

Issue173 Newsletter Oct 2008

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The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2008 ISSUE 173

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Welcome to University Campus Suffolk
its striking shape and unique roof as seen from Fore Street

Editorial: Being Realistic

If you thought I was unduly cheerful in my last Editorial, I'm afraid I'm going to do it again! There are many good things happening in Ipswich, some of which I probably don't even know about. The more obvious ones are referred to later in this Newsletter - the opening of the new University Campus Suffolk building on the Waterfront, the likely redevelopment of the Civic Centre site, the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange and the former museum in Museum Street, the Co-op's purchase of Wherstead Park and, not least, the proposals for four big wind turbines which could make a useful contribution to providing sustainable energy.

I hope you'll read about all these matters in the following pages - in which you will also find some issues the society is not happy about!

Yes, the economic slowdown has affected some development schemes - inevitably perhaps but badly timed, especially when the Waterfront was looking so promising. It sounds as if the St Peter's Port development will be started soon, but the three derelict dockside buildings near Stoke Bridge may continue to blight the appearance of the Waterfront on the western side as seen by thousands who pass by every day. In an ideal world the owners would be made to clear the sites and create green spaces until proper building takes place. However, I must remind myself to be realistic - which is not the same as being pessimistic!

The biggest topical (and controversial) issue is the Government's consideration of changing local authority boundaries in Suffolk and Norfolk to create unitary authorities. The decision would affect our whole area for decades to come and needs to be looked at from all angles. The Society's carefully considered response is outlined in this Newsletter on page 6.

The year 2010 will see the Society's 50th anniversary. We hope to hold a number of celebratory events which are already being discussed by your committee. There should be much to look forward to in 2010.

Neil Salmon

Chairman On Current Affairs

As I write the Boundary Committee for England has been holding meetings about its proposals for new boundaries for Suffolk and Norfolk (and also Devon). The Government has charged it with advising on how the counties should be dealt with when the areas must be unitary authorities. The Government has set its mind against two-tier structures (as at present). The Committee makes it clear it has not yet come to a final solution and is seeking views on the two proposals. Their preferred proposal would be a unitary authority, "North Haven", based on Ipswich and Felixstowe, the Shotley Peninsula and surrounding areas, and the other unitary authority based on the rest of Suffolk. The other possibility offered is just the one authority for the whole of the present Suffolk (minus Lowestoft). I am quite sure its final recommendation will be one of these two, so our submission has to address which of these we feel is best for Ipswich. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find the Society's response, but I can state here it is strongly in favour of the "North

Haven" solution, although I hope we can choose a better title. Incidentally, the new boundaries of "North Haven" would have a very obvious kink in it to the north, placing Tuddenham and Westerfield outside the North Haven. We think this must be corrected.

The Westgate Centre, as it is becoming known, has now had the public consultations and a planning application is expected shortly for this former Civic Centre site. Negotiations are taking place for the anchor store. We might take comfort from a recent Government statement that developers should favour stores which don't already have a presence in the town. This is a new consideration and could prove very useful. Turnstone, the developer, has made it clear it envisages an upmarket development which would upgrade this end of town, so that is also good news. Turnstone is also looking at the possibility of purchasing the old Crown Court and Police Station which are soon to come on the market. This would make a massive development. The Magistrates' Court is also said to be looking at a move to nearer the Crown Court by the river, so there could be major changes to that whole area.

The SWISS Centre (the new sixth form college for SW Ipswich and other schools) has received the support of the Society, although we believe it should be located in the Education Quarter in Ipswich. We have grave concerns about travel arrangements for staff and students.

There has been surprisingly little publicity for a proposal by the Environment team at IBC to build four very large wind turbines (up to 125 metres tall) at three locations on the edge of Ipswich - at the Bury Road Park & Ride site, Ravenswood and at Belstead, marking the main north and south entrances to the town and giving a boost to Ipswich's green credentials. (See Mike Brain's article in this Newsletter.)

High Speed Travel

I was researching some facts and figures for the Newsletter when I came across a dusty old report *To his Britannic Majesty George IV, from the Committee on Trade and Plantations, on the prospects for Mechanical Conveyance between London and the Northern Manufacturing Districts, August 1822.*

'The committee has received evidence from Messrs George and Robert Stephenson, colliery engineers of Killingworth in the County of Northumberland. The elder gentleman is unlettered but professes a rude mechanical aptitude; his son received a modest public education in the City of Newcastle upon Tyne. They possess a remarkable fancy that the steam engine, now employed to drain the collieries of the district, might be adapted for the purposes of locomotion; and that, in the not too distant future, such a device might carry passengers between London and the northern industrial districts at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour.

'Your committee considers this view to result from a distempered imagination, probably occasioned by the severe climate and privation experienced in the colliery districts and by frequent recourse to spirituous liquors that all too frequently results. Representatives of your Gracious Majesty's Treasury pointed out to the committee that the latest mail coaches between London and Manchester, sustained by frequent change of horse and travelling by turnpike on Mr Macadam's patented

surface, have achieved the remarkable speed of ten miles per hour; and that no possible gain in human welfare could result from attempts to reach a higher velocity.'

Postscript:

In the 1930s a Royal Commission on Transport concluded that Britain would never need the continental innovation of 'motorways'. And in 2007 a White Paper on railways concluded that there was no case for Britain to adopt the continental innovation of 'high speed' railway lines.

Footnote about our mainline to London:

Remarks about the overhead electric wires being nearly 60 years old have been received sceptically. But it is true that the Shenfield to Liverpool Street overheads went up in 1949, although Ipswich-London wasn't electrified until 1985 (extended to Norwich in 1987). Leisurely progress! And it's not 'high speed'.

