

Issue 181 Newsletter Oct 2010

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2010 ISSUE 181

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The official opening of the Society's gift to the town – see page 9

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Editorial: Golden Times

Editorial: Golden Times and Leaden Prospects

This is the last Newsletter of 2010, our 50th anniversary year. I'm sure many members will have enjoyed some of our special events. Talks by distinguished speakers, Jonathan Glancey, Jay Merrick, Neil Clayton at Woolverstone and Ken Powell at Isaacs should have given us much to think about and made us appreciate even more the role of a civic amenity society.

Some might complain that the celebrations haven't involved red noses and party games. And neither will our end-of-year dinner! But the dinner should be an opportunity for simply enjoying ourselves in good company. I hope that many of you will be there to round off the year happily.

Then into 2011. If the Chancellor's cuts are only half as bad as feared, it will still be a difficult and uncertain future. Public services will be adversely affected and the voluntary sector will find it hard to compensate. The Ipswich Society is likely to include quite a number of public spirited individuals who will make their contributions to society at large. But for volunteers there are obvious limits of time, availability, health and above all continuity. Ipswich Film Theatre, for example, is being run by a magnificent body of volunteers - work which is acknowledged elsewhere in this Newsletter - but that combination of talents and enthusiasm doesn't grow on trees. And less glamorous public services might never attract enough volunteers.

The future is worrying because even when the economy shows signs of real recovery, re-creating public services would be very much harder than cutting them. To take a local example of a very efficient service, if Ipswich Buses were to be wholly privatised, it is inconceivable that it could ever become publicly owned again. The spirit of the times is against it. Decision makers must be aware that such changes are irreversible.

However, I sincerely hope that Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk County Council (what's left of it) will weather the storm judiciously, making decisions that will respect the built environment and the quality of the services on which our town depends. I trust members will agree with that, even if they don't agree with everything else above!

In the meantime, there is a wide variety of material in this Newsletter which I hope will interest you; this is not a one-track or narrow gauge society. For the next Newsletter, I'd welcome letters, articles, etc which members might like to send me by 20 November.

NEIL SALMON

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More Anniversary Events

Our special events continue this year with the Annual Awards Evening on Wednesday, 10 November and our end of year dinner on Friday, 3 December. Information should have been received by all members, under separate cover, about our dinner at Gresham's.

Our Awards Evening this year will be held in the Old Council Chamber in the Town Hall starting at 7.30 pm. The Council Chamber is also now known as part of the Bellamy Suite. This Victorian room is steeped in history and is accessed via the imposing Italianate staircase adjacent to the Town Hall main entrance. We will be serving wine or soft drinks and a selection of canapés at the end of the evening.

Su Marsden

Awards Evening

Further to Su Marsden's invitation above, members might like to know that there are fifteen nominated new buildings and refurbishment schemes to be shown on screen and evaluated. And we are pleased to report that Bob Allen, a former chairman of the Society and an excellent speaker, will again present and describe the nominations. We hope to meet many of you there at what remains arguably the Society's most important event of the year, even in this very special year!

Winter Lectures

There are three only this season because of the special events of 2010. All will take place in Museum Street Methodist Church on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 pm. Please feel free to bring your friends. There is no charge for anyone.

12 January 'Saving the Walk'

Bob Markham has subtitled his talk 'Ipswich people catch the tram, 1880 - to date'. He says this is "an illustrated history of Ipswich filling in its Victorian boundaries: travel by 'tram' to Whitton village, 1903; Gainsborough 1930; Priory Heath 1939; Maidenhall 1950; Chantry 1953, and more." [**Editor:** it sounds like a fascinating combination of geography, history, sociology and public transport!]

9 February The River Gipping Trust

Lewis Tyler, Secretary of the Trust, will speak about the work which has been done and which is planned to restore and care for this historic river and valley. The Trust is greatly involved with maintaining and improving the river from Stowmarket to West End Bridge, Ipswich. Although that doesn't include the final stretch of the river through the rest of Ipswich, members of our Society are likely to be very interested in everything to do with our historic waterway through Suffolk.
9 March Date definite. Speakers to be confirmed in the January Newsletter.

Chairman: Current Affairs

As I write this we are just coming up to another Heritage Weekend. The brochure lists many interesting buildings, many of which can't normally be viewed by the general public. There will be

free rides on a veteran bus provided by the Transport Museum. I do hope many of you will have availed yourselves of this programme.

The Society has for many years been calling for Ipswich to become de-cluttered. There are dozens of examples of unnecessary traffic lights, road signs and road fencing which are an eyesore, an expense and also counter-productive to road safety. It is therefore very good that Eric Pickles, the Government minister, has come out strongly in favour of the campaign and is instructing local government accordingly. Your committee will continue to press for a big reduction in clutter on our streets, and if you have any examples of such, please let us know - we can all help in this.

The economic slowdown continues and I am afraid will only accelerate in the New Year when VAT increases and departmental cuts (local and national) begin to bite. The effects so far are clearly displayed in our town centre. Shops closing or closed are very visible and disturbing. We must, however, preserve perspective. There are some new businesses opening, for example Paperchase in the old Dixon shop in Tavern Street. We must also record that UCS has now completed its second building on the Waterfront - to be named the James Hehir Building in honour of Ipswich's former CEO. This is a teaching building with specialist facilities. The building behind it, nearer Duke Street, Athena Hall, is purely student accommodation and should shortly be completed.

The housing market continues to decline slightly and there are a number of vacant units around the Waterfront. The state of the market, I'm afraid, will mean that the unfinished developments at the Stoke Bridge end will remain skeletal for some time to come.

Recent crime statistics show that once more nearly all crime rates are reduced. I know there is some scepticism about how reliable these figures are, and there are big differences in the methodologies of the two measures. But by either measure crime rates are the lowest for many years with recent steady improvements year on year. What is not so welcome is the number of people who fear crime. The public perception is that crime is high, despite proof to the contrary. Fear of crime is high - actual crime is low. We must do all we can to reduce this irrational fear, so often trumpeted by some sections of the press.

Peter Underwood, in many ways a founder of The Ipswich Society, is our sole Vice-President and is now settled happily in a home in Holbrook. Your committee will recommend to our next AGM that two additional Vice-Presidents should be appointed. The AGM will make the decision.

