

The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2004

ISSUE 154

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A Commemoration from the Society
for Quay West (see page 7)

Articles and letters which are not explicitly from the Society are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Ipswich Society itself

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Editorial

A happy New Year to you all. And I hope that this Newsletter will bring you food for thought and some reasons for feeling optimistic about the future of our town. You will find amongst the various articles a report on our very enjoyable Awards Evening, the Chairman's account of this tantalising stage of progress towards a major Visitors' Centre, the prospect of a dramatically new bridge across the New Cut and, most controversially, an article about "Noddy housing".

Other similar societies in the region regularly send us their newsletters, for which we are very grateful. It is always interesting to compare and contrast their experiences with ours in Ipswich. A striking survey undertaken by Anne Lloyd appeared in the Chelmsford Society's Newsletter. She studied changes in shop ownership in Chelmsford High Street during the 20th century.

"Of the 87 different shops in 1906, it was estimated that 78 of them were operated by local traders. Nine were assessed as national enterprises and there were no international firms in the town centre. In the High Street today, whilst stores such as Next, Gap, Monsoon and H&M flourish, no stores offer a tailoring service: there are no dress makers in the town centre; high quality clothing stores for ladies are absent, and many people choose to shop in London or neighbouring towns for a better quality and a wider choice of clothing.... In addition, chain stores like to portray a corporate image and this gives uniformity of layouts and window displays around the country."

No surprises there! Not much can be done in the short term to improve the range of retailing in our town centre - except we should make good use of the unique shops we do have. In the medium term, perhaps the proliferation of new flats will bring in newcomers with the inclination and money to patronise a wider variety of shops. However, it is encouraging that a survey carried out for Urban Management Initiatives shows that other aspects of our town centre, like the quality of public transport, street cleaning, marketing and promotion, and (yes) even car access and car parking, compare very favourably with similar sized towns in the region.

I look forward to receiving your contributions - articles, letters, illustrations, suggestions - for the next Newsletter by 20 February. The more the better.

NEIL SALMON

16 Warrington Road, Ipswich, IPI 3QU

Wanted... Help with History

Wanted... someone to do simple research and write up a manageable history of The Ipswich Society. The Society, ever since its inception in 1960, has been involved in various ways with most of the huge changes in Ipswich. Your Executive Committee thinks that our activities should be recorded in one accessible attractive publication. This should be a fascinating undertaking for someone interested in how members of a civic society have contributed to the ongoing developments in Ipswich.

Most of the research needed for such a history could be done at home using back numbers of the Newsletter and the Society's scrapbooks, etc. Help would also be available from founder members and others with long memories.

Don't be surprised if much of what the Society has said and done is already half forgotten, so there are discoveries to be made and the record to be put right!

Please contact our Chairman, Jack Chapman, if you are interested.

Area Forums: Please Use

Most of you will have received a leaflet from the Borough Council announcing the setting up of Area Forums. These are part of the Council's One-Ipswich, a Community Strategy - "the overall plan that brings together key services in the town to meet local people's needs."

Your Executive Committee considers that these forums could become influential in future decision making and consequently we would encourage members of the Society to attend meetings of the particular Area Forum for their own area. The five areas are based on groupings of local government wards:

North-West — Whitton, Whitehouse, Castle Hill

North-East — Rushmere, St John's, Bixley

South-East — Gainsborough, Priory Heath, Holywells

South-West — Gipping, Stoke Park, Sprites, Bridge

Central — Alexandra, St Margaret's, Westgate

Another part of the Community Strategy is the creation of six Thematic Panels, namely: Access and Fairness, Culture and Learning, Environment and Transport, Crime and Disorder, Economy and Regeneration, Health and Well-being. The Society will seek to be represented on all or most of these Panels.

The Chairman's Letter

Falling foul of a book

I have just been given a copy of a small book entitled *Crap Towns* which some of you will have read about in the press or heard about on the radio. It lists the 50 worst towns in the UK: Ipswich is number 25! The entry for Ipswich starts, "Hideous concrete monoliths overshadow the potentially attractive centre of this once thriving market town." Somebody called Mike writes that a wine bar in the town centre had "run out of wine" at 7.30 pm and goes on to say, "The town centre looks like it's about to fall down in the next storm." The good news is that I don't think we need take his publication too seriously. Also included are Southwold and Aldeburgh and further afield Oxford, Brighton and Winchester. To be fair the book does not purport to be a serious study of the various towns' architectural merits: it was compiled from entries on a website asking for comments on "crap towns" run by *The Idler* magazine.

Cleaning up our town

Many comments in the book refer to graffiti and litter, and drawing attention to these is something I approve of. Some of you will recall that I have written before in these pages about litter on our streets and the wider problem of managing waste locally and nationally. In this context I note two recent developments locally.

Following a lengthy and detailed report on litter by a select committee of parliament, Suffolk County Council has established a group to come up with solutions for dealing with litter and junk across the county. Let us hope they come up with radical solutions.

Here in Ipswich I am pleased to report that after discussions with IBC about their appointing street wardens there is new action. Suffolk Constabulary have just appointed twelve County Support Officers. These will have more powers than Street Wardens but not the full range of those exercised by a police officer. They will wear a uniform similar to but distinguishable from that worn by the police, and they will be based at Ipswich police station and be responsible to the police. They hit the streets in early December, each paired with a police officer, and from about January they should be patrolling alone. They should make a big impact on graffiti, litter, public drinking and general anti-social behaviour.

The problem of deteriorating town centres is, however, not only caused by anti-social citizens. Councils are also guilty - albeit from the best of motives. I refer to the proliferating street signs and notices, mainly but not exclusively related to traffic control. Nottingham Council have recently addressed the issue and have scrapped an amazing 10,000 (yes ten thousand) parking signs within one square mile of the city centre. Ipswich could very usefully follow the same route.

Distinguished architecture needed

The Society's Awards evening on 12 November was very successful. Sponsored by Suffolk College for the first time, the lecture theatre, which is a very suitable venue, was virtually full. The food and drink was as usual excellent, and problems with the slowness of the queue have been noted and will be avoided next year. I have to say, cautiously, that the quality of entries this year was not impressive. For several years now it has been difficult to award at the highest category of award (although this year Isaac Lord's was an exception). Too many of our buildings, in my view, are serviceable, competent and economic, but all too often lack any charisma or "oomph". It is not that I would want all planning applications to have these qualities, but it would be encouraging if one or two were, perhaps especially around the Waterfront.

A bridge for the future

On this topic I recently attended a joint meeting of the Waterfront Steering Committee and the Conservation Advisory Panel where the business was to consider the design of a footbridge (with cycle track) over the New Cut to the Island. Three designs were considered, and I have to say they were all of a high standard. [See also pages 12-13] It will be interesting to see in several years time whether or not it gains a Society award.

