

Issue 187 Newsletter Apr 2012



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Editorial: The Society & the Future

At our January Executive Committee meeting Jack Chapman announced that he was resigning as Chairman owing to continuing ill health. A well deserved tribute to Jack's contribution to the Society is on page 9. John Norman, equally well known to members, steps up from Vice-Chairman to Acting Chairman until the AGM.

The Ipswich Star is leading a welcome campaign to boost the future and the reputation of the town. The Society was represented at the Beacon Town inaugural conference which John Norman writes about on page 14. One of the greatest needs for the town's prospects is for the town centre to be linked by sensitive and varied development to the Waterfront. This has long been advocated by the Society and it is an aspiration clearly shared by IBC, Ipswich Central and the local press. The more the general public is made aware of this vision - and the reasons for it - the better. But success will depend largely on those with the money to invest in such developments. And thinking of investments, the best recent news for Ipswich is that University Campus Suffolk has bought the land between Neptune Marina flats and the University's new James Hehir Building. Various private proposals for building on this site have come and gone because of the recession but it is a natural site for the University's enlargement in due course and should contribute to its being one of the most attractive Higher Education campuses in the country.

Hold fast to the town centre!

You might think it is obsessive to focus again on the town centre when there are so many other matters which interest The Ipswich Society. However for me, and I hope many others, the town centre is in a way the town. We say "I'm going to town" or "into town" or "down town". We don't need to say "I'm going down to the town centre." Doesn't this habitual speech indicate how we gravitate to the centre? (Especially so in Ipswich where our location at the head of the estuary means that almost all roads naturally lead downhill to the centre.)

At least, that's how it's been so far. But will it last? In most parts of the country, out-of-town superstores and business parks pull in other directions. And now there is the growing popularity of internet shopping. I wonder whether town centres in the day time will have to be kept going by Senior Citizens using their bus passes, and women (of all ages!) doing their 'comparative shopping' (i.e. mostly for clothes) in a largely man-free zone!

Thankfully there seems to be some realisation of what could be lost. The Mary Portas review achieved some publicity in December and her recommendations (see page 5) may have some influence - although without legislation they'll be easy to ignore or forget. In Ipswich, the Master Plan drawn up by IBC and Ipswich Central (Pages 6-7) shows awareness of what's needed, although its emphasis is heavily on retailing rather than a holistic vision of how a town centre could be an attraction. Perhaps the biggest boost would come from more people living in or close to the town centre. The Master Plan does indicate residential uses for the eastern half of the 'Mint Quarter' and parts of the proposed 'Merchant Quarter'. Living in a town centre has long been unfashionable, but human beings are capable of reversing trends over time - in this case, if the right kinds of housing are built, and if motoring becomes more expensive and, above all, if the town centre is attractive in a variety of ways.

Neil Salmon

AGM, Lectures & Events

Annual General Meeting and Lecture

University Campus Suffolk, Wednesday, 25 April, 7.30 pm

We are pleased to be able hold our AGM again in the Ground Floor Lecture Room at DCS. We aim to make the business part of the evening efficient but less rushed than last year's, when some members who wanted to speak felt that there was insufficient opportunity to do so. We shall then hear a talk by Mr Alistair Lang who, after a distinguished career in banking, is now Chief Executive of Birketts Solicitors. He is a member of the CBI Eastern Regional Council and was actively involved in the successful renewal campaign for the Ipswich Business Improvement District. Following the talk, The Future of Ipswich, there will be opportunities for a chat over wine, soft drinks and nibbles.

Advance notice of a Winter Lecture on Friday, 12 October 2012

Griff Rhys-Jones is the President of Civic Voice, the national organisation which our Society belongs to. We are pleased to report that he has agreed to talk to us about the importance of Civic Voice and our support for it. He is well known as an informative and entertaining speaker on this subject which has become close to his heart. The talk will probably take place in the atrium of Suffolk New College and there will be wine and food, and possibly a charge for admission. The date is fixed but these other arrangements remain to be confirmed.

Birkin Haward (1912-2002): architect, artist and antiquary

Town Lecture by Martin Harrison, 10 May, 1.00-1.50 pm, Museum Street Methodist Church. Birkin's career as an architect was mostly devoted to his work in and around Ipswich. His buildings often showed an imaginative use of technical innovations. Sadly, some have been lost or are under threat but many still remain in excellent use. He was also a talented painter and draughtsman as can be seen in his thoroughly researched books on Suffolk churches and stained glass. This lecture should be a welcome reappraisal of a fine artist in the widest sense. He was also a founder member and a good friend of The Ipswich Society.

Ipswich in Bloom

You are invited to enter your garden in the 2012 Ipswich in Bloom Competition. The entry brochures can be obtained from the Entry Secretary email info@ipswichinbloom.org The closing date is Friday, 25 May. There will also be a barbeque event for entrants on 25 May at Castle Hill allotments, with a chance to meet other gardeners. Prizes and certificates will be awarded on 26 September, 6 pm, at Museum Street Church.

Elm Street and Museum Street

This extraordinary juxtaposition of architectural shapes and styles is typically British. (The City of Bath is wonderful but it's not typical!) When each building is good of its kind, the resulting mixture can be stimulating for anyone interested in aesthetic appearances. All the more so if one has any awareness of historical characteristics. Here we have buildings of the 17th century, second half of the 20th century, early 20th century and 18th century (Mrs Smith's almshouses of 1760 glimpsed on the right).

The Chairman's Letter

This will be the last time I will write to you as your Chairman. At the January meeting of the Executive Committee I stood down as Chairman for health reasons but I intend to remain as a member of the Committee. Until the AGM, your Vice-Chairman, John Norman, will act as Chairman. At the AGM John will stand for election as Chairman and a new Vice-Chairman will then need to be appointed.

I have been Chairman for eleven years and have enjoyed the experience immensely. During that period John Norman has been a very supportive Vice-Chairman and I wish to thank him for this. The current committee is perhaps the strongest we have had for some time with several new members.

This is no bad time to have a change of Chairman. Little Waitrose has opened in the Corn Exchange and plans are proceeding for a bigger Waitrose and a John Lewis at Home on the old Crane's site in Nacton Road. So shopping will be well taken care of. These developments and the Tesco on Grafton Way show Ipswich is bucking the trend nationally. And although we do have failing businesses and boarded up shops we also have new businesses and developments in the town and more in the pipeline.