Jack Chapman

New Shops in Town

Viyella and Country Casuals have just moved into the handsome shops previously used by Ryman's in Butter Market. On the opposite side of the street, on the corner of Thoroughfare, White Stuff has recently opened. In Tavern Street the new iStore seems popular. If these are the sorts of shops which members of the Society and many other townspeople say Ipswich needs, let's hope they'll be well patronised. Meanwhile JDSports and Poundland are moving into bigger and more prominent premises. There's life in the old girl yet! **[Editor]**

News about Planning

Duke Street Roundabout

By promising a 15% reduction in traffic flow Suffolk received a Central Government grant towards removing the roundabout and replacing it with traffic lights, making Back Hamlet uni-directional uphill and traffic towards Duke Street turning right via Pownall Road. The neighbourhood is up in arms claiming that consultation has been improperly carried out by the agents. IBC officers and councillors have had to face unpleasant truths at public meetings, but the scheme will go ahead and may produce some improvements at Duke Street. On behalf of the Society I have attended meetings in support and given advice.

Public Houses

Pubs may go (The Blooming Fuchsia replaced by six houses the most recent) but new ones are rare. Francis Walsh, the founder of St Jude's Brewery in Cardigan Street, has been granted permission to convert the former photographic studio at 69 St Matthew's Street into a cask ale pub selling his products direct to the public - a new Brewery Tap in the town centre.

Cooper's Garage, West End Road

An Outline Application has been made to demolish the existing buildings and erect two drive-through stores, a Boots and a Burger King. (This application supersedes the one featured in the July Newsletter.) For flooding reasons, the site is not considered safe for housing. A thorough examination of all the alternative retail sites in the town has been carried out with the result that a Boots here would be open from 7am to midnight daily, except for normal Sunday hours. This would affect Sainsbury's at Hadleigh Road but probably not a lot of other pharmacies. The continuous hours are unique to Ipswich and would be a real service improvement. On the other hand we feel that there are an adequate number of car accessible fast food outlets. (On health grounds alone we object.) IBC will need a full traffic assessment by independent consultants to show that two drive-through outlets would not produce congestion at this over-regulated junction, including London Road and Yarmouth Road - it is said that there are 137 vertical poles and 150 metres of railings!

Great Whip Street

Further to this large application for nearly 400 residential units referred to in the July Newsletter, we are still awaiting a date for the Planning Committee's deliberations. We are unhappy with the elevations; a letter is being written now that the elevations have been revised.

Kennings' Site, Duke Street

A Travelodge Hotel package is planned. It is four-storied with parking behind. The Duke Street façade has striking vertically banded coloured panels. We support this application. [Editor: Travelodge have said, "Duke Street is perceived as a better location than the original site. It benefits from dedicated on-site parking as well as being in an excellent location for access to the many amenities at the Quay and the town centre." They had intended to be part of the Regatta Quay development which has gone into administration.]

Site of the former Thomas Wolsey School, Old Norwich Road

We support the use of this land for housing. The design is no worse than such medium size developments usually are. Twelve affordable units out of 48 is in line with the existing requirement of 25%.

Anglia Parkway

This site is on the road to the Bury Road Park & Ride near Graham's; it is in view of the Old Norwich Road Conservation Area. GB Oils propose to build six oil storage tanks and park eighteen tankers here. Its interest is that this may be the beginning of the removal of flammable products from the Vopak site next to the Cliff Brewery, which might lead to the brewery building being saved in the future.

The Corn Exchange

Finally agreement has been reached on the entrance to the Corn Exchange. Simple Sans Serif stainless letters below the balustrade will announce "THE CORN EXCHANGE". Below between the pillar capitals the temporary green painted plywood will be replaced with stainless steel panels. The left side doors will be electrically operated by a green push knob to help accessibility. There will be no canopy.

36 St Edmund's Road

This is a renewal of an existing permission to build a 5-bedroomed house in the garden of a house overlooking Constitution Hill. Unfortunately, the new design by an architectural technician is too large and uninteresting for a Conservation Area, deviating markedly from the previous Arts and Crafts-driven house.

The Cracked Willow in St Mary-le-Tower Churchyard

For many years the large and attractive willow in the SE part of the Tower churchyard has been splitting branches and the main trunk. Some weeks ago this became much worse; the Borough Arboricultural Officer and the Conservation Officer discussed the correct approach. For safety of the public and to the dismay of some members it was dismantled from a cherry-picker unit until, at about six metres from the ground, work had to be stopped because of a huge wasps' nest. When this has been dealt with the remaining trunk will be removed. It will be replaced in the planting season with a smaller tree, possibly a hornbeam. The Arboricultural Officer is seeking suggestions - phone Andy Whalley on 01473 432000.

Planning Regulations

The Coalition Government has announced many changes that will affect local planning in the future but so far they are largely announcements. Regional government has been disbanded so that Regional Planning Strategies have been dismissed. It's not clear what will replace them - as is the suspension of Local Development Frameworks. The process in Ipswich is suspended and the planning Inspector will return when she knows what she has to do. Likewise the Major Infrastructure Planning Board has disappeared, though most believe it will return in a slightly different disguise. The much touted abolition of 'Garden Grabs' will have to await the Bill. Most worryingly the dreaded 25% slash to council budgets will surely lead to considerable upheaval in the planning world as we know it.

Car Parking

Charles Street has returned, razed to the ground having lost its concrete-cancer upper floors. It is now Pay & Display at £1.80 for the first hour. Most developers cannot foresee being able to build their great buildings around the Waterfront in the near future. There is therefore a rash of temporary car parks for three years. It will relieve the usual Christmas season parking problems but will it lead to many more cars in central Ipswich with the consequent gridlocking? Let us hope the flows are being studied by Dave Watson, Head of Suffolk County Council's Highway Department.

Exterminate, Exterminate!

Quangos are an endangered species. They have been 'at risk' for quite some time. With a name like that perhaps it's not surprising - even though 'quango' sounds a bit better than 'quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation'!

But it's only a year since John Norman was praising the work of a quango which has been a great help to Ipswich - and now it's been killed off. EEDA (East of England Development Agency) has invested some £45m of public money in Ipswich. This includes a number of smallish contributions to some schemes, but more importantly large investments in UCS, IpCity Centre and the purchase of the huge Cranfield's site from Allied Mills so that a private developer could take over and concentrate on the actual development work. The fact that the developer has become a victim of the recession is not EEDA's fault. Without EEDA's role Cranfield's whole range of buildings would be rotting away with no home still for Dance East. And these old industrial sites will still be used in due course eventually for the benefit of the local economy. Any smaller local organisation likely to replace EEDA wouldn't have the resources to make such major purchases or grants.

