



The Ipswich Society

NEWSLETTER

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Ancient and modern

The Orwell Bridge, St Nicholas Church, St Mary-At-Stoke Church from the roof garden at the top of the Willis building.



Editorial

“Into print with rod and gun”

“It is with some trepidation” would be an appropriate phrase with which to start this, my first *Ipswich Society Newsletter* Editorial. Then something along the lines of “a hard act to follow” applied to my distinguished predecessor, Neil Salmon, who edited (wrote articles, took photographs and a lot more besides) “more issues than you could shake a stick at”. Indeed he established the present look and feel of the Newsletter: its classic masthead bearing the Bernard Reynolds Society emblem, the Times New Roman text, its frequent use of photographs and its welcoming “user friendly” layout. This makes no mention of the quality of the Newsletter’s contents over the many years during which Neil has “been at the helm”. In preparing to “get match fit” for this task, I am struck by the various and always positive reactions to the Newsletter which I hear from readers – both members and non-members. Everyone seems to look forward to the package dropping onto their door mat: some make a point of reading it in one sitting, others read it when they have a spare moment; many, I suspect, keep all their back issues and from time to time look up something which they recall reading. I certainly fall into this last category. If you think that this opening paragraph is a ham-fisted way of using a bunch of clichés without appearing to, then “Guilty as charged”.

Robin Gaylard

(N.B. Grateful thanks to all the contributors to this issue.)

New Members



Friend or fowl? This determined bird roosts behind the anti-pigeon spikes on the side of The Ancient House. Vermin to some, the rock dove is a close relative of the homing pigeon, decorated war hero, parachuted behind enemy lines to carry vital intelligence to the home front. Commemorated on: www.pigeoncenter.org/militarypigeons.html and at Bletchley Park museum, Hut 8.

The Tesco Affair

In 1991 the then owners of the Cox Lane car park were granted planning permission to build a 55,000 square metre shopping centre with a 9,250 square metre minimum department store, space for a 120 stall market, some housing, an 1,100 space car park and a heritage museum with public open space; three years later, no sod having been turned, they were applying for a 120 stall market place; nothing has come to fruition in the ensuing twenty years.

In 2007 Ipswich Borough Council, realising that their Civic Centre was no longer fit for purpose and that rehabilitation for a second thirty years would not be cost effective, decided to move to a lease-hold office block in Russell Road. They sold the building and the site to a developer (Turnstone). The company demolished it floor by floor and applied to redevelop it as a shopping centre having an anchor store with a total of 15,248 square metres, together with eleven houses and an extension to the New Wolsey Theatre. The permission has never been granted and the site remains empty five years later, presumably because of other retail developments proposed or opened in the Greater Ipswich district.

At the same time, Tesco applied to build a large store, 12,000 square metres, 60% devoted to food and 40% to comparison shopping. In addition, there would be two hotels of 255 beds, 116 residential units of various sizes, 25% affordable, a further twelve retail units, a car park for 600+ free spaces. After much opposition from Ipswich Central (the organisation representing town centre businesses) and The Ipswich Society, permission was granted by the Committee on the Chairman's casting vote. Various difficulties then arose over land ownership, traffic management and the depressing economic environment. Tesco's less than satisfactory recent financial results led to a second application in August 2012 for a 9,422 square metres retail food store on one floor, two hotels and fourteen four-bedroom terraced houses. Nine months of procrastination over this second proposal and they have now announced that they will not, after all, occupy the premises but will develop the site for another retailer to use. However, at the time of writing (end of May 2013), there has been no planning application hearing or alteration to the existing proposals. Thus we remain in limbo as to what will happen.

Ipswich now has three large sites, undeveloped, all suitable for large scale town centre shopping with room for a reasonably large department store; in addition, the town centre – like the rest of the developed world – is no longer the desired shopping destination. Meanwhile, the Local Planning Authorities have allowed a large out of town retail park at Crane's, now Futura, anchored by the UK's most loved retailer, the John Lewis Partnership, and permitted Next and Marks & Spencer to expand at Martlesham Heath.