When I came to Ipswich in 1970 it was a very different place. Above all, the Wet Dock was an industrial wasteland which had long been depressed. At the north end, Paul's and Cranfield's were still operating but elsewhere old neglected buildings were slowly crumbling into the water. When there was first talk of regeneration of the area, there was set up a group to support and champion this. Bellway flats were the very first development, soon followed by others. The Waterfront Group (later Partnership) was set up, consisting of the local authorities, developers and owners. Ipswich Borough Council was represented by Sue Arnold, a senior planner, who was very enthusiastic. All developments since then have been monitored by this Group. As the only organisation without vested interests, The Ipswich Society was asked to chair the Partnership and I did so until its closure in 2011. The Waterfront today with its university, cafes and restaurants is a very different place and attracts many visitors. It has been a privilege to be involved in this transformation.

More recently we have celebrated our fiftieth birthday with a number of special events which were appreciated by many members. And after many years in the planning, the history of the Society is nearly ready for publication and should be available soon.

The Society is in good shape and I wish it well in the future.

Jack Chapman

Geology In Ipswich

In May, GeoSuffolk, led by Ipswich Society member Bob Markham, will have a display based around 'Geology in Ipswich' at the Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park. Themes will include:

- the Stoke Tunnel excavations into an interglacial bone bed
- Coprolite Street and the 'coprolite' industry

- former Ipswich brick yards
- Ipswich building stones
- and of course the geology of our parks

Visit www.geosuffolk.co.uk for more details of this event.

The Mary Portas Report

This seven-month investigation was published in December. At the time, the Government seemed pleased but what, if anything, will they do? The proposed National Planning Policy Framework might weaken 'town centre first' approaches. And steep cuts in funding to local authorities will make it harder for them to help. However, the problems facing the High Street are at least being made more public. Here is a summary of some of the recommendations in the Report which members might like to think about.

- Town teams to run centres like a business with a management team comprising shopkeepers, landlords, council representatives and residents.
- An out-town veto giving Government ministers an "exceptional sign-off" on new out-of-town developments.
- Penalise landlords for leaving shops empty. And if shop premises really are defunct, some suggested alternative uses are for conversions to gyms, creches, bingo halls.
- A National Market Day to publicise markets and reduce regulations so more people can become market traders.
- Business rate concessions - offering the same discounts given to charity shops for retail start-ups and small businesses.
- Free controlled parking to be set up by local authorities, with a league table to make charges transparent.
- Major retailers should report on their support for local high streets in their annual reports.
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In Ipswich, the idea of 'town teams' seems partly covered already by Ipswich Central. Penalising landlords for empty shops might seem a good idea - because a great many are owned by investment companies more interested in the potential capital gain rather than the urgency to obtain rental income. Otherwise why don't they more readily reduce rents? Members' comments on all of this would be welcomed by the Newsletter.

Planning Issues

Ipswich Town Centre Master Plan Consultation Draft

The Society's Executive Committee has discussed this document at length and would like to make the following comments on behalf of its 1300 members. Our members' most frequent criticism is that they rarely go there because "there are not enough decent shops" and because of "their perceptions as to its attractions, cleanliness and general state of safety". This is particularly noticeable from those who live on the outskirts or in the wider county. Ultimately their unease can

all be traced back to the current lack of a top class shopping offer in the town centre. This state of affairs is not limited to or controllable by Ipswich. It is obviously in part an outward sign of the economic problems that beset the developed world and partly due to the different ways the new technological world shops - by car in shopping centres or by internet. Thus it is heartening to read this blueprint to revive our town centre which is so optimistic in tone. It points out that:

- The shopping offer is of low quality.
- National chains find the empty shops to be incompatible with modern trading.
- There are two empty sites zoned for retail that will probably never be developed for that.
- A third site, Archant's print works (i.e. EADT, Turret Lane) is available for development.
- The connection between the town centre and the Waterfront is tenuous.
- Thus the current east-west axis should change.

With this we largely agree.

The time has come to re-zone the whole of the so called Mint Quarter for housing. The Society has long favoured a town square of 3-4 storey town houses with parking beneath a new central public square. There could be some small specialist shops in streets leading to this development. However, we think the Civic Centre site should still be encouraged. If enlarged by the addition of the sites of the police station, the disused courts and the Paul's almshouses, it would be a very attractive site adjacent to the business area and main shopping streets. Already in place are a controlled car park and reasonable access from outside the centre. If this were to happen, the development of the north-south axis would be less logical.

We do support the concentration of all the bus services into one bus station, but at Tower Ramparts, not the Mint Quarter. Extending the Tower Ramparts shopping centre northwards over the bus station will only take place if a developer is prepared to invest. We would much prefer to see investment in the modernisation of the Buttermarket shopping centre and extending the retail offer southward, replacing the Old Cattle Market bus station with an avenue of arcaded shops with residential accommodation above towards the Archant site. We do not feel that there would be demand for shops on the Archant site, though flood avoidance plans may necessitate it. The Queen Street-St Nicholas Street- St Peter's Street axis has turned into a veritable engine room of successful food and specialist retailers and developing another street 200 metres to the east may be unwise. Obviously we completely support a crossing of the Star Lane gyratory. Even at this stage it would be good to put forward the essential parameters for the crossing and some ideas on how they might be met.

Whilst Ipswich has many fine parks, it is noticeable there are none within the medieval centre. Thus we very strongly support the establishment of green public spaces in the town centre. If, as seems sensible, more people will live in the middle green spaces will be vital.

The Society is dismayed at the quality of the design and architecture of recent renovation and new builds. It is vital that we achieve better in the future than we have in the last twenty years. We must all work together to ensure that poor buildings are not allowed in Ipswich!

In summary, we admire this forward thinking document and hope which such a plan brings, even if we may disagree on some of the details. Ultimately, however, it will depend on the financial state of the UK and the economic activity of Ipswich and East Suffolk. The land is largely privately owned

and hence the major decisions are out of our hands. We can improve our chances by planning positively in every way and increasing footfall by the development of entertainment, cultural and other attractions which so far Ipswich has not yet achieved.

Planning Applications & Results

John Lewis at Home on Cranes site. It was granted permission but there are a number of tight conditions on trading. Pharmacy, post office, opticians, takeaway food outlets, banks and building societies are not permitted. The goods sold and displayed shall not include clothing, footwear, jewellery and watches. Beauty and toiletry items may not be displayed and sold in more than 75 sq m of the floor space. [Editor: i.e. it's not intended to be a department store.] £750,000 is to be spent on non-A14 traffic remediation, but nothing to ameliorate Junction 57 of the A14. Public art to include reference to previous industrial use.

Yarmouth Road/London Road. Marston's will build a Road House - for more food than drink. Despite objections from the Waterfront Group and the Society as to design and the importance of having an impressive building at the main western entrance to the town, and the total lack of use of the proximity to the canal, the Planning Committee were only concerned with exit and entrance into the traffic, particularly by drays. The concern was not to interfere with a commercial application for an undeveloped site. An opportunity missed!