It's fair to say that not all of EEDA's initiatives have come good but they have in general fulfilled their purpose of using public money where private money on that scale was very unlikely to be forthcoming. EEDA also had the reserves to take the risk on capital projects where property developers and certainly local authorities could not have done. In that way they have levered in private investment and development. EEDA has claimed that the £45m invested in Ipswich has encouraged a further £225m of private money and so promoted employment and economic growth.

I deduce from this that there are probably good, bad and indifferent quangos. They should be treated accordingly and not condemned as a species. I feel sure the name doesn't help. It has been loaded with examples of poor practice to produce an automatic sneer. Isn't the same true of 'political correctness' and perhaps 'health and safety'? And, being even-handed politically, haven't we been prevented from thinking and evaluating their pros and cons by the sneers implied in 'death tax' and 'poll tax'?

Neil Salmon

Notes & Comments

Housing

It's hard to say what the future holds for housing. The Government believes that changes to the planning system should eventually lead to more houses being built. We are told that ministers in the Department of Communities and Local Government are placing some faith in a New Homes Bonus, a carrot for councils to approve plans for new homes with a promise of a central pot of money to match increases of council tax gained from new developments. The hope is that this will turn nimbys into yimbys ('yes in my back garden') by helping to fund new community facilities. We shall see.

A Green Cornhill

Green cloth covered the Cornhill turning it into a welcoming meadow where children entered through a gate and could sit and relax while watching Punch and Judy. A nice original touch provided by Ipswich Central and others on 18 August.

Not so sticky

Many town centre streets look more gum-free (in early September) than they used to be. The graffiti squad also continues to keep walls pretty clean. All this work is mostly done unseen but the results are praiseworthy. It's money well spent, cleaning our environment and keeping up morale.

One step forward and one step back?

Sainsbury's in Upper Brook Street has finally introduced some self-service check-outs, like most other supermarkets. Useful for people in a hurry with few purchases. But the system destroys yet more jobs, and you have to use their plastic bags!

Lifts at last

A new footbridge across platforms 2 and 3 is being built at Ipswich railway station. This will incorporate new lifts at each end. The work should be completed early next year. It's amazing that successive railway authorities have got away with the very poor access for disabled passengers hitherto.

New gallery, new art

The former Ipswich Art School in High Street, just above the Museum, opened in July with a selection from the Charles Saatchi collection. It will continue till early January, so there's still time to go. On first entering, don't be put off by what looks like work in progress. It's *The Bed* by New York artist Will Ryman, which is best seen from the balcony above. Some of the most interesting work is upstairs anyway.

Our Gift to the Town

Most of the Society's year of celebrating our 50th anniversary has been understandably inward looking. But your committee was also eager to create something public which would last. Tom Gondris suggested that we might encourage and help fund improvements to the triangular space in Christchurch Park at the side of the Mansion. It has been a popular place for people's picnics obtained from the kiosk at the Mansion, but it's always looked rather temporary - but not now, with its resurfacing and its new tables, chairs and umbrellas. This has been achieved by the Society's co-operation with the IBC Parks Department and with further financial support from Suffolk Environmental Trust and the Friends of Christchurch Park. Tom Gondris has overseen the project from start to finish.

The official opening took place on Friday, 10 September. [The photo on the front of the Newsletter is a reminder.] Jack Chapman explained the reasons for this project. He recalled that the park and mansion had been a gift to the town from a great benefactor (Felix Thornley Cobbold). However, as he said, few rich people today use their wealth like that, so in its small way the Society wished to add to the town's attractions, particularly as this sort of improvement had not featured in the large-

scale restoration of the park funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Mayor, Councillor Jane Chambers, thanked the Society, wished us a happy birthday and cut the ribbon for the official opening. We then strolled up to the Reg Driver Centre (where the Society has installed the Blue Plaque commemorating Felix Cobbold) for a further chat and refreshments.

Neil Salmon

The Wrong Change

The wrong change - and not just from the supermarket

In the Society's 50th anniversary year, it is natural to look at where Ipswich has come from and where it might be going. On joining the Society's Executive four years ago, my first questions were: "Where is the vision for Ipswich? Where is the strategy? How can such immense developments in the built environment take place with no accompanying strategic development of the road network which serves them? How will this work?" Sadly, these questions still remain.

Back then, two important public consultations seemed to offer some prospect of resolution. The Local Government Review (LGR) identified two distinct communities within Suffolk and offered Unitary Status as an opportunity for them to concentrate their respective energies in pursuing their proper destinies without undue hindrance from each other. Complementing this, the Local Development Framework (LDF) suggested a structure to steer development in the direction preferred by the community rather than simply to suit developers' ambitions. But what happened?

The Local Government Review

This began with the Boundary Committee inviting local authorities and stakeholders in the county to submit their proposals for models for a new county-wide unitary structure. The Boundary Committee assessed those models for their financial viability and delivering value for money, from which just two candidate models qualified for public consultation, namely a two-authority model comprising North Haven and the predominantly-rural rest of the county, or alternatively a single county-wide unitary authority.

The remainder of the consultation process was fraught with controversy. The final submission to the Secretary of State acknowledged that Suffolk displayed a strong appetite for unitary local government, but too few respondents supported the options offered, persisting instead in asserting models which had already been rejected on financial grounds. Courageous and spirited no doubt but ultimately not a way to make progress. Suffolk therefore kept the two-tier system by default even though it was the one option which most agreed they didn't want!

Since then, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has stopped all activity towards creating new unitary authorities, so that would have been the outcome anyway. But Suffolk was generally reluctant even to accept the question that was asked, so North Haven and the rest of the county will presumably continue to pull in opposite directions - and one of the impending axes on public spending in Ipswich will be wielded by a County administration whose rurally based majority displays little appreciation of Ipswich's distinct urban opportunities, challenges and imperatives.

The Local Development Framework

With a similar flourish of new-found executive power, the same Secretary of State suspended the Regional Spatial Strategies, upon which the LDF critically depends and therefore seems dead in the water. But not before the Borough's own Planning and Development Committee had already driven a coach and horses through the process before it was completed, by accepting a proposal to develop a major superstore and hotel complex at Grafton Way. This was in clear contradiction of a Core Strategy which recommended no more large-scale out-of-centre retail development and which sought relief to the road traffic problems around Star Lane. Even when a Core Strategy represents the fruits of three stages of public consultation over several years, all approved by the full Borough Council, it is evidently no match for a determined developer and an irresolute council.

