

The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2008

ISSUE 170

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High Commendations for
 St Joseph's College Junior School (top)
 and Grosvenor Memorial Hall (below)
 (see Awards on pages 4-5)

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Chairman on Current Affairs

The work of the Society is continuing apace, much like the ever changing building scene in the town. Recent statements by John Lewis and Waitrose have announced a big expansion in their store's empires specifically targeted at towns which are important but not major in national terms. Ipswich must fit the description very well and it must make the possibility of these stores coming to Ipswich more realistic. There will be a supermarket (together with housing, retail and a hotel) on the Civic Centre site and a recent statement by Government that stores which are not already present in a town should be favoured can only be good news. A department store is to be the anchor on the Mint Quarter behind the Co-op, and one might hope for a John Lewis here. All of this however and the developments along the Waterfront and elsewhere, will be affected by the reported slowdown in business and property activity.

This certainly applies to what is perhaps the prime site in the town centre -- The Great White Horse. It seems odd we can't find a permanent use for this grand hotel building when we are planning many other hotels all around the Waterfront, but I am told the hotel suffers from its central location (access) as well as its age and Listing. Let us hope for its future.

There are of course a number of other prominent retail stores lying idle, most particularly the old Littlewoods store in Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre. These places, however, are not eyesores. We do have a number of these in town -- shops long boarded up and often covered in graffiti -- sad sights in our lovely town. The old museum building in Museum Street has long been in this state since it ceased to be a dance school. However the good news is that there is currently a plan to convert it into a restaurant with some serious names supporting it. All the shops along the west side of Upper Orwell Street are of course awaiting the development of the Mint Quarter. But there is no such excuse for Bar Fontaine at the top of Northgate Street/St Margaret's Plain which the Society has been giving attention to for some considerable time.

The university site on the Waterfront is now four storeys high. Last week there was the first meeting to unveil what Phase II would look like, further along the Waterfront. It is early days but the architect was very open about his ideas and keen to listen to comments. It all looks very promising and the Society will continue to monitor it closely as it develops.

A "mission of safety" -- the Society has recently taken responsibility for saving some very important etched glass panels by the internationally famous John Hutton whose designs are incorporated in buildings all over the world. At home he has work in the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford on Avon, Coventry Cathedral, Newcastle on Tyne and Plymouth. He designed and made three panels for the then newly built Fison House in Princes Street. These represented Roman deities -- Ceres goddess of agriculture, Pomona goddess of fruit trees and Flora goddess of flowers. Ceres has entirely disappeared, Flora is intact, and Pomona is broken but can be salvaged. The Society has been working with the Borough and the Museums to save and store these gems whilst thought can be given to their future home.

I hope many of you use our street market and may remember the Society pressing for it to be enlarged into Lloyds Avenue. Well this is happening, albeit slowly, and the magnificent new bakery stall there is well worth a visit. Ultimately we hope to see the market expand the whole length of Lloyds Avenue -- linking Crown Street to the Cornhill and Giles Square.

Our website is currently undergoing a revamp. Websites (like notice boards) require great effort to keep them up to date. Ed Broom remains our webmaster but is now working with Ken Wilson and Caroline Markham to keep the site right up to date, fresh and lively.

May I end by urging you to put the date, 27 June, in your diaries, for we are arranging another river trip on the Orwell Lady. Our last river trip was a huge success and there have been many demands for another. Su Marsden is responsible for the arrangements.

Jack Chapman

The Society's Annual Awards

The Awards Evening is usually the most interesting single event in the Society's year. I think it should always be held even if none of the nominated projects is deemed worthy of any level of award. Members like to hear what our panel of judges have said about recently completed new schemes in Ipswich. If the quality is poor in any particular year, let it be said! But this year there were seventeen nominations from members and most were well worth considering.

Chris Wiltshire once again lit up the evening with his perceptive and witty comments as he presented the photographs of all the nominations on screen. In introducing him Jack Chapman said that Chris sometimes "ruffles a few feathers" -- and had leave to do so! Yes, there was a little ruffling, as you may see below, but it keeps listeners on the edge of their seats.

