



The Ipswich Society NEWSLETTER

www.ipswichsociety.org

January 2020 Issue 218



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Autumn colours and textures in the Arboretum, October 2019. Photograph by Graham Smith.

Editorial

Welcome to the New Year issue of the *Newsletter* and it is encouraging to welcome all the new members to The Ipswich Society listed below. I am sure that our very successful Heritage Open weekend in 2019 (see page 6) had a hand in this bumper number. As has become customary, we will cover the results of the Society's Annual Awards Evening in November – a high number of nominations with several notable award winners this year – with an article and photographs in our April 2020 issue. Meanwhile, all the relevant photographs and information can be viewed on our online Image Archive. I hope that many adults and children will enter the 60th Anniversary Photography Competition (see page 22).

R.G.

34 New members



Above: a detail from the Drapery Store to the east of Cox Lane; see our back page for a montage of images of the string of former Co-op stores added over the years.

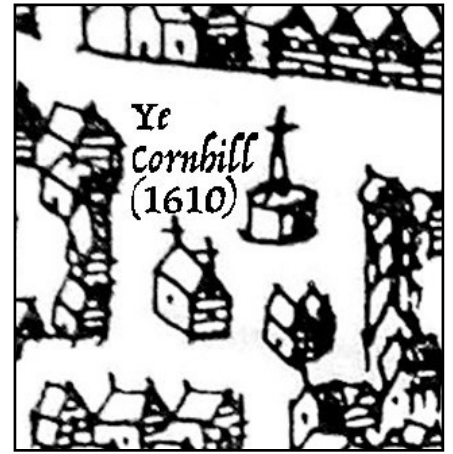


The Blatchly Armillary Sphere, Christchurch Park, against a moody sky in October 2019. Photograph by Graham Smith.

Chairman's remarks

It is disappointing to reflect on the long running saga of Ipswich's Cornhill. You may recall that things started back in September 2012 (seven years ago) when Sir Stuart Rose the former chief executive of Marks & Spencer described the town as a 'barren wasteland' and 'the most depressing place I have ever seen'.

At the same conference he suggested that he could 'sort things out with an expenditure of just £200,000, small things, a few trees, more benches, more going on and more covered areas in case it's raining'.



The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council put their heads together and before the conference was over they had announced that there would be an architectural competition to redesign the Cornhill. Getting from there to where we are now is a saga in itself, involving two completely different designs, a tower twice the height of Grimwade's as the focal point (rejected), the 'Cornhenge' polished concrete standing stones (demolished) and a recognition of the historical great and the good of Ipswich (just seven names).

I understand that there has been a considerable number of reportable incidents. Thus, some thirteen months after completion, the steps are being rebuilt which this time will include tactile paving and visible nosings. If these steps had been constructed inside a public building the *Building Regulations* would apply and these features would have been essential.

When changes to the Cornhill were first mooted there was, understandably, disquiet amongst the market traders they were losing the best trading position in the town. Most resigned themselves to their new location and tried their best to make it work. What they can't understand now is why the occasional visiting trader is allowed to set up a stall on the Cornhill, providing it is under the banner Farmers Market / Christmas Market / French Market.

Needless to say, Stuart Rose's original estimate £200,000 was a wild guess that was nowhere near the £4+ million that the project actually cost, and this latter figure doesn't include the extras – demolishing Cornhenge or rebuilding the steps.

Today there are a similar number of trees, perhaps a few less benches and nowhere new 'under cover'. As we suggested before it all began, the town's main square will attract everybody's attention and we need to get it right first time, and see value for our money. I'm not sure we're there yet.

As we move into the Society's 60th anniversary year I would like to say 'thank you' to Graham Smith who has been Treasurer of the Society for the best part of the decade. As well as keeping our finances in order, Graham has ensured that our claim under the complicated and exacting rules of Gift Aid has enabled the Society to recover a substantial sum.

Graham has also made a significant contribution to the highly complex issues of GDPR (Data Protection) and similar legal requirements. Graham will continue to be a Trustee of the Society and a valued member of the Executive Committee.

John Norman

Planning matters

The Unitarian Meeting House, Friars Street. The Trustees became concerned about roof leaks, cracking in the external rendering and movement of the galleries. Having consulted historic building experts, Historic England and IBC Conservation Officers, they have instructed KLH architects to carry out surveys and produce a plan for the necessary repairs and renovations that do recur in 330 year-old buildings.

They propose the following:-

- 1 Remove the existing external cementitious render and re-coating with a three coat system of chalk/lime putty/hair render on riven chestnut lathing.
- 2 Remove inserted 20th century steel members and concrete surrounds and undertake structural repairs to the timber frame including new bracing.
- 3 Insert 100% sheep's wool insulation into the external wall fabric and roof space.
- 4 Remove and replace eight window frames with purpose-built joinery and remove and repair a further four windows, carefully removing and reinstating all lead glazing to both replacements and repairs. Together with removal of deteriorated leaded lights for overhaul and localised *in-situ* repairs to window frames.
- 5 Remove existing roof tiles and re-roof with handmade plain clay tiles incorporating a 'bat safe' breathable underlay and custom-made clay arris tiles to the hips, including the repair of rainwater gullies.

The surveys are painstaking and make interesting reading. The Trustees are acting responsibly to care for their treasured building; it doesn't seem to me to be at risk as are others in Ipswich.

County Hall, St Helens Street. As might be expected, the roof has leaked and caused wet and dry rot in the Old Council Chamber and stairs. This application is to remove invasive buddleia and to repair the roof with slates. Inside, panelling will have to be removed and the interior rot, both dry and wet, killed with fungicides. Some wood and panelling will need replacing appropriately and refinishing. The dates of the woodwork are uncertain; some date from late 19th century, others from the 1920s.

1 Regatta Quay. One of the original concepts for The Mill was to use the flood zone ground floor as a Theatre intended for Jo Carrick's Red Rose Chain. She has moved on to Gippeswyk Hall, so there are now no takers. The owners have now applied for a convenience retail store use; their sequential survey claims that it would not affect any other local store.

82 Berners Street. This early 19th century house has been a GP surgery, consultants' rooms and now a dental surgery. It is not nationally listed but is in The Society's *Local List* of 1984 and mentioned in the survey of the Conservation Area. About two weeks ago, an air conditioning unit was fixed to the first floor street facade, prominent and disfiguring in such a site. There had been no consultation or permission granted. A photograph was taken; the Conservation Officers were contacted who instructed the Enforcement Officer. Last week, technicians removed the offending device. Thanks to David Owens for this success.

