


The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2008

ISSUE 171

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Farewell to the Town Exchange concept, but what next? (see page 9)

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Editorial

Strategic Planning continues

You will see that the Local Development Framework, IBC's planning proposals for the period up to 2021, is again well to the fore. The Society's response is much too lengthy to reproduce in full, but I've summarised key parts of it under clear headings. I hope that some of you also responded individually. The time scale for replies was extended by a few weeks, but this part of the consultation is over now. There will be further consultations at a later stage.

Unitary Ipswich -- Also Continuing

I'm sorry if this editorial sounds similar to the January one! But, again, this very important matter is ongoing. The Government insists that all options are still on the table. It is said that a decision should be announced in the next few months so that if changes are made elections for a new Council could be held next year. So, shall we have a slightly larger Greater Ipswich, a rather bigger Greater Ipswich, or perhaps even a Greater Suffolk, or no change at all?

Voluntary Work

I'm sure our tribute to Beryl Jary on her 'retirement' from the Society's Committee will be read with interest. For many members Beryl is probably the best known person in the Society. We shall all miss her contributions. I can't help but think generally how her kind of voluntary work for us and indeed for other organisations too, is one of the best aspects of life in Britain. If Gordon Brown and others would like to celebrate British Values, the extent and value of purely voluntary work should be right up there near the top. I doubt whether many other countries can match what volunteers put into societies and clubs of all kinds in Britain. Even many loyal Britons can be heard to wonder, "You mean you do it for nothing?"

Fairtrade Town

I welcome the efforts by the Making Ipswich a Fairtrade Town Steering Group to get Ipswich recognized as a Fairtrade Town, like a number of other towns and cities. It means that Fairtrade products should be readily available in shops and used in workplaces and other organisations. Some supermarkets have helped the cause by moving in that direction, selling Fairtrade bananas, tea, coffee, etc. When I enjoy a glass of Los Robles Fairtrade Carmenere from Chile, I hope it's doing me good, but I'm sure it's doing the producers some good!

Pykenham's Gatehouse

This fascinating little building will once again be open to the public on the first Saturday of each month from May to October between 10.30 and 12.30. For more than 500 years the Gatehouse has stood here, and it stands today, a rare and valuable survival of medieval Ipswich. Many of you will already have made a visit but those who have not should seize the opportunity. Children especially are intrigued by the hidden stairway.

Those who would like to be more closely associated by assisting on these open days should contact Caroline Markham.

Development Framework

These strategic documents which the Borough Council has been required to produce constitute the most important matters for the town and therefore The Ipswich Society at the present time and for the next few years.

Even with more space than usual to devote to this in the Newsletter, we can only choose some of the Society's responses, some of them grouped to make them easier to follow. We feel sure that members will find this interesting. Some of the issues are very controversial, in which case not everyone can be pleased by the Society's stance, but we hope these comments to the Borough Council seem sensible and constructive.

We can add that the Suffolk Preservation Society has written to IBC saying that "the Ipswich Society's reply can be taken to be the Suffolk reply as well".

Introductory letter to The Ipswich Society to IBC to accompany our detailed comments

We enclose our responses to the three major documents of the LDF which we have read thoroughly and discussed at length. In general, we support the proposals but we do put forward other views and emphasis in some areas. Our members have expressed views to us that can be summarised as follows:

1. **Overdevelopment:** We are concerned that, in an attempt to achieve the Ipswich Policy Area housing target, we develop every last plot of previously developed land, back garden and odd green patch. Densities need to be watched to avoid building future no-go areas. To prevent this, consideration may have to be given to developing the Northern Fringe in an 'eco' way before 2021.
2. **Traffic:** Congestion in the town centre is becoming bad and will worsen with more residents in Policy Area IP-One and increasing Felixstowe Dock traffic. Imaginative multi-nodal traffic management schemes are an urgent priority which should be planned in detail and instituted before the developments are built. At the same time we realise that major transport schemes are not within the Borough's powers; plus all pressures must be brought to bear on the relevant agencies to improve trunk roads and railways. We should be producing sensible plans to do this.
3. **Design:** As a Civic Society we are extremely perturbed by the quality of design that is currently being given planning permission. Our commitment to improving this through Development Control policies needs to be emphasised and highlighted in the LDF. Further, we believe that the centre of town needs an urgent review of the streetscape and traffic arrangements by a multi-disciplinary executive group.
4. **Shopping:** At the time of writing we do not feel that a greater area of central Ipswich should be zoned for retail. Rather, we should campaign actively to improve the quality of our shopping experience using the Ipswich BID scheme.