In a brief introduction Chris said that the sheer volume of building in Ipswich was almost bewildering and the quality often mediocre, even though standards overall had improved. In the 1980s the Society felt grateful if the new buildings weren't terrible, whereas today we are spared "the really awful". However, he had a personal bete noir -- huge banners that stay up for ages advertising new building projects.

So, these are the seventeen nominations which I list in full for members who weren't present, together with a tiny sample of Wiltshire wisdom.

- Grimwade Memorial Hall, Fore Hamlet -- conversion of old building and new extension for housing; impressive landmark saved; the new complements the old; good workmanship.
- Cabmen's Shelter, Christchurch Park -- major restoration of shelter originally built for Cornhill; superb attention to detail with new carvings.
- Jeain Residential Home , 322 Colchester Road -- very skilful extension which is hard to spot.
- Pemberton House, Curriers Lane, new building for SCC Community Education -- quite exciting but perhaps too much going on in a small space.
- Orwells Furniture, 497-9 Wherstead Road -- made by this local company for own use; cleverly built around existing structure; marvellous gate but set back and may not be much noticed.
- St Joseph's College Junior School, Birkfield Drive -- four new classrooms in slightly curved block; lots of good ideas; quirky and joyous.
- Curson Lodge, 45-47 St Nicholas Street -- restoration of important buildings. Successful compromise between restoration and conservation.

- St Mary at the Elms Church, Elm Street -- three new niche sculptures; welcome consolidation of the niches and sculptures; perhaps the flush block-like sculptures overflow, the niches.
- Orwell Quay, Persimmon's major development of flats, houses and restaurant -- flats built on an impressive terrace and interestingly not parallel with dock; ubiquitous "ginger" materials on front; drab barracks-like housing at rear.
- New house at 2 Tomline Road -- a brave statement; something different, but a "sad orphan".
- AXA Building, Civic Drive -- recladding of office block in pale grey; pleasant and inoffensive.
- Ipswich Central, Franciscan Way -- recladding of St Francis Tower; tidies it up.
- Ipaxis, Wolsey Street, new apartments -- a big scheme with some striking elements; "world's finest collection of downpipes"; ground floor car parking visually "insensitive to pedestrians".
- Fonnereau Gardens, Fonnereau Road, former hospital into flats -- pleasant use of properties but like a complex of buildings nailed together.
- Former airport terminal, Ravenswood, residential conversion -- "a sad place because we lost an airport and left Norwich and Cambridge to provide it"; front on Nacton Road more successful.
- Foxgrove Gardens, Foxhall Road, new gates -- brightens up the area; whimsical.
- Mariners' Court, Wherstead Road, new apartments -- honest building; good cornices and eaves.

The awards were then announced and our President, the Mayor, Councillor Inga Lockington, presented the framed certificates to the various winners as follows.

- AN AWARD OF DISTINCTION for Curson Lodge, St Nicholas Street. Certificates were presented to Ipswich Building Preservation Trust (client), Hilary Brightman (design), R G Carter Ipswich Ltd (contractor).
- AN AWARD OF DISTINCTION for the Cabmen's Shelter, Christchurch Park. Ipswich Borough Council was client, designer and contractor.
- A HIGH COMMENDATION for Grimwade Memorial Hall, Fore Hamlet. Braceforce Properties Ltd (client and contractor), Wincer Kievenaar (design).
- A HIGH COMMENDATION for St Joseph's College Junior School. St Joseph's College (client), Wincer Kievenaar (design), R G Carter Ipswich Ltd (contractor).
- A COMMENDATION for Orwells Furniture, Wherstead Road. Orwells Furniture (client and contractor), KLH Architects Ltd (design).
- A COMMENDATION for decorative steel gates, Foxgrove Gardens, Foxhall Road. Barratt Eastern Counties (client), Paul Richardson (designer and contractor).

Jack Chapman thanked all concerned, especially Chris Wiltshire, Tony Hill who took most of the photographs and Russell Nunn who organised the nominations and judging. People then adjourned to the restaurant for drinks, nibbles and animated conversation.