A major attraction for visitors

Finally I want to update you on progress on the Waterfront Visitors' Attraction Centre. Phase I of the Feasibility Study has now been concluded, and it is very positive. The report was launched to an audience of decision makers - County, Borough and the private sector - where it was well received. The consultants recommend a flexible concept, designed to function in a number of ways, using

moveable walls and ceilings and relying heavily on software to catch a change in the ambience/environment Themes which will be depicted include Anglo-Saxon, Marine, Wolsey, and the American connection with Ipswich.

The consultants predict such a Centre could attract 100,000 visitors per year and soon break even on running costs. Phase I was funded by East of England Development Agency (EEDA). Phase II (the final phase) has yet to find funding, and this is currently being addressed. 50% has already been found. Given the positive tone of Phase I it is essential that Phase II is completed, identifying a site and sources of funding for the capital project. It would be a total waste of EEDA's investment in Phase I if Phase II did not go ahead.

May I wish every member a peaceful New Year.

JACK CHAPMAN

Tall Buildings, But How Tall?

I recently had the opportunity to stand on the highest level of the Redrow development at Coprolite Street and look out over the Wet Dock. It is a superb vantage point, higher than the Bellway flats nearby to the north and better placed to view the panorama than, for example, Quay West on the other side of the docks complex.

I am unsure however to suggest how high tall buildings on the Waterfront should go. There is a clear and direct correlation between the heights of buildings and the wealth generated by them. Increased height means increased occupancy which means increased profit for the developer, which in turn means further investment and more development. Brownfield land becomes homes for the increasing population. There is also the advantage of construction jobs while the building process is under way, and the employment the businesses in the building bring.

But one of the concerns is that tall buildings mean poor design. This need not be the case, and world-wide there are examples of tall buildings being icons of good design. Equally there are myriads of 1960s tower blocks that are bland, boring and uninspiring, contribute nothing to the environment and give the industry a bad name. A further problem is car parking. Taller buildings equal more residents and more cars. Recent planning approvals in Ipswich include multi-storey blocks with fewer car parking spaces than flats (and they are probably being sold to residents with two cars per flat).

The alternative to growing upwards is growing outwards, burying green fields under urban sprawl. Is it not better to return people to the city centre, to develop high density living that embraces the social needs of the community, puts people close to leisure facilities and reduces the need to travel in from the suburbs?

Ipswich has the potential, the opportunity and the vacant brownfield sites to secure its own future, and it has the gem of a Wet Dock right in the heart. Additional residents close to the town centre mean that businesses thrive, in particular the pubs and restaurants. But can we accommodate

Ipswich's future housing needs by building on brownfield and windfall sites alone? Mike Cook, Chair of our planning monitors team, has figures to indicate that we can.

JOHN NORMAN

The Society's Annual Awards

The lecture theatre at Suffolk College was full and Society members eagerly awaited the news of our judges' verdicts. Even though there were fewer nominations this year — twelve compared with nineteen last year — they represented a good range of both private and public work, and both residential and environmental improvement schemes. So once again this was a worthy reminder of the Society's aim in raising awareness of the value of an appealing street scene.

Our Chairman, Jack Chapman, introduced Councillor Penny Breakwell (Mayor of Ipswich and President of The Ipswich Society) and Professor Dave Muller, Principal of Suffolk College which had kindly sponsored the evening's events. In a brief address, Professor Muller made clear the determination of the College to press for the creation of a university on and near the Neptune Quay corner of the Waterfront. There are at present 1874 full-time students in Higher Education at the College and 2346 part-time. With these (increasing) numbers a university would certainly be viable. (In that case the northern part of the present campus could be devoted to a separate Suffolk College of Further Education.) Support is forthcoming from Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council, and from the Universities of East Anglia and Essex. Proposals will be put before Central Government very soon. Ipswich Society members will surely be pleased to hear of these intentions and hope that at long last our area will lose its "poor relation" status of having no university. The simple truth is that a university would bring more brains and more money into Ipswich, with other less tangible advantages.

Chris Wiltshire, a past Chairman of the Society, then took us into the main business of the evening. He underlined the Society's desire for buildings in the town to be unique and striking — buildings that people would travel to see and that would enhance the town's self-esteem and its commerce. He welcomed the fact that several of the nominations were on the Waterfront, which for far too long has been ignored by many local people. He reminded us that in Maritime Year 1982 our Society drew up a futuristic plan for redevelopment of the Wet Dock and he regretted that progress has been so long delayed.

His comments on the nominations for awards were as usual thought-provoking and often amusing. For those of you who weren't there, here is a sample of what was said.

The Nominations

Isaac Lord's, Fore Street

The only surviving complete merchant's trading complex. Has won Society awards for previous parts of the renovation. This is a new major refurbishment of the salesroom and crossway. Good use of largely original materials and a high standard of craftsmanship.

Salthouse Harbour Hotel, Neptune Quay

The conversion of this old building left the judges with mixed feelings, some "reasonably pleased," but concern was expressed about the block building attached to the western flank wall.

Greenwich House and Holbrook House, Duke Street/John Street

The first part of the redevelopment of the former gasworks site. Difficult to judge until more of the project is completed. The use of banded brickwork and timber cladding nicely reflects the old dock context. Some judges disliked the little railings along the top.

Quay West, Stoke Quay

Respects the height of Felaw Maltings nearby and makes a strong statement itself, although the main entrance looks under-stated. Part of an Ipswich of the future but raises questions about what is appropriate here. Is this Rimini?

Curzon House, St Peter's Street

The name should be Curson House since this was part of the site of the great house of Lord Curson, courtier and spy of Henry VIII. It echoes some of the "Italianate features" of Buttermarket Shopping Centre. Not keen on the "post-Modernist windowettes". More pleasing is the re-use of the 19th century facade in Rose Lane.

Fore Street re-paving scheme

Some paving too "busy" and less successful than in some other streets. Planters don't fit in too well and already some stains have run off on to expensive York Stone. But the removal of old poles and yellow lines was welcomed.

25 Berners Street

Conversion of ground floor shop to residential use has been quite careful and successful.

Public toilets, St Margaret's Street

A welcome new facility and a nice idea to echo some of the North London Underground stations, but looks too "bricky" and bare — despite our President's plaque commemorating the opening!

The Navigator sculpture, riverside near Princes Street bridge

The Society welcomes more public art but this isn't sufficiently visible to the public. Liked the surface rusting effects on the corton steel.

IP Central apartments, Waterworks Street

Uses the site well but lots of "Georgianette" surface details which might be more suitable on an "executive style" house.

Jamie Cann House, Demoiselle Crescent, Ravenswood

Next to the Listed former airport terminal building but makes no reference to it. Full of cottagey "retrospective make-believe" — although it has to be acknowledged that many people would like that.