Star Lane Traffic System

The Society believes that the current Star Lane gyratory is the most important problem that the Borough and County Councils have to solve. At the time of writing there is only one mode that can go from east to west -- the internal combustion engine. The west to east is little better. Whenever there is an obstruction elsewhere gridlock ensues. We think the following points need to be taken:

- Northern By-pass: At a very high cost, a project that is not in Suffolk CC's strategic transport plan and hence not in the Highways Agency's thoughts will not be built for the foreseeable future.
- The East Bank Link Road will also never be built whilst the Highways Agency feels its junction with the A14 is dangerous.
- The only relief is therefore a Wet Dock crossing. We feel that the best route is across the lock and thence to Bath Street. The yacht traffic can be coped with by a swing or lifting bridge. If the Dutch can do this there's no reason why we can't.
- We do not see why strategic infrastructure need wait upon the finalisation of the redevelopment of The Island site.
- Star Lane itself should be two-way, widened by land acquisition from properties on the north side as they are developed. It should be boulevardised with trees to prevent it turning into an in-town motorway.
- The traffic lights at the junction with Grimwade Street should be for pedestrian control only.
- Key Street/College Street should be for buses, taxis, access vehicles and bicycles only. It should be a 20mph paved, shared space area.
- There should be a frequent east-west bus route along Key Street/College Street.

A Northern By-pass?

The Society opposes the Northern By-pass on the following grounds:

- The proposed rationale is to provide a relief route to the Orwell Bridge; we need to have traffic figures to confirm that a substantial number of users of the by-pass would otherwise have gone through Ipswich when the bridge is shut; presumably these would only be going from Felixstowe to the north and vice versa.
- An A14 block does not occur sufficiently often to justify a new route.
- The actual delays around the Star Lane gyratory system need to be quantified; currently at rush hours several minutes are lost but we need to know how many would have used a northern by-pass.
- All new roads generate more traffic, which is clearly not sustainable in any sense of the word for the foreseeable future.
- The new road would go through an area of green countryside which is largely untouched.
- It would be vehemently opposed by all residents north of the Borough, thereby creating an unpleasant town versus country atmosphere.
- It is not in Suffolk CC's Transport Plan and hence not in the Highways Agency's long term plans. There is thus no funding, as stated above.

East Bank Link Road?

The Society thinks this should not be built for the following reasons:

- The Highways Agency will refuse to sanction what it regards as a dangerous junction with the A14, as noted above.
- It will interfere with, more or less, an important nature area.
- It would be possible to fund it privately but this would require retail development on the Volvo site which is against Policy.
- It probably would not reduce traffic on the Star Lane gyratory.

Future of Crown Street

Possible redevelopment of Crown Street:

- The majority of swimming pool users are not car drivers; they use the bus or even walk or cycle. Thus moving away from Crown Street and the bus station (to the site opposite Portman Road football ground) is illogical.
- With the Mint Quarter, the Westgate/Civic Centre and perhaps Old Cattle Market bus station sites empty, Ipswich clearly cannot sustain a further retail development in Crown Street.
- We think it is unlikely that the Borough will find a developer to partner IBC for the proposals on the Portman Road site as development costs do not add up.
- Whilst Crown Pools needs a considerable amount of money spending on it, the basic structure is satisfactory for another 35 years. It should be refurbished and enclosed; a second 50 metre pool and diving pit can be built next to it. Fore Street baths plus its car park should be closed and its site sold off; these funds would be used for the Crown Pools regeneration.
- Charles Street car park will have to be rebuilt but it could be done in such a way as to have an office or high density residential development above.