Neil Salmon

Recent Planning Matters

The Society's response to recent planning applications:

Timber storage yard, Toller Road: erection of 6 storey block of 20 apartments.

"At present our main concern is that this is a change of use from employment to residential. There appears to be sufficient apartments in the planning pipeline for the market, whereas employment land is starting to run out. It is conveniently close to the outer docks and, for residents, it would be an isolated block surrounded by high industrial use... If it is decided to allow change of use we have no objections to the design."

"Island site", Greyfriars Road: 4 storey block of 14 flats

The Society feels that a tall development on this site is going to gradually enclose St Peter's Church as a preserved kernel surrounded by big massy modern buildings. It is vital that an absolute limit of four storeys is set here and it is made absolutely clear that no increase would be granted in the event that the site plus planning permission is sold on.

Gym and Trim, Lower Orwell St: 3-4 storey block of student accommodation

"This further proposal might at first seem more reasonable as the new building occupies a lower proportion of the area available. It is obviously conceived to "fit in" with the neighbouring buildings. However there are no early 19th century terraces in the area... The addition of false chimneys is the crowning touch... Their only use would be to attach satellite dishes! Are our students to be brought up with such a terrible level of design, thought and inspiration? We would ask that the developer returns to the drawing board."

1 Benezet Street: 7 town houses of 3 and 4 storeys

"When the Society reluctantly conceded that the existing buildings were not suitable for conversion to residential property... we did not expect the replacement of buildings to reach a satisfactory level of design... It really is a very poor pastiche which maximises the number of residences on the site whilst keeping to the building regulations with very small buildings. The Committee will be doing Ipswich a favour if they reject this and ask the developers to get a properly executed architectural design." (IBC approved design.)

85-87 Fore Street: erection of 3 and 4 storey building for student accommodation

"This proposal is very interesting in how it deals with the flood risk assessment by having the ground floor of near two storey height, and using it as offices and stores. We hope that the space will be found to store students' belongings securely during the vacation, thus saving them from being transported from home every term. We fear that on the Fore Street facade the height to the first floor will play badly adjacent to the Lord Nelson. We would ask that the architects devise methods to ameliorate this before permission is granted."

Co-op garage Burrell Road: change of use from vehicle sales and filling station to temporary surface car park with 130 spaces

"The Society objects in principle to any increase in car parking in the town centre as it only serves to increase the number of cars, causing more congestion, CO2 production and impeding public transport. If the owners of the site are so undecided as to how to develop it, perhaps they should be

asked to donate the profits to traffic improvement schemes. In any event, permission should be granted for the shortest possible time."

34 Foundation Street: erection of 4 storey office extension

"We have no objections to an office building on this site. However, we think the design utilising metal cladding is inappropriate in this area; further, the fenestration is unsatisfactory.

150 Norwich Road: installation of wrought iron gates

"We would like to congratulate the owners of this fine house on their efforts to regenerate the entrance with well designed metalwork. It will be an example to the community how this sort of work improves the townscape for all, not just the owners. It is particularly important that this type of work is carried out in this difficult area."

Development Framework

Strategic Planning for Ipswich

The manner in which a planning authority's strategic plan is produced is changing. After the prolonged labour that produced the 235 page 2001 Ipswich Local Plan in one process, we now look at various topics such as housing, employment, transport, etc. area by area whilst retaining an overall Ipswich perspective. All of this is driven by the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, at which the Society gave evidence.

The next step is the Local Development Framework for inner Ipswich. The Borough Council's Executive Committee has produced many documents including its preferred options:

1. The Council plans to meet Ministers' housing targets by allocating land for 6,800 new homes for Ipswich by 2021 to ensure the overall target of 15,400 new homes is met.
2. 35% of new developments to be affordable homes; at least 65% of those for rent.
3. The Crane's site in south-east Ipswich becomes a Strategic Employment Site.
4. The creation of a green ring around the outside of the town.
5. All major development have at least 10% green space.
6. No more out-of-town retail parks within the Borough boundary.
7. A Wet Dock crossing is supported, and transport links between the railway station, the Waterfront and the town centre will be provided.
8. The Council believes a possible northern by-pass outside the Borough boundary should be properly considered.