57 Henley Road. This large 1880 house on the corner of Henley Road and St Edmunds Road has been bought by a developer and his architect, Peter Wells; they have been granted permission to convert the existing four apartments and a Spiritualist Place of Worship to six apartments: one one-bedded, the remainder two. The existing modern garage will be replaced

with an appropriate extension for the ground floor apartment. There are additional other improvements. We objected to a separate application to fell the huge red cedar on the front corner of the property as this listed tree is an important landmark and was probably part of the Arboretum planting. This was refused.

Websters Yard, Dock Street. On, possibly, the single most historic site in Ipswich where the Anglo-Saxons first forded the river in about AD650, the Edward Fison maltings building will be demolished with its important signage and replaced by a ten storey modern tower block containing eight small apartments and a four storey executive quadriplex for the developer's own use. The demolition has come in for criticism; there is no suggestion that the signage will be in anyway commemorated. The blandness and lack of articulation is not without its problems. It has been slightly improved but it is not entirely satisfactory and will be seen from a near 360 degree view. Before work commences, an archaeological site survey must be carried out.

Mike Cook



The Winerack

Last July, local building company Carters offered the Society a chance to look around the Winerack later in the autumn, when it was due to be in its final stages of completion. The tour was limited to twenty people, so I sent round an email to members and received 92 replies! The visit took place in early September with the lucky first twenty in attendance and I managed to secure with Carters two further tours.

On arrival, we were equipped by Carters with 'high-vis' clothing and steel toe-cap boots. (I had to give them our shoe sizes, so I share with you that the average shoe size of the Ipswich Society is 8!) We watched a promotional video explaining the problems involved in finishing a 'ready-made' structure: the Winerack, as named by the people of Ipswich.

The car stacking system was also explained and that is where our tour began. There are eight storeys of car parking inside the building with space for 250 cars. Residents will drive in from Key Street and park on one of three turntables, remove themselves, their shopping, grandchildren, dogs, etc. from the car and use their key fob to send it on its journey. The turntable twists and delivers the car into one of the (German manufactured) lifts which move it on to one of the storage shelves. It's a bit like a giant drinks vending machine.

One of the advantages of internal car parking is that the apartments are wrapped around the outside of the building and so have lots of windows – and the views are magnificent! In September the lifts were not finished, so we walked up to the third floor. It was a fine summer evening and the waterfront looked gorgeous. The additional two tours with a further 40 members altogether were in October and by this time there were lifts and we ascended to the 12th floor, of the total of 19. The view was absolutely stunning in the early evening twilight.

When an opportunity like this arises and the timing precludes dissemination in the *Newsletter*, I use my 'round robin' email list. If you do not receive my monthly email updates and would like to please send me your email address.

Caroline Markham secretary@ipswchsociety.org.uk

Heritage Open Days 2019

I'm very pleased to report that Ipswich had yet another successful Heritage Open Days weekend. Of course, the fabulous weather over the weekend of the 14 and 15 September helped so I've decided to take credit for that as well; you're welcome!

The event seems to grow year on year and this year we had forty venues and attractions open. There were also guided walks by our friends from the Ipswich Tourist Guides Association, starting from the TIC in St Stephens Lane and an extra guided walk led by the Stowmarket Ramblers, setting off from Christchurch Mansion. Let's not forget the Ipswich Transport Museum bus: always popular and a great way to get from the town centre to Broomhill Lido and Library.

A special welcome to our new participants in 2019: St Mary at the Elms, St Mary Le Tower, both wonderful churches, along with Tower House, Birketts in Princes Street and Suffolk 'energy from waste' out at Blakenham. Thank you all for taking part.

Also, to old friends soon to return: Arlingtons, Christ Church United Reformed Baptist Church, The Royal Hospital School at Holbrook and Ipswich Cemeteries. You were all missed.

As ever, our friends at Willis Towers Watson were very popular (and a great place for lunch). Of course, they had competition this year, from nearby Birketts, for the best roof-top view. They both get a rosette for a great skyline view of the town. I'd also like to give a very honourable mention to The Ipswich Building Society at Mutual House. Love the period costumes. I very much hope everyone enjoyed the day – the town was buzzing.

A big thank you to everyone who agreed to open their doors. And thank you to all the wonderful stewards, those leading guided walks or driving buses. Many, many thanks to the volunteers from the committee and membership of the Society for your assistance before and on the day. Thanks also to Ipswich Borough Council for their valuable assistance in designing the layout of the book and to the team at the Tourist Information Centre.

Finally, thank you to all of you, the residents of Ipswich and our welcome visitors. Your enthusiasm and enjoyment of the weekend makes it all worthwhile.

See you all next year.
Neil Thompson,
Ipswich Society
Heritage Open Days
Coordinator



Visitors on the roof garden,
Providence House (Birketts)
in Princes Street.
Photograph by Tim Leggett

Classical heads at the station

In September, Stephen Salter drew our attention to an ornate terracotta head at the northern end of Platform 4, repeated in several places below the canopy line at the railway station. He had asked Greater Anglia about what or who this represents, but they did not know. Later, railway history enthusiast, Mervyn Russen, saw the enquiry and happened to be at the station.

‘I had some trouble locating the heads but eventually found some – sixteen in all. They are located on the waiting room building on the island platform between Platform areas 3A and 4B at the tunnel end of the island. There are eight on each side of the building... What is more, there appears to be more than one cast used because the beard designs are different on the examples shown here and they are staring at the world at different angles. All of them seem to be enjoying the company of snails.



‘The heads must have been installed at around the same time as the island platform was built in 1883 – almost forty years after the main station was constructed. When I saw Stephen’s example, I wondered if it was Mercury (Roman mythology) or Hermes (Greek mythology), the messenger god. This might fit with it being placed on a railway station. One employee at the station said that he had been told that they were Greek gods.’

[Our thanks to Mervyn and Stephen for the photographs and we hope that Society members might be able to come up with further information. -Ed.]



November 2019 saw the celebration of 20 years of the Bangladeshi Support Centre, based in Ipswich and now rebranded as **BSC Multicultural Services**. The organisation supports over 50 nationalities in Suffolk. Started (and continued) by a remarkable, committed group of volunteers, it is now a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It operates from an accessible community building which also houses other VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) organisations including ‘Citizens Advice, Ipswich’ in Suffolk’s most ethnically diverse and vibrant town. The BSC reaches out to advance education and empower individuals and communities.

[www.bscmulticulturalservices.org.uk]

The Civic Voice Manifesto for the 2019 General Election

The Civic Voice, the national body of which The Society is an active member has published its planning manifesto for the 2019 General Election. Its recommendations are clearly important for many Local Planning Authorities and their local societies. It reflects the Trust's visits to Societies throughout the country, particularly by the Executive Director, Ian Harvey (members may recall his visit to Ipswich and his dislike of the Willis building). We are lucky to live in Ipswich where our Planners are well staffed, able, scrupulous and effective.