Public Transport

We could make the following suggestions:

- Close the Old Cattle Market bus station. All buses would use an improved Tower Ramparts bus station.
- The ceaseless passage of large diesel engined (and technologically outdated) buses through some of Ipswich's best streets should stop.
- A small quiet electric or hybrid bus should shuttle around the current route at 5 minute intervals which would otherwise be traffic free.
- A similar vehicle should be used for a Tower Ramparts - railway station shuttle route.
- We would like serious thought to be given to utilising the Felixstowe railway line more heavily. Within Ipswich it could have a 10 minute interval with halts for Sproughton Road, Norwich Road, the Northern Fringe development, the St Clement's site and Warren Heath before continuing to Felixstowe. This would reduce pressure on the roads in many areas including the A14. Fast, rapidly accelerating tram-like vehicles would be used to provide brief stop times. Network Rail would like the line electrified but the freight traffic does not yet justify it. Electric trains would make a substantial difference to the quality of life for line-side residents by reducing noise pollution. Though such a scheme may appear fanciful now it is an obvious solution for twenty years hence. Thus we need to engage our thoughts, planners and consultants with it now.

Parking Strategy

We support this strategy overall, except we note an overall increase in long-term commuter parking from 1179 spaces to 1890 plus. However, many are on Portman Road's development; this is approaching doubling of places and will surely have an adverse effect on rush hour congestion. We feel these figures need reconsideration.

We think that street parking in the central car parking zone, now it is under the Council's control, needs a major overhaul. There are inadequate spaces outside working hours; signage is inconsistent -- sometimes excessive, sometimes absent. This needs input from parties in addition to Highways. Marks & Spencer NCP car park -- Possibly the spaces here could be incorporated into the rebuilt Charles Street multi-storey car park. It could then be used as an extension for the bus station and as a coach station by day; but at night it would be useful to have car parking so close to the town centre. This site must certainly not be zoned for building of any sort.

Central Shopping Area

We believe that the potential shopping areas (outside the present core) should be considered to be as follows:

- The Mint Quarter might be an attractive site for an upmarket anchor store, but it would be risky as the area is now lower end of market. We still live in hope however.
- The Westgate Quarter (ex-Civic Centre) is very attractive either for a supermarket or an upper end store, particularly as it is close to arterial roads and has a car park.
- The Old Cattle Market is outdated for the bus station and urgently need relocation. As it is, it really can't do as the route from the centre to the Waterfront and would need money spent on it anyway. That could well come from a mixed development, spacious tree-lined walk with speciality shops below and residential above.
- We do not believe that shopping should spread north of the main east-west route, Crown Street. We think that would be inappropriate and probably not supported by the retail market.

Other Strategic Planning

Other suggestions and comments in brief:

- We argue the case for a Visitor Centre (Anglo-Saxon etc?) at the Waterfront to give Ipswich a stronger pull as a tourist destination. Several small schemes won't compensate for this lack.
- We need a more radical Shared Space approach to designing cycle and pedestrian routes -- wider pavements accommodating pedestrians and cyclists. Specifically, the routes across the lock from the Waterfront to the town centre, and from the station up Princes Street to Greyfriars are uninviting; slow dangerous and ugly.

- Ipswich Village West: Assuming Ipswich Buses leave Constantine Road and the building is to be retained, why not offer it to Ipswich Transport Museum, and they could even reinstate the turning circle and have a tram running round it! Then the museum would be a town centre attraction rather than a suburban one
- Fison House, Princes Street: This should be retained as an employment site and the actual building retained. This is a distinctive office building by Ipswich's best modern architect, Birkin Haward. The concrete piloti and fenestration are particularly noteworthy.
- Provision of health services: it is a sound strategic move to place all hospital-type services at Heath Road. However, as the largest employment site in the Borough and the biggest traffic generator, much more work will have to be done to improve transport matters. It would be wise not to make strategic plans about GP services and health centres until the outcome of Lord Darzi's report into the delivery of Primary care services is clear for Ipswich.
- Site allocations for new housing. See our concern in our introductory letter about developing "every last plot".

[**Editor:** Some of the most obvious public anxieties about the Development Framework arise from the 61 different sites mentioned for possible development, ranging from 512 housing units at St Clement's Hospital grounds to as few as four units elsewhere. Some neighbours of these possible development sites have been taken aback to see notices put up nearby without their having been informed in other ways

However, some of these sites may not become available in any foreseeable future, while unspecified new ones may occur as 'windfall' sites. The naming of these 61 sites is clearly the Borough Council's attempt to get somewhere near the Government's target of 6,779 housing units required in Ipswich. Even so, with all these, plus the 3,450 built or building in the centre, the total would still be about 400 short!]