19 St Margaret's Green. A retrospective application to demolish Kwikfit buildings has been postponed twice for legal considerations. The buildings had not been declared unsafe but the permission for demolition and new student accommodation expired in April 2010. The Planning Committee agreed to the retrospective application because they can't enforce a rebuild, they can't enforce a build and the maximum fine is £1000. The Society supports the concept of keeping it as an improved green space to improve the townscape and to allow the air quality to improve. But there are many financial, legal and practical difficulties on the road to completion. The Society will object strongly to its proposed use for hand car wash.

Derby Road Station. Re-application for a 45 bed care home. The previous application was withdrawn because of local objections. The trees and sleeper embankment to be retained to Stanley Avenue. Better noise attenuation. [Don't forget care homes are one of the best sources of employment for the unskilled.]

Ipswich School, Music Centre. The modified second application has been approved by mc, subject to acoustic tests. A transport plan and an event management plan are to be presented. All events including practice to finish by 9.30 pm.

The People's Hall, Stoke Street. An application to build 4 flats behind the wall separating the Hall from the next building to the east has been granted with no changes to the roof.

Telecommunications mast, Stoke Drive. 117 objections to a slim 12.5m pole on a street corner. Dangerous radiation to a school 50m away. No thought given to mobile internet connections - important economically. We need a proper policy, not ad hoc decisions.

Golden Key, Woodbridge Road. Revised and improved plans to convert to a 400 sq m food store. Widely presumed to be Tesco's.

Mike Cook

Colchester Road Fire Station

Re-development of Colchester Road fire station site

Hopkins Homes is currently working on proposals to introduce a sensitive residential development, recreational open space and contributions (£230,000) to support local services and facilities and that respect the architecture and amenities of the local area. Hopkins Homes have previously been amongst the award winners for their development on the site of the School of Jesus and Mary in Woodbridge Road.

There had been some discussion about the fire station site becoming a supermarket but mc issued a Planning Brief in June 2011 suggesting the site was best suited for housing. Hopkins propose 59 homes in a mix of two, three and four bed properties (which includes fifteen affordable homes built to the same high standards), 112 parking spaces and a central public open space with a pedestrian route through to a further green space facing Colchester Road. Our planning monitors will need to review the application in detail, but it looks promising.

John Norman

Bikes Worldwide

Hands up if you've recently taken up cycling. Wow - one million hands go up! I started an article with this opening line in the last Newsletter so why do so again? Well, if the number of people cycling is increasing then so must the production of bicycles. In 1965 the number of bicycles and the number of cars produced worldwide was the same, some 20 million. Since then both have risen substantially. Car production is now up to 40 million units whereas bicycle production exceeds 120 million. For a world population of 7 billion that's one new bicycle for every 58 people, including those too old or too young to ride! There are probably more than one billion bicycles in the world; over half have been manufactured in China (where use is declining rapidly) and most of the rest are from India, Taiwan and Japan. Top of the range machines are still made in Europe.

[Source: worldometers.com]

John Norman

Resignation of Jack Chapman

Many members will already know that our Chairman, Jack Chapman, has now found it necessary to resign, and the Editor has asked me to comment briefly on his stint of almost twelve years in the Chair, prior to a more formal review at the Society's forthcoming AGM.

Jack took over from Peter Odell in the summer of 2000 and quickly made his mark on the Executive Committee. He established good relations with the Chief Executive of the Borough Council, firstly with Jim Hehir and recently with Russell Williams. The Society has always avoided political

posturing while ensuring that it can work well with the Officers of the Council and with whoever has been in political control.

As Chairman, Jack has always taken a keen interest in the work of the Executive Committee members who had accepted responsibilities for specific activities. He took particular interest in the many Society visits and tours and frequently participated in these. He chaired most of the Winter Lectures and was a regular contributor to the quarterly Newsletter, being very supportive and appreciative of the Editor.

He also continued to represent the Society on the Waterfront Steering Group, an advisory body comprising representatives of organisations involved with the development of the whole Waterfront, which he chaired successfully until its demise - due to the current recession. His views were particularly valued as he did not represent any commercial interest.

Peter Odell's period of office culminated with the Society's fortieth year anniversary celebrations and conference: perhaps the highpoint of Jack's chairmanship will have been the fiftieth anniversary in 2010, in the planning of which he had been deeply involved.

So what has he achieved during his time of office these last dozen years? He has encouraged the growth of the Society's membership (now in excess of 1200) and has personally raised the profile of the Society which continues to have a good and respected name in the town. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude and appreciation for his leadership over these years, the more so as he has unfortunately had to cope with ill-health for most of the time, which he has borne with much fortitude.

Tom Gondris

Democracy or Demi-cracy

Rule by the people, or the subjugation of one half by the other half?

The Society's long-standing invitation to its members is to consider "Ipswich: it's our town do you care how it develops?" which in turn invites democratic challenges "How do we decide what we want?" and "How do we go about getting it?"

But how do we make changes democratically? After years of investigation I have reached the conclusion that, at its worst, it is like trying to nail a blancmange to a fence with a rubber nail, with one arm tied behind your back and someone trying their best to distract you. If you are lucky, someone will come along with something more substantial than a blancmange, offer you a proper nail, free both your arms and encourage you to get on with the job. This was thankfully so with street prostitution in Ipswich. The local community was acutely aware of an intolerable problem for which there was no local solution; the media sowed untold confusion "in the interests of balance" by asserting a woman's right to choose her career even though the street prostitutes' plight affords them no such freedom of choice. Fortunately the Home Office produced a well researched national strategy, clarifying several fundamental problems which demanded separate solutions. But it still took many years of multi-agency effort and ultimately five murders to stimulate the necessary concerted action.

So achieving democratic change is not simply a matter of doing what obviously needs to be done, but rather one of surmounting all the obstacles that lie in your path; and it requires a lot of timely co-operation from a lot of interested parties. And with good reason; power is a notoriously corrupting influence which should be diffused. Democracy for all its flaws is infinitely preferable to tyranny, but it does slow things down. This is unhelpful when urgent change is imperative but whose need is not yet obvious to all- as with the debt crisis which led to the credit crunch, and in a variety of impending crises in pensions, healthcare, climate change, and so on. Some of these problems are indeed associated with an over-concentration of power, for instance relying too heavily on the financial services sector for economic prosperity, or the use of fossil fuels for energy, which in turn call for the added precautions of appropriate monitoring and regulation. But such measures in turn divide the democratic community, between those who value individual and corporate freedom, and those who value security and order in society. How do we accommodate such contradictory values?