John Norman

New Unitary Authority

Your Society's Executive Committee has given a great deal of time and thought to the Boundary Committee's 'Draft proposals for unitary local government in Norfolk and Suffolk'. Our submitted response runs to fourteen pages of reasoned arguments covering all five of the Secretary of State's criteria and most aspects of economic development, infrastructure and community interests. We realise that not all Society members will agree with this response, particularly those who advocate a single Suffolk authority, but on considering the whole range of present and future interests we have concluded as follows. This is the **Executive Summary** which prefaces our response.

'Of the two models recommended by the Boundary Committee for consultation, The Ipswich Society strongly supports the preferred proposal for two unitary authorities in Suffolk, comprising a North Haven unitary authority covering Ipswich, Felixstowe and connected areas; and a Suffolk unitary authority comprising the rest of the county.

'The Secretary of State's five criteria, and the range of services to be delivered, suggest an overarching principle: that the boundaries for the new authorities in Suffolk should recognise the emergence of quite distinct communities of common interest, for both now and the future. The Society's original proposal recognised three such communities: an enlarged Ipswich, a Suffolk Coastal including Felixstowe and Lowestoft, and a Suffolk Rural. However, the popular support enjoyed by that model is not matched by the assessment of its economic viability. Of the two models deemed capable of satisfying all five criteria therefore, the Society recognises that the development needs of the North Haven area - to provide a focus for economic development and a strategic transport gateway for trade and tourism between the UK, mainland Europe and the world - are quite distinct from those of the rest of Suffolk, and will best be met by creating two distinct unitary authorities.

'Local government should indeed be local, but unitary authorities must be large enough to be viable. Ipswich is rightly proud of its eight centuries' tradition of self-determination under the Charter of 1200, and is now the focus for much new development, not least the establishment of a new

university; but it is also recognisably a part of the wider North Haven region which boasts the expanding Port of Felixstowe and the thriving technology centre of Adastral Park at Martlesham. The demands for regional infrastructure, supporting services and shared amenities all require concerted strategic direction from a local authority committed to a clear vision for North Haven, and the active involvement of the communities participating in these developments. The Society strongly argues, moreover, that Westerfield and Tuddenham are properly part of the North Haven community of interest and should be included within that authority. We also note the interest expressed by Hadleigh.

'In contrast, if Ipswich were subsumed into a single unitary authority for the whole of Suffolk, sheer weight of representation would result in rural interests being given priority over those of the urban regions, as has prevailed in matters governed by the present Suffolk County Council since 1974. Creating a single county-wide authority would reduce the self-governance of Ipswich even further, and the Society strongly endorses the Boundary Committee's understated conclusion that "the aspirations of Ipswich may not best be met under this model," with strategic consequences for the whole country.

'The Ipswich Society therefore supports Ipswich's future development as part of a North Haven unitary authority, ideally to be re-named "Orwell".'

Snippets (1)

Welcome to a valuable newcomer

The new UCS building should be not only complete but in use by the time you read this. It certainly is a striking sight on the NE corner of the Wet Dock with six floors overlooking the water and a gradual descent in height towards Fore Street. It's hard to believe it contains 325 rooms especially as two of them are large lecture theatres, but like the Willis building it occupies a surprisingly big space. At last the Ipswich area can be seen to have a university - nearly 50 years late! Incidentally, if you think there's a lot of new building or conversions for student accommodation, it is said that 2,750 will need to be housed by 2015.

And a welcome new use for Wherstead Park

The East of England Co-operative Society has announced its purchase of the former HQ of Eastern Electricity > TXU > E.ON electricity companies. E.ON's moving out was a blow to local employment and prestige. It is appropriate that the enlarged Co-op should locate its HQ in our area because it is central for their purpose following the merger of Ipswich and Norwich and then the addition of Colchester and E. Essex Societies. The Co-op's 400-500 employees won't occupy the whole site, part of which will be let to suitable other businesses.

St Peter's by the Waterfront

As mentioned before, our Society helped to fund the new booklet about the church. We also made a donation towards the restoration of the windows and are recognised for posterity in the book of sponsors kept in the church. Those of you who will come to our Awards Evening on 12 November will appreciate the work done on the windows. The east window especially is indeed a glorious sight - after all those years of being boarded up.

Generosity in Norwich

We often learn interesting things from newsletters sent by our neighbouring sister societies. The Norwich Society's Newsletter of July 2008 gratefully acknowledges a legacy of £40,000 from a certain individual's estate. He left no specific instructions for its use.

Band in the park

The Society was pleased to be able to sponsor a concert given in the Upper Arboretum of Christchurch Park by the Suffolk Phoenix Brass Consort on 27 July. The band played well, the weather behaved itself, lots of people came and we were also able to publicise ourselves.

Recent Planning Matters

Not many significant planning applications were made to IBC during July and August, perhaps a reflection of the economic slowdown. But here are some we commented on:

1 Neptune Quay: demolition of former snooker club adjacent to Salthouse Harbour Hotel, replacement with a new 6 storey extension to provide 27 additional bedrooms ...

'This proposal is largely supported by the Society .. it is lower and without the striking gable. Terraces and waterfronts have been built up to the attractive state we now like by erecting dissimilar structures, not by attempting to create a wall of look-alikes. Assuming that it does not infringe on the inn to the north we support this application.'

1 Cobbold Street: demolition of existing storage and warehouse, erection of 3 and 2.5 storey block of flats incorporating 9 two-bedroom flats and 3 one-bedroom flats.

'The replacement of a jumble of undistinguished warehouses is appropriate. However, this is a street of small-scale terrace housing and really can't take a new development of this size.'

The outcome of previous planning applications:

The Great White Horse - permission granted for internal alterations to form coffee shop.

73-81 St Matthew's Street, Alexander House - permission granted for conversion to student accommodation with additional floor, despite our objections.

Elton Park, Hadleigh Road - partly in Ipswich, partly Babergh DC who have granted outline permission. Planning decision deferred by IBC. (We supported the application in general.)

SWISS Centre - approved by SCC regardless of our concern about traffic generated by it.

Gym & Trim, Lower Orwell St. 3-4 storey student accommodation - approved by IBC, but awaiting agreement on Section 106 negotiations.