Children's play area, Christchurch Park

Popular, and despite colourful features not very intrusive in the park. Good picnic tables and seats. The maritime theme rather "off the peg".

We had listened carefully to Chris Wiltshire's comments on behalf of the Society's judges and we had enjoyed Tony Hill's photographs of all the nominations which John Norman had skilfully presented in a computerised programme. Now came the announcements of the awards, which were presented to the winning clients, designers/architects and contractors by the Mayor.

The Awards

AWARD OF DISTINCTION for the refurbishment of the saleroom and crossway at Isaac Lord's

Client: SJ and GA Cooper

Design: Anthony Rossi

Contractor: R & J Hogg

COMMENDATION for Quay West residential development, Stoke Quay

Client: Bellway Homes, Essex
Design: RMA Architects Ltd
Contractor: Bellway Homes, Essex

COMMENDATION for Greenwich House and Holbrook House, Duke Street

Client: Persimmon Homes (Essex) Ltd

Design: RMA Architects Ltd

Contractor: Persimmon Homes (Essex) Ltd

Members and guests then adjourned to the next room where we enjoyed the excellent refreshments provided by Suffolk College catering students. It was a pleasant conclusion to the Society's Annual Awards Evening, one of our most important events of the year.

Isaac Lord's Update

Gina and I were delighted to receive the Society's Award of Distinction for "Refurbishment of the Saleroom and Crossway" at the presentation ceremony on 12 November at Suffolk College. We were particularly pleased that both our architect Anthony Rossi and builder John Hogg were also present to receive their awards.

This phase completes major structural repairs of the complex that we began over twenty years ago. At that time, many of the buildings were redundant and desperately in need of attention, and it was evident that "making good" was no longer sufficient to prevent continuing decay of the structure. It is important to acknowledge how critical the support and co-operation of Ipswich Borough Council has been to the final result. The Conservation Officer, Bob Kindred, has been instrumental in helping us to bring derelict parts of the site into useful, rate-generating activities. Small "pump-priming" grants and pragmatic planning consents enabled the west side of the site, for instance, to be developed into open-plan offices and an art gallery, thus creating a revenue stream to maintain the buildings for the future and bring an important part of the town back to life.

More recent structural repairs have been carried out with significant grant aiding by English Heritage and their active involvement has been much valued by all parties. The Regional Surveyor for English Heritage, Trudi Hughes, has been closely involved throughout and is delighted by the Society's recognition.

We recently gained planning consent to create a restaurant in the Grade I Listed east warehouse and we are now exploring ways to take this project forward. After so many years of major building works, our own resources are exhausted and in the New Year we will seek a partner or an independent developer to take the scheme to the next critical stage where the generation of income will ensure the survival of these internationally important buildings.

STUART COOPER

A Message from the Treasurer, etc.

I have had a letter from the Inland Revenue which starts:

"From April 2004, people who complete a Self-Assessment tax return will be able to nominate a charity to receive all or part of any repayment due to them. The Inland Revenue repaid around 0 billion to nearly 3 million Self-Assessment taxpayers last year." Even assuming that they are using the American rather than the British billion, this is quite a lot of money and all charities will be watching the results with interest."

Are you such a taxpayer? Do you know anyone who is, even if not a member of the Society? Watch out for full details in our April Newsletter.

Meanwhile **Gift Aid**, an entirely separate scheme, is continuing to provide us with extra income at no cost to those of you who have already made a Gift Aid Declaration.

If the letter "G" appears on the address label of your Newsletter than you have already made such a declaration and need do no more. If there is no "G" but you would like to help the Society in this way - and are a taxpayer - then fill in the slip at the foot of the payment form if paying by cheque. If you pay by Standing Order ("S" on your address label) give me a ring. If I'm out, just leave your name and address and say "gift aid". Yes, it's as simple as that!

KEN WILSON

...and a reminder from our Membership Secretary

Can I remind members that membership cards will no longer be issued on my receiving your subscriptions. Confirmation of your membership will be the continued receipt of the Society's Newsletter - as agreed at the 2003 AGM. Those who pay by Standing Order will find an "S" on their Newsletter envelope. New members who have joined since September 2003 will not need to renew their subscriptions until 2005.

PHILIPPA ISAAC

Recent Planning Matters

Here are some of the Society's comments on recent planning applications, followed by the Borough Council's decisions on some applications referred to in our previous Newsletters.

NCP Car Park, 11 St George's Street erection of 3-5 storey block of 38 flats with undercroft parking

"This application lacks important detail - like external wall materials! And it included development on land currently occupied by three terraced properties in Bedford Street (although this is not part of the current application!). Basically the elevation to Bedford Street is three-storey Victorian style and the elevation to St George's Street four-storey more modern style with a corner under a square pyramid roof. It contributes nothing to the street scene and is a cheap solution to a small proportion of a major development site - St Matthew's roundabout, Bemers Street, Bedford Street, St George's Street. The Listed building in St George's Street (the former Globe public house) will be over-

dominated by this development, there will be duplicated rather than shared vehicle access from St George's Street (behind QS) and the ramp up to roof-top parking will remain as a feature of Bedford Street.

"It is not as bad as some recent proposals (e.g. Christchurch Street) but it is a case for throwing out and starting again, with the message that copying Victorian panache is not necessary. In development terms, this site is crying out for a design brief led proactively by your crood selves (IBC) backed up possibly by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). We cannot afford to allow this prime site at the entrance to Ipswich town centre to suffer a repeat of the architectural disaster of the 1960s."

Ipswich Hospital Mortuary Extension

" The lost bicycle sheds are not being replaced (at least not in this application). On this site there are notorious parking problems. This facility (the bicycle sheds) has always been well used by many of the staff who work in the pathology laboratory. The Development Committee should make planning permission contingent on the Trust producing plans for not just replacement but more cycle spaces with better security and, ideally, changing facilities. In this way the Trust would go a small step in reducing their parking problems."

25 Tuddenham Road : construction of car hardstanding and retaining walls

"The Society believes that this application to allow a second parking space in the front of a fine house in a Conservation Area should be refused as a matter of principle. The Development Committee must try to reduce the number of cars in the town centre and one of the ways that assists this is not to allow the insertion of extra parking spaces in gardens, particularly in Conservation Areas. This 1883 house by Gibbons is on the Ipswich Society list of important local buildings. The citing mentions the "stone steps" and the "2m Suffolk white brick front wall with red brick and corded decoration. Gate piers with stone capping." Clearly this is a fine midVictorian building and should not be altered." [IBC refused permission on the grounds that "the proposals would result in the loss of the remaining historic landscaped frontage and its replacement with a bland excavated car parking area which would be seriously detrimental to the Conservation Area."]

3 St Aubyn's Road : erection of building incorporating three self-contained flats

"This appears to be a most welcome departure in what is an essentially residential area." [IBC approved with some details specified.]