I suspect that most ordinary people simply take this in their stride. Of course we value personal freedom, but we also recognise that civilised society involves mutual responsibilities towards other people. We work to earn money to spend for ourselves and our families, and accept that valuable public services and infrastructure have to be paid for through taxes. Above all, we want equitable systems of reward and taxation, and good value for both disposable income and taxes. But the question of where to draw the dividing lines is then taken up in party politics and debate in the media, with proponents of market forces arguing that privatisation is the way to get value from the public sector (but for whom?), while their opponents argue that private greed has been the downfall of the Western economies. Does our "common sense" have to be subverted by these extreme ideological distractions? Does the "squeezed middle" have the power to clip the political wings and keep both public and private sectors in proper balance, or is "common sense" not common at all?

I have recently argued that our first-past-the-post voting system is artificially divisive where division need not exist. It might be better named "demi-cracy" since the outcome is selectively to ignore the arguments and concerns of as much as one half of the electorate in favour of the other half. But there is, after all, more than one form of democracy.

Representative democracy

Casting a vote every few years for a local councillor or MP is a crude means of addressing the growing complexities and manifold choices of modern life, but the appeal of this simple system should not be under-estimated for those who have no wish for any greater engagement in public affairs. At a public meeting some years ago, a portfolio holder for the Borough Council was berated for troubling the public with her consultation when she had already been elected to get on and do her job. She retorted that she would dearly like to do just that, but consultation was required by the national Government of the day. Even this simple question on the duty of participation illustrates how "government by the people" belies the scope or passionate disagreement among the people.

Consultations: "What do we want?"

Consultations have nonetheless become a significant means of engaging public opinion and insight into current issues. But do they live up to the expectation of producing more popular solutions? Consider two prominent examples among many from recent years. The consultation on Unitary Local Government (ULG) in Suffolk failed because, in spite of a clearly expressed appetite for ULG, the people of Suffolk put parochial aspiration above practicality and collectively rejected the only two solutions that could be financially viable. And the consultation on the Local Development

Framework (LDF) took years to progress, while in the meantime the Borough approved the Grafton Way (Tesco) development in spite of the draft provisions of the LDF regarding out-of-town retail and traffic congestion. By the narrowest of margins, the fruits of direct consultation were trumped by representative democracy! We must now wait and see how well it benefits the town - along with the parallel out-of-town development on the Cranes site - and, by implication, who really holds the keys to the town's future.

Localism and ministerial intervention

Whatever we might have wanted from the LDF or ULG, their consultations would ultimately be overruled by yet another servant of democracy, the newly-elected Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who intervened to suspend firstly all progress towards ULG, and secondly the Regional Spatial Strategy upon which the LDF depended. Given that this was making way for Localism, whereby local communities will be empowered to deliver the solutions they deem most appropriate, would it be unreasonable to conclude that this empowerment will consist of "You will do as I say!"? For Localism does indeed appear perversely to be driven very strongly from the centre, regardless of explicit local wishes, even down to saying prayers before council meetings!

Area Forums and Area Committees

An early manifestation of Localism will be to replace the underperforming Local Area Forums with Area Committees. These will still comprise regular public meetings, which will now be run by local councillors with decision-making powers and with local budgets. Hopefully these will be better attended and supported by the communities they are intended to serve.

Where next?

The immediate focus for local democracy must surely be the Localism Bill, dictated by the Central Government as part of the Big Society, itself a problem re-packaged as a solution, not unlike the financial liabilities re-packaged as assets whose toxicity caused the credit crunch. So is it crunch time for democracy?

"Men at some time are masters of their fates: the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." On the evidence of the recent past, little has changed in four hundred years. The opportunity to operate the levers of power is ultimately all that matters, and consultations and strategies which lack the will and resources to deliver their objectives are merely well intentioned distractions. Where is the spark that will change this? Do local communities really have pent-up reserves of energy waiting to be unleashed by the liberating power of Localism, or would the Politics-to-English phrasebook translate "We're all in this together" as "You're on your own"?

Our inter-dependence makes the strategic issues of the day increasingly matters of political will, empowerment, and co-operation . not division . at all levels. The democratic .common good. or demi-cratic divide and rule? It may well be our town, but how much choice do we really have?

Mike Brain

Shorts of All Sorts

Ipswich Maritime Festival attracted 55,000 visitors last year. Another similar festival will be held on the Waterfront 18-19 August. There will be stalls, music, dancing, historical re-enactments and fireworks.

IBC's proposed £1.5m **jobs and skills investment fund** is to support businesses creating private sector jobs. Ipswich has been quite dependent on public sector jobs which are now being reduced. Any attempts to boost growth should surely be welcomed.

Chantry Park now has a Friends group. We hope they'll attract plenty of good helpers. Similar groups at the other big Ipswich parks provide active support for arguably the town's greatest assets.

Dickens Walks organised by the Town Guides have been popular in this anniversary year. The great novelist visited Ipswich a few times as a young reporter and he put up his Mr Pickwick at the Great White Horse - where he didn't have a trouble-free time!

The Evening Star became **Ipswich Star** on Monday, 23 January. since it couldn't become the Morning Star! It is thus in direct competition with the EADT and appears to make the latter less Ipswich-centred.

Shared Space in Exhibition Road, S Kensington should be worth a look, where visitors to the great museums are meant to co-exist with the traffic. Our own example, Handford Road, was so badly chosen that the concept is sullied or unrecognised in Ipswich.

Abellio, the Dutch owned railway company. took over the Greater Anglia franchise on 1 February in a snow-affected week. (National Express had run our trains from 2004 till then.) Abellio's franchise is short and our infrastructure and rolling stock elderly. What hopes?

The Byles Fountain in Alexandra Park has been restored, thanks partly to a grant from the Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund. It's good that the 21st century can find some money for our so valuable Victorian heritage.

Development of St Peter's Port, i.e. the big vacant space between St Peter's and St Mary at Quay churches on Star Lane, is said to be starting later this year. We shall see. The revised plan is to include flats rather than offices, plus the two hotels, retail units, etc.

Tower Ramparts shopping centre has a new owner, LaSalle Investment Management, who aim to modernise it. It ought to be ideally situated, being between the Cornhill, the main bus station and what was the biggest car park - although the reduction of the latter hasn't helped.

IBC's intention to build some **council houses** seems to be made possible by greater flexibility in Central Government policy in the face of the chronic shortage of affordable family homes. The numbers will inevitably be small at first but it could be a valuable precedent.

John Lewis and Waitrose at Crane's are not in the best place, the Society has argued. But better there than not at all. It has been surmised that they might encourage newcomers to buy the more expensive houses and flats in Ipswich.