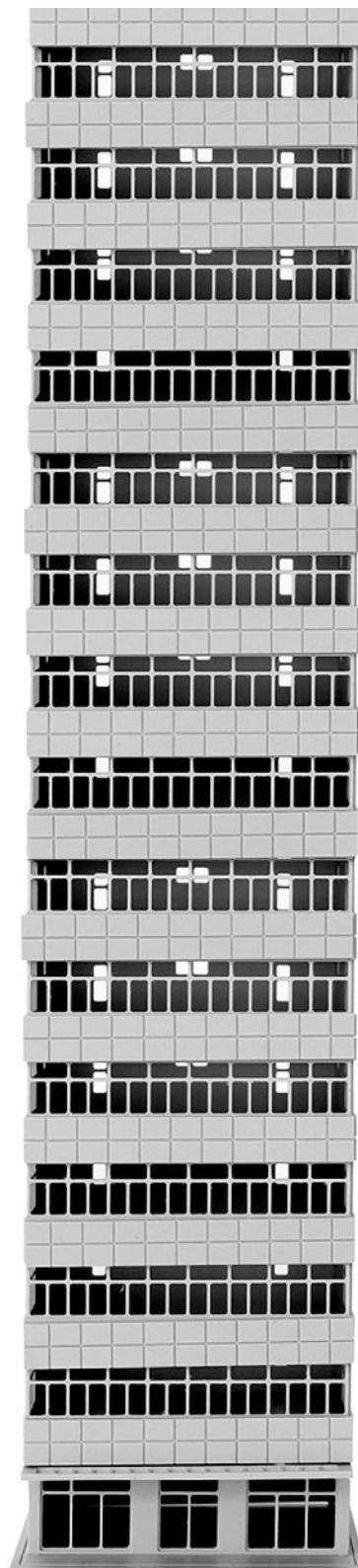
They want an **A**ccessible, **B**alanced and **C**ollaborative Planning System. Citizens and groups making objections, often highly expert, detailed and well-argued, at the full application usually have only a minimal effect. Developers have bought the land, worked out how many dwellings they can fit in and give away as little as possible so that their 25% profit is reached.

At present, planning officers encourage early discussions concerning your proposals (free to householders but commercial developers are charged.) This may result in a formal pre-application (pre-app). These are kept highly confidential. Civic Voice would have an open pre-app conversation with planners and affected parties; additionally, they would have an independent 'moderator' to oversee this process to ensure that it was transparent and that everybody was heard. The Ipswich Society thinks that this is a sensible step and would be helpful; however, the attitude of secrecy that applicants currently have in regard to pre-apps make it unlikely to be agreed by developers.

Civic Voice makes no comment on the overwhelming role that the big developers play and they make no suggestion as to how to ensure that plans, once approved, remain unchanged and not value-engineered into a cheaper and tawdry version that is unrecognisable.

The Society would like to see the Section 106 or CIL agreements made public. These legal agreements between the local planning authority and the developer regulate the affordable housing and the monies the developer pays towards the mitigation of the effects of the build on transport, education and health infrastructure. The money comes from the profits and so each side employs experts to assess how much the developer can/should afford to pay. Currently, none of this information is available. It is, after all, the money that is going to be utilised for the public good.

Mike Cook



Planning Enforcement

You may have noticed some criticism of the local authority elsewhere in this *Newsletter* but there are departments within the Council where praise is due. One such case is Planning Enforcement. In simple terms, in Ipswich you cannot get away with much; planning violations rarely escape the eyes of the Planning Officers (or occasionally Ipswich Society members).

An all too frequent breach is the use of sheds in rear gardens for commercial activity, and this comes in a number of similar, but different forms. Either a second, third or more sheds are erected to meet the demands of the business (and 'sheds' here could mean kennels and dog cages), or an over large shed which not only occupies much of the available space but it is used for the storage of commercial goods which then attract an increase in vehicle movement.

Most of these cases present some initial difficulty, they are inevitably an individual entrepreneur just starting a business (which is to be encouraged), doing it from home (which is usual) but expanding too quickly thus causing a nuisance to the neighbours.

The enforcement office also acts to have banners removed when they are advertising a product or an event at premises other than where the banner is displayed. Generally banners can be displayed for 28 days but only outside the premises to which the advert relates.

Enforcement officers have also been effective in ensuring that the conversion of small terraced houses into multiple occupancy is done so with consideration and respect for the adjoining property owner. This is a difficult one as a loft conversion, with the dormer window (or larger) on the rear elevation, allowed under permitted development.

The rule was introduced to make it possible to extend the home to accommodate a growing family; it has been misused by some unscrupulous developers who have converted two up, two down houses into units for as many as nine unrelated occupants. One toilet, one small kitchen, no common room and each bedroom little bigger than a single bed.

That, in itself doesn't contravene planning regulations but, as you can see in the photograph on page 10, the removal of the kitchen walls leaving the back bedroom hanging on very little support does cause concern under building regulations and probably contravenes health and safety legislation. Work on the property illustrated was stopped when the HSE issued a prohibition notice.

In a similar case elsewhere in town the developer had removed what they considered to be 'their half' of the shared chimney stack (and the chimney breast below), without any thought as to how the remaining part of the stack would remain standing.

The case receiving the greatest amount of publicity was a listed property in Silent Street, the owner being summoned to the Magistrates Court early in 2019 to account for the alterations made without consent. He admitted eight counts of contravening planning law on a building of special architectural or historic interest, extensive areas of early nineteenth century decorative plaster having been removed and other unauthorised work carried out. He was given six months to carry out restoration work to the satisfaction of the Conservation team. Having

failed to meet the Court's requirements the building owner was back in court in July and was fined £20,000 with a similar amount in costs (and narrowly avoiding a custodial sentence).

An interesting (and expensive) case involves a partially built back garden development. In 2016 the original planning application was refused because the proposed house was simply too big for the site, it was poorly designed and was contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The developer tried again in August 2019 but by now had convinced himself that the new version would be acceptable so started building before the planning committee had made a decision. This version of the proposed property was also refused, however the building was by now up to chamber floor. A third application, this time for a smaller property was considered by the Planning Committee at their November meeting. This was approved meaning that the foundations and partially built external walls will have to be removed before this latest design can be constructed.

The enforcement team in Ipswich deal with perhaps 200 cases each year, varying between change of use, works to trees protected by preservation orders, unlawful advertisements and breaches to the granted permission.