So is it good news that Ipswich Central, the organisation representing several hundred town centre stakeholders, is now in the process of developing yet another vision for the town centre? I certainly hope so. Among other things, this is proposed to promote inward investment by new retailers whose awareness of Ipswich is apparently rather deficient: in a survey of the 25 top national retailers already represented in Ipswich, 43% thought that Ipswich castle was one of the town's greatest assets!

The supermarket and the future of the town centre

Modern supermarkets are perhaps now indispensable for the efficient mass distribution of daily essentials, and the function, scale and dominance of the Grafton Way development in Ipswich might well invite comparison with the keep of a castle. So let us pursue the metaphor and consider this: in the very unlikely event that Tesco invested Section 106 money into restoring the town's historic walls, would the local 'serfs' then be availed the protection and security of the 'castle grounds' only on production of their Tesco Club Card? The major supermarkets offer unprecedented choice, but does this metaphor illuminate how our wider freedom is being eroded, as consumerism and market forces concentrate wealth with the mass retailers, who use it to become developers with the clout increasingly to dictate the shape of our towns to suit their own corporate agenda?

Just as the banking system is essential but has drained the public purse through its more questionable activities, is it acceptable that private profits should merely 'trickle down' into the public realm from the newly rich corporations whose evidently well stocked reservoirs of wealth were derived from us in the first place? While we should be grateful for the supermarkets' distribution efficiency, we should also recognise that this is accompanied by an equally efficient process for taking payment: a penny or two here and there on the hundreds and millions of items sold daily translates into millions of pounds of additional daily revenue for the supermarkets. So does "every little helps" mean that Tesco is helping you, or is it predominantly the other way round? And as for the competition, whose aisles proudly proclaim that they charge no more than Tesco, how often do you see them offer goods below the "Tesco price"? Will we come to see this as yet another aspect of modern life that was too lightly regulated until it was too late, alongside MPs' expenses, banking, and greenhouse gas emissions?

No matter, that is the way we are going and we must move with it and see how well the new development works for the town. We will not have to wait too long. On the same timescale, public austerity will be the consequence of the private global credit crunch: unfettered private acquisitiveness producing a withering public morbidity at precisely the time when further global catastrophes urgently demand globally-co-ordinated solutions which lie beyond the influence of mere individuals or even (perhaps especially!) market forces.

The wider picture

Consultations are plainly one thing and outcomes quite another. The LGR and the LDF failed to deliver for reasons both local and national. This must bring into question just what do we mean by "local democracy"? Is it anything other than that which can evidently be decided only by those with the power and the opportunity? Will "The Big Society" provide a better answer, and will the likes of the major supermarket chains play their proper part?

If the town grinds to a halt under the combined traffic burdens within the A12/A14 bypass, can we rely on Tesco to fulfil its civic obligations and rectify the matter, perhaps by building a Wet Dock Crossing as the LDF suggested? Undeniably we are "all in it together" and "can't go on like this", so might we even throw off our parochial blinkers and look forward to a coalition of all the parties after the next General Election, to agree a cross-party programme to re-harmonise the private and public sectors for the common good?

More immediately, signs used to be commonplace which read, "Please check your change before leaving the shop as mistakes cannot be rectified afterwards." We must hope that the Borough's Planning and Development Committee checked its metaphorical change before leaving the supermarket. ...

Mike Brain

Being Part of One's Town

If you didn't know what a 'flaneur' is, you soon found out in Jay Merrick's talk to the Society in the Willis Building. Much of his talk was about the value of strolling in towns and cities, observing and reacting and feeling a part of the environment. Baudelaire, he said, "walked Paris into existence". As a child himself in San Francisco in the 1960s, Jay got to know vibrant parts of the city as he frequently strolled down towards the waterfront.

Now as an Ipswich resident, he described with critical affection his favourite stroll into town. Close to the impressive 'Georgian' terrace on Norwich Road there are some contrasting little shops some of which have character, but then near the junction with Bramford Road there is the 'Revett's' building with a "tinny carapace" on top which "belongs in a business park" and is "a failure of planning". Each side of Barrack Corner he sees a mixed picture, but heading off into Civic Drive ("not really civic, just a dual carriageway") there are three welcoming buildings - the New Wolsey Theatre ("each façade talks to what it faces"), the big AXA curved building ("designed by people who used their eyes" and conveying a sense of "craftsmanship and pleasure in detail") and the Willis Building itself (Norman Foster, "the arch-technocrat" making "Modernism bow to the existing street layout"). There is enough in this walk, he said, to produce an emotional connection with the town. A Society like ours should be even more vigilant to ensure that townscape quality is maintained and enhanced.

However, the architectural correspondent of The Independent and writer on this subject in several other journals didn't simply confine himself to a verbal account of a stroll in our town, enlightening though that was. More thought provoking was his considered opinion that town planning and the predicament of towns themselves suffered two major blows decades ago from which they've never

recovered. One was the abolition of Retail Price Maintenance in 1964 which set the scene for American-style price cutting. The other was the enthusiasm of influential theorists for the 'Non-Plan', a reaction against the then town planning. This gave local communities a bigger say in planning - good in theory, but combined with price cutting it led to the inexorable growth of big business, which could come along and say, "We know what people want and we can pay for it". The result we see today is the influence of a giant business like Tesco whose effect on town planning is so powerful because Local Authorities usually can't afford to resist it.

In his second session upstairs, Jay reminisced about architects whom he had interviewed during recent times. [Tony Marsden made notes on this part because I had had to retire with a heavy head cold!] He recalled Oscar Niemeyer in Buenos Aires at the age of 96 who said he had brought sex to architecture - while continually glancing down at Copacabana Beach below. In Jay's opinion, if it were not for Le Corbusier, Niemeyer would have been the single most important modernist. "At the age of 102 he's probably still exploring the formal possibilities of reinforced concrete." He also described an interview with Zaha Hadid on the second floor of her MAXXI Museum in Rome, "unquestionably a diva"! And he recalled Norman Foster, Baron Foster of Thames Bank, whom he has known for ten years yet "I don't know what makes him the most driven of architects I've ever met." Nowadays, he employs over a thousand people in all continents - sixty buildings going up at one time. "What you get from Foster is the best possible solution for a site." Which brought his listeners back to where they were, the Willis Building, one of Foster's early creations - and near the end of a memorable evening.