Curson Lodge, 45 St Nicholas St, change of use to wine bar - IBC concerned about rear access, refuse storage, etc. and asked for more information from applicant.

12 Duke Street, 7 storey office block - we had no objection but the Environment Agency need to be convinced that workers above the ground floor can be evacuated in case of more than one metre deep flooding if once in 200 years!

Cromwell Square, erection of statue commemorating, Prince Obolensky - IBC approved. We note the actual or potential demise of some of the big 1930s pubs - The Racecourse, The Haven, The Duke of Gloucester, The Waveney Arms with their spacious bowling greens. Although understandable commercially, this is a loss of neighbourhood social centres.

Two big applications came in too late for comment here, but will be covered in the next Newsletter. They are the 'Shed 8' site next to Neptune Marina on Orwell Quay and an office development in Princes Street on the corner of Chalon Street.

Ipswich Maritime Trust

On Sunday 7 September the Trust hosted a party on board the 3-masted barque *Picton Castle*. Des Pawson presented the Captain with books for the ship's library and a great feast was laid on. Part of the crew (age range 19-74) were at the nearby Lord Nelson, no doubt researching nautical matters concerning Ipswich while the remaining crew entertained us with humour and courtesy.

We had a delightful evening learning about the history and the current events of the voyage. I can imagine Admiral Vernon (who invented 'grog') looking down on the scene with a smile on his face. I heard more than one person suggest that Ipswich should consider adopting the *Picton Castle*. Now there's a thought. The vessel made a stunning visual impact lying at Orwell Quay.

Diana Lewis

Future Of Civic Centre Site

1. The Ipswich Society is pleased that Turnstone are keen to develop the whole potential Westgate site, i.e. including the former court building and the police station. Planning for this whole block must determine the planning of these present limited proposals. 'Making the best of it later' will not produce the quality of development we would expect for this important site.
2. The concept of an arena demands imaginative planning to create an attractive and useful facility and so avoid the risk of its becoming a concrete desert frequented by undesirables! The ventilation shaft of the spiral car park could be made into a striking feature with well designed (computer controlled?) vertically inserted lighting.
3. We recognise that the provision of retail space is the key to the whole project as seen by the developers. Yet this is the most controversial aspect and it is difficult to foresee what it should consist of and what its effect would be on the viability of existing town centre shopping, which we are very concerned about. But in any case we advocate a high quality development which would enhance the appeal of Ipswich town centre as a whole, bringing more people into Ipswich for their whole range of shopping in both the new and the older shops. This might suggest a good quality department store in view of its very large proposed size and multi-storey nature. This major building especially must be attractive and not a large expanse of zinc cladding.

4. The proximity of so many local bus services in Civic Drive and St Matthew's Street and the Park and Ride services nearby make this development admirably less dependent on private cars. However the use of cars will greatly increase here and therefore the access for cars and provision for parking will demand precise and thoughtful planning. Civic Drive is quite short and a traffic build-up would be very unpopular with both through-traffic and motorists using the Westgate Centre.

Other observations:

Attractive landscaping is essential in making this a desirable place to visit.

The fall of the land towards the south should be made a landscaping feature.

The New Wolsey Theatre needs more space around it, and because loud noises can easily be heard inside the Theatre it should be understood from the outset that any events in the arena must be co-ordinated with the Theatre.

We are unsure about the location of the proposed restaurant next to the arena. Perhaps that could be located better in 'Retail Space A' near the Theatre to have some synergy with theatre-going. In any case, we would not want to see a fast food outlet next to Civic Drive.

Historic Lady Lane is the main pedestrian access to the Westgate Centre. This needs very careful treatment to make it welcoming, and from here the first sighting of the vast new buildings of 'Retail B' should be an attraction rather than a cliff face!

Ipswich Port Thriving

The Port of Ipswich is often overlooked, even by Ipswich residents, because Felixstowe dominates not only in its claims about size but also in the amount of traffic it generates. But the Port of Ipswich is important on a national scale, not for containers but for mixed and bulk cargoes. The port handles over 3 million tonnes of cargo each year; its strength is its diversity. Ipswich is the UK's leading grain exporter handling some three quarters of a million tonnes. Grain is a typical 'bulk', as are fertilisers, animal feedstuff, organic peas and rice.

Ipswich is one of the UK's top timber ports with a strong tradition in unloading Baltic and Scandinavian timber; timber is handled for Northern Wood, West Bank Timber, Anglo Norden, Ridgeons and Bill Rees. Timber also comes in from North America. In January 9,500 cubic metres were shipped in a single load aboard the Orfea sailing from Canada for Price & Pierce Softwoods. This timber was loaded at Thunder Bay on the shores of Lake Superior. The ship is now expected to be a regular caller at Ipswich.

ABP (Associated British Ports) have invested considerable sums to make provision for storage of agribulks and minerals, and last year some 400,000 tonnes were offloaded. The re-opening of the rail link to the West Bank enables Brett to transfer sea dredged and other aggregates inland by train. And to really concrete the story, the increase in bulk powder for Southern Cement is another rapidly increasing business.

When the big container ships arrive at Felixstowe they are reluctant to stack empties on top of the full containers they are hoping to unload at their next port of call (it would necessitate double

handling and delay). Instead Ipswich Port has built a considerable trade in uploading empties on to smaller ships for transshipment to near-Europe where they are transferred on to the larger vessel once the full containers have been unloaded.

The Society remains concerned however by the reluctance of China to receive, and the shipping companies to return, empty containers for re-use. In some cases it is cheaper to build new ones in China than to ship empty containers back home. It could be argued that this is no worse than the fate of the cardboard boxes inside those containers - but, then, these should also be re-cycled or re-used.