IBC's decisions on previous applications:

Isaac Lord's: restaurant, shop units and meeting rooms - approved.

Handford Road: erection of 76 dwellings - approved.

Territorial Army Centre, Yarmouth Road: 123 flats - approved, with many conditions including affordable housing.

11-15 Great Colman Street: front faqades to be retained, 22 flats - application approved by 113C, with various demands on architectural details and prior archaeological investigations. The Society considers this a good example, after trial and error, of the planning process working well.

Phones 4U, Westgate Street: replacement shop front - approved.

413-415 Bramford Road: residential development with a density up to 50 dwellings per hectare - the Society is pleased this has been rejected by IBC on the grounds that it would be a piecemeal development in an area which needs comprehensive planning.

Ravenswood: 36 houses, 16 flats, 27 affordable dwellings - approved with requirements about bricks, paving and restrictions on satellite dishes, but not a word on design qualities. The Society finds it remarkable that CABE is unable to find a design champion in Ipswich. (See article below.)

Noddy Housing

The Ipswich Society has long campaigned against poor quality exterior design; it comes as no surprise that the interiors are equally unimaginative and impractical. The Ravenswood development is Ipswich's latest example.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) was set up by the Government incorporating the Royal Fine Art Commission to do what it says in its title. To achieve this it intends to find Local Design Champions throughout the country. Unfortunately no one has either come forward or been selected in Ipswich. If they had, perhaps we might have avoided some recent follies such as the apartment block behind the Foyer in Waterworks Street, Ravenswood and numerous smaller residential developments.

Discussions with the Borough Council's Development Officers show that there is little that either they or we can do to alter the mindset of the developer. When modern design has improved the quality of so much in the visual, tactile and practical life of the ordinary consumer, the housing industry should be ashamed of itself. The current range of Fords from Ka through Focus to Mondeo exemplifies that good design does sell, and it is patronising to their customers to say that house buyers only want pastiches. Go to Currys and Comet for electrical goods or Ikea and DFS for furniture and see what modern designs do roll off the shelves.

Now Mr Prescott intends to introduce "a package of building regulation and planning reforms to enforce better standards" to stop developers building "Noddy box veneer housing." His paper delivered to a "better building" conference in October makes stirring reading. This is encouraging, particularly if there are teeth in the planning consents to deny the rubbish. Personally, I feel that our Council Development Officers need the time and the personnel to carry out more proactive planning of possible developments. I think that here there may be a role for the Society and we should be more proactive in the future rather than merely responding at the application stage.

MIKE COOK

Ipswich Society Planning Co-ordinator

Designs for a New Bridge

The Conservation Advisory Panel recently had the privilege of discussing three designs for a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the New Cut.

In May 2001 four architectural practices were invited to submit designs for the proposed bridge. Ten were submitted. The ten were reduced to five and then, following a structural audit, further

reduced to the three presented to the Panel. A most interesting and lively debate followed the presentations. Almost uniquely the Panel were being asked to choose between options rather than criticise a single proposal. There was warm support for all designs, reflecting the time and effort the teams had put into the competition. Two of the three designs had similarities - an arch spanning the river with a deck suspended by wires from the soffit.

The first presentation was from a consortium led by architect Craig Driver with Robert Robinson from SCC Property and Rob Seller of MLM Consulting Engineers. They showed the Panel some excellent computer images of a single parabolic steel arch set at right angles to the river supporting a box girder deck. The deck is not parallel with the arch but skewed into a sinuous shape to encourage a seamless flow of pedestrian and cycle traffic. The 3 metre wide deck opens to 5m in the middle where the suspension wires are attached. [see below]

KLH Architects, again with MLM as consulting engineers, also presented an arch, this time in reinforced concrete with solid fish-tailed feet. KLH's arch is semi-circular with the possibility of an interesting full circle reflection when the tide reaches high water. The span is divided into three with a pair of cables supporting a rib under the deck at the one-third and two-thirds points. KLH were represented by Robert Keeble and Martin Goodwin supported by John Hawkins of MLM. Whereas the first design was slender and had drawn inspiration from maritime connections, KLH had chosen a more robust structure suited to the current industrial landscape. [top opposite]

The final submission was by Paul Matthews of The Landscape Partnership, a unique design presented as a "4D Bridge". The self-supporting structure would be a space frame of large diameter hollow tubes with a wire mesh deck, possibly with a solid central section. The "wow" factor comes from a spiral helix which springs out of each bank initially providing support for the steps but then spins across the river above the deck in a single twist. The helix would be a steel tube containing spot lights and a continuous strip of fibre optic light. [bottom design below] Both KLH and The Landscape Partnership had used considerable resource to build a model for their proposals. Unusually SCC have chosen to have the bridge designed before funding has been earmarked, in the hope that with the opportunity for a stunning design the money will be found quickly.

The Millennium Commission contributed funds to 27 bridges ranging from £525,000 for the Torrs Walkway in the Goyt Valley to £22 million for the Wilkinson Eyre Blinking Eye connecting Newcastle with the Baltic Arts Centre in Gateshead. Now there's an opportunity for a stunning bridge in Ipswich.

JOHN NORMAN, Vice-Chairman

Gothic Art for England

On Saturday 15 November, a full complement of Ipswich Society members travelled to the Victoria and Albert Museum to view the Gothic Exhibition. Our guides for the day, Charles Tracy and Judith Meredith-Stewart, to whom we were greatly indebted, accompanied us on the coach. Charles used the journey to prepare us for the exhibition by generously supplying us with a copy of the genealogical Houses of York and Lancaster. This helped us to place, by means of his explanation,

Gothic Art in England in the context of the very turbulent period from Edward III in 1327 until the death of Henry VII in 1509.

Today we use the term "Gothic" to describe buildings and objects whose form derives from the pointed arch developed from the mid- 12th to the end of the 15th century in most parts of Europe. However, the word was unknown during this period and was first used in the Renaissance to define a "barbaric" style which did not reflect the classical ideals popular at that time. In the late 18th and early 19th century the Gothic style regained popularity through architects such as Pugin, when "Gothic" came to identify not just an artistic style but a whole epoch - "The Gothic Age".

Our guides split us into four groups, taking two groups before and two after lunch. This was extremely helpful as we could all derive benefit from expert guidance and knowledge. My curiosity centred on the manner in which this exhibition would be presented, as it must have been quite a daunting task for the exhibition curator, Professor Richard Marks, to decide which artifacts to display and how to do so.