Neil Salmon

Rights of Way at the Docks

Suffolk County Council has issued five orders concerning Ipswich docks. They would ensure non-motorised traffic a Right of Way along the perimeter of the Wet Dock and reach into the East Bank area. It denies Rights of Way for motorised traffic. Associated British Ports and others are contesting this and a Planning Inquiry will take place starting on 7 December. The Society has agreed to join forces with the Ipswich Maritime Trust at the inquiry and, if necessary, in obtaining professional advice on the issues raised.

Our case is that there has always been a Public Right of Way across the lock. However, we are desperately in need of hard evidence, particularly for the more recent past. If any member has any evidence either by his own memory, documents, letters, diaries, photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, we need to hear as soon as possible.

Mike Cook

Two special books

The Toll-houses of Suffolk by Patrick Taylor, Polystar Press, 277 Cavendish Street, Ipswich, IP3 8BQ

This well produced 84pp book includes photographs of and comments on all the known toll-houses and a number of 'impostors', i.e. houses which look 'right' but are in the wrong places! The turnpike

road system, upkeep of roads and collecting of tolls are all interestingly explained with reproductions of original documents and posters. NS

The Ipswich Mint Vol 1 (ca 973-ca 1016) by J C Sadler, a limited edition of 500 copies (150pp) is available from the author at Lockdales, 37 Upper Orwell Street, Ipswich. Ipswich had a workshop called a mint which produced silver coins in the name of kings, in the name of the man who produced them and in the name of the town. Hundreds have survived and the author claims to have traced every specimen. The book also contains suggestions for the location of the castle and an interesting take on the origins of the name, Ipswich. JN

Braintree & Warner Archive

Now, to be honest, I'd never thought of Braintree as a daytrip destination; thus far, I have managed to resist the lure of its siren song. How wrong I was - we had a really interesting day. The only disappointment was that the coach trip did not involve the crate of brown ale and singsong my childhood memories led me to expect (it was my first Ipswich Society trip, needless to add). We went first to the Warner Textile Archive, situated in one of the mill buildings they bought when they moved here from Spitalfields. The archive - which consisted of a random collection of cardboard boxes in Milton Keynes when the enthusiastic archivist began her work cataloguing and conserving it - contains objects the artists used for inspiration, like Uzbek jackets, Afghan embroidered hats and Ikat cloth, their sketches and detailed paper plans, as well as the fabric samples and wallpapers. There is also an exhibition about the history of the firm with drawers of delicious silks and a gallery showing the work of artists who have used the archive for inspiration, including their sketches of the textiles from the archive. We saw Queen Mary's bridesmaid's skirt and learnt that the Royal Family didn't pay for goods ordered from Royal Warrant holders(!), that you can't weave with completely gold thread, that the 14-year old boy silk weaving apprentices weren't allowed to use their hands for anything else as the silk snagged so easily and that the silk weavers were not allowed to be interrupted as the weaving of the 30000-stitches-to-the-inch patterns was so complex; they managed 10 inches a day.

We moved on to the Town Hall for a brief talk on its history and a welcome buffet lunch. The building was donated in 1927 by the other big mill owners in the town, Courtaulds, who also gave the school that is now used as the museum. Each of the main rooms is panelled in different woods (the burr walnut is especially impressive) which could explain why the cost rocketed from £10,000 to £40,000. There are some really dinky paintings purporting to depict episodes from the history of Braintree (the Battle of Maldon?) on copper panels in niches on the ceiling which look just like illustrations from contemporary children's history books.

After lunch, on this very hot day, the more redoubtable members went on a walk round the sights of Braintree (including the allegedly longest Georgian street in the country) which was led by Professor Chris Green who is a local resident, although widely known in Ipswich music circles. We wimps went to the cool, compact and comprehensive museum which had some good displays highlighting the importance of the big local businesses like Warners, Courtaulds and Crittall. I never knew as I walked down the Bund in Shanghai that the iconic 30s buildings I was looking at all had Crittall windows.

We had time for a wander round the old street pattern of the bustling town centre, following the market stalls as they meandered down alleys and passed timbered buildings before calling in at the Art Deco Picture Palace. This has been converted into a pub by placing the bar where the screen was and keeping the original features, including the amazing carpet. Their ice-cold lager was pretty splendid too.

Many thanks to Caroline Markham for organising such an interesting day and introducing me to a town I'd overlooked.

Kay McElhinney

Duke Street Roundabout

It is interesting to watch how the local press pick up on the negatives of changes to traffic management schemes but give no coverage to improvements or reduced journey times. Take for example the removal of the Duke Street roundabout at the bottom of Back Hamlet. Traffic flowing into Ipswich in the morning rush hour down Bishops Hill and along Fore Street now enjoys a much smoother and therefore quicker journey. This is also an important link in the number of south-east Ipswich bus routes. Further changes to traffic management hereabouts will see the installation of an in-bound bus lane along Fore Hamlet. Traffic travelling east along this commuter corridor has also enjoyed smoother traffic flows from the Novotel roundabout along Star Lane to Fore Street.

There are of course negatives to every scheme and some residents in the immediate vicinity of the scheme are inconvenienced by having to change their well established travel plans. (Note however that the majority of these residents are within walking and cycling distance of the town centre.)

I appreciate that these words are being written before the start of the school autumn term which will bring a vast increase in the amount of cross-town traffic (which is why the work took place over the summer) and thus the true value (or problems) of the removal of the roundabout will not be manifest until you are reading this. I suggest however that a great benefit of the scheme will be the advantage it brings to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly students of the university and college, residents of the apartments and visitors to the Waterfront.

John Norman, Vice-Chairman

Sgt Arthur Saunders VC

Remembering a distinguished soldier from Ipswich

The Society's latest Blue Plaque will have been mounted on 180 Cauldwell Hall Road. This was the home of Sergeant Arthur Frederick Saunders of the Suffolk Regiment. He left here to go to the Western Front in the First World War where he won the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Loos in northern France. The ceremony on Sunday, 26 September will be reported fully in the next Newsletter.

