this expanded and exciting team can be found on www.thecoddenhamcentre.co.uk

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We have planned hard for 'business as usual,' next year.

On behalf of all the Trustees and the team, thank you for your support in whatever part you have played in our exciting journey. With your help, it is a journey I am confident, will continue.

Have a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew MacPherson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew MacPherson
Chair - The Coddenham Centre CIO
1st December 2025