This and much else can be viewed at the Town Hall One-Stop Customer Service Centre or online at www.ipswich.gov.uk and click on "Mapping the Future" at the bottom right hand. The options will be well publicised in The Angle and all media in the New Year. There will be six public consultation meetings and the Strategic Planning Team will make a presentation at all five forums. A summary of the proposals will be discussed at two meetings of the Society's Executive Committee so that we can formulate the Society's considered reply. Members' input in any form will be welcome.

Mike Cook

Enthusiasts for Local History?

The Executive Committee of our Society has recently been discussing the lack of an Ipswich historical society -- a grouping whose interest would lie in exploration, whether individually or by collective ventures, of the manifold aspects of Suffolk's county town.

There are, of course, well established bodies like the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and the Suffolk Records Society whose scholarly remit embraces Ipswich, and specialised interest groups have increasingly come to supplement and to augment their work on Ipswich -- the Archaeological Trust, The Maritime Trust, the Ipswich branch of the Family History Society, the Transport Museum and so on. Among this input, that of our own Ipswich Society should by no means be discounted. Our concern for civic amenity and environmental advantage continually engages us in historical enquiry.

Engaging in research at all levels in Suffolk's local history has never been more widely pursued than it currently is, and thriving local societies abound in our many communities, which accommodate all levels of aptitude and the whole range of interests and enthusiasms.

Ipswich has not always lacked such a body. As far back as 1947 a branch of the Historical Association (a national body) was formed in the town designated The Ipswich Historical Society, and flourished to a greater or lesser extent until 1982. Its demise was occasioned by the advancing years of the membership, a drop in attendances at its lectures and courses (which were open to all) and perhaps no less pertinently the limitations of school history syllabuses, with very little take up of what the IHS offered.

The thinking of the Executive Committee is that if there were sufficient interest within our membership there could be formed a history group as a sub-group of our Society. The principle on which the 1947 IHS was launched continues to be relevant -- that "while lectures and talks are necessary to raise awareness, reliance should be placed on more active participation in local research and study". If, on the evidence of our many community based local history societies, we were able to incorporate all ages, levels of aptitude, and almost an infinite range of interest and enthusiasms, it seems hard to believe that such an Ipswich venture could not similarly thrive. Interested members should contact the editor initially, and not the writers of this note, who while still active and ready to participate as "joiners-in", consider themselves too long in the tooth to organise such a group. The Society needs those active, enthusiastic history buffs that it knows are out there. Roll up, roll up!

Bill & Ruth Serjeant

Helping at St Peter's

The Society has received a request from the Ipswich Hospital Band to help them open St Peter's to public visitors. As most of you will know, the Band with a great deal of effort and support from other organisations succeeded in winning a substantial award from the Heritage Lottery Fund to transform St Peter's into a Centre for Music, Arts and Heritage.

St Peter's is arguably the most important church in Ipswich because of the historicity of its site, its celebrated font, its association with Wolsey and its architecture. It will be magnificent after this restoration. In addition to facilities for rehearsals and concerts, there will be a permanent exhibition of the history of the church and parish, and other displays which may include the Millennium Wall Hangings and the Society's own information boards.

The Society would very much like to help by manning the church for one half day a week probably starting in May. In that case we should need to have a Society co-ordinator, who would draw up a rota of people (and reserves) to be present in the church, and of course a good number of volunteers. The more there are, the more the duties can be spread out. Helpers would need to keep an eye on the displays, talk to visitors and be prepared to deal with sales of booklets. They would not be responsible for opening or locking up the church.

Members who would like to help are asked to contact Beryl Jary initially on 726229.

Blue Plaques: John Glyde

We are soon to have printed a new brochure which features the plaques we have installed around the town. It is time for an update since the newcomers earlier this year.