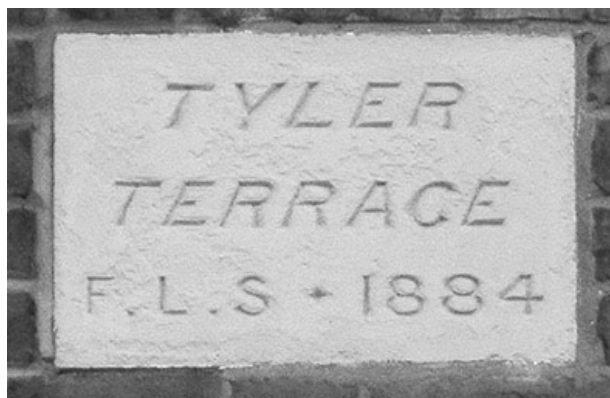
John Norman



Photograph by John Norman

IBPT Ipswich Exemplar Initiative

Ipswich Building Preservation Trust (IBPT) partnered with Ipswich Building Society (IBS) is searching for a local residential property built by the Freehold Land Society (FLS) that can be bought and used as an 'Ipswich Exemplar Initiative', creating an enduring representation of early Ipswich housing development.



Above: one of the characteristic FLS house plaques

The Trust aims to acquire a 2 to 3 bedroom property which retains some original features, but needs refurbishment. The renovation will illustrate how the property can achieve modern energy efficiencies and still retain its historic character.

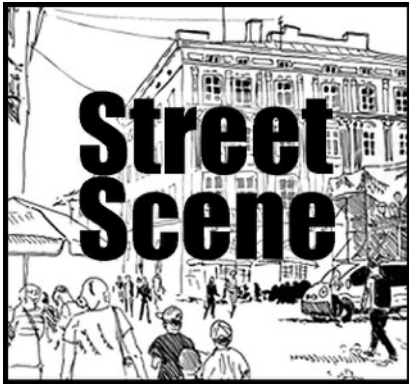
During this renovation period IBPT hopes to create workshops, and to record progress. This process and the resulting resources will contribute to education and provide practical guidance for those involved in renovating similar properties. In addition, IBPT aims to include research concerning the human stories associated with the property itself, the Freehold Land Society, and the extension of the parliamentary vote in late 19th century Ipswich.

Of the 484 properties built by the FLS in Ipswich, a number have been short-listed on the grounds of practicability for restoration and maximum visibility potential for the general public. The Ipswich Building Preservation Trust intends to work with Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Building Society and other organisations and heritage professionals to achieve the Ipswich Exemplar Initiative to reinforce the importance of our local building heritage and its links with the community it serves.

If you have, or know of, an FLS property which might be of interest to the Trust in this initiative, please contact Nick Jacob, IBPT Chairman, 89 Berners Street, Ipswich IP1 3LN (01473- 221150; email: njacob@njarchitects.co.uk).



Above: a 'typical' FLS terrace of decently-built houses in Ipswich.



As I write, the stunning 50 feet high Christmas tree from Elvedon Forest is standing in its impressive tub on Cornhill covered in masses of bright lights and golden baubles and the town Christmas lights have been switched on. A handful of empty units have been filled by Christmas pop-up shops; Lloyds Avenue has a Christmas/Craft Market covered by a large marquee, Ipswich Town Football Club has an exhibition and pop-up shop in the Town Hall including the replica FA Cup; card barrows, carol singers and buskers abound, children run around excitedly and there is a buzz in the air.

Many changes have occurred in Ipswich in the last three months. Here are just a few of them.

Current building projects

*The Winerack is very nearly complete and the adjoining paving on Albion Quay is in progress as I write, which will be the finishing touch and complete the matching paving along the full length of this side of the Waterfront for the first time.

*The Hold is taking shape fast. The tower crane has gone, the hoardings are down and completion is expected in early 2020.

*The New Wolsey Theatre concourse reshaping is well under way and scaffolding has been erected as construction of the 'Golden Pavilion' has started, replacing the Wolsey Studio and adding rehearsal facilities for the theatre. Completion is expected in May 2020.

*The Buttermarket Centre internal refurbishment is progressing very slowly. This includes new flooring and updated wall cladding and a complete redesign of the entrance facing Butter Market.

*St. Francis Tower had its external cladding removed last year and is expected to have new upgraded cladding added in the near future after the decision on who pays for it.

*Cornhill snagging issues are being dealt with. The 'marmite' sculpture nicknamed 'Cornhenge' has been removed. Work is currently in progress replacing the paving on the tops and bottoms of the steps to make them more visible. In the New Year additional handrails will be added down the middle of the steps, also to the Town Hall steps. The tapered step, currently with barriers, will disappear to be replaced with a combination of seating and planters.

Recently completed projects

*The St Peters Wharf paving and upgrade has been completed with new lighting, seating, litter bins and three silver birch trees with smart surrounding cages to protect the trunks.

*The St Stephens Lane brick planters beside the church have been repaired and are looking much smarter. Other tidying-up work has been in progress in Arras Square.

*The former Bar Fontaine facing St Margarets Plain has been converted into smart apartments, the formerly derelict building looking attractive and loved again.



Now open

*Cards Direct has opened in Westgate Street replacing Weymouth-based tReds (shoes and fashion); this was their only shop in East Anglia, which recently closed.

*Pretzie coffee and patisserie restaurant opened at the top end of Westgate Street and has proved very popular.

*Café Myra opened on December 2 in the former Doorsteps site on St. Nicholas Street.

*The Orient convenience Asia store opened in Carr Street.

*Papaki coffee shop is due to open in King Street as I write.

*Paddy and Scott's international coffee shop chain have opened their new head office in the University of Suffolk next to their flagship Waterfront outlet.

*An impressive giant Noah's Ark is berthed alongside Orwell Quay, open to the public with a Bible stories exhibition. This is the first time the vessel has visited the UK and she is expected to stay in Ipswich for the next three months. This is a real coup for the town.

Shops and pubs

*The former Swan Inn in King Street has reopened under new owners as The Swan & Hedgehog.

*The Falcon in Queen Street/Falcon Street at the time of writing has just reopened under the same management to see how things go.

*The (Grand Old) Duke of York in Woodbridge Road is reopening under new owners as 'The Duke' after redecoration.

*Argos has closed their Carr Street branch and reopened in the Sainsbury's store in Upper Brook Street, as is happening with the Sainsbury-owned Argos stores in many towns.

Coming soon

*Diechmann shoes are reported to be opening early in 2020 in the Cornhill site to be vacated by Burtons/Dorothy Perkins in the New Year.

*Hayes Travel are reported to eventually be filling the empty Thomas Cook unit in Tavern Street which has been empty since the collapse of the latter earlier in 2019.

*A Vegan Pub is to be opened by the Lloyds Avenue based Peninsular Vegan Foods/Hanks. So far the location is secret but the pub is expected to open soon.