Leonard Squirrell

Leonard Russell Squirrell (1893-1979)

The man who painted 20th century Ipswich

Josephine Walpole described Leonard as "The Last of the Norwich School" in her biography of the man, as did Sir Frank Short RA, a former President of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. There is no doubt that Squirrell deserves to rank with the likes of Crome, Cotman, Thirtle, Middleton and the Stannards.

Our Society has at last been able to gain agreement to celebrate this modest but extremely gifted Ipswich man. A Blue Plaque has been installed at the house where he was born, 82 Spring Road. This is particularly appropriate for a man who once wrote: "I am abidingly glad that my eyes look upon East Anglia as home. How much it means to me is demonstrated when I come back after journeys afield. As an artist I feel more satisfied with its countryside, its villages and architecture every time I return."

He worked abroad and in counties of England far and wide but spent most of his long life in and around the Borough of Ipswich.

He grew up living in the house in Spring Road with his elder brother, Sydney, his father and a housekeeper, Mrs Stringer. His mother had died of tuberculosis at the early age of 38 when Leonard was eight or nine years old. He had an enjoyable and energetic childhood and it soon became clear that he had great talent for the art of drawing. This is a talent that has become an undervalued skill in the fine art area these days. In 1908 he began his training at the Ipswich School of Art under the watchful tutelage of George Rushton, a fine artist himself, having exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1897 to 1948.

Leonard suffered from an unfortunate stammer all his life and very often asked questions of his tutors in the form of handwritten notes because of this impediment. His draughtsmanship and skill with a multiplicity of media did all the talking for him and he did eventually teach etching at the Ipswich Art School. He was extremely skilled as an etcher which is a real test of drawing skills and he produced the most exquisite aquatints, mezzotints and dry-points during his lifetime. In 1923 and 1925 he was awarded Silver Medals at the International Exhibition in Los Angeles for his mezzotints, 'The High Mill, Needham Market' and 'Notre Dame, Paris' respectively.

His work in pastels was also of a high order as can be seen in works recording scenes in Italy and France and in the beautiful 'Kersey Village Street, Summer Evening' (1928) which is in the Colchester and Ipswich Museums' collection. He produced very few oil paintings because he preferred watercolour and what he described as "the fluidity of that medium". He wrote books on both pastel and watercolour techniques. Josephine Walpole, a great local writer on art matters, has produced four books celebrating Squirrell's life and work, one of which included some of his original notes on etching techniques.

Leonard was a very prolific artist and produced watercolours for a number of commercial companies such as Rolls Royce. Local companies who used his work included Ransomes Sims and Jefferies and Fisons. Thanks to Annette Kenny (Leonard's daughter) I have copies of the

preparatory pencil drawings made by him for a series of paintings for Fisons depicting their sites round the country.

These include local buildings such as Levington research station, the sulphuric acid plant towers at Cliff Quay and Bramford Works in Paper Mill Lane. The drawings are works of art in themselves and are annotated with his colour coding notes so that he could work them up into larger scale paintings in his studio. I cherish them because his notes clearly show the thinking steps which led him to create the finished work.

For twenty years he produced fine watercolour drawings for William Brown (Ipswich) to illustrate their company calendars and did similar jobs for Pauls and Ladbrokes. My first experience of seeing Leonard Squirrell paintings was as carriage prints on the former Great Eastern Railway trains of the 50s. He also produced paintings for railway posters which are much sought after by enthusiasts. Painters are driven to work and never really retire. At the age of 84 he produced a painting for Compair Industrial for their prestigious calendar and a series of limited edition prints.

Leonard was also a loving family man. He married his wife Hilda in 1923 and their first house was at 67 Foxhall Road. Later he needed more space and built a house and studio in Crabbe Street. In the meantime they had two children, Martin and Annette. Both of them were infected with what Hilda described as "the family disease" of painting and drawing.

Leonard Squirrell died in 1979 at his daughter's home in Uttoxeter, a man worthy of an Ipswich Society plaque - the grand old man of East Anglian painting.

Merv Russen

At Woolverstone Hall

... now Ipswich High School for Girls

Neil Clayton spoke affectionately about his time working in the building. In the very room where we sat (on 14 July) he talked about lobbing chalk at inattentive boys, one of whom, Hesketh, was awarded 5/- for a graze on the head caused by chalk. He filled in distant historical information about families and manors which skirted this quiet estuary - quiet after an invasion in the 12th century by some Flemings. He also alluded to a notoriety in the area for smuggling and for religious extremism which caused one clergyman to be kicked out! His tale of the history of the manor revealed families who loved and lost the place, and who called upon the Court of Chancery to sort out ownership, which fell to the Ward family after fifty years of deliberation.

Eventually the extremely rich Berners family of Bond Street, London acquired the property. In 1776 they brought in Johnson of Essex to build the house using Woolpit brick and paid a sum of £14,000 to complete the Hall. The Berners were an unprepossessing family, High Sheriffs, who loved hunting but found the space too limiting up on the Orwell and moved to Berkshire to spread their wings. But they had left a beautifully proportioned and elegant footprint on the park. By 1937 when the place was in peril, being eyed by developers, Lord Nuffield, William Morris, bought the estate through the Nuffield Trust and gave it to Oxford University. But by 1939 it was in the hands of the Government who wanted to train marines on the site. In the war years it was inhabited by a range of

military personnel but came out relatively unscathed to be taken over by London County Council in 1949.

The history of the place from then on displayed much in the way of wavering fortune. Irene Chapman, the charming and powerful organiser, devised the system by which it became a boarding grammar school for boys from Inner London, with other places filled by the Government. It was an interesting mix. Some called it a reformatory: others dubbed it the Working Man's Eton. The success of the school was connected with the influence of heads such as John Smitherman and the mix of boys from forces' families and from Foreign Office families and 'boys from the buildings'. After a time when the authority of London became too pressing and the desire for comprehensive education was required, the end was in sight and the clever boys left.

Neil expressed nostalgia for the times before 1989 when the expense of running the school was not so great and the systems therein allowed for a teaching style which was rigorous without being constrained. His talk was a delightful stroll though numerous memorable by-ways delivered in a warm and generous tone, at once schoolmaster and jolly favourite uncle. We thank him for the fun of the talk. Pat Grimwade also thanked the Head of Ipswich High School for Girls for the use of her fine establishment.