We have tried to make the new brochure attractive and colourful, using photographs in the process. However, one of the important worthies we have celebrated in the town cannot be fully included in the publication because there seems to be no existing image of the man!

John Glyde, the radical thinker and social historian who is remembered in Eagle Street, has been researched at the Record Office, his name has been swept through Google and other internet search engines but all to no avail. If you can point us in the right direction to find an image it would neatly complete our task. Please contact **Tony Marsden** via the Executive Committee. Also, contact us as we continue to draw upon suggestions for celebrating the famous men and women of our town. We would love to have more.

Corporate Members' Event

On Tuesday 25 September, we held a hospitality event for our corporate members at the John Russell Gallery in Wherry Lane on the Waterfront. There was an excellent turn out of fifty-two members and potential members. It was an opportunity for corporate members to meet the executive committee and each other. Our Chairman, Jack Chapman, gave a short talk about the aims and objectives of the Society and Neil Salmon spoke briefly about the Newsletter.

We are very grateful to Tony Coe for allowing us to use his gallery for this event. It was a fabulous venue and allowed us to view the exhibition he was holding at the time of John Brunson's etchings and paintings. Everyone present seemed to enjoy the evening, and we hope to be able to host similar events in the future.

Midsummer Cruise

A future date for your diaries, and open to all members is our next purely social event. We have chartered the Orwell Lady for an evening cruise to Harwich on Friday, 27 June (so quite close to Midsummer!). Full details and information about tickets will appear in the April Newsletter.

Su Marsden

Giles: Ipswich Cartoonist

For a number of years I have been researching local links with Giles and I have identified around 60 cartoons which show scenes or have some other local connection. A similar number of drawings and cartoons, etc. exist which Giles produced for local groups and individuals.

This research may lead to a book or, at the very least end up in the Suffolk Record Office for anyone to see. Although I have spoken to many local people, there may be other links I have not discovered. I should be pleased to hear from anyone who has a personal drawing by Giles, a copy of which could be added to the collection, or has an anecdote or knows of an incident which led to one of Giles's published cartoons.

John Field

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Snippets

Two/three fine buildings?

The British Council for Offices has named Grafton House the best new office block in the Midlands and East Anglia -- a result which may surprise some of its earlier critics. With Endeavour House across the Road and the Crown Court next door, Ipswich has a worthy trio. But how will the first two be used in the future? The court house can always rely on users!

"Beyond the Horizon"

This is the appropriate name for the imaginatively designed 12m long glass panel by York-based Dan Savage. Installed on Orwell Quay in October, the work commemorates Suffolk's role in the founding of Jamestown Virginia in 1607. It will be seen by more people regularly when the rest of Orwell Quay is developed.

Mint Quarter

There's still a hole in the middle of town. The current developers who teamed up with NCP two years ago admit the failure to re-build here has affected Upper Orwell Street and now Upper Brook Street. Please get on with it.

Two Historical Exhibitions

Congratulations to the creators of the Clarkson and Gosnold exhibitions at the Museum and Mansion respectively. We hope they've been seen by many, especially young people. Strange to think that when we older people were at school little was popularly known about these hugely important pioneers.

Your Committee and Events

Evening Events at 7.30pm

- 13 Feb -- "Suffolk Coastline" by Mark Mitchells (Museum Street Church)
- 12 Mar -- "Dance East" by its Director, Assis Carreiro (Museum Street Church)
- 24 April -- Annual General Meeting at Ipswich School Little Hall

Members' Outings

- 28 Feb -- Orwell Park Observatory Nacton
- 5 Apr -- Eton College tour and boat trip on the Thames
- 6 May -- "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" plus coach tour of City of London, West End and Docklands
- 14 June -- Visit to Norwich, hosted by The Norwich Society
- 27 June -- Evening cruise as far as Harwich on the Orwell Lady
- 23 July -- Bedfordshire -- the Chilterns Gateway and Dunstable Priory.
- 6 Aug -- Guided tour of BBC TV Centre, Shepherd's Bush