So if you're one of the 30% of Ipswich households without a car you can take an X5 bus to Waitrose or a 66 to the big new Next and M & S. Or you don't and you do it online. No wonder ten out of twelve of Mary Portas' high streets continue to die.

Mike Cook



Chairman's remarks

April was a particularly busy month, with both the AGM and the Sir Michael Hopkins lecture in the same week. I am pleased to report both went well with over a hundred in the audience at both venues. John Field presented slides of Ipswich old and new after the formal AGM and despite the difficulties with the audio equipment John was well received.

Sir Michael Hopkins delivered an interesting and extensive resumé of his career in East Anglia from his first major project, the Willis Building, to a couple of his classics, the refectory at Norwich cathedral and the Forum in the same city, finally cumulating with the Ark in Bury St Edmunds, a Civic Trust Award winner. He managed to tie it all into his routes in Suffolk and his first renovation project, a house at Cratfield, purchased for £400 for his own use. By all reports the evening went particularly well and I have thanked Willis for their hospitality.

Sir Michael corrected me on one thing. He was not Project Architect for the Willis building; he was Norman Foster's Project Partner. The young Birkin Haward was the Project Architect. Sir Michael so impressed the Willis directors they retained him for the Greyfriars redevelopment and from there he secured work at Greene King and his new practice was established.

Planningwise, not much is happening and I have written a separate article giving the likely reasons why [*Toxic Ipswich*, p. 18]. The major contractors are having difficulty securing work and when they do it is without a reasonable margin. Smaller builders, particularly those who work as subcontractors on major projects, are in greater difficulty. Given that the construction industry should be 10% of the economy it is difficult to see recovery from this crisis, and when eventually it comes there will be too few skilled crafts-people about to handle renovations and restorations.

The Society continues to receive a string of enquiries about the history of the town and requests from students who are using Ipswich (particularly the Waterfront) as the subject for their dissertations. However, research carried out for the series of articles currently appearing in the *EADT* and *Ipswich Star* continue to fascinate and intrigue and I am indebted to my fellow contributors for their help.

By the time you read this we will have marked **Civic Day** on Wednesday 19 June with The Ipswich Society's new gazebo on Cornhill. We talked to members of the passing public about Ipswich, current issues and its future. We had leaflets to distribute and it was an opportunity to recruit new members. Thanks to the volunteers who assisted on the day.

A forthcoming event you can be involved in –
Sunday 21 July, 2.30-4.30pm: **Brass on the Grass**, a summer concert in the Upper Arboretum, Arts and Crafts shelter, Christchurch Park featuring Stacks of Sax (an event sponsored by The Ipswich Society). Bring chairs, a blanket, a picnic. Come along and enjoy the concert and some refreshment.

Have a good summer.

John Norman (Ipswich Society Chairman)

Recent planning matters

The Emperor: Despite the Community Asset Order, it seems that Tesco has agreed a 25 year lease with Punch which overrides its Community Asset status. Legal opinion is that Judicial Review wouldn't succeed but a complaint to the Ombudsman might; however, it would only say that IBC planners didn't handle the case well but would not reverse the decision. I understand that the contents have been stripped which makes it practically difficult to reopen. It's sad that we are powerless to keep open a pub that would be viable as a Community Asset given a reasonable landlord, which there is, because it is more profitable for a property company owned by a hedge fund to lease to a global supermarket firm.

Tesco Grafton Way: Postponed yet again. [See *The Tesco Affair* on page 3.]

Warrington Road: This has been refused on grounds of inappropriate design.

Long Street and Fore Street junction: There is a keen support group (Suffolk Aviation Heritage Group) for Edith Cook (first supporter: the Society with a blue plaque). They wish to erect a statue on John Norman's Fourth Plinth. There will be a competition aimed at students in Ipswich to choose the most appropriate.

73 Berners Street: Many will have noticed a green storage box in the front driveway; one of the neighbours, a Society member, has had lengthy conversations with me and with the Conservation Officer. As a result they are seeking retrospective approval of the box which will be altered, repainted, planted around it and a new wall built. All seems reasonable to me.