John Norman

Parks And Open Spaces

People visiting **Christchurch Park** will have seen the many changes/improvements over the past months, but some problems remain. Regarding the new Reg Driver Education Centre, a receptionist is shortly being employed to enable this building to be open on seven days a week, closing at 7 pm from April to the end of August, 6 pm throughout September and 4 pm during the winter months. This will add to the security and the provision of information about the park. Various organisations are being considered for a three year contract to open the kiosk in the Pavilion in the Lower Arboretum and a decision on this will be made by the end of this year. Meanwhile, the unisex toilet is open daily, as is the disabled persons' toilet which needs a radar key to be used; alarms are fitted in both rooms in case of emergency.

The area around the former tennis court adjacent to the Pavilion, now converted to an all-purpose games facility for young people, is to be turfed in the autumn, and a design for the overgrown land to the north of the Wilderness Pond is being drawn up by students at Otley College. The plans will include the Rockery and will provide more benches around this site.

The subject of litter bins always raises its head! At present, there is an experimental recycling blue and black bin by the Mansion tea room, the success of which will be evaluated in the autumn. New recycling bins are planned for use throughout the park, hopefully being timber-clad with metal tops giving information on what goes where, and these will be positioned over a period of time. Two extra members of park staff are being employed this summer to clear rubbish, and the effect is noticeable - a much cleaner and tidier landscape! The Brett and Burton drinking fountains are both working and are regularly maintained.

Everyone seems pleased with the restoration of the raised bed of floral motifs by the Henley Road entrance. In all, the improvements, care and maintenance provided by the Lottery money has made this park a peaceful, clean and beautiful place - and strolling along paths amongst the uncut grasses that shimmer in the sunshine is one of life's pleasures!

On the subject of fountains, there is much enthusiasm for restoring the granite drinking fountain in **Alexandra Park** for which the group of Friends of the latter are hoping to raise money from various organisations. The Ipswich Society has offered possible financial help in this enterprise, as the fountain is of considerable historical interest. Alexandra Park was created in 1903 when Ipswich

Corporation bought some land from the Hill House estate, home of the Byles family, and the drinking fountain was erected in 1905 by Charles Henry Cowell (a prominent member and one time Mayor of the town) in memory of his mother, Marianne Byles, who was born at the Hill House in 1801. This sturdy fountain is now in a state of disrepair with no running water available and three of its four turrets missing.

Alexandra Park has long been a popular place for nearby residents and students of the College - indeed, when the land was purchased in 1903 a newspaper article describes the park as 'a breathing space wildly rushed by the children, rolling and running down the slope in the simple delight of motion ..' With the redevelopment of the College and the Waterfront and the building of the new University, Alexandra Park is a most valuable green lung in the town. It has the further attraction of some woodland containing mature elms (for the restoration of which a separate group of Friends is already raising money) and an excellent and well-attended playground for young and older children. A source of clean drinking water would seem to be essential in this most attractive park.

News in brief about other parks:

Holywells Park is awaiting approval of its Stage 1 application bid for an HLF grant of 2 million which is due to be assessed this September. On Saturday, 19 October the Friends of Holywells are holding their successful and well-established Apple Day from 11 am to 2 pm.

Play Areas: There are a number of play area improvement schemes being planned for the next few months, the main ones being those in **Chantry Park**, **Bourne Park** and **Sallows Close** off Bramford Road.

During October there are local Fungi Forays and on Saturday, 22 November there is a Winter Wetland Cruise on the 'Orwell Lady' to see waders along the estuary. For full details of events, please contact the Park Rangers on 01473 433994.

Pat Gondris

Shorter Snippets

A **Giles** exhibition will be held in the Town Hall Gallery from 6 November till February. Grandma will look even fiercer if you don't go!

A **free annual season ticket to London** is an incentive offered to prospective purchasers of flats at Voyage (Ranelagh Rd) and Modus (Duke St). It's even clearer whom they're aimed at!

Tesco intend developing a store in Ipswich on site of former B&Q in Grafton Way. Not clear yet how big. Their consultation with the public may have taken place before you read this.

The **Willis Building** is one of the great modern attractions of Ipswich. The newly completed tall and slender Willis Building in Leadenhall Street, London, is also one of the finest there.

Wind Turbines In Ipswich

A reader has asked why so much of the Newsletter has been devoted recently to climate change, which surely belongs properly with Friends of the Earth and similar enthusiasts rather than The

Ipswich Society. But the climate isn't changing just for Friends of the Earth: for good or ill it is influenced by all of us in the way we live our lives. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, urgent action on low-carbon energy is needed over the next few years at all levels from international to individual. There is no need to panic, but there is every need for concerted action. But what?

In the July Newsletter we saw that while we can all take steps to reduce carbon emissions by using energy less wastefully and more efficiently, which will be crucial over the next decade or so, much deeper cuts in emissions must be made beyond 2020, calling for massive investment in new sources of energy. Much has been made of the possibilities for individual households to generate their own energy, but a recent 'Guardian' review showed that the case for a mass market in such domestic micro-generation solutions is far from proven for both technical and economic reasons. Hence the replacement for the mass consumption of fossil fuels must be motivated from a higher organisational level, calling for political leadership both nationally and locally. It takes time and money to plan and build new infrastructure, and we need to start now. But who wants to pay for that, on top of rapidly rising energy bills? Then again, who wants the lights to go out?

It is most unusual for any elected government to risk taking action ahead of public opinion, and I expected my next sentence to be to urge you to lobby your local councillors and MPs to provide the political will needed to bring those changes about. Happily, things are already moving at both levels, **but they still need our critical encouragement and active support.**

Locally - and this is where climate change brings tangible matters for Ipswich Society members to consider - **Ipswich Borough Council has unveiled proposals for up to four wind turbines to be erected around the outskirts of Ipswich**, three of which will stand 125 metres tall. If correspondence in the 'Evening Star' is any barometer of local opinion, the proposal appears to have been given a cautious welcome.