Willis is VERY Special

English Heritage has recently Listed as Grade I the Lloyd's Building in London. This is the striking building in Leadenhall Street/ Lime Street which has its lifts on the outside. At the time, a number of newspapers recognised the achievement by placing this distinction in context. It was surprising to see that the Listing of post-war buildings only began in 1987 and the Grade I list is still remarkably small- only nine in fact, of which Willis is one.

The Willis Building (originally Willis Faber) was a highly controversial addition to the Ipswich street scene in the early 1970s, as anything so new and different was bound to be. Today it seems to have been generally accepted - certainly by most Ipswich Society members who have enjoyed the occasional functions the Society has held there. But if we merely take it for granted now, that is to overlook its very special place in the architectural heritage of our country. So here is a reminder of this roll of honour of constructions officially considered by English Heritage to be "exceptionally important". Ipswich should be proud of ours.

- The Severn Bridge, 1961-66, by Freeman, Fox and Partners
- The Royal Festival Hall, London, 1949-51, by Sir Leslie Martin
- The Lovell Telescope, Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, 1957
- St Catherine's College, Oxford, 1960-62, by Arne Jacobsen
- Coventry Cathedral, 1956-62, by Sir Basil Spence
- The Royal College of Physicians, London, 1960-64, by Sir Denys Lasdun
- Kingsgate Bridge, Durham, 1966, by Arup Associates
- Willis Faber Building, Ipswich, 1972-75, by Norman Foster (Lord Foster)
- The Lloyd's Building, City of London, 1978-86, by Richard Rogers Partnership

Beacon Town Conference

University Campus Suffolk, Friday 24 February 2012

A blatant attempt to sell more newspapers or a real effort at moving Ipswich forward? Although there was some of the former, probably created by the fact that the conference was organised by the Ipswich Star and led by its editor Nigel Pickover, it was much more about the future of Ipswich and what the 100+ key decision makers in the audience could collectively do about it.

Ben Gummer led the way by bemoaning the constant criticism he has to endure from sceptics who suggest Ipswich isn't up to it. Terry Hunt, editor of the EADT, gave a lively and compelling address on the perceptions of Ipswich as held by the good folk of rural Suffolk, suggesting Ipswich's problems started when it became the County Town of the whole of Suffolk (upstaging Bury) in 1974. The acrimony between Bury and Ipswich is only one way. The people of Ipswich love going shopping in Bury (and the other major towns of East Anglia). Terry suggested that if he asked the question of the good folk of Suffolk why they never visit Ipswich the most likely answer is why should they? Thus it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ipswich's shopping offer is poor, but will not get better until it can attract customers from a wider catchment, who won't come whilst the offer remains weak.

Perception is always the reality and the perception of Ipswich amongst the people from the market towns and villages is low, so low that Ipswich does not exist on their radar. For those from the coast north of the Alde, from the towns in the north of the county, and from a very short distance up the A140, Norwich is their town of choice. Is Ipswich part of Suffolk? Yes, for the football, Yes for the Theatre, but otherwise No, and a very resounding No from a two-thirds majority.

Mark Bee (Leader of Suffolk County Council), David Ellesmere (Leader of Ipswich Borough Council), Ben Gummer and Nigel Pickover also spoke. We broke out into workshops, made pledges

as to how we individually would contribute to improvements (in the perceptions) of Ipswich and generally ended the day feeling much more positive about the future. Thus the Ipswich Star had delivered the first round of improvement. We look forward to part two in mid-summer when some of the pledges should have come to fruition.

John Norman (I really do love Ipswich)

Fonnereau Way

It is quite some time since members of The Ipswich Society were asked if they could provide evidence of pedestrian use for the Fonnereau Way. (The Society had given strong support when the newly named route was established, particularly to protect it from the possibility of being lost in any future development.) This path from Christchurch Park northwards to Lower Road Westerfield is one of the few that allow walkers to reach open countryside from the centre of town, avoiding almost all roads. It's been marked as a path on the OS maps since 1880 and on Wilfred George's map for about 30 years - no one objected. I've walked it for 30 years and others, still living, have done so for 37 years before that.

To legally protect the Fonnereau Way path it was claimed as a Public Right of Way, and on 11 January 2010 Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way Committee formally authorised its inclusion on the Ipswich Definitive Map. However Network Rail objected to the path being public where it crosses the line west of the station at Westerfield. Subsequently the planning Inspector accepted the argument that the crossing was private footpath at this point and that public use of it had been trespass. This part was therefore deleted with its continuation to Lower Road, Westerfield. An appeal was lodged against this interim judgment and a Public Inquiry held in December 2011. At the Inquiry more evidence was provided to support the case that the route had been used by the public both before and after the railway's construction in the late 1850s. This evidence was gathered from Suffolk Public Record Office and from some 24 members of the public who recalled using the path as far back as the mid-1930s. The Ramblers Headquarters supported the appeal by providing legal argument against Network Rail's position regarding trespass.

We therefore received with great pleasure the Planning Inspector's final decision (9 January of this year) which accepted the path in its entirety. The Inspector's judgment was that "on the balance of evidence, a path had existed before railway work began in c.1856." This decision was based mainly on submitted evidence of use. Network Rail may still appeal against this decision to the High Court. In the meantime a celebratory walk was enjoyed by local ramblers on 14 January using the restored part of the route. The Fonnereau Way is an enjoyable walk and is highly recommended. The route is described in East Suffolk Line Walks booklet and also in a Greenways leaflet available from Ipswich TIC. You could also follow the distinctive shields that line the route, now "recalled to life" as a visitor to the Great White Horse once wrote.

Geoff Knight

The Question Mark

John Norman's article in the last Newsletter pointed out that there was more to the new sculpture at UCS than is first thought. The inevitable flurry of hostile letters to the local press failed to convey that the sculpture itself is aligned with the tall concrete chimney on the College site on the other side of Fore Street and on the chimney is an LED light display. The further connection is that this LED display spells out the letters Q U E S T I O N ?

If sceptics don't find this appealing and relevant to a Higher Education institution, perhaps they might be persuaded to have a close look and enjoy the elegance of the sculpture and feel the smoothness and shape of the white marble side or the black granite side.

Getting Wolsey in Place

A lecture by John Blatchly is always delivered with a natural ease. There are some facts which you didn't know and some amusing anecdotes, and at the end you realise it's all added up to much more than the sum of its delightful parts. On this occasion, I thought I knew most of what Dr Blatchly would have to say about Wolsey and the creation of the statue but it turned out to be only a fraction of what I enjoyed on the evening of 14 December.