Recent Planning Applications

The Society's responses to these proposals:

85-87 Fore Street: new 3 & 4 storey building, accommodation for 58 students.

"This vacant site is at the heart of Ipswich's medieval core. It is surrounded by warehouses, merchants' homes, a pub and a church which are listed Grade I, II* and II. Clearly the new building must be very high quality, visually, functionally and in build standards.

"The proposal for students' accommodation is entirely appropriate. We believe that this second application fulfils the above criteria. Because of flood risk, living units on Fore Street have had to be raised to the level of the middle of the first floor of the Lord Nelson PH. This accounts partly for the height of the Fore Street elevation. However, it is now less than two metres higher than the pub and the same height as Minerva House to the east; the faade is broken by a cedar-clad gable.

Materials and palette are modern but will match the surroundings well.

Consideration of superimposed outlines on the street scene suggests that St Clement's church tower will be able to be seen from the quayside. We support this application"

19 Neptune Quay: revised part landscaping scheme

"This alteration of the original planning permission appears at first sight to improve the landscaping of the university courtyard and also of security management. However, on closer inspection it will

deprive the south-east entrance doors and the plant room doors of direct vehicular access from a relatively easy route from Coprolite Street to a more difficult route.

"If the University and its architects have changed their intentions of how the building is to be serviced, this should be made clear in the application. It will make traffic management hazardous in this area and thus should be modified."

73-81 St Matthew's Street, Alexander House: erection of 3 storey side addition and alterations to rear block for conversion of offices to student accommodation.

"We supported the previous application to convert this important building from offices to student accommodation. However, the addition of a further seven units has necessitated design changes which we feel are unacceptable. The loss of the camera obscura and its replacement by a perforated metal structure is the removal of a historic artifact built for the original owners, the Alexander family. The new addition is unworthy of the architect's previous changes and obscures the graceful curve at the west end of the building. We feel strongly this amendment to the original grant should be refused."

The Great White Horse Hotel: external and internal alterations to convert part of the hotel into two units

"We realise that the hotel appears to have limited appeal as retail units but we do not feel replacing the Georgian style windows on the Tavern Street faade will make the difference between success and failure, whilst it will materially damage the appearance of the building. We feel this part of the application should be refused, the remainder being acceptable".

The Corn Exchange: stone and brickwork repairing, removal of existing canopy, re-roofing, etc.

"We are delighted to see that the Borough Council continues to restore its original glory. The current scheme includes the removal of the late 1960s canopy over the entrance from King Street, with stone cleaning and restoration of some architectural ironwork. Whilst we are happy to see the removal of the canopy, we feel that further thought should be given to the protection of patrons of the Corn Exchange against the elements."

The outcome of previous applications we commented on:

- Gym and Trim, Lower Orwell Street -- planning permission was granted despite our criticisms.
- 34 Foundation Street -- planning permission was granted despite our two reservations.

Restoring Holywells Park

The Borough Council and Friends of Holywells Park group are preparing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund under their 'Parks for the People' programme to restore the park and develop it as an attractive facility. As usual in such bids, support from other organisations in the community can make quite a difference to the result. So the Chairman of our Society was delighted to be able to write enthusiastically as follows:

"Sadly the mansion house was demolished over 30 years ago, so let's not neglect what remains, i.e. the stable block and orangery, and develop them for further use. Historically, the ponds supported local business by supplying water to the former brewery at Cliff Quay and feature prominently in one of Gainsborough's paintings hanging in Ipswich's Christchurch Mansion.

"An excellent playground was installed in the park last year, bringing more youngsters on to the site. Therefore it makes sense to provide more facilities that parents and children can use nearby. A skateboard park perhaps? The area is quite densely populated along Cliff Lane then up to Landseer Road where older children lack amusement facilities. Staff will be needed to implement the vision and to maintain it, hopefully well beyond a five year period.

"It is good to see all these aspects included in the bid. That area of town is not the most wealthy and the success of this bid would make a major difference to the vicinity and the local inhabitants. It has our strongest support."