Taking the negative view first, we should not be blind to the potential for adverse environmental impact from such tall moving structures. The Suffolk Preservation Society has in the past voiced concerns about off-shore windfarms if they are visible above the horizon. Can we not simply maintain the status quo? Well, if we want to maintain our living standards, we have to change to secure energy supplies for our future. If we stick with burning fossil fuels, supplies are already becoming more expensive and less secure, and they will ultimately undermine the conditions which support our survival. So which status quo do we want? Many people find wind turbines to be graceful and elegant structures, but even if you disagree, might you prefer to tolerate the sight of them by day if, in return, they provide heat and illumination through the hours of darkness?

Of more tangible concern is the matter of noise and vibration, which may be much lower than traffic or aircraft noise but which, if perceptible, could be a persistent and even relentless source of nuisance in the dead of night for anyone living within earshot. However, the Council's site selection strategy minimises the risk of this outcome, and the portfolio holder, Councillor Louise Gooch, offers the following reassurance:

'We have been careful with our preliminary site selection to identify those places which appear to have least environmental impact - all are close to dual carriageways, one is near to overhead pylons and another is close to a sewage treatment works. However, all would need to have an environmental impact assessment undertaken, and we would ask the partner we work with to undertake the consultation with residents, so that no one could reasonably suggest that IBC is

imposing this on unwilling residents. As it is, there are guidelines about how close turbines can be erected relative to domestic dwellings, and so far all sites are within those parameters.'

Taking the positive view, we have to look to the future both for the climate and our own pockets. Wind turbines may not yet produce energy as cheaply as fossil fuels have, but how will they compare in a few years time? On-shore is also cheaper than off-shore wind energy, and both are plentiful sources of renewable energy available locally, unlike oil and gas nowadays. The Borough's initiative has earned the recognition of John Gummer MP, a champion of making Suffolk the greenest county. And may well provide an example for other local authorities to follow.

But wind power alone will not fill the energy gap. **In a speech on 26 June heralding a Low Carbon Britain**, Gordon Brown highlighted the need to facilitate oil supplies in the short term while reducing our dependence on it for the longer term. In addition to new energy efficiency measures and incentives, he proposed a major shift to renewables of all kinds and to nuclear, and eventually to carbon capture and storage (CCS) when commercially proven, so that virtually all our energy will be from low-carbon-emitting sources by 2050. This will require £100 billion of private sector investment over twelve years, and the Government is seeking to provide the policy framework and to remove the obstacles to this enterprise.

So both local and national government are indicating the political will to move to cleaner forms of energy. Our support for these actions should be properly and objectively sceptical. Why does the specification for a new coal-fired power station contain no reference to CCS? And is nuclear waste so bad when it is rendered safe after a few thousand years, whereas carbon has to be locked up for ever? But our support should equally derive from anticipation of fuel shortages, insecure supplies and rising prices - power cuts and fuel poverty - rather than nostalgia for the cheap and plentiful domestic supplies we have enjoyed from the North Sea for the past decades, whose impact on the climate will persist for decades to come.

Mike Brain

mikebrain1@btintemet.com

News From Museums

The Ipswich Heritage Group continues to be a useful forum for gathering news from several other organisations such as Ipswich Maritime Trust, Suffolk Record Office and Ipswich Tourist Guides. There is usually a lot to learn from Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service. Although their Development Plan hasn't been formalised yet, it was heartening to receive the reassurance that, following the submitted bid for improvements at Colchester Castle, the next in line big effort will be bids for funding the proposed new glazed entrance covering over the courtyard and linking the refurbished Exhibition Gallery ('Art Gallery') with the main High Street Museum. This will re-invigorate the whole High Street complex which contains such a huge amount of fascinating and important material but has sometimes seemed a poor relation of the Mansion. It was also pleasing to hear that the curatorial staff is being brought up to strength with a new Curator of Archaeology and an Assistant Curator of Natural History.

Visit To Norwich

Thirty Ipswich Society members travelled up the A140 on a bright but cool June Saturday. The visit was something of a 'return match' as a large group of Norwich Society members was welcomed to Ipswich last year. In return we had been promised a chance to see old and new developments in Norwich.

We arrived at the Assembly House to a warm welcome from Vicky Manthorpe and Alec Hartley, the Vice-Chairman of the Norwich Society together with our two guides for the day, Jan and Helga. Whilst we enjoyed the coffee and biscuits provided, Jan gave us an excellent potted history of the site and building from 13th century college of secular priests to its 20th century uses as a dancing school, cinema and girls' school. Saved from demolition by the Norwich Society after suffering the ravages of dry rot, beetles and the blitz, the building is now owned by the Norwich Arts Trust. Two walking tours were on offer, one to explore the latest developments and the other to look at historical buildings. A difficult choice was unnecessary as each group was able to enjoy one walk in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

Highlights for me were the most recent developments. The Theatre Royal, given a 10m overhaul by Tim Foster, a specialist in theatre design, successfully combines old and new buildings and has an excellent sound system suitable for concerts. Chapelfield shopping centre, built on the site of Caley's chocolate factory, includes a simple, high timber roof construction that echoes the city's Norman heritage, and well designed information boards. The centre is surrounded by 'wrap around' flats on three sides and the medieval St Stephen's Church is incorporated into the scheme sympathetically with high quality decorative ironwork gates to the churchyard. The newly installed 'quincunx' sculpture on Hay Hill was inspired by the essays of Sir Thomas Browne. Marble and granite representations of the human brain, eye and seed pods were much in use as ad hoc seating - something intended by artists, Anne and Patrick Poirier.

The Forum, a 63m Millennium project designed by Michael Hopkins has risen from the ashes of the old city library. Hopkins has also designed the impressive new Refectory built alongside the cathedral. Helga, our guide, drew our attention to a number of decorative bollards, an attractive feature in the street scene, each topped with a design relevant to its location. Never too old to enjoy a game, Society members spotted doves, a ram and a swan!