The need for a Wolsey statue first occurred to him about twelve years ago but the final push came from James Hehir, IBC's then Chief Executive, at the unveiling of the Prince Obolensky statue. So it was all the more sad and problematic when James suddenly died, because he had said, "You deal with the history, John, and I'll look after the fundraising." Despite that major setback the campaign turned out to be quite short, with the launch (and first cheque) at St Peter's in October 2009, the interview of the seven short-listed sculptors (out of 57 applicants) in December 2009, the proceeding work by the chosen artist, David Annand, the second publicity launch in St Lawrence's Church, ongoing fundraising and the unveiling of the finished Wolsey on Ipswich Charter Day, 29 June 2011.

Most of the applicants had proposed a Wolsey standing up blessing the populace. But what we see now is Wolsey seated and, as it were, teaching children. Dr Blatchly's explanation was that "the average Ipswichian wasn't looking for a blessing" and having Wolsey seated on Curson Plain, near the site of Curson House which he wanted to retire to, meant that he could be under the trees, one or two of which would have had to be removed if he'd been a standing figure. That would have got him off to an unpopular start!

For those critics of the statue who question the length of Wolsey's robes, we learnt that a cardinal's Cappa Magna is some 16 feet long and needs two or four train bearers. And the cat on the statue is authentic in that Wolsey allowed his cat to sit on a stool on his right side even when presiding in the Star Chamber. It will of course help to attract children to the statue and, after all, as it says around the base, "Pleasure should mingle with study so that the child may think learning an amusement rather than a toil."

Fascinating snippets also came out of the talk. Sculptors re-use their clay and David Annand used the clay of Wolsey's head to model Alex Salmond's! We learnt that there are nursery rhymes relevant to our great man - apparently Old Mother Hubbard is Wolsey. The huge black marble tomb intended by Wolsey for his own corpse was left around royal circles unused until Nelson's body was inserted and placed in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

Most important to Dr Blatchly is the legacy aspect apart from the statue itself. Two more Wolsey heads were made by David Annand, one of which serves as an 'advertisement' in the Tourist Information Centre for the statue and the other will be unveiled at DCS, where the 200-seater lecture room will be the venue for the Annual Wolsey Lecture, to be given on 24 April (7 for 7.30 pm) by Phillip Lindley, author of Cardinal Wolsey, Church, State and Art. He will describe Wolsey's role as patron of the arts and architecture in Renaissance England.

We were told that, at the unveiling of the statue, a bystander was heard to say, "Yes, Wolsey. I know about him. He built the theatre." Dr Blatchly is keen that we should all keep learning so that we know better than that.

Neil Salmon

Miscellaneous News

Suffolk Country Homes and their Estates, c.1750-1850

This course at Belstead House. 4-6 May, is possibly the last of the popular weekend courses organised by the Suffolk Local History Council, owing to the proposed closure of the House by Suffolk County Council. The course explores the building and re-building of some Suffolk estate houses, the making of their parks and gardens and management of their estates, A coach trip visiting gardens of the period is included. For booking information contact Belstead House, Sprites Lane, Ipswich, IP8 3NA. Tel: 01473 686321. e-mail belstead.house@suffolk.gov.uk Their website is www.belsteadhouse.co.uk

Ipswich Record Office, Free Open Day, Saturday, 14 April, 9am-5pm.

This special day will be hosted by Ipswich Record Office and Ipswich Building Society. Three guided walks for adults and children will be led by Margaret Hancock. She will explain how Ipswich Building Society helped working people to get a stake in property in the Bramford and Norwich Road areas and show how you can learn more about their lives from the census and Record Office archives. In this way you can learn how to begin your family and local history research using the county archives. There will also be strongroom tours, a second hand book sale and activities for children. Although the day is free of charge, booking is essential via Ipswich Record Office, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, IP1 2LQ, tel: 584541 Ipswich.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Road Maintenance and Libraries

Ipswich Borough Council has been responsible for maintaining most of the roads in the town on behalf of the County Council. This responsibility will be taken over by SCC and then transferred to a private company in April 2013. At the same time the county's 44 libraries will be transferred to a new body, an Industrial and Providential Society. Whatever one thinks of the reasons for these moves, maintaining the resulting quality for us as users is surely a demand we can all share.

A Little Known Ipswich Product?

Most members are likely to know something about the engineering and other manufacturing activity which used to take place in Ipswich. But sewing machines? It has been brought to our attention that high quality machines were made here in the late 19th century by Whight & Mann at their Gipping Factory, New Station Road and sold from 39 Buttermarket (and in Holborn). Their Prima Donna is a collectors' item now. But they also imported German and North American models. Apparently re-badging and competition led to closure in 1884.

A Critic's Parting Words

Jonathan Glancey who gave us a memorable talk in our anniversary year, 2010, has left The Guardian where he has been architectural critic for 15 years. Amongst his last words in his final article he wrote what could be the key criteria for societies like ours. "But what really matters today is the creation of good homes for millions of people, and the nurturing of towns and cities that are lovable yet distinct from one another."

Language changes - for good or ill!

The English language has always been remarkably fluid, but sometimes it's hard for older people to accept changes. The Newsletter has previously been prickly about "train station" replacing "railway station" which is said to have started in 1960. But what about today's "it's down to you" instead of "up to you" or a person feeling "good" instead of "well"?

Park Road Reservoir Update

On 23 February I was fortunate enough to join a visit by the Institute of Civil Engineers to the Park Road reservoir. The visit commenced with a presentation at the Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park. It provided an insight into the challenges presented by a project of this nature. Then off to Park Road where site manager Neil Davidson was our host.

The project commenced on site in the autumn of 2011 with a planned duration of about six months. Not unusually one or two issues arose which will now see work continue till June this year. Firstly the removal of 6,000 tons of topsoil from the concrete roof of the reservoir took longer. Surveys identified that the risk of deploying heavy equipment on the roof was not an option. Much of the work had to be carried out by hand with shovels and wheelbarrows, with final removal via a vacuum pump. Secondly, a decision has been taken to build a new internal partition wall effectively dividing the reservoir in two, an additional investment that will ensure future planned maintenance will be possible without the need to drain the entire reservoir. That has added £900k to the capital costs which will now total about £2.4 million!

As John Norman explained in last October's Newsletter, the reservoir was built in 1902 and has a capacity of 21 million litres of fresh water to serve the north of Ipswich with water pumped into the reservoir from a borehole in nearby Whitton. It is a credit to the original engineers that the internal cast iron support columns and steel beams have survived in good condition and remain suitable for shot blast cleaning and epoxy coating. The concrete floor and roof are being checked carefully for damage and any cracking identified is being over-banded with a flexible product. All products used inside the reservoir have to be certified as suitable to come into contact with drinking water. Pipe-work has been modified to improve the flow of water into and through the reservoir.