Tony Marsden

Clarence House & London

Clarence House, the Queen Mother and other Famous Mothers

It is a lovely August day and London is looking its best for our Famous Women themed day organised by Barbara Barker. Our tour begins close to the Millennium Bridge with coffee at the Salvation Army Headquarters. This impressive glazed building was opened in 2004, on the site of the original 1881 HQ. Then we travel south through Southwark, back across the Thames over Waterloo Bridge with its fabulous views and on to Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly.

Our guide keeps up a constant discourse on famous women: Elizabeth Fry prison reformer; Rosalind Franklin DNA scientist; Ada Lovelace mathematician; Angela Burdett-Coutts. Did you know when she became the sole heiress to the Coutts Bank fortune at the age of 27 in 1837 she gave most of it away to good causes and founded the NSPCC? Much later she married a man half her age - which reminds me of our Mrs Pretty who gave the Sutton Hoo treasure to the nation and had her only child at the age of 47!

We circumnavigate Hyde Park and get stuck in a traffic jam in Knightsbridge caused by building work on the Candy Brothers' latest residential complex (our guide says £150m for a 4-bedroom flat!). Moving at last, we drive round the back of Buckingham Palace, the front of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament and south over the river. Wow, London never fails to impress! Lunch is at the South Bank Centre and we have time to explore the Royal Festival Hall built in the 1950s for the Festival of Britain (elegant and spacious) and the Hayward Gallery (people and cars strictly separated 1960s style, so lots of steps and high level walkways).

Back in the coach and across the river again we come at last to the piece de resistance of our day. Designed by John Nash and built in 1827 for the Duke of Clarence (later William IV) Clarence House is a white stuccoed mansion at the west corner of the rambling brick 16th century St James's Palace. The view as we enter the garden from The Mall lives up to our expectations and, inside, our tour of the ground floor reveals further delights. The Lancaster Room, with its clear evidence of the present incumbent HRH Prince Charles, is a firm favourite with many. There are Prince of Wales reminders everywhere - photographs of Edward VII and Edward VIII and a fire screen with an embroidered purse with the badge of Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51). Some prefer the Queen Mother's Morning Room, retained by Prince Charles very much in his grandmother's taste. I especially like her (large) collection of botanical Chelsea porcelain! And we all love the Garden Room, Princess Margaret's sitting room when she lived here. Light and airy with bright carpets and upholstery, it has an eastern feel accentuated by the huge tapestry (shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851) depicting an Egyptian scene.

Sated with the opulence, glamour and sheer size of things, we wend our way home, stopping at St Martin-in-the-Fields Crypt Cafe for a refreshing cup of tea before leaving our great city. A fantastic day out, Barbara - many thanks.

Caroline Markham

World Cinema in Ipswich

It is very pleasing to note that Ipswich Film Theatre re-opened in May and has proved very popular. Great credit should go to the members of IFT Trust, acting on their conviction that if the programming was right and the publicity clear-cut and issued well in advance there would be audiences for films made outside the Hollywood criteria - which at present seem confined to appealing to youthful audiences with an emphasis on romance and/or violence! The trustees have been proved right so far and many new faces have appeared at IFT box office.

In some ways it is a model of how a community-run facility can work. The Trust has negotiated rental terms with the Borough Council who continue to own the Film Theatre and Corn Exchange. The ushers are all volunteers but the bulk of the work and responsibility falls on the shoulders of the members of the Trust. The success, however, lies not simply in the model but in the precise combination of talents and experience represented in the trustees who comprise a solicitor, an accountant, a journalist, a former Borough councillor, a person with PR and advertising experience and an experienced films programmer. Ipswich is fortunate indeed to benefit from this ideally qualified team. Long may they succeed!

Future of Park & Ride?

Who might kill Ipswich's Park and Ride?

The recession brings many changes: some things slow down (or stop), others grow. An example of the latter is the number of development sites that have applied for and been given planning

permission for temporary car parking - usually for two or three years which, if there is no development use for the site, are frequently renewed for a further three years. The Ipswich Society generally objects to the granting of planning permission for temporary car parking on the basis that if the developer receives an income stream from the car park taking the long term risk on development is less likely to happen, and limited time permission means the site operator is less likely to screen the site, plant trees or add lighting.

However, there are currently some 1500 spaces close to the Waterfront on temporary permissions, with parking fees as low as 50p per hour. This means there is little difficulty in finding a parking space in Ipswich which has led to a reduction in the use of the Park & Ride facilities, particularly for those drivers who intend to stay less than five hours (i.e. shoppers and visitors). Long stay commuter parking is not permitted in these temporary car parks, or at least the fees charged are prohibitive.

These short stay visitors are the very people who should be using the Park & Ride facilities during the working day. The consequence is that buses travel into and out of town after the morning rush hour with very few passengers. Ipswich's Park & Ride scheme is a Suffolk County Council subsidised facility, whilst the planning permission for temporary car parking is by Development Control of Ipswich Borough Council.

I cannot foresee the subsidy continuing indefinitely, so what's the future for the Park & Ride? In the long term the building sites will be developed and the drivers looking for a parking space will move elsewhere (into the 700 space Tesco car park, which is promised to be free for short term parking). Service buses could marginally change their routes to serve the Park & Ride car parks. Ipswich Buses service 13 to Tesco Copdock for example is just yards away from the P & R terminal, and the 66 route between the railway station and Martlesham could divert to the P & R. This would put a lot more flexibility into the P & R service; currently they cannot pick up passengers other than at the P & R site, or the town centre for the return journey. What we cannot afford as times get tough is to run empty buses along the main corridors for the majority of the day.

John Norman Vice-Chairman

An e-mail to the Chairman

A number of people have responded to the Chairman's request for non-committee members to write to the Newsletter. An interesting reply has come from Peter Turtill. Some of his views are at variance from those of the committee, but the Newsletter doesn't shy away from controversy; in fact that was one of the aspects which most impressed the judges when the Newsletter won the top regional award for community publications when that was being run by the British Association of Industrial Editors.

Mr Turtill refers to page numbers in the July issue. "May I add comment to various pages of the latest Newsletter. I hope to be informative, helpful and questioning of current attitudes."

"Page 2. Why must we grow our town? I am at a loss to understand why growth is considered to be good or even necessary as this is our home and not a business so why attract a growing population? Why is growth even considered? We should be trying to shrink our town surely?"

"Page 3. Why is Ipswich lucky to have publicly funded work at UCS? It straddles a main road into town and just adds to the congestion. I am pleased other large buildings such as Regatta Quay and The Mill are at a standstill. I just wish they had never been started. I much preferred the dock as it was, open to all traffic and free of kerbs/ chains /bollards and street furniture."