In the foyer of the exhibition the subdued lighting and predominantly black and red colouring acted as a rich and appropriate backdrop for the period. The entrance was flanked by the towering mythical painted carvings of the four Dacre beasts, the bull, gryphon, ram and dolphin (c. 1520) from Narworth Castle in Cumberland. They are rare examples of a tradition of heraldic ornament and are said to have been taken to the Field of the Cloth of Gold in France. In stark contrast, mounted in a glass case and spot-lit, was the beautiful tiny crown which belonged to Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV. It is one of only two existing medieval crowns. This was only the introduction to the exhibition and for me it encapsulated the perfect feel of "the Gothic". The main exhibition was thematically displayed under the titles Culture, Royalty, War and Chivalry, Patrons, City and Town, Household, Church and Death. but inevitably many of these themes overlapped.

For each of us there were exhibits that held our attention for different reasons, but most of us were stopped in our tracks by the Reliquary of the Order of St Esprit (c. 1390-1410). This is an elaborately arcaded structure of gold, enamelled en ronde bosse, set with pearls, rubies, sapphires and enamelled flowers superimposed with a plaque of the arms of Henry III of France. Another show-stopper was the tournament armour for the foot combat of Henry VIII which was made by Flemish and Italian craftsmen working in England c. 1520. It stands 188cm high proving that Henry was not only stout but tall. The armour was made for the tournament at the Field of the Cloth of Gold and shows signs of being hastily assembled as Francis I of France changed the rules governing the type of armour to be worn! The horse armour, also for Henry VIII, displayed on a model horse, was probably a gift from the Emperor Maximilian I to Henry VIII to mark his wedding to Catherine of Aragon in 1509.

I don't intend to re-write the catalogue of the exhibition, which is a hefty tome selling at £45 per copy and currently available at Waterstones, but hope to give a flavour of our day. For those of you who won't be able to get to the V&A, an easier and longer term option would be to visit churches, towns, houses and museums in this area which feature quite prominently as source material for the exhibition.

Paycocke's House at Coggeshall was cited as a fine example of a fashionable Tudor timber merchant's house, elaborately decorated with his own merchant mark, an ermine tail. Perhaps more

unexpected was the Charter of Henry V to the Borough of Colchester (from Colchester Museums). The illuminated initial encloses a figure of St Helena who also figures on the Colchester town seat matrix (c. 1413). St Mary's Church in Bury St Edmunds was represented by the cadaver tomb of John Baret. It is meant to prompt the viewer both to consider his own fate and to pray for the deceased.

Also in this section, the Art of Death, is the brass of Thomas and Emme Pownder originally from St Mary Quay, Ipswich, now in Christchurch Mansion. Pownder was one of the bailiffs, or joint mayors of Ipswich, and a ship-owner. Another amazing exhibit from Ipswich is an unusual oak wicket door surrounded by a large imposing frame once belonging to a merchant's house in Key Street, now in Ipswich Museum.

Exhibits from churches in Suffolk are many, namely Holy Trinity Long Melford and St Peter and St Paul Lavenham for their architecture, St Mary's Bury St Edmunds for its nave and corbel angel (now in the V&A), St Mary's at Kersey for part of a chancel screen with images of prophets and kings, St Mary's Ufford for one of its many fine benches and an early 15th century burse from St Ethelbert's in Hesselton (now in the British Museum). Lastly the Exning pyx (1450-1500) found in Exning churchyard in 1845 and now in the British Museum.

Many of the artefacts have been borrowed from sources outside the V&A and because of their age and rarity are priceless, offering us a rare chance to see them. Gold and silver plate, manuscripts, tapestries, carvings, sculptures, armour, jewellery, vestments all were expertly displayed and they gave us, the visitors, a much better appreciation of the period now known as Gothic.

MARY HOLLIS

Regionalisation is Here

Local government for the regions is happening. Scotland and Wales already have their own parliaments, the North-East may have a regional assembly and the possibility remains that other areas will follow. We can argue about the true boundaries of East Anglia and how our ideas differ from what is currently defined as the East of England (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire) but we can't ignore the fact that a considerable amount of Government decision making and spending is carried out regionally. I recently had the privilege of contributing to the process of formulating the strategy for the East of England Development Agency (EFDA) and what struck me was the power and influence this organisation has over our lives.

Major items likely to be included in the EEDA strategy for the next 10 years include:

- Communications: the number one at my conference was roads, but electronic communication will also feature strongly (Broadband to every village?)
- Environmental Technologies (renewable energy generation - wind farms)
- Skills and Knowledge shortages
- The effect of EU enlargement, which includes an increasing market place for the export of goods and services, but the influx of labour to fill the skills shortages (see above)

- The decline of Research and Development, and the need to encourage entrepreneurs to start their own businesses.

Other regional bodies that exert influence and control, and spend our money, include Go-East (the Government Office for the Eastern Region), EERA (East of England Regional Assembly) and the Strategic Health Authority, the East of England Tourist Board and lots of small bodies such as the East of England Innovation Relay Centre (EEIRC) and the obscure InvestEast of England.

JOHN NORMAN

Letters to the Editor

TOO MANY SIGNS

From Ken Nichols

The article "Sign o'the Times" touched on a subject close to my heart - too many road signs, the way in which they are growing ever larger and the fact that temporary signs never seem to be removed. I call it "Sign Pollution". Can there not be a survey to see which signs really do inform and which could be scrapped? The siting of signs seems only to be decided by the criterion "Can the motorist see it from 400 yards away?" ignoring the fact that it masks some beautiful view or building. The pedestrian or cyclist is not taken into account, or even more importantly the blind, partially sighted, the disabled or mums with push chairs. So let's hope for an initiative to clear our streets of clutter. The other observation I would like to make is that wonderful though the development of the dock is, can we hope for a landmark building that will be so powerfully designed that people will identify it as being the Ipswich Waterside, rather than the whole quayside being developed and then only looking like a river frontage anywhere in Europe.

NO KITCHEN WASTE IN BROWN BINS

From Chris Mole, MP for Ipswich

You asked in Snippets (2) [October Newsletter] does anyone know what the reasons are for the Government's new restrictions on kitchen waste being included in compost recycling schemes. A scientific study by DEFRA had been commissioned to look at the risk of pathogens finding their way from kitchen waste into the food chain. This followed the BSE and Foot and Mouth outbreaks and the concern that contaminated meat had been discarded and found its way into livestock feed. The study is flawed in my view, and that of the Composting Association (CA), in that it assumes firstly that 10% of household kitchen waste is meat, and secondly it applies solutions more appropriate to abattoirs than composting plants. In an attempt to keep pathogens "off the fields" the Government has placed stringent restrictions that composting, plants such as that operated by Anglia Water/Ipswich Borough Council may not be able to meet. Hence the local ban. A lot depends on the implementation of the regulations by the State Veterinary Service and I am talking to the CA about how we ensure DEFRA reviews the impact of its guidelines in order to allow composting and recycling to move forward once again.