The SWISS Centre

For some members who haven't heard about it, the prospect of a 'SWISS Centre' in Ipswich might sound bizarre. It is in fact the ingenious name for the proposed new sixth form college, as we old-fashioned people might have put it, serving South-West Ipswich and South Suffolk. (Get it?) Anyway, the Society has written to Suffolk County Council to make these criticisms.

"We are delighted to see your proposals for the new centre; it will bring a welcome revolution for the education of our young people in the catchment areas involved. However, we do have a major concern for this site. We believe it should be in the Education Quarter on the Ipswich Waterfront. We make the following points in support of our argument:

"Transportation: The only mode of transport to access this site is road. Ipswich residents would not cycle out there and clearly there is no rail station. We accept there is a frequent bus service from the town centre, but none from any other part of Ipswich. The age of the students means they will not be attending for a standard school day which could be served by school buses at the start and end of the day. They will use regular transport and this in practice will mean motorised vehicles -- cars, or worse, two-wheelers. It is therefore logical, and planning for a sustainable future, to place it in the centre of the transport system.

"Infrastructure: We believe it is important that the SWISS Centre should be close to the Further Education College and University Campus Suffolk. There will be many obvious synergies that would be more readily developed if they were all in the same quarter.

"Local Plan: We understood that, in the adopted Ipswich Local Plan, Further Educational developments were to take place in the zoned Education Quarter.

"As this proposed development remains just outside the Borough boundary, it is not easy for us to influence your decision. We would, however, be grateful if you would let us know on what grounds it was decided to build it on the outskirts of the town and whether it remains possible to change it."

Town Lectures

On Thursdays, 1.00-1.50 pm at Museum Street Methodist Church. The remaining lectures are:

- 14 August -- John Blatchly on 'The Lost Great Houses of Ipswich'
- 9 October -- Isabel Clover on the Ipswich Charter Hangings
- 11 December -- John Field on 'Ipswich Port, Past, Present & Future'

Details in leaflets at Tourist Information Centre, etc.

Making the Most of Town

Michael Loveday is an international authority on urban regeneration. He has worked in a number of European countries, is a board member of the English Historic Towns Forum, of which our Society is a member, and closer to home he is Chief Executive of the Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) based in Norwich.

I think his talk to the Society on 9 January was not only interesting but one of the most important we have heard in recent years. So much so that I ended up with seven pages of detailed notes. The best way to do justice to this mass of stimulating ideas is to set some of them out in almost note form.

One of the most crucial aspects of successful regeneration is to concentrate on what makes a town special and promote that as much as possible -- to avoid the increasingly common accusation that it is a 'clone town'.

Heritage buildings which do so much to make a town unique should not be just 'done up' and reserved in aspic but continuously maintained and used.

'Heritage' is not just to interest posh people, nor to promote social inclusion, nor sadly to please young people (so many of whom think it's uncool!) -- it is about driving the economy.

Visitors to the UK don't come for our beaches, but to see and experience our heritage.

The heritage aspects of a town need to be shaped up and made digestible. For example in Norwich their twelve best buildings are promoted as 'The Great and The Good', their 32 medieval churches are the 'String of Pearls'.

The public realm of streets and squares should look pleasant and be used creatively. For example a road might be closed for a special occasion or for other purposes. Traffic signs and paving should be subject to joined up planning and not look like the results of different authorities' work.

Theatres, cinemas, the football ground are all part of a town's appeal. Blue Plaques, too!

Heritage Open Days can play a big part in appreciating and promoting one's town.

Making the most of one's town is a "serious business so get business people onto it". (We could have said that the Ipswich Business Improvement Districts scheme, BIDS, is doing so.)

Mr Loveday ended by suggesting one could ask if a town is getting better. The answer is NO if transport is poor, heritage is seen as "pepper potting" and things are done to people rather than getting them involved. The answer is YES if the town emphasises its uniqueness while learning

from good practice elsewhere, sees preservation as a positive good, is community based and will take risks.

In Town with Michael Loveday

Earlier in the day before his evening talk, some of our Executive Committee members met Mr Loveday at the station and with him walked along Princes Street, then via Queen Street, St Nicholas and St Peter's Streets to the Waterfront for lunch. In the afternoon we returned to the town centre via Fore Street.