After a brief stop for lunch we re-grouped for our afternoon tours. Our guide, Jan, introduced us to many fascinating areas of ancient Norwich, some well known but some 'hidden corners'. The Maids Head Hotel, a coaching inn in the late 18th century, retains part of an earlier Norman building and is mentioned in the Paston Letters. The impressive houses, built by wealthy cloth merchants on Elm Hill after a devastating fire in 1507, were saved from demolition as slums by the casting vote of the Mayor in the 1920s. Blackfriars (St Andrew's Hall) was bought by Augustine Steward, a merchant Mayor, from Henry VIII for a mere 80. We admired the fine flint wall of the Bridewell now used as a museum celebrating Norwich industries and housing the first loom for wire netting and original pattern books for exquisite Norwich Shawls. Would we have noticed the terracotta frieze depicting stonemasons and carpenters, or urns and scallop shells decorating the skyline on George Skipper's London Street office? Skipper's Royal Arcade, modelled on the Burlington Arcade, has fine peacock tiles in art nouveau style and is unmissable after a 3m renovation in the 1980s. In St Peter Mancroft, entertained by a rehearsing choir, we admired the fine tapestry and seven sacrament font.

At the end of our walks we re-grouped at the Assembly House for a very welcome afternoon tea. Thanks are due to the Norwich Society for their generous hospitality, Chris and Lois Terry for their impeccable organisation and our two Norwich guides for their knowledge and enthusiasm.

Margaret Hancock

Literary Suffolk

Any lover of literature who lives in Suffolk will find much of interest and probably some inspiration in 'Literary Suffolk' - for only £1! This is a booklet compiled and written by Anne Parry on behalf of the Suffolk Development Tourism Partnership and Suffolk Book League. There are entries on 100 authors and their works arranged in sections - writers who lived in Suffolk, writers who visited Suffolk, poets, writers on Suffolk landscape, novels with a Suffolk setting and children's writers. You will of course find entries on our greatest poet, George Crabbe, and our greatest visiting novelist, Dickens, and our notable Ipswich literary people commemorated by Ipswich Society Blue Plaques - V S Pritchett, Jean Ingelow and John Glyde - and lots of less obvious ones.

I hadn't realised that Ian McEwan attended Woolverstone Hall School, nor that Aylmer Maude, translator and friend of Tolstoy, was born in Ipswich. I should have liked an entry for W G Sebald, who was based in Norwich but had much to say about Suffolk in *The Rings of Saturn* and was undoubtedly one of Britain's finest recent writers. But there are so many revelations in such a small booklet that I'm sure many readers will be inspired to 'make their own literary pilgrimages,' as Anne Parry has said.

Copies are available from the Tourist Information Centre or from Jim Brown, Suffolk Tourism Partnership, on 0844 980 8510.

Neil Salmon

Chiltern Trails And Tales

It was a very warm day as we drove to the Dunstable Downs. The sat-nav in the coach let us down and we drove around Whipsnade and saw the lion cut into the chalk hillside. Eventually we found the NT Chilterns Gateway Centre at 243m above sea level, the highest point in Bedfordshire. The Centre is a modern new building featuring a variety of 'green' technologies including a wood chip boiler, rainwater recycling and an intriguing 'wind catcher' that captures the air from the hill naturally and delivers it into the building through a 90m long underground concrete earth duct. I walked along the ridge of the Downs past a medieval warren (there are still many rabbits about) and up to Five Knolls Round Barrow Cemetery dating to 3000 BC and re-used by the Romans. Areas of grassland had been left uncut to encourage plants and butterflies, of which there were many flying around.

After lunch at the Centre we drove down to Dunstable where the A5 and A505 cross. They are the old Roman road of Watling Street which goes from the Welsh coast down through St Albans and

London to Canterbury; and Ickneild Way, the oldest road in Britain from Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire to Knettishall Heath in Norfolk -103 miles, originating in the Neolithic period.

We visited Priory House Heritage Centre which still has a 13th century vaulted ceiling. We toured the exhibition showing the history of the town and saw a wall painting dating from Queen Elizabeth I's time, rescued from a house in the town. We looked around the Priory Church of St Peter - all that is left of the large Augustinian priory after Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. We had a short walk to the crossroads with an excellent guide pointing out different buildings. We were told there had been an Eleanor Cross - King Edward's widow's body had rested here on her way to Westminster. For the Millennium they had put up a clock tower outside Priory House. We finished with a cream tea and tales about the area. Thank you to Caroline Markham for arranging such an interesting day.

Barbara Barker

Our Midsummer Cruise

Our cruise on the 'Orwell Lady' was a great success and seemed to have been enjoyed by all the members who came along on it. This was despite overcast skies and a very keen wind!

We left the Wet Dock just after 6.30 pm, with most passengers on deck listening to the captain's commentary as we sailed down river to Harwich harbour and Felixstowe docks. On our way back up river, the buffet was served in the saloon and so most of us stayed below deck out of the wind. This was a good opportunity to socialise as well as enjoy some rather delicious nibbles. It was great that the evening was so popular and it was particularly pleasant to welcome some new members who hadn't been to any previous events.

Su Marsden

Olympics Past and Future

It might seem a long time since the excitements from Beijing, but now is the time to look ahead. The national guide to suitable venues contains seven local venues which participating teams could use for training - three in Ipswich:

1. Ipswich Gymnastics Centre,
2. Northgate Sports Centre
3. and Ipswich Town FC.

We hope that visiting teams will choose some, if not all.

Snippets (2)

Cornfields in town

Les Bicknell's 50m x 10m picture depicts cornfields and clouds and will cover the outside of the Corn Exchange while IBC's 1 million repairs to the roof and walls take place for the next six

months. But let's not call it a 'shroud' as some have done. It's a celebration of work being done on an immensely valuable building - Ipswich's 'village hall' housing so many different events and arts organisations, in particular our Film Theatre. But people attending those events do need a canopy over the entrance especially in times of bad weather.