This is a significant project and the site is subject to stringent safety management procedures. On the day of our visit 45 people were signed in to work on the site. Like everyone on site we were expected to arrive with suitable personal protective equipment including safety boots, gloves, helmets, goggles and fluorescent jacket. We were fortunate enough to be allowed, under careful supervision, to descend on to the reservoir floor. Full access was not possible as some areas are designated as confined spaces with all the safety controls in place that necessitates. It is an amazing space down there and it was a privilege to observe the skilful and labour intensive work being carried out - grateful thanks to our busy hosts.

All those working on the site consider themselves fortunate to be involved with this unique project but they are also acutely aware that there is inevitably some disruption to local residents from traffic movements (500 12-tonne lorry movements for the removed topsoil alone) and site noise. The site operates between 8 am and 5.30 pm each weekday with the noisiest element now complete (removal of topsoil). Hopefully the project will complete on time and ensure it is another 100 years before this level of refurbishment is necessary.

Once the work is complete the reservoir will be deep cleaned and disinfected before refilling and water testing commences. The roof will receive a waterproof membrane and be protected with a layer of stone chippings rather than reinstating the topsoil.

Graham Smith

I Love Ipswich

After living in a village for 33 years, I moved to Ipswich almost eight years ago and find plenty of things to love about the town. Here are just some of them.

- The numerous parks and libraries, so that wherever you live in the town you have free access to green space and a library. Exercise for body and mind.
- The rich cultural and historic heritage of the town with its wealth of medieval churches, many of which have been converted to modern use.
- The great arts scene which Ipswich has, with the ever improving Pulse Fringe and Ip-Art festivals, as well as the wide ranging and varied programme provided by the New Wolsey and Regent Theatres, and Eastern Angles and Red Rose Chain theatre companies, complemented by the excellent Film Theatre.

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On the minus side, Debenhams is just a pale shadow of its former self, so Ipswich really needs a large department store in the centre of town, and more shops that cater for the mature woman with a fuller figure. Can we also have a proper tea shop on the lines of Betty's of Harrogate. I'm sure it would be popular with the tourist trade as well as locals. I like a cappuccino as much as anyone but aren't there just too many coffee chains in the town now?

I would also like to see more appreciation of the 1930s buildings we have in the town and feel they are overlooked in favour of earlier periods. The demolition of the garage at the bottom of Bolton Lane was a travesty in my opinion. The growth in the popularity of motoring is an important part of our social history and garages are a part of that history. The wonderful sweeping facade, with the

iconic glass bricks, was built to disguise the basic utilitarian structure of the garage and was a joy to behold. Now we are left with an ugly gash in the skyline. To argue that it opens up the view of the buildings on the opposite side of Bolton Lane is a bit like saying there'd be a better view of St Stephen's Church if the Ancient House was demolished.

The development of Ipswich didn't stop at the turn of the last century so action should be taken to protect some of its 20th century buildings before it is too late.

Linda Erith

[**Editor:** The garage was demolished without planning permission (see page 7). Those who, like me, enjoy the view of the Manor House now revealed didn't advocate the demolition, but now it's done ...]

Sir Charles Sherrington

Since retiring, Mike Cook has devoted a lot of his energy and time to The Ipswich Society. Before that, he was a Consultant Anaesthetist at Ipswich Hospital where his work required, amongst other things, an intimate knowledge of how the human nervous system functions. One of the greatest pioneers in studying and understanding the nervous system of animals and humans was Sir Charles Sherrington. So for Mike to speak about Sherrington on 11 January was a marriage made in..... Ipswich.

Sherrington must have been fond of Ipswich. Although born in Islington, he came to live in the town with his parents at Edgehill House, Anglesea Road and entered Ipswich School in 1871, aged fourteen. And then after a long and pre-eminent career he chose in 1935 to retire to Ipswich, living briefly in Graham Road and then at 73 Valley Road when that house was ready. [Compare another man who also reached the very peak of his profession, Sir Alf Ramsey - he also lived in Valley Road and stayed there in retirement. Would this make an unusual quiz question?] Sherrington lived there for a few years but after his wife died and then in his middle 80s he moved to Cambridge and then to Eastbourne.

Sherrington did indeed reach the very peak of his profession. It's not a lightly used expression when you consider that he became President of the Royal Society, was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1924 (jointly with Lord Adrian), received 21 honorary doctorates and was appointed to the Order of Merit, the highest civil honour in the UK. The career that led to all those honours took place at St Thomas's Hospital, Cambridge University. Liverpool University (Holst Professor of Physiology) and Oxford University (Waynflete Professor of Physiology). His microscopic studies of dogs' and humans' brains led him to deduce how the nervous system works. The composition of the brain and the nature of the spinal cord were not much understood till then. He was able to map areas of the brain responsible for different functions of the body and he made these discoveries known through 220-300 scientific papers and a book which became the classic text of neurology for the first half of the last century. This knowledge proved indispensable for physiologists and clinicians.

Together with these extraordinary professional achievements. Sherrington's range of interests extended to writing on philosophy, composing poetry and travelling widely in Europe, the USA and

Canada. In Ipswich he officially opened the Northgate Street central library in 1924 and was President of Ipswich Museum, 1944-52.

Long an admirer of Sherrington's work, Mike Cook did originally bill his lecture as being about "Ipswich's most eminent son". Having had the case for Thomas Wolsey put to him, he did tone it down a little in his lecture to "second most eminent"! However, it's not a simple matter and wouldn't it be a fascinating debate on whose influence is greater and of more duration - Wolsey's or Sherrington's?

Neil Salmon

Producing Electricity

Dr Michael Coleman presented "a scientist's view" of generating and transmitting electricity in his lecture to the Society on 15 February. He worked in the management team at Sizewell and then Bradwell nuclear power stations before retiring. He has also been Chairman of Suffolk Preservation Society. He described the history of generating electricity from the 19th century and then explained the nationalisation of the industry, when there was a legal requirement for the Central Electricity Generating Board to supply electricity continuously. This obligation was removed when the industry was privatised in 1989; now, maintaining supply is "a matter for the market".

Concerns about climate change in the 1990s have led to such developments as the extensive use of gas rather than coal in power stations. Dr Coleman then went on to speak about the various options for using renewable sources of power - wind, hydro, solar, wave, tidal, wood, biomass and nuclear. Of these he strongly favoured tidal power, because of its predictability and its proven technology (a Severn barrage could supply 15% of the country's needs) and, not surprisingly, nuclear generation which he argued is safe as long as there is an adequate water supply and if the spent radioactive material is vitrified and stored safely. On the controversial subject of transmission he explained why burying cables is so much more expensive than using pylons.