*A Nail Bar is being fitted out in the former Martin & Co. estate agents unit in Queen Street which has been empty for a while.

The future

*Broomhill Pool has recently put out to tender the work to restore and reopen the lido, with work planned to start early 2020; completion possibly by 2021.

*McCarthy Stone – we still await a start on the assisted living complex on the former Archant Newspapers site in Lower Brook Street by the same developer completing the Winerack.

*New Police Station – plans have been put forward for a revamp and extension to the Princes Street Fire Station so that the Police Station can move in with them, replacing the current Police Station facing Museum Street and backing on to Chapman Lane.

*The Defiance, Stoke Street – plans have been submitted to convert the former pub into apartments with the addition of a sizeable extension.

*Burtons site, St Peters Wharf. Exciting plans have been put forward for this site and adjoining building next to DanceEast for an arts and media hub. If the plans are given the green light, two storeys could be added to the former Burton's building. A mix of 14 flats is proposed for the third to sixth floors, with a plant and roof terrace and restaurant on the top floor. Funding still has to be found for this project.

As projects occur during 2020 we will try to keep you updated through our quarterly *Newsletter* and Ipswich Society Facebook page.

Tim Leggett



New representative for the Ipswich Society at the SLHC needed

Since 2013 I have been a committee member of the Suffolk Local History Council (an umbrella group for all things history in the county) as the representative of The Ipswich Society. Changes in my personal life have meant I will resign from the SLHC committee with effect from November 2020.

Therefore the Ipswich Society is looking for someone to represent them at SLHC. The SLHC Committee is made up of representatives from many areas, such as Record Office, Museum of East Anglian Life, Bawdsey Radar Trust, Suffolk Family History Society, various Local History Societies, Recorders and individuals.

The SLHC produce a Newsletter, Review (of history articles), Calendar of history meetings and Speakers list; it administers the Recorders Scheme, puts on conferences for societies, Recorders & members as well as organising two 'Focus On' days each year.

The role of my replacement will be to produce a short report following each SLHC Committee meeting for The Ipswich Society Committee and to help with the running of the various events mentioned above. There are four meetings a year, on a Thursday, that are held in Ipswich.

You don't have to wait until next November as you could be seconded on to the SLHC Committee. I will be remaining on the SLHC Committee until November 2020 owing to another role I have responsibility for. If you are interested in finding out more about this role, please contact me: email janette1407@hotmail.co.uk or phone on 01728 628768.

Janette Robinson



A huge ark has moored at Orwell Quay on the Wet Dock, its first visit to the UK. The ark *just* squeezed through the lock and is 230 feet long, and about half the size of Noah's. This apparently timber-built ship (it sits on a steel hull) is a venture advertised as a biblical museum of sculptures and structures – some say a bit pricey to visit...

Greenways

Sounds like an old song, I know. In fact, The Greenways Project is a successful partnership, led by Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) with Babergh District Council (BDC) and East Suffolk Council (ESC). Suffolk County Council were also involved for many years but sadly withdrew in 2018.

The project exists with the aim to protect and enhance our countryside and open spaces to the benefit of wildlife and local people, from Sroughton in the west to Martlesham in the east. It covers an area north of Tuddenham to Wherstead in the south: an area of some 100 square kilometres and home to around a quarter of the population of Suffolk.

The project which has existed for twenty-five years relies on volunteers to complete much of its practical conservation work. As with everything, there is a cost; this year it's about £100,000 of which the three remaining partners contribute around £60,000. The project fills the funding shortfall by working with Parish and Town Councils, seeking grants and other contributions and by selling their services.

Last September I was invited to join a tour of some of Greenways projects including the installation of paths around common land at Martlesham, plans for possible path surfacing and a major step building project up the 'Tump' at Ravenswood. I understand that's what they call the small manmade hill with the *Green Wind 2* installation by environmental artist Diane MacLean on the top. If you live at Ravenswood or have visited, that is the group of tall poles with triangular 'pennants' on top; it's a beautiful spot and well worth a visit.

I also saw the project's plans for a new river path and a major new nature reserve at Sroughton next to the Eastern Gateway site, where the sugar beet factory used to be.

Like many people around the town, I enjoy our green spaces but inevitably tend to take them for granted. I now appreciate how much effort goes into managing these wonderful areas and would suggest £100,000 a year is money well spent. I hope IBC, BDC and ESC continue to support the project on our behalf. We need to support and thank The Greenways Project and all its fantastic volunteers for their hard work. Everything they do enhances our wonderful town.

If you would like to know more about the Greenways Project contact james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk
Neil Thompson

4 College Street

Ipswich Borough Council has made a substantial investment to save the Benet Aldred house (1590) at 4 College Street. The whole St Peter's Wharf scheme will be designed, planned and eventually built, but this run-down little merchant's house is significant and deserves to be saved now and celebrated for its historical place in the Ipswich story.



The Soham wartime explosion and the pocket park in Ipswich

Railways were an important part of the war effort in World War II. Railway employees were in reserved occupations to ensure that the extensive rail network operated. The field of battle was not the only place where actions of extreme courage by ‘ordinary’ people are enacted, as this incident exemplifies.

Driver Benjamin Gimbert and Fireman James Nightall were on the footplate of the locomotive Austerity on the night of 2 June, 1942, travelling from Ely to Soham with a train of 51 wagons. They were loaded with bombs bound for the US Air Force bases in the region for delivery to targets in Germany. On the way to Soham, the driver glanced round and noticed to his alarm that the truck just behind the locomotive was on fire – it contained forty-four 500-pound bombs, unfused but full of high explosive. He applied the brake gently to avoid jarring the load.

Driver Gimbert and Fireman Nightall knew that they had to try to detach the burning wagon from the remainder of the train to avoid a massive explosion. The train was now travelling around 20 miles per hour, but it took about half a mile to come to a halt. By that time they were approaching Soham station.

Jim Nightall jumped down from the footplate and went to uncouple the burning truck from the rest of the train; he remounted, then Driver Gimbert opened the regulator to ease forward. “I proceeded with the wagon, which was on fire, intending to get it well clear of the station and surrounding buildings, and leave it there and proceed to Fordham,” driver Gimbert later said in his official report. “On approaching the station I gave a second touch on the whistle to draw the signalman’s attention, and as my engine rolled towards him on the platform I went over to my mate’s side, namely to the right-hand side of the engine, and shouted to him to stop the mail and asked if the road to Fordham was clear.”

He never received an answer for, at that moment all the bombs in the truck exploded, the explosion being heard many miles away. Jim Nightall was killed and signalman F. Bridges died later that day in hospital. Driver Gimbert somehow survived, though in his first three days in hospital surgeons removed 32 pieces of metal from his body.