The Woolpack: New signage is larger; it will be unlikely to increase trade much. There is also an application to consider some small changes to the Tuddenham Road exterior in conjunction with interior alterations. I draw your attention to these because the survival of the pub is under question.

There were sixty-six applications in recent weeks, one of which was a major.

Mike Cook

X-Fund money for Ipswich

The Government launched a scheme last year to revive High Streets, following the Mary Portas report. They made £1 million available and towns were invited to bid for a share of the funding. The 'Future High Street X-Fund' judging panel visited Ipswich and heard about the competition to redesign the Cornhill, transform Blackfriars (Fore Street area) and improve the Saints (St Nicholas and St Peter's Streets). They were clearly impressed with the efforts so far.

The Government recognised that Ipswich was trying to revitalise its town centre, against the impact of the recession and the change in shopping habits and awarded us £168,000 for the 'Turning Our Town Around' initiative.

David Ellesmere, leader of the Borough Council, said that "it is towns that are bold about change which will weather these challenges best." The national press has been somewhat more sceptical about the sums involved suggesting that £168,000 is so small it cannot possibly make any difference. Let's prove them wrong!

JN

Restoring the historic quay and wharf names of Ipswich

Since its inception in 1982, the Ipswich Maritime Trust has sought to promote interest in the unique maritime heritage of the town. While welcoming the redevelopment of the old Wet Dock as one of its principal aims, the Trust has been saddened at some developers' poor choice of titles for their particular projects, turning their backs on the once so familiar names of the old quays; and it seems the various authorities were content to let them.

The Trust published an *Occasional Paper* to draw attention to this general laissez-faire attitude, seeking local press support and generally 'campaigning' on the issue. It soon became clear that the bureaucratic path to a new postal address was not easy to uncover, and even less easy to influence! What was clear was that once a new name had been given publicity, it tended to become stuck in people's minds, leading ultimately to its official acceptance. This seems to have been the case with 'Regatta Quay' for example, despite it still not being a fully-fledged postal address.

While our campaign received widespread support from those who were aware of it, it has yet to achieve what may be called 'action'! However, the Trust has recently been invited by the Borough Council to suggest new names for the various elements of the large residential development currently under construction on New Cut West, and for the new street that will afford access to it. Accordingly we have offered ideas based on the local characters and ships directly associated with the old St. Peter's shipyard on nearby Stoke Quay in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

And so it seems we can have an influence after all, but I, for one, shall not be happy until we have removed the irrelevant 'Regatta Quay' paraphernalia from Albion Quay, and have a new name for 'the Wine Rack'!

Meantime, you might like to boost your sense of pride in the IMT Window Museum display on Admiral Broke, a name up there with Nelson in the annals of famous naval victories. [See Page 16] *Stuart Grimwade*

This page and the next: the Great Whip Street site on 18 April 2013, seen from Bulstrode Road; in the background from left: flats on Vernon St, R&W Paul silo and the Burton's block, DanceEast, Cranfield's, 'The Wine Rack', The Custom House, Ashton KCJ, The Last Anchor, Salthouse Hotel.




Cowells, printers

Anyone interested in the manufacturing achievements associated with Ipswich will be proud to recall the great engineering firms, especially Ransome Sims & Jefferies and Ransome & Rapier. But they weren't the only world-class companies working in Ipswich. This emerged very strongly from the talk on Cowells given by Alison Morris, the present company's Sales Director, as one of the Town Lectures on 14 March. Although not an Ipswich Society event, the talk was so interesting I think it deserves a mention in our Newsletter.

Mrs Morris briefly sketched the early days of the company from 1818 when it dealt in groceries, wines and spirits and eventually ran its own furnishing store, but she concentrated on its celebrated core business of printing. She described the production of colourfully illustrated children's books (for Puffin etc.), the top quality art books to satisfy the demanding standards of, for example, Henry Moore and New York's Museum of Modern Art, the printing of six large volumes of American Wild Flowers which took ten years to produce and which American printers fought shy of, and the vast catalogue of the Royal philatelic collection, for which the precious stamps were sent to Ipswich by train and kept in a police cell.