REDUNDANT SMALL BROWN BINS

**From Annie Merry, Recycling Officer,
Waste Management Services, Ipswich Borough Council**

I am writing in response to the item in the October Newsletter regarding "redundant small brown bins" and hope to answer the questions raised. Ipswich Borough Council's brown bin scheme was

launched in 1998 to collect kitchen and garden waste for recycling. The scheme has proved extremely popular with Ipswich residents and continues to be well used despite recent changes to collections necessitated by the Animal By-Products Order.

This Order was issued by DEFRA in the interests of animal health and came into force in July 2003. The Order requires Ipswich Borough Council and other councils in the UK to comply with new regulations regarding the composting of catering or food waste. Ipswich Borough Council is currently exploring the possibility of utilising funds from DEFRA in order to comply with the regulations and resume the collection of food waste.

However, we do recognise there is competition for DEFRA funding and the funds were oversubscribed last year. In the meantime we are continuing to investigate all options to resume the collection of non-animal food waste and therefore encourage residents to keep their small brown bins.

PARKING PROBLEMS

From Tom Gondris

I refer to John Norman's feature on Parking Problems in the October Newsletter. I am afraid John is wrong in thinking that parking on footpaths is not allowed in London. The lower part of Broomwood Road on The Avenue, Clapham Common, is used for short term metered parking with cars encouraged to utilise half the pavement width, the individual car spaces being marked on the pavement and road.

I have no idea how general this policy is, and it may be limited to a particular London borough - I think Battersea in this case. This is an area of terrace housing, with minimal car parking facilities.

"LOVE ON THE DOLE"

The Editor apologises to Don Skeates for misquoting his letter in the October Newsletter. Mr Skeates recalled seeing this play at the old Lyceum Theatre in about 19-36 when (it should have read) "unemployment was high." Members must have thought it was a strange distortion of economic history to associate the 1930s with high employment!

WHAT SORT OF FRUIT OR VEGETABLE?

From Pat Read

I noted with interest Pat Gondris's remark about the pineapples on the gateposts to Christchurch Park in Soane Street. I had been watching with great interest the workman rebuilding the pillars at the Bolton Lane entrance to the park, and was finally able to say, "How good it looks, having the pineapples back again." To which he indignantly replied, "They're not pineapples, they're artichokes." So I took photographs of both, to compare, and I guess he's correct! [Editor What do readers think? This is in Soane Street on left: Bolton Lane on right.]

A Dust Mop at St Peter's

Thursday, 1 May 2003 was the beginning of a whole new experience and one which would last until 16 October. I'd answered Roger Wolfe's plea in the Newsletter for volunteers to help keep St Peter's

Church open for a couple of hours each Thursday afternoon from May to October. It was part of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust policy to open the three maritime churches which stretch in a line parallel to the Waterfront. The churches being medieval and of particular interest, it was felt that people would be tempted to see inside buildings not normally open.

I soon found that it took a good fifteen minutes to uncover display panels showing the history of the area and to set out the sales table (including the all-important donations jar). Notices had to be put outside the church to advertise the fact that we were open, and at 2 pm promptly the great doors were thrown back.

My duties were varied and ranged from greeting visitors and telling them pertinent facts about the church to selling pamphlets and books. Spare moments found me wielding either a broom, dustpan and brush (plaster tends to drop from walls on a windy day) or a duster on the pulpit or on the token pews near the altar. I also discovered that the churchyard is popular with local drinkers, so we had regular pick-up duty to keep the area free from rubbish.

I say "we" as there were three volunteers on a regular basis with a few more every now and then. Fortunately two of the three of us had an encyclopedic knowledge of the church and its environs, while I managed to commit to memory "mentioned in Domesday survey of 1086" and "font brought over from Tournai in 1190." I did however get muddled somewhat with my 14th and 15th centuries, and need to do some swotting up if asked to volunteer next year!

We also managed to move several items of furniture from left to right (with the aid of metal rollers and three pairs of willing hands) and even added various splashes of colour to brighten up the interior. A magnificent pair of red velvet curtains transformed the sales table, while St Michael's Church, no longer used, provided us with an altar frontal and matching pulpit fall, both in red. There were various events of special interest to St Peter's Church while we were on duty, one of which being "IP-Art" which took place in the first two weeks of July. An unusual photographic record of the various stages of a specially commissioned piece of sculpture was placed in the centre of the church, attracting many visitors who also stayed to appreciate the building itself.

The two Heritage Open Days in September provided a particular "buzz" as, owing to the church being on a list of religious venues to be visited by sponsored cyclists, we had a steady stream of helmeted visitors on the Saturday, all eager to have their cards signed and be on their way to the next target. (You've guessed it - I volunteered for a couple of hours in the morning!)

Obviously, volunteers are no use without visitors, and to me these were the special joy of being in the church on a Thursday afternoon. Many of them were "locals" who had probably never stepped over the threshold until attracted by the "Church Open" sign. Others were ex-locals who had moved from the area many years ago and all having fond memories of being christened, married or singing in the choirs of 1927 and 1945! As Jill Freestone's splendid free-standing displays showed many old photographs both of the choir and local inhabitants, our visitors were able to spot themselves in the photos, thus providing us with names to fill in gaps.

Those who'd moved even further away included one man whose family emigrated to Canada in 1838. Now living in Vancouver, he was intent on tracing his family background. Yet another Canadian visitor, who had worked in a nearby factory some years ago, popped in to see the church and by chance met someone who had worked in the same place at the same time. This sparked off a

vigorous "Do you remember" session. We became accustomed to accents from places such as New York, Tokyo, Australia, Philadelphia and Holland (the latter people having arrived by boat at the marina). On one memorable day we were visited by a lad from Portugal who delighted us by wandering round chanting in Latin, for as he said: "This is what you do in a church." Ireland and Belgium, Toronto and The Hague were also represented. We had some visits by Blue Badge Guides bringing small groups of visitors as an extension to their Town Centre Walks. (Perhaps these could be a regular Thursday afternoon event?) Occasional flashes of excitement were provided by boys on the roof, resulting in publicity in the local paper; an exchange of statements in the same paper as to whether or not the church was "empty" provided a burst of visitors the following Thursday! Likewise the ITV drama about Henry VIII resulted in several visitors eager to see a display about "local boy makes good" Cardinal Wolsey and his adjacent Gateway. A particular highpoint was the arrival of our 1000th visitor, a somewhat bemused Filipino lady with a child, who was presented by Dr Blatchly with a copy of his book about the splendid font in St Peter's Church.

In all, it was a fascinating six months and an experience which I would certainly repeat in 2004. It was fun and I would heartily recommend it to anyone with a few hours to spare.