The guard of the train, Herbert Clarke of Ipswich, was knocked down by the blast as he made his way back to his van at the back of the train. Picking himself up, shocked and injured, he ran back up the line towards Ely, putting down detonators to warn the crew of any approaching train, before he collapsed.

Soham station was destroyed and, where the burning wagon had stood was a crater 66 feet across and 15 feet deep. Buildings all over the town of Soham were wrecked and damaged, but the action of the two men in the cab had prevented a much greater explosion and probably saved thousands of lives in the area.

The George Cross was awarded to Driver Gimbert and (posthumously) to Fireman Nightall. The citation read: “These men knew the danger to which they exposed themselves but chose to put their own safety last.”

In 1960, two Class 47 diesel locomotives were named respectively Benjamin Gimbert GC and James Nightall GC. Local man Herbert George Clarke is commemorated in a pocket park opposite the southern end of Croft Street, Over Stoke, where a plaque can be seen. Its position

signifies the huge importance of the early railway in this location and the many railway employees who lived there.

(Based on the article by Bob Malster in the Friends of Ipswich Transport Museum newsletter, *The Priors Press*, issue 173.)

While the population strove to retain a semblance of 'ordinary life' during the war, we are reminded here of the perils which might be just around the corner.

We are grateful to Society member Izzy Lane for reminding us of this extraordinary story and its source, and her hope that the plaque on the park entrance can be cleaned and repaired; also for the photograph.



Thanks to St Peter's volunteers

Once again we've had another year of sessions in St Peter's by the Waterfront on Thursdays from May to the end of September 2019. I would like to thank all volunteers for giving their time during those months in order to keep the centre open and to welcome visitors, many of whom came from overseas (even arriving by boat), and enjoying their visit.



In particular I would like to express my thanks to Jean Lockie, a stalwart among volunteers, always ready to do extra shifts at short notice. She announced that 2019 would be her last year of volunteering due to ill health; I know that I, and all our volunteers, will miss her cheerful disposition and readiness to help.

As usual, in March 2020 I will be contacting those keen to help out in St Peter's on Thursdays from May 7 to 24 September.

Jean Hill

If you would like to volunteer, do contact the Hon. Secretary – details on page 23.

Letters to the Editor

Development and walkers from Geoff Knight, Ramblers Footpath Secretary (Ipswich & District)

Your article in October *Newsletter* of The Ipswich Society is interesting and wide-ranging. I would like to home in on one group of people likely to be affected by the outcome of any development.

Over the last three years there have been two Public Inquiries under the Transport and Works Act relating to the Main Railway Line in Suffolk and the Felixstowe Branch Line – effectively the Trimleys. There has also been the matter of Planning matters relating to Sizewell C. The Northern By-Pass is stirring again with all that might affect.

What all these developments have in common is finding a way to move people and traffic along their chosen (or to be chosen) route.

What they all signally fail to offer is any worthwhile planning compensation for those who have walked the paths interrupted or threatened by these developments and there are 47 of them.

As a result of the Felixstowe Public Inquiry, which has reported, a king-size bridge has been constructed at Trimley and five footpaths diverted – mostly close to the railway line. No underpass has been suggested by Network Rail. There was virtually no appreciation of the reasons why people walk and what might be a good alternative to any lost route. The opinions of the objectors were noted, and largely ignored. All the places where vehicles can, however infrequently, cross remain unaffected. It is only footpaths that are affected.

Walking is reckoned to be good for health – it's good for social interaction too. Dog-owners make much use of the network of paths. There are a host of formal and informal groups of walkers. They are not walking to get anywhere; they have not usually a train to catch! It can be exercise; it can be a walking conversation; it nearly always has a view, some plants or crops to be seen, birds and some native mammals.

Can I ask your readers to make sure the planners are aware of what walkers would lose by unimaginative planning? Making accommodation with needed improvements is one thing, removing a delightful walk is quite another. The loss may be difficult to quantify but it would be felt deeply.

Ransomes and Rapier from Mervyn Russen

I was interested to read the articles by John Alborough and Barry Girling in recent issues of the *Newsletter* about buffers manufactured by Ransomes and Rapier discovered in far-flung regions of the world.

I discovered machinery by R and R a bit closer to home whilst on holiday at Didcot Railway Centre, home of the Great Western Railway Museum. It is a turntable for turning locomotives originally made for the Southern Railway in 1935 (see next page, with a notice showing details as an inset). It was apparently moved to Didcot from Southampton Docks.

Thomas W. Mundt (mentioned on the notice board) was an engineer working for the Dutch State Railways who invented this variety of turntable which was a continuous girder type supported at three points.

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In a 1921 advertisement Ransomes and Rapier Ltd describe themselves as ‘Specialists in Railway Traversers and Turntables’.

‘Zombie Sites’ in Ipswich from Graham Day

Within the central area of Ipswich there appear to be some sites which are available for development, but nothing ever appears to be happening and, as such, they do detract from the street scene somewhat.

There may be at last some developments regarding the former County Hall in St Helens Street. However in the near vicinity, at the corner of Grimwade Street and the Rope Walk, No 25 Grimwade Street and the former County Hall Social Club appear to be in a fairly advanced state of dereliction. Another site near the Lord Nelson in Fore Street has seen no movement whatsoever.

It is for me particularly sad with regard to the former Social Club. I was working in the Clerk’s Department at County Hall between 1969 and 1971, and I believe the club opened its doors in 1971. As staff we were invited along to the opening which was hosted by the then Clerk of the County Council, Cecil Lightfoot. It was an excellent occasion and over the years the Social Club went from strength to strength; I remember going to band gigs over the years at the club right up until the new millennium.

The decamping of Suffolk County Council to Endeavour House then sealed the fate of the club premises. The only activity in recent years was a homeless lady who made her home for a while in the porch. Now the site is fenced off, but with no sign of any activity and trees and bushes are sprouting through the structure as if in direct competition to the canopy of the Amazon rain forest!

I realise that there are always financial constraints on developers, that planners may be in the process of negotiating a scheme with a potential developer prior to the granting of planning permission, and there is additional uncertainty for everything due to Brexit!

Surely, however, something can be done to develop these zombie sites.

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Patrick Taylor from Geoff Knight

Having read several articles from Patrick in the *Newsletter* I wondered whether there might be something of an appreciation after his recent death. His activity as a ‘conservation architect’ was considerable and always with an ecological bent.

I first knew him as a mathematician and a rambler and more recently with the Chamber Music Society. His book *All Else Fails* is a cornucopia of his varied activities and talents. We all received one at his funeral in the Guildhall, Hadleigh – a fitting place to celebrate his life.