In some ways it was a nostalgic occasion, seeing all those photographs of huge rows of presses of different kinds, but more especially because there must have been thirty or more of Cowells' former employees in the audience. They took a very active part in the Question and Answer session at the end. One man confided in us that a penalty for doing something badly was three month's work on bingo cards! The present company, now in Lovetofts Drive, is appreciably smaller but at least it exists and keeps the famous name alive.

Neil Salmon


[printer's devil]



AGM talk: Conservation in Ipswich

John Field, previous Town Planner and Town Centre Manager for Ipswich presented a series of eye opening slides to the 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Ipswich Society.

Describing previous schemes by transport consultants to solve Ipswich's traffic problems John highlighted the 1960s suggestions of improvements and alterations. These included double-decker roads by the Waterfront, dual carriageways from Cromwell Square to the College and the demolition that took place in Queen Street prior to a major highway being constructed through Giles Circus, the Cornhill and under Lloyds Arch on into Crown Street. This was to be an important north-south route that was deemed essential to ensure the town didn't come to a grinding halt. The buildings in Queen Street were demolished, Ipswich lost some important history but the road was never built (and nor did the traffic come to a standstill, well at least not until they smothered the town with roadworks for the £21 million upgrade scheme to make the town fit for the twenty-first century).

The dual carriageway from St Matthew's Street along Civic Drive came to an abrupt halt at the front door of The Galley restaurant in St Nicholas Street. This, and the adjacent buildings were saved at the last minute and Cromwell Square became a car park with traffic taking an alternative route down Grey Friars Road to the Novotel and beyond.

Borough and County counsellors have argued ever since on ways to improve the docks gyratory layout but have failed to reach agreement and, apart from some minor tweaking nothing has changed since Star Lane was constructed thirty years ago.

Will the latest round of investment be worthwhile? The docks gyratory will still be the same, traffic will still queue in St Helen's Street, and the other main routes into town in the morning rush, and without Tesco in Grafton Way there will be no changes to the Novotel roundabouts. The subways outside Greyfriars have gone and pedestrians will find it easier to cross the road but will traffic flow as easily?

Incidentally the same figure of £21 million has just been spent on improvements to the East Suffolk Line including the Beccles Loop which now allows an hourly service to Lowestoft; 'tis just a pity trains no longer stop at Westerfield.

JN

At the recent AGM the Mayor, Ms Mary Blake, presents outgoing Newsletter Editor, Neil Salmon, with an original painting of St Pancras Church, Ipswich by Brian Jepson, in recognition of his many years as the Ipswich Society Newsletter Editor.



Snippets (1)

St Mary-at-the-Quay church is a super little Waterfront Church with a superb double hammer beam roof and probably dates from 1450. The church has been redundant since the 1970s although it was used by the Boys' Brigade for a time. However the future of the building is now looking bright.

Suffolk Mind and the Churches Conservation Trust have been awarded a grant of £3.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to restore and rejuvenate the medieval church, into a Wellbeing Heritage Centre for everyone in the community.

The aim of this innovative collaboration is to create a building that will provide a quiet and beautiful sanctuary. St Mary-at-the-Quay will be a flexible and welcoming community space which is open to all. It will offer wellbeing and heritage activities, a centre for local events, complementary therapy as well as a café. The whole project is likely to cost some £5.7 million.

Suffolk Retail Park (off London Road)

Suffolk Retail Park has been sold for a reported £18.75 million. The out of town retail centre which is home of Next, Argos, Halfords and The Range consists of 96,787 sq. ft of retail floor space generating an annual rental income of almost £1.5 million. If you are aware of the expected return on an investment of this size you will appreciate that this is a valuable asset with some prime retailers ensuring heavy footfall. It is just a pity it takes so long to drive out of the car park!

John Lewis Partnership

Almost 50% of John Lewis 'click & collect' is collected from one of the 291 Waitrose Stores, (there