"Page 5. Why fourth time lucky? Ipswich is not a city and too much time and money has already been wasted trying to change the status of our home town. It would be better for those who want to live in a city to just move into one. That would cost our town nothing. Also why a new Sixth Form College catering for up to 2,000 students? Where are these students coming from?"

"Page 6. Mr Jonathan Glancey no doubt gave a very entertaining talk but he is wrong about curbing the traffic flow on Star Lane and Key Street. We should have curbed the now derelict monster building developments on the dock instead. They are a scandalous obstruction on the dock and the roadway. These are main routes across our town."

"Page 18. Empty homes exist so why build more along the dock, Kiln Meadow or the Northern Fringe?"

Mr Turtill also writes in useful detail about the flood barrier and the Promenade [on the Island site of the docks]. He emphasises the Public Inquiry at IpCity Centre, starting on 7 December, into matters of Rights of Way around the dock. He points out that, "Anyone can attend but you must be there on the first day if you wish to contribute evidence or to address the Inquiry." This is a subject taken up by Mike Cook in this issue on page 13. It is an important and urgent matter which members might be able to help with.

Blickling Hall

A small group of Society members paid a visit to Blickling on 19 June. Arriving at the Hall we noticed that a theatre company were assembling a stage for Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that evening - and the weather was proving to be rather appropriate! We experienced a cool blustery day with a few short sharp showers, but fortunately the worst of the rain held off until we were back on the coach for our return.

The Hall itself dating back to the 17th century is a fascinating place to explore. The last owner to live at Blickling in the years leading up to the Second World War was Lord Lothian who was visited by many famous guests including Nancy, Lady Astor, the first woman to be elected to Parliament. Visitors were allowed access to most rooms, including the very grand Long Gallery with its huge collection of books assembled by Sir Richard Ellys over a forty year period in the 18th century. I found 'below stairs' areas (the kitchen and service areas) particularly interesting, as one was able to hear recordings of several former servants reminiscing about life at Blickling in the inter-war years. One of the gardeners, who was responsible for preparing floral displays for a royal visit by Queen Mary, found her to be a rather "nice old girl"!

The gardens were looking stunning. There was a parterre with a spectacular display of herbaceous shrubs and further afield the Dell, with its rustic summer house. We had to search for a while before

finding a charming leafy bower called the 'Sitooterie' with three stained glass windows depicting different trees, which catch the light perfectly. The Orangery was a delight - the highlight of my visit to the gardens. There was an abundance of citrus fruit bushes - orange, grapefruit, lemon and lime - and a wonderful aroma of orange blossom permeating the whole building. There was also time available to browse in the second-hand bookshop, the garden shop and plant centre and the rather quaint little museum which outlined the story of nearby RAF Oulton and Blickling during the Second World War. Despite the unseasonal weather there was plenty to see and do at Blickling.

Lois Terry

Suffolk Local History Council

Many of our members will include in their range of interests a concern for aspects of exploration into the history of Suffolk. In that connection the name of the late Peter Northeast cannot fail to be a familiar one. As well as his own contribution to such research, he encouraged and inspired enthusiasm for such studies among many individuals and groups to whom he gave generously of his time and knowledge. Pete died in 2009, and the Suffolk Local History Council- the umbrella organisation for local history societies across the county - on which Peter served in many capacities for many years, wish to commemorate his life and work. This note provides early notice of one such SLHC venture.

A day conference - 'Peter Northeast Memorial History Conference' - has been arranged to take place on 19 March 2011 at Elmswell Community Hall. Speakers will include Dr David Dymond, Dr Nick Sign and Mr Clive Paine, all widely known in the Suffolk local history scene. Conference programmes can be obtained from the SHLC secretary, Mrs Deidre Heavens, 5 Cotswold Avenue, Ipswich, JP1 4LL. Tel: 254291, e-mail admin@slhc.org.uk

Further details of the SHLC can be viewed here: <https://slhc.org.uk>

Ruth Serjeant, Ipswich Society representative on Suffolk Local History Council.

Some Shorts

The fire at St Mary Elms in August, cause unknown, was a sad blow to a fine and regularly visited church. But it could have been worse. A hatchment has been lost and much cleaning up remains to be done but thankfully the roof and the tower survived.

Christchurch and Holywells Parks will remain locked at night, we are pleased to learn. But it seems that Friends' groups may be required to contribute more supervision.

The Police's proposed move from Elm St/Civic Drive to share space with SCC at St Edmund's House (Rope Walk) and Landmark House (Whitehouse) could free up space for a large development of the Civic Centre site and boost that end of the town centre.

The 'night economy's' latest figures indicate that 12,000 people are in town at peak times. The full economic pros and cons of this part of the economy would be interesting.

New information boards with maps will start to appear this month. They should help to improve links between the town centre, railway station and the Waterfront.

Big Lottery Fund money (£1million+) will be devoted to Whitehouse and Whitton to develop community facilities - welcome news to NW Ipswich, where it is needed.

The new Egyptian Gallery at High Street Museum should be especially helpful to primary school pupils but fascinating also to all visitors who will find much else to enjoy as well.

Edith Cook, pioneer aviator, parachutist and balloonist, commemorated by our Blue Plaque in Fore Street, has at last had a named headstone erected in Coventry where she died following a parachuting accident.

The DIY Maniac

The Ipswich Society rightly concerns itself with planning applications and major projects that affect the built environment. I would like to raise an issue that is continually changing the housing stock by lots of small actions, and in my opinion changing it detrimentally, namely the DIY maniac. Not the person who does a bit of painting and decorating and small repairs. No, the person who tackles major projects. The person fired up by television programmes who buys a house to 'do it up' and make a profit.

Original features are ripped out and new 'original' features are installed, and the new style house sold for a profit, reassuring the DIYer of his ability and style, ignoring the reality that the rise in price was a result of asset price inflation for the last sixty years. The new owner then embarks on the same procedure ripping out the work of the previous DIYer as he doesn't like it. So it goes on, costing the economy billions of pounds of wasted effort and destroying the architectural integrity of large numbers of houses. There is almost nothing that can be done to stop this merry-go-round. However, if house prices go down and people are a lot poorer perhaps the DIYer will be discouraged. Perhaps forty years of slowly declining property values would help preserve Ipswich's old houses.

Louis Musgrove