It was fascinating to hear the reactions of an experienced town planner who hadn't visited Ipswich for a few years. Impressed by the developing Waterfront, he nevertheless noted how it still seems detached from the centre by Star Lane in particular. His ideal solution would have been to sink the road level by 'cut and cover' methods, partly paying for it by selling off the land recovered for surface use (although the major sewer put in when Star Lane was created in its present form makes this almost impossible).

But unprompted, he thought Star Lane should be widened and made two-way, with Key Street and College Street used for public transport (i.e. what the Ipswich consultants had recommended). He saw the need for Princes Street to be more pedestrian friendly, especially for visitors arriving by rail and being confronted by the maze of underpasses at Civic Drive. He noted some of the town's independent shops but felt it would be very desirable to have a lot more, the troublesome Mint Quarter being a possible location.

We enjoyed our walks. It's often enlightening to view one's home town through a visitor's eyes even visitors without the background that Mr Loveday has. Many thanks to him for the whole day.

Neil Salmon

IBC and Climate Change

Readers of the Newsletter may be interested to learn that IBC has created two new roles relating to local climate change issues. The Climate Change Officer's role will be seeking to lessen the environmental impact of IBC's operations, and my role as Assistant Climate Change Officer will be to engage with and involve the Ipswich community. Local Authorities are increasingly seen as the mechanism for leading action at local level.

For general information, the following sites contain much about climate change, how you may be contributing to its effects, what you can do about it, and what help may be available.

- www.direct.gov.uk This is the Government's web site for all public services, and the Environment and Greener Living section covers all aspects of climate change.
- Suffolk Energy Action Link (SEAL) via www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk For efficiency advice and information on grants in Suffolk.
- CRed Suffolk -- Focusing on the simpler actions and pledges for householders to reduce carbon emissions, the site also offers the downloadable booklet '50 tips for householders' and the Suffolk Climate Action Plan.
- The Energy Saving Trust (EST) -- www.energysavingtrust.org.uk Information on small changes we can make as individuals, choosing energy efficient appliances, a free home

energy check facility and information on community action taking place across the country. There is also information about grants, and contact details for the EST Advice Centre Anglia.

- [Defra](#) and [Environment Agency](#) These two web sites contain a wealth of information at a more scientific/technical level.

If you have any specific enquiries regarding climate change or action you wish to take, and cannot find what you need at these sites, then please contact me and I can try and put you in touch with the relevant organisation. My contact details are Catherine.booty@ipswich.gov.uk or 01473 432091.

Catherine Booty, Assistant Climate Change Officer, IBC

A Late Letter

A late letter from Ann Petherick squeezed in here!

"How can anyone in Ipswich -- or anywhere else -- seriously believe that building more roads reduces congestion? The point has been proved so many times that increasing road capacity, whether in town or outside, generates additional journeys."

Curson Lodge Restored



Curson Lodge

Curson Lodge on the corner of St Nicholas Street and Silent Street was a very popular building during the Heritage Open days. So it was not surprising that a large audience came to hear more about it on 12 December. The Society is very grateful to our three speakers who between them covered all aspects of the work done to restore this valuable part of the town's heritage.

Charles Tracey dealt with the history of the whole building including the part which is now the College Bookshop on the Silent Street side. Begun in about 1500, it was probably a large guest house/inn, "semi-grand" as Charles said. Over the years many structural changes have been made. It is hard to imagine but evidence shows there was a great projecting timber porch in the present bookshop frontage. Visitors would have entered a screens passage and then turned left into a smallish but grand hall. The Silent Street frontage was jettied all along.

IBC's Head of Conservation and Design, Bob Kindred, spoke about how the building was saved by its early listing in 1951 -- part Listed II* and part Grade II. He explained how a major structural problem with a great central chimney would have been a deterrent to any future commercial buyer. Grant aid from English Heritage was sought but the criteria had changed so that only buildings "at risk" qualified. And this wasn't "at risk" -- IBC conservation service has been at considerable pains to see that historical buildings in Ipswich are sound. But getting English Heritage to upgrade the whole complex to II* meant that £45,000 was finally awarded towards the cost of full restoration so that the Ipswich Building Preservation Trust could proceed.