[In July 2011, Patrick gave a Winter Illustrated Talk to the Society based on his book *Toll-houses of Suffolk*. -Ed.]

Ipswich and the New Hanseatic League

The October 2016 *Newsletter* (Issue 205) carried an article about a Society outing to King’s Lynn. Caroline Markham wrote: ‘We were guided round Hanse House, one of the original ‘kontors’ or warehouses of the Hanseatic League - indeed the only surviving intact Hanseatic warehouse in England. King's Lynn, according to Dr Richards, is an *Edge Town* – on the edge of the Fens, on the edge of East Anglia (it is closer to Leicester than to Great Yarmouth), on the edge of the Midlands and on the edge of the Hanseatic League – it was a partner town along with Great Yarmouth and Ipswich.

‘The Hanseatic League or Hansa was a confederation of merchants stretching from the Baltic to the North Sea in operation from the 13th to 17th centuries. A New Hanseatic League has been formed, with its headquarters in Lübeck, for those with connections to the medieval Hansa - King's Lynn was the first English town to join in 2006. Hull and Boston joined in 2014 and 2015 respectively and we look forward to Ipswich putting in its application and becoming a member of this historic economic association.’

In April 2017 Alison Fairman, Chairman of Boston Hanse Group, contacted Caroline as a result of the article in the *Newsletter* and offered support with an Ipswich application. The email was forwarded to Stuart Grimwade and the Ipswich Maritime Trust took it from there. The Borough of Ipswich duly applied to join the New Hanseatic League, which is based in Lübeck in Germany, and was accepted in 2018. Pat Grimwade, a member of the Society’s Executive Committee for a number of years, has written a book on the subject and will be the speaker at our Winter Illustrated Talk in February (see page *Diary dates*, page 23, for details).

Snippets

Two key snippets of news for **Suffolk motorists**, particularly those commuters who work along the Civic Drive-Princes Street corridor. Ipswich Borough Council is planning a new multi-storey car park on the existing surface car park off Portman Road.

Encouraging is the fact that local firms have been commissioned to design the structure: KLH Architects and JP Chick (Structural Engineers). Project managers and quantity surveyors are Allman Woodcock of Norwich.

There will no doubt be competition amongst manufacturers of such things that their structural steel or precast concrete patent design is the most efficient, cost effective or quickest to erect but we welcome the Council’s decision to award these initial contracts to local people.

Ipswich Makerspace (<https://ipswichmakerspace.com>)

The Makerspace is a Suffolk-based group of like-minded makers who get together to learn, build and experiment with a huge variety of technology – modern hardware, traditional craftworks, and everything in between.

The workshop is in Dove Street, Ipswich featuring tools for almost any project, spread through several work areas for various types of crafts: soldering stations, a laser-cutting bay, and a fully equipped workshop. The workshop includes a table saw and router table, pillar drills and bench sanders. There is a CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine, 3D printers, a laser-cutter, plus computers to drive them. Member interests encompass programming, robotics, and electronics, but also range through classic woodworking, costumes and props, models and sculpture, chainmail, leatherwork, sewing, papercraft and even jewellery.

[Readers addicted to the BBCTV series *The Repair Shop* will be interested in this venture. Ed.]

Ipswich Digital Trail (called ‘Ipswich Walking Trail’ on the app)

This is one for all of our readers who own and use a mobile telephone... Suffolk Archives has launched an app containing historical trails that users can follow, unlocking different points on a treasure-hunt style walk. You can learn about key sites in Ipswich, answer quiz questions, and see Ipswich change through time. The app can be downloaded for free by searching 'chronicle story trails' in the iPhone or Android app stores, and the Ipswich trail was launched for Heritage Open Days on the 14th of September 2019. One or two inaccuracies need to be corrected, but we hope to road test this in our next issue. Of course, there's no substitute for a knowledgeable, friendly 'IRL' (In Real Life) Town Guide, who continue to provide excellent tours of the town.

La Tour Cycle Café

Anna Matthews has had to withdraw from La Tour Cycle Café on Albion Wharf owing to bereavement and health problems. As the driving force behind this fine, popular venture which started at 17 Tower Street and which helped the homeless, refugees and others to provide tasty meals and drinks to the discerning customer (at reasonable prices), Ipswich owes Anna a great deal. Discussions continue to try to continue the spirit of this community space elsewhere.

Passive House

A dodecagonal (12-sided) structure built to Passive House standards is taking shape in Brickmakers Wood – between the rear of Suffolk New College and Alexandra Park. This form of building is constructed with superinsulation and triple glazing to be ultra-low energy. It will require little energy for space heating or cooling and will be used for therapeutic treatments.

Passive house (German: Passivhaus) is a voluntary standard for energy efficiency in a building, which reduces the building's ecological footprint and is sound-proof.