JEAN HILL

Heritage Lottery Fund

Robyn Greenblatt is a businesswoman with money to give away. She is East of England regional manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund and there is some evidence that Ipswich has missed out on what could be considered a fair share of this newfound wealth. That's our fault, of course. Money is only distributed against bids received, and only then for suitable causes. There have however been some significant grants. For example Ipswich Transport Museum received £130,000 for a new roof, the catalyst for what has become regular and frequent public open days and reward for the efforts and enthusiasm of the volunteers. Ipswich Building Preservation Trust is also an occasional recipient of HLF funding and received support (£74,500) for the renovation of the Half Moon and Star at Barrack Corner. IBPT's latest project, Trinity Lodge in Back Hamlet, is subject to an application for an amount in excess of £200,000 and it is likely that renovation of 45 St Nicholas Street on the corner of Silent Street will also be subject of a substantial bid. Collectively this is still small potatoes compared with grants to projects in, for example, the North-East.

So what's next? What should we bid for? A Waterfront Visitor Attraction *per se* would not be eligible, but if it were to be situated in a Listed building then it would be much more likely, to meet the criteria for grant funding. The restoration of Broomhill Pool (which is Listed) is typical of the type of project that Robyn will recommend for grant aid. The money distributed by the HLF is raised through the National Lottery where 5p from each ticket goes to good causes, and the majority of that to heritage projects.

Snippets

A tale of two wars

The Ipswich at War exhibition at High Street Museum is well worth visiting. It should bring home to both young and middle-aged how everything on the home front was affected during the Second World War. By today's standards the bombs were relatively small and Ipswich wasn't pestered like London, but there were many raids and too many casualties. One criticism of this exhibition is that not enough distinction is made between the two wars - partly the result of lack of space. But whereas historians and older people realise the two wars were utterly different, young people easily "merge" the two, which were after all only separated by 21 years.

The future of the Regent

Rumours that IBC is considering letting the Regent Theatre to private management should come as no surprise. The former cinema, the biggest and potentially the best theatre in E.Anglia, has hosted many splendid entertainments since the Council bravely took it on and prevented its subdivision into small cinemas. But when money is so tight in local government and the proverbial "hard choices" have to be made, isn't it wiser to let the big theatre be run by the private sector and retain control of the Com Exchange for the huge range of community activities there?

Safe station

Ipswich railway station has been awarded "Secure Station Status" under a scheme jointly run by the Department of Transport, the British Transport police and Crime Concern. Requirements included CCTV, good levels of lighting and a staff presence, particularly when the station is less busy. Additionally, Ipswich station multi-storey car park has gained a Secure by Design award, although it hasn't won any architectural or "contribution to the public realm" awards.

Increased ferry sailings

Ipswich Port operator, ABP, is to invest £6.1 million into the roll on/roll off facilities on the West Bank. The investment follows agreement with Ferryways NV to extend their current five year agreement for a further 20 years. When ABP acquired the port in 1997, one of their targets was to re-establish ferry services to continental Europe. The deal with Ferryways began in 2000 with a two ship operation. This expanded to a third sailing in 2002 and a fourth in 2003. This new deal ensures Ipswich's position as a leading ro-ro port. Close to 100,000 units are handled annually and this is set to grow. The total investment in the Port of Ipswich since ABP took over will exceed £20 million when the new ro-ro facilities are complete.

ITFC-coloured bins

The blue bins are coming to join the black and the brown. A pilot scheme has begun in the Rushmere, Whitehouse, California and Bramford Lane areas for a fortnightly collection of plastic, paper, cardboard and cans. It is good that IBC hasn't been deterred by the ban on kitchen waste from brown bins (see Letters to the Editor) and is pressing ahead with more recycling.

Ugh - by gum!

It costs IBC almost £21,000 a year to remove about 20,000 pieces of chewing gum from town centre streets. A pound a piece to scrape or steam away other people's dirty habit! Shouldn't the makers add £1 a stick to the retail price of chewing gum? Increasing the price from 50p to £10.50 per packet should reduce this anti-social behaviour considerably!

Tourist Information Point

John Norman writes to say that he has received both critical and supportive feedback on the proposal for members to act as a Tourist Information Point in the town centre next summer. Of particular note was a letter from member and Blue Badge Guide, Martin Tuffs. Condensing Martin's reply to a single point, he suggests that the idea would work best during Heritage Open Days in September. The Executive is actively considering all responses and there will be a further update in the next Newsletter.

River Action Group Progress

Members will perhaps remember that R.A.G. was spawned by the Environment Protection Panel on which I represent the Society. Its main active members are from Ipswich Wildlife Group, Sustrans, the Inland Waterways Association, Greenways, the Museum and IBC Regeneration and Planning personnel. Fellow Ipswich Society member, John Ireland, represents local cyclists.

What has been achieved so far? Our principal success, I feel, is the adoption by the Borough Council of our Strategy Document. This called for all housing development along the upriver frontage from Stoke Bridge to include the provision of either separate cycle routes and footpaths or a combined path if necessary.

Those interested should walk upriver from behind the Ministry of Defence site up to the first railway bridge. They will see large stretches of completed paths which have all been provided by the developers. Beyond this bridge the Ipswich and Norwich Co-operative Society have provided a 5 metre width of land by setting their outer fencing back where this has been possible. Improvements to the paths have yet to take place in this area.

A completely new section of the cycle path has been created between Princes Street bridge and West End Road. This passes through what will become a picnic site where our Lottery-funded Navigator sculpture (featured in the July 2003 Newsletter) has been erected.

The Ipswich Wildlife Group, on behalf of R.A.G., has now obtained a substantial further Lottery grant which is paying for the development of this picnic area and for the production of seven information boards showing what is being, or has been, achieved between the start of our section of the path at Stoke Bridge and Alderman Canal. An additional grant from the Nationwide Building Society will help to pay for a further work of art to mark this start at Stoke Bridge.

An indirect result of our activities has been the creation of a skateboard park at Stoke Bridge. R.A.G. gave the initial impetus to the Borough Council's providing the land and R.A.G. undertook the development of the adjacent pocket park. There are many problems associated with the skateboard park, mainly to do with litter, graffiti etc but there is no doubt that this new facility is popular with young people of our town.

One of our constant concerns is the whole question of cleanliness, including dog fouling. We do have regular river clean-ups, but sadly we are a dirty nation, and it is up to organisations such as our Society to keep up the effort to educate the public.

On a final note, we continue our efforts to provide a River Centre, possibly associated with an Environmental Centre, along the river frontage. One day we'll see boating on the river again.