The Trust was able to appoint conservation architect, Hilary Brightman, our third speaker. She described how high scaffolding and a temporary roof allowed the whole structure to be seen for the first time in recent years, some of the valleys and jetties being otherwise inaccessible. The problem chimney stack gets wider as it goes up and sits on a brick vaulted cellar which needed to be strengthened with a steel joist. Decorative details of wall paintings and 18th century wall paper have been retained and a 17th century ceiling with roses has been carefully preserved by a specialist. Ironically but properly, "you can't see what the money has been spent on", she said. But two spacious flats have been created upstairs.

As all good Ipswich Society members know, this was not Thomas Wolsey's birthplace (that was just across the street) but it was a building Wolsey would have seen. We hope Ipswich Building Preservation Trust will be able to sell it successfully soon.

Neil Salmon

Suffolk Local History Council

Suffolk Local History Council co-ordinates and disseminates information relating to county-wide local history societies, local genealogical societies and other societies which, like our own, have a wider remit, but which incorporate an interest in history and heritage. A quarterly journal, Suffolk Review, and a Newsletter are published. The former contains articles on a wide range of Suffolk interests, past and present; the latter includes details of 'happenings' at the three Suffolk Record Offices (Ipswich, Bury, Lowestoft), local 'Bookshelf' reviews, short articles on the wider national local history scene, and much more!

One of the main events of the SLHC calendar is the annual local history weekend at Belstead House Adult residential College near Ipswich. The next one, to be held Friday 2 May to Sunday 4 May 2008 is on the theme 'Suffolk Buildings -- Castle to Cottage' with individual speakers and a visit to one of the county's notable historic monuments.

Membership of the SLHC is open to individuals as well as groups and societies. Application should be made to the Hon Secretary, SLCH, 2 Wharfedale Road, Ipswich, IP1 4JP. You can also visit the *SLCH website* for more enlightenment.

Snippets (1)

Flood Barrier

The Environment Agency has been given more money by Central Government because the risks of flooding have become very readily apparent. So the prospects for the Ipswich flood barrier have improved. The initial cost of constructing the barrier across the New Cut near Felaw Maltings is said to be £3.5m. Its purpose is to protect low lying areas like Ipswich village from tidal surges.

End of the road

Cranes have agreed to sell their Nacton Road site for redevelopment. At present 400 people work there, where there used to be over 1000. Cranes do intend to lease it back for a couple of years while they look for other premises, but that may not be in Ipswich. So is this the end of large scale manufacturing in our town? IBC want the site to remain an industrial zone to provide jobs. Ikea has apparently expressed some interest in using the site -- if so, there would be jobs, and there would be traffic!

Theatrical tensio

Eastern Angles theatre company was threatened with a 50% cut in Arts Council grant. Thankfully its value to Ipswich and the many rural places the company visits was finally recognised and much of its funding restored. Not so lucky was the City of London Sinfonia, worthy and loyal providers of Ipswich Civic Concerts, nor Compass Theatre from Sheffield whose (unfashionable?) productions of 'straight plays' have been so impressive at the Wolsey.

Cleaner No

It's good to see that many of the telecommunications boxes have been re-painted in a sage green slightly mottled surface which we hope may deter graffiti artists/vandals who regard these fixtures as their territory, and whose 'work' took years to obliterate.

Worth a letter

Ken Nichols' letter in our last issue may have done some good. He complained about the public services which dig up but don't replace paving bricks. His specific target was the lower end of St Stephen's lane. That has now been repaired. Not sure whether it was soon after the letter was published or a coincidence.

Two churches re-born

Wonderful news that St Peter's should open in May as new 250 seater auditorium for concerts and other artistic activities. Thanks are due mostly to the initiative and drive of the Hospital Band. More volunteers would be welcome to greet visitors when the church is open. Contact Beryl Jary (tel 726229)

St Lawrence is also expected to open in the next two months as a valuable community centre in the heart of the town. Amongst its users will be Age Concern who will be able to reinstate their much missed tea room

We wish both venues every success.