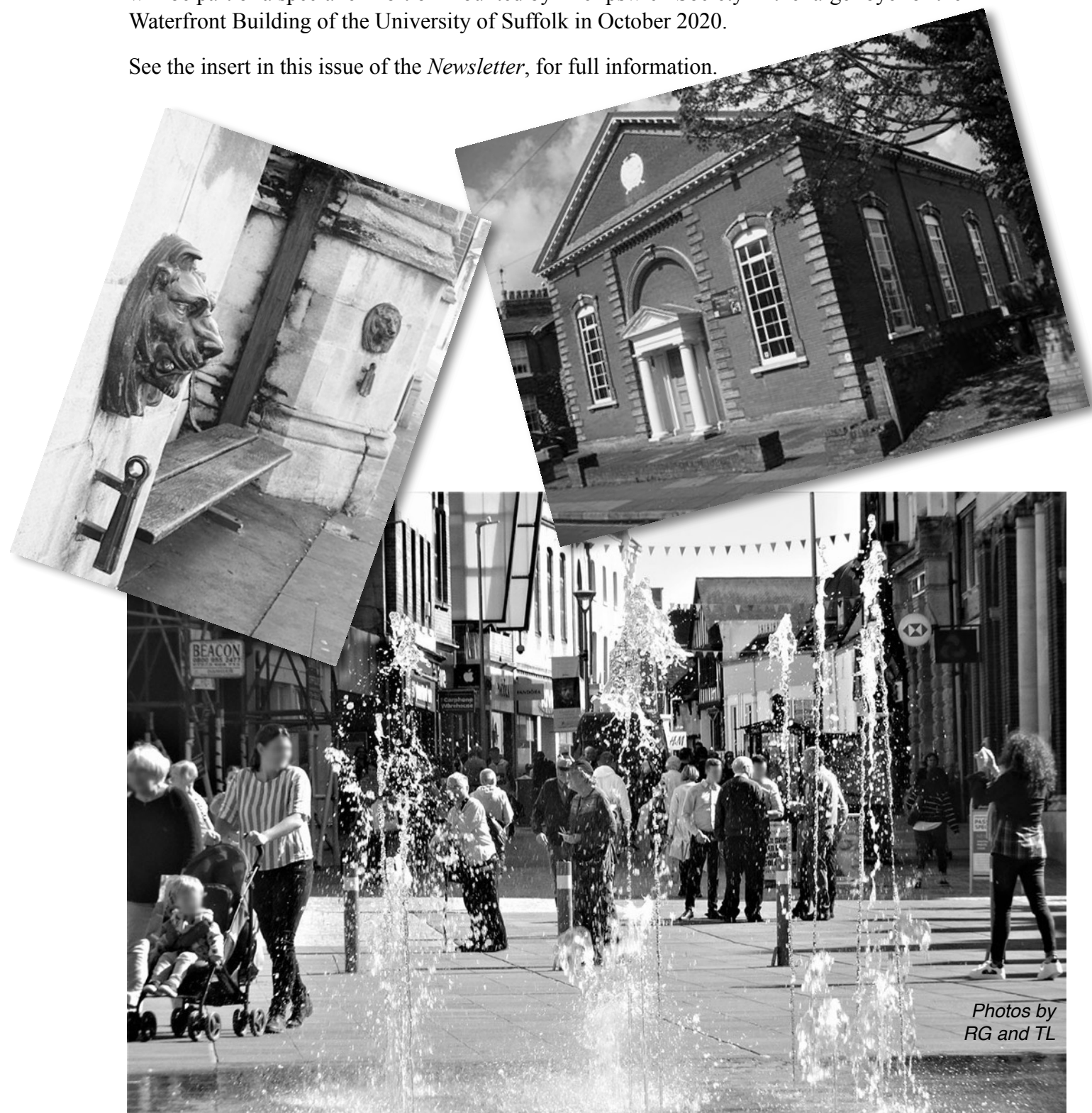
Our photograph shows the state in early November 2019; the glazing was installed shortly afterwards.



Ipswich Society 60th Anniversary Photography Competition

The Ipswich Society will celebrate its 60th birthday at our Annual General Meeting in April 2020. We invite members and non-members of the Society to enter our Diamond Anniversary competition to celebrate Ipswich town centre, its buildings, environment and people. It is open to photographers – and now that almost everybody has a mobile phone, that's a lot of you – of all ages. Tell us your age if you're under 18. The rules are very simple and the selected images will be part of a special exhibition mounted by The Ipswich Society in the large foyer of the Waterfront Building of the University of Suffolk in October 2020.

See the insert in this issue of the *Newsletter*, for full information.



Photos by
RG and TL

The Ipswich Society

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Diary dates

Winter Illustrated Talks at Museum St Methodist Church (entrance in Black Horse Lane); all talks start at 7.30pm and free tea, coffee and biscuits are provided afterwards. All are welcome.

Wednesday 15 January 2020: Winter Talk. Tim Edwards on 'Ipswich Town FC – Putting the story into our history: an ITFC Heritage Society talk'.

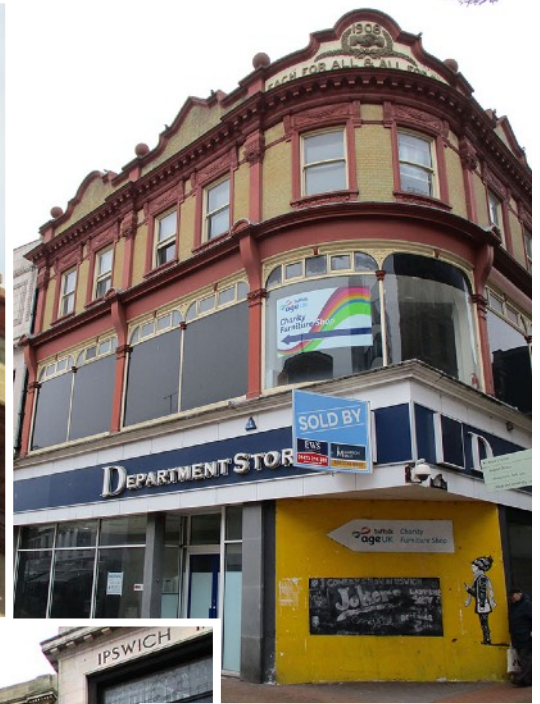
Wednesday 19 February: Patricia Grimwade on 'Ipswich - a Hanseatic port'. Pat has visited many of the Hanseatic ports to research a new booklet: (which will be available for £2 each).

Wednesday 18 March: Oliver Paul on 'The story of Suffolk Food Hall and The Cook House (including the Paul family, agriculture and the farm shop)'.

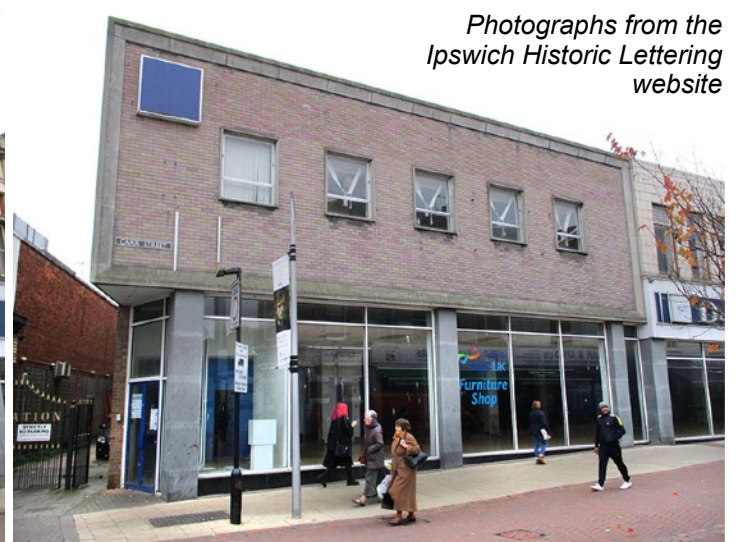
2020 Outings: *24 April* - Tutankhamun at the Saatchi Gallery, Chelsea; *20 May* - Guided tours of Hadleigh and Finchingfield Guildhall; *11 June* - Gressenhall Museum; *7 July* - Kew Gardens

Newsletter deadlines & publication dates (the latter may vary by a few days)

Deadline for material: 1 December;	Publication date: 22 January;
1 March;	2 April;
1 June;	17 July;
1 September;	9 October.



Former Co-op stores in Carr Street, Ipswich, 2019.



Photographs from the Ipswich Historic Lettering website