The bells of St Lawrence

Ipswich has many unique features. One of them is the world's oldest complete and original set of five church bells (made in 1450-1480) in the tower of St Lawrence's. (Next oldest, 50 years younger, is at St Bartholomew the Great in London.) But while the church itself has been magnificently refurbished, the bells must be lowered to a new platform so as to be safely rung. 50,000 is needed for this worthy project. Donations can be sent to Dr John Blatchly, 11 Dalton Road, Ipswich, IP1 2HS, cheques being made out to Birketts LLP, Solicitors for Ipswich Historic Churches Trust.

The 'war' of Upper Brook Street

Replacing gas mains and some other services seemed to go on for ages. But you've only to look in the trenches to see great corroded iron pipes and the need to connect with modern plastic to get some idea of the problems. However, the finished job with new paving across the whole street should look good. But some of the pavement was be-gummed within days. If only chewers would bin their gum! And perhaps one day it will be fully pedestrianised.

Cuts - against the zeitgeist

The spirit of the times demands that public transport be increased and improved to persuade more people out of their cars, but Ipswich Buses are having to curtail the No 2 service and reduce the frequency of some others. This is partly because SCC has awarded the Park & Ride contract to First Eastern Counties (saving a relatively small sum) and IBC is being financially tougher on Ipswich Buses. Short-sighted!

Saved - our first museum

Even now, many Ipswich people don't know why Museum Street is so called when the Museum is in High Street! But the original museum is in Museum Street opposite the Methodist Church. One of the first in the country, it opened in 1847 'particularly for the benefit of the working class' as Professor Henslow said at the time. After years of shameful neglect by previous owners, it will soon become Arlington's restaurant owned and run by Ken and Liz Ambler, members of the Society and winners of an Award for their conversion of the electricity substation in Duke Street to Mortimers Fish Restaurant (now Loch Fyne).

We are delighted that this historic building will be restored and put to excellent use.

Ipswich on film

Members of our Society's executive attended the launch (at the TIC and Hollywood Film Theatre) of a new DVD, 'Ipswich Past: As our Parents Knew It'. It features many aspects of our town during the last century, including quite a lot of footage shot by Don Chipperfield, our late member who also organised many of our continental trips. But there is much unfamiliar material as well. Copies are obtainable from the Tourist Information Centre.

London Museum / BBC TV

We arrived at the London Museum at 11.15 am which gave us time to tour around the Museum, have lunch and look around the Barbican. Refurbishment of the Museum will not be complete until 2009, so some areas were not open to us but there was still plenty to see. One section, entitled 'London before London', shows how the Thames was once a tributary of the Rhine before changes in climate and sea level led to the configuration we know today. Animals found nowadays only in the tropics once roamed the Thames valley and were much larger than their modern counterparts. There are strange reminders of an earlier landscape with the remains of yew trees dating back to 2,500 BC still visible at low tide at Erith.

Most of the 47,000 Roman objects in the Museum were recovered in the course of building operations in the city - one outcome of World War II bombing. Another bombing was poignantly marked with a Tribute Book in memory of those killed in the London bombings of 7 July 2005. 'London's Burning' is about the Great Fire of 1666. Although barely a dozen people died, the disastrous destruction of 4/5ths of the city changed it for ever. So who were the villains? (Answer: amongst others, the carters who charged extortionate rates to ferry people's possessions to safety.) Who were the heroes? (Answer: perhaps surprisingly King Charles II and his brother the Duke of York, who endangered their own lives to help the fire-fighters.) This is worth exploring on the Museum's web site (www.museumoflondon.org.uk).

When we arrived at the BBC Television Centre we were split into two groups. We sat at the very table in the News Centre where the running order of all BBC news programmes on television and radio is determined, while we watched dozens of journalists working on their stories from VDU screens. Newsreaders are not just presenters but journalists who research and write 80% of the material they read, working on shifts 12 or 14 hours long.

Studio 3 is vast, with walls and roof numbered at two-foot intervals to give the co-ordinates for plotting positions of scenery, microphones and lighting. Erecting or striking a set normally takes only about an hour, but for 'Come Dancing' a sprung floor must be installed; that takes about six hours. Other programmes broadcast from here include 'Fawlty Towers' and 'Blue Peter'. ('Blue Peter' is 50 years old this year, and we were shown the famous garden which is somehow smaller than it appears on TV.) For some shows a studio audience of 350 is required. At the touch of a button, seats in rows emerge from the back wall. We were told that if they don't laugh or applaud when they're supposed to, another button will send them back into the wall (perhaps!). The BBC uses these big studios much less now, so they hire them out - at 40,000 an hour - to anyone who can afford them (even ITV).

The Jewish Cemetery

The Society was pleased to hear from IBC that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has Listed (Grade II) the boundary walls of this little known but historically important site. The walls enclosing the burial ground on four sides were built c1764 and survive essentially intact. Other reasons given by the DCMS for Listing are that this is 'an important reminder of the existence of a

Jewish community' and 'there is a special historic interest in the continuous settlement in England of this oldest non-Christian minority group and the tolerance afforded to it by the local population.'

The DCMS schedule outlines the history of Jews in Ipswich. There was a community in the Middle Ages but Edward I expelled the Jews from England in 1290. At Cromwell's invitation Jews returned in 1656 and settled in London. By 1750 Ipswich had an established Jewish population, worshipping in a rented room. They built a synagogue in Rope Lane (now Rope Walk) and acquired the land, already enclosed by these walls, in 1796. But the population declined in the 19th century, the burial ground was closed in 1855 and the disused synagogue pulled down in 1877. The Jewish Board of Deputies took over responsibility for the site and, after WW II, BOCM Pauls maintained the site for the Board of Deputies, although no maintenance has been carried out recently.

The burial ground contains 36 tombstones arranged in seven rows largely chronologically. They have inscriptions in Hebrew or some in Hebrew and English. The earliest dated tombstone is 1797/8 (Jewish year 5558). Some inscriptions are no longer legible because of weathering.

Orwell Prompts Debate

It's not clear why Eric Blair chose the name George Orwell. But even more puzzling is that we in Ipswich aren't clear about our river's names!