Legacy of 'Black Sheep'

It has become fashionable in books plays and films to tell the story backwards from the end to the beginning. Seldom does this seem justified and successful. But it certainly works in 'The Cobbold Elliston Affair' by Sandra Berry.

The author's brother found a packet of letters written in 1901 from Buenos Aires. They concerned a young English widow with five daughters all under the age of eight who had been left almost penniless. As her recently dead husband was Frederick Cobbold, she sought help from the Cobbold family, her wealthiest relations. Amazingly by today's standards perhaps, she was turned down by amongst others Felix Thornley Cobbold, one of Ipswich's greatest benefactors, who presented Christchurch Mansion to the town.

It seems that the reason for this callous treatment was that the indignant family presented a problem. Frederick's father, Arthur had "married beneath him" in fact had only married after his partner had produced ten children in a house in Wykes Bishop Street not far from Cliff House, the Cobbold family home close to their brewery.

Sandra Berry, great-niece of Frederick's youngest daughter, has explored all these complications as an engaging detective of family history. Her book is well illustrated with period photographs from Victorian times almost up to the present day, and from countries across the world where the various children settled. It is an intriguing record of the Cobbold family and of social and moral aspects of English life in which Ipswich was probably typical.

'The Cobbold Elliston Affair' is produced by No.11 Publishing: PO Box 459, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 9DH

Letters to the Editor

The History of the Quakers in Ipswich from Robin Hawes

I am interested in most aspects of Ipswich life and history, but my particular interest is in the history of the Quakers, the Society of Friends, of which I am a long-standing member. I regret that I did not

get some pictures of the original Meeting House of 1700-1790, now of course demolished, with the site being redeveloped after archaeological investigations of the multi-layered history.

I wonder if you might post a note in the next Newsletter, asking whether there is anyone at all interested in the Quaker history of Ipswich, references to which have appeared with the anti-slavery campaign, and the picture of the home of Richard Dykes Alexander in St Matthew's Street. Many years ago I did some researches myself, but naturally I am not in an easy position to use the record Office where all the Quaker records are deposited. If there is anyone interested I would like to make contact perhaps with a view to producing some kind of publication.

(Editor: Mr Hawes wrote to express interest in joining a possible history group within The Ipswich Society, for which sadly there were insufficient numbers to make this viable. He could be contacted on the subject of Quaker history at 12 Wellgarth, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0RR)

**Peter Barefoot
from Julia Booth**

Many thanks for publishing the tribute to my father, Peter Barefoot, written by Roger Gillis, in your recent Newsletter. It is really gratifying to read such a thoughtful and fitting appreciation of his work, capturing so well the spirit of his approach to design.

We are also very grateful to the Society for all the work you did to arrange for the Blue Plaque commemorating our grandfather, Leslie Barefoot, in The Walk. Although our father's style was very different from his father's, he had a lot of respect for his father, and I know he enjoyed the photo-shoot in July.

**More in Sorrow than in Anger
from John Fairclough**

I find it almost incredible that 'The Museum' page (page 13) of the Ipswich tourist brochure 'visit Ipswich and District 2008' contains, with reference to Colchester Castle, the sentence "The Castle Museum takes you back 2,000 years to roman times when Boudicca ruled from Colchester, the capital of Roman Britain."

I am sure most members are aware that:

1. Boudica was Queen of the Iceni (even if only briefly queen regnant after the death of Prasutagus c.AD 60).
2. Colchester was a Trinovantian and/or Catuvellaunian centre -- never capital of the Iceni.
3. Boudica led the greatest rebellion against the Romans, which nearly drove them out of Britain in AD 62. In the process she destroyed Colchester.
4. By definition 'Roman Britain' was ruled by the Roman Emperor.

If our own Borough Council cannot get the facts right, how can we expect others to take our local history and heritage seriously? Despite the page being headed 'Colchester & Ipswich Museums', I am assured that our joint museum service had no sight of this material before it was published. This is a sad commentary on how our museums are viewed within the Borough Council.

Casting my mind back to the early 1970s when Pat Butler held the honorable office of Curator of Museums for the County Borough of Ipswich, I wonder what she would have said to the Town Clerk if anything similar had happened. Those who remember her determination to defend the interest of Ipswich Museums will know what I mean.