Postscript: Dr Coleman has subsequently written to thank the Society and to put his argument for nuclear power even more strongly. "I am not convinced by the effectiveness for power generation of any of the range of renewables on offer since almost without exception the normally accepted ones are not capable of uninterrupted generation which is a basic requirement of any stable electricity supply system. For the £100 billion subsidy that will have gone to wind by 2020, I could have built upwards of 15 Sizewell Bs and ensured we had guaranteed clean power for the next 60 years. Furthermore, although the grid needs updating and expanding to meet oncoming needs, it would not have needed the massive expansion now necessary. In other words I could have seen a cost effective way of meeting our international obligations on CO2 emissions and meeting our energy needs."

New Hotels in Ipswich

A Travelodge is being built by Barnes Construction in Duke Street on the former Kennings Car Hire site. With an exciting and colourful external appearance this 87 bedroom hotel will provide

accommodation for parents visiting students in the adjacent university, visitors to the Marina and an affordable stay for the increasing weekenders choosing Ipswich as a base.

On the site of Cranfield's lorry wash (the triangular plot between Star Lane, Slade Street and Key Street) Premier Inn are promising a 81 bed hotel. This site, immediately to the rear of the Custom House, enjoys a location closer to the town centre whilst still being within a stone's throw of the water. Car parking will be on the adjacent triangular site, the former Cranfield's garage next to St Mary Quay. Both sites are owned by Investec Bank plc, receivers of the assets of the two previous developers now in administration. In the case of Cranfield's, the hotel was originally granted planning permission in 2004 alongside the 23 storey Mill but was never started, with subsequent planning applications for residential and then student accommodation floundering in the recession.

John Norman

Shipping in the Haven Ports

6,800 ships sailed into Harwich Haven in 2011- that's 500 each month or an average of 18 every day. They were heading for Felixstowe, Harwich (Parkeston) and Ipswich.

Firearms in Suffolk

Suffolk, population 668,000. Firearms held under licence: 41,600 shot guns, 12,500 firearms = 54,100 guns held by 21,500 people.

Letters to the Editor

Disagreeing with the Society's 2011 Awards

From James Empson

I have not seen all of the 2011 Ipswich Society Awards on foot I admit, but judging by the Newsletter photographs of them I wonder still where Council planners derive their training. Admittedly they may be functional constructions but with the exception of Handford House, Cumberland Street, which should stand the test of time, the rest add no aesthetic merit to our environment whatsoever. (In my opinion!)

Tydemans Close, Woodbridge Road, is harking back to "1960s brutalism". "Some bravery in design" is an overstatement, I think. I must go and see the garden sheds in little gardens, as mentioned though! I hesitate to criticise the Treehouse, but your photograph of it reminds me of a Fina filling station. Wolsey's statue reminds me of Canute at the Wash. Sorry, John! Coe's is so out of place in a Victorian street that words fail me. Sorry, David and William! The James Hehir Building is reminiscent of those awful painted flats which adorn Northern France and the outskirts of Moscow or Warsaw.

And the comments which attend your list of Awards in the January 2012 Newsletter brightened up a dull day in the way the writer tried not to offend!

Peter Bruff, the great civil engineer

From Dr Peter Boyden

During recent visits to the Record Office in Ipswich I have noticed with interest a number of articles in the Ipswich Society Newsletter about Peter Bruff. Having for more than thirty years researched

and written about aspects of his life, chiefly with regard to railways and resort development at Walton-on-the-Naze and Frinton-on-Sea, I have now embarked on a more ambitious project to write a full biography of him.

I am encouraged that there are people in Ipswich who wish to see Peter Bruff commemorated in the town where he resided for much of his life. However, I was sorry to notice that the engraved glass panel in the station booking office, that since 2001 has celebrated him, appears to have been replaced with images of Ipswich Town footballers!

[**Editor:** The Society is planning to install one of our Blue Plaques, reminding people of the man who designed the railway tunnel, some of the railway route and our Victorian sewers.]

Ipswich Umbrella Trust

I've enjoyed catching up with some journal reading during the (Christmas) holiday period and came across an article by Francesca Smith in the July edition, 'Down and Out by the Orwell'. As well as the soup kitchen to which Francesca refers, the Ipswich town centre churches have also been running a night shelter from December through to mid-February.

The Ipswich Umbrella Trust has been very pleased to work in collaboration with the churches over this provision. A partnership of Ipswich Housing Action Group, Genesis Housing & Ipswich Umbrella Trust has secured significant funding to establish longer term overnight provision for homeless and chaotic people in Ipswich. We are always very grateful to receive donations of parcels of food and other personal items such as tinned food,(especially meat and fish). packets of soup, tea bags, small jars of instant coffee, small boxes of cereals, small packets of biscuits, small tablets of soap, towels (especially bath size) and men's new socks. The Umbrella Trust works in association with the Community Resource Centre, which runs a cafe open from 10 am until 2.30 pm on weekdays. Each day a volunteer helps in cooking a main meal for about fifteen people or serving snacks or washing up.

Please help the Umbrella Trust either by delivering contributions to the Community Resource Centre, 1 Black House Lane, Ipswich, IP1 2EF, Monday-Friday, 9.30 am - 3 pm, or telephone 01473 685077 and we will arrange to collect.

Roger Fern

The Treehouse

Members might like to know more about the East Anglian Children's Hospice Treehouse, which the Society's judges decided was well worthy of our only Award of Distinction in 2011. The following information is culled from Footprints, the magazine from EACH.

Architect Roger Gilles led the Barefoot and Gilles team who designed the building. He has written about the project as follows: "My experience of the other EACH hospices is that they make the

most of life and are colourful and full of light. To do this we have strategically placed windows around the hospice which allow both light to stream in and to provide views of the woodland. This has been the same for the corridors which lead to the bedrooms. There are large windows with window seats incorporated, so children and their families can enjoy views of the courtyard garden outside. Whilst feeling very lively and open, the building also has to be a safe private environment for vulnerable children where people can be together and have fun, yet be safe and intimate and even alone when they need to.”

The Bauder green roof system is made up of thousands of sedum plants, which insulate the building and collect rainwater. 'No dig' construction was used in the car parking areas to protect tree roots. (Postscript: BBC Look East said the Duchess of Cambridge would visit The Treehouse in Suffolk near Ipswich!)

Committee & Members' Events

Events:

- 25 April — Annual General Meeting at University Campus Suffolk, 7.30 pm
- 23 June — Civic Day - the Society in town, and photographic competition via local press

Forthcoming Outings:

- 14 April — The Wimpole Estate
- 30 May — Bob Markham's Christchurch Mansion (see enclosure)
- 11 July — Stanford Military Training Ground (see enclosure)
- 21 August — The Buckinghamshire Chilterns
- 12 September — A Day Out in the Fens - Prickwillow and Wisbech

Advance Notice of Lecture:

- 12 October — Griff Rhys-Jones will speak about Civic Voice (details to follow in July)
-