Correspondence in The Guardian speculated on whether George Orwell chose his name because he would have crossed the Orwell as a child when his parents took him on holiday to Southwold. Then someone pointed out that the Orwell Bridge wasn't built then and he would have crossed the Gipping en route from London, but George Gipping doesn't sound so good!

A further writer said that he would have seen the Orwell from the train or he could have crossed it by road because 'two of the three river crossings in the town are over the tidal Orwell, not the non-tidal Gipping.' But the Gipping is certainly tidal at Princes Street Bridge, and further upriver. Where does the name change? Stoke Bridge?

Letters To The Editor

A Message from Down Under from Bernard Brown

Your splendid Newsletter travels a long way to reach me at the University of Auckland. When it arrives I have to be vigilant lest my colleagues whisk it off. Those who don't know Ipswich from a town in Queensland or one in Massachusetts nevertheless find the production greatly appealing. And they get me to elaborate the contents. The Jamestown story was appreciated by our Harvard contingent. A Tudor historian latches on to anything to do with Wolsey.

I was born and reared in Hadleigh but my spiritual home has always been Ipswich. My mother (a Welton) was brought up in Providence Street - it's still there, as well as the house! - and Dad in

Sirdar Road (ditto), I was taken to Portman Road for the legendary Aston Villa encounter in 1939. Dad (Sydney Brown) became Mayor of Hadleigh and Mum, who died aged 98, was the oldest active Girl Guide. They met, at sixteen, through the Boys' Brigade and Guides attached to Tacket Street Church. Uncles and aunts kept a newsagent's in Fore Hamlet and a post office in Fore Street (Healey's - recently reprieved from closure). I can't do without my Ipswich Society Newsletter. It's the next best thing to Being There. Up the Town and up the town!

Not an Abolitionist Street from Ruth Serjeant

We can be proud that the names of eight Ipswich streets commemorate activists in the anti-slavery movement of the early 19th century, as was noted in the July 2007 Newsletter. It is a disappointment therefore to be unable to confirm the suggestion in our January 2008 Newsletter that Gaye Street in the same vicinity was named for Claude Gay, an 18th century Quaker and abolitionist. Gaye Street (always so spelled) was named in 1871, having been formerly Little Granville Street, to honour the 'cordial respect and affectionate esteem' in which the rector of St Matthew's Church, Charles Hicks Gaye (1803-1882) was held during his long incumbency in the parish. He came to Ipswich in 1848 retiring from St Matthew's in 1875 after 27 years service, accepting the living of Swilland where he died in 1882.

It is possible that the street naming coincided with an earlier retirement plan. From an address he gave to his parishioners when leaving in 1875 he refers to the previous years when he had been seriously ill and which had perhaps prompted such a commemoration. A volume of his published sermons and addresses can be found in the St Matthew's parish records at Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, and there are two stained glass memorial windows in the church, one to Gaye himself, the other to his first wife, Jane Grimmer who died in 1852.

A single Suffolk Unitary Authority from John Fairclough

I understand that the Committee of the Society is about to consider its response to the proposals for Unitary Local Government, and is minded to support the Ipswich/Felixstowe (with separate Rural Suffolk) option. As a member of The Ipswich Society and an Ipswich resident I would ask you to think carefully about this matter. Both proposed schemes for unitary councils will mean the disappearance of the historic Borough of Ipswich. The Ipswich and Felixstowe Unitary Authority would place Ipswich within a disparate unit including the rural area of the Shotley peninsula, but excluding the residential areas of Woodbridge and Melton. This unit will still be too small to support appropriate services and will never achieve its own identity. At least under a single Suffolk Unitary Authority (including Lowestoft) Ipswich can aspire to becoming a true County Town as the administrative centre of the historic county.

Of specific concern to the Society, this single Suffolk will be large enough to provide its own unified Heritage Service for archives, archaeology and museums much more economically with one authority merging the present ones within the existing boundary, rather than creating two entirely new and geographically unsuitable units I hope The Ipswich Society will support the option for a single Suffolk Unitary Authority (including Lowestoft).

Indian Summer Mela

Hosted by the Ipswich and Suffolk Indian Association in partnership with Ip-Art, the 8th Ipswich Mela certainly lived up to its name. Christchurch Park, thronged with families, had a festival atmosphere on Sunday 13 July with stalls selling spicy food, a funfair, licensed bar and fabulous music and dancing on the open air stage.

The masala dosa (pancakes) and chana dal vada (hot chilli rolls) made by Mrs Kochera and Mrs Joycutty come highly recommended. Follow them with chicken tikka from A Taste of India and you have the perfect Sunday lunch! The performances ranged from traditional to east-west fusion, with some stunning dances and excellent vocals from local singers Vijayendra and Sridevi Kalabandi. Compere Jeff Mirza kept the audience involved with anecdotes, jokes, cheers for women, cheers for men, cheers for the performers and for everything else! The biggest cheer of all, however, was for IPSWICH - a fine local pride!

Caroline Markham

Blue Plaque Fame Spreads

A contact made through our secretary led to an interesting meeting in June. Three members of the Executive of the Woodbridge Society met with Tony Marsden to discuss our Society's policies and practices to do with the placement of our Blue Plaques. They went on a short tour of our plaques and coffee at St Lawrence's afterwards.

Although the weather was unpleasant, the walk and exposure to the sites of interest as well as the new building along the Waterfront was of great interest to our visitors. They were impressed with the work done for the new brochure but loudly applauded the Plaque scheme itself, pursued for the Millennium celebration by Neil Salmon. They were able to go away with clear indicators about our activities and with some firm plan to implement their own scheme in Woodbridge. We look forward to the start of a celebration of the worthies of Woodbridge in the near future.

Tony Marsden

Heritage Open Days

The Society's attractive brochure and a dry weekend helped to make the Open Days a pleasing success. Diane Hoskins will provide a report in the January Newsletter.