TOM GONDRIS

Lunch-time Lectures

It's worth bearing in mind that there will be another series of lunch-time lectures this year. They will be held in the Ipswich Film Theatre at the Com Exchange on Thursdays at 1pm and are scheduled to end at about 1.50 pm - so that people who work in the town as well as retired folk may be able to attend. The speakers and subjects are:

- 12 February — Dr John Blatchly on "Writing the History of Ipswich School"
- 22 April — Terry Hunt on "130 Years of the East Anglian Daily Times"
- 17 June — Peter Underwood (our Vice-President) on "Thomas Wolsey"
- 12 August — Elizabeth Sugarman on "Jews in Suffolk - Past and Present"
- 14 October — Robin Herne on "The Art of Paganism"
- 9 December — Professor Chris Green on "Composers and Suffolk"

Kensington Palace / Apsley House

It was my first visit to two architectural gems so there were swathes of culture and loads of history to absorb. I was on a steep learning curve but it turned out to be a fascinating experience with the added pleasure of seeing Hyde Park in wonderful October sunshine. Thank you, Julie and Margaret, for arranging a great day out.

Kensington Palace

We were decanted from our coach into Kensington Gardens, once the private parkland of William III and Mary II and now merged into Hyde Park. We approached the palace from the south so our first view of the building was its most handsome facade behind the flamboyant statue of William. The royal couple chose to move to this modestly proportioned Jacobean brick mansion in 1689 from Whitehall. Their change of address was largely due to health reasons because William's asthma and bronchitis were aggravated by Whitehall's damp and smog.

Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to transform the existing house and later monarchs employed Hawksmoor and Kent to carry out further alterations. Grinling Gibbons decorated the interior with carved panels, graceful fluted Corinthian pillars, friezes and statues. William Kent seems to have produced some of the most interesting features for George I - in particular the trompe l'oeil crowds of figures (including a self-portrait) overlooking the King's Stairway. In the dramatic Cupola Room his trompe l'oeil fresco gives the effect of a dome although it is only 3.5 inches in depth. The King's Gallery, designed by Hawksmoor, has an opulent ceiling painted by Kent and its walls are covered in fabulous works of art. This room has recently been restored to its original perfection and it was here that I found one of the most interesting objects, a working wind vane, the wind direction indicated by a moving pointer on a painted map. It is attributed to Thomas Tompion (1694), one of the most famous clock makers. (There is a similar one in Woolverstone Hall.)

Moving forward to the 19th century, Victoria was born in a ground floor room once known as the North Drawing Room on 24 May 1819. Her bedroom on the first floor shows a complete change of style from the rest of the palace with pretty floral wallpaper and much lighter furnishings. I could picture her playing here as a girl with her beloved little dog, Dash. It was in this bedroom that she was woken at 5 am on 20 June 1837 to be told that her uncle William IV had died and she was now Queen. A white marble statue of Victoria as a young girl stands on the Broad Walk to the east of the palace. It was made by her daughter, Louise, a gifted sculptress, in 1893. More recently Kensington Palace became the London home of Charles and Diana, and Princess Margaret had an apartment here.

Our tour of the palace included a viewing of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection from the 19th century to the present day and a display of the Queen's hats and handbags. Some of the colourful hats rotated on slender stands. It looked like a rather attractive piece of installation art and would not have seemed out of place in Tate Modern. The sunken garden created in 1909 is an attempt to copy the formal gardens laid out by William and Mary. Dwarf cypresses and terraced flower beds surround a rectangular pond to form a sheltered tranquil place. Just the spot for a picnic.

Apsley House, No 1 London, Hyde Park Corner (Wellington Museum)

Until the beginning of the 19th century London ended at Hyde Park Corner and the countryside began. So Apsley House was known as No 1 London because of its location just past the toll gate into London from the west. Many of the distances to England's towns were measured from Hyde Park Corner.

The house was designed by Robert Adam during the 1770s for Lord Apsley. Fifty years later it became the suitably grand home of the first Duke of Wellington. He took up residence in 1817 just two years after defeating Napoleon at Waterloo. Wellington used the architect Wyatt to enlarge and alter the house. The Dining Room was created in 1819 and the Waterloo Gallery some ten years later. Then in 1828 (the year in which he became Prime Minister) the final touch was added - a classical portico and the whole exterior clad in Bath Stone. Apsley House was given to the nation in 1947 and it has become the Wellington Museum. With its collection largely intact and family still in residence, it is the last grand aristocratic town house in London.

The museum is rich in sumptuous 19th century furniture, memorabilia, trophies, tableware and art. Many paintings depict Wellington's contemporaries, victories and family. Perhaps the most stunning painting is Velasquez's "The Water Seller of Seville", painted in 1919 when the artist was only twenty years old, and Correggio's "The Agony in the Garden", apparently stolen from Joseph Bonaparte's luggage at Victoria. Then there is the huge Goya portrait of Wellington on horseback: allegedly the original was of Napoleon but the head was re-painted. Finally in the basement I found the famous caricature "A Wellington Boot or the Head of the Army", one of many drawn by William Heath in 1829.

My favourite part of the building is the staircase - light, delicate, curving upward in a great spiral and picked out in white and gold. At the foot of the staircase is a startling double life-size Canova statue of Napoleon wearing only a fig leaf. To continue the fig leaf theme: overlooking the back of Apsley House in Hyde Park is the Achilles statue, a 33 ton bronze copy of a Roman original. It was erected in 1822 on behalf of the women of Great Britain to commemorate the Duke's achievements. This nude statue caused outrage and William Wilberforce, no less, led a campaign to have it

removed for decency's sake. A fig leaf was eventually positioned in the appropriate place and the statue remained.

As we left for our journey home we passed yet another heroic image - an equestrian statue of Wellington by Sir Edgar Boehm on the central traffic island.

DIANA LEWIS

Old Inns of Ipswich

Although disappointed not to be able to hear the advertised lecture on The Ipswich Masterplan, the Society was very grateful to Dr Charles Tracy for speaking to us at such very short notice. He chose to talk about Old Inns of Ipswich - not the multitude of little boozing dens as some of us might have expected, but inns. The distinctions were wide and crucial. There were indeed lots of ale houses for the lower orders. There were also taverns which tended to specialise in wines and could provide substantial meals. But the inns were the big establishments catering for well heeled local people and travellers.

Inns were usually second only in size to the churches. The bigger ones could cater for 200-300 people and included stabling for visitors' horses. They hosted such events as feasts, concerts, balls, gambling clubs, trade association meetings and electioneering.

Charles pointed out that Ipswich was about the 5th wealthiest town in England during the late 15th and early 16th centuries with many important visitors and pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Grace, so several inns must have provided suitable accommodation. It isn't always clear which they were. He chose to concentrate especially on the large and rambling timber framed building at the junction of St Nicholas Street and Silent Street - the building which used to be wrongly called Wolsey's birthplace, and which is now being surveyed by the Ipswich Building Preservation Trust with a view to completely refurbishing it.

The survey and Charles's own examination reveal the likelihood that this was one of the major inns of the town, with an even longer frontage on to St Nicholas Street and evidence of a two sided gallery at the back for access to guest rooms. Hearing this enthusiastic account of a wonderful building made us all the more eager for the Ipswich Building Preservation Trust to acquire the necessary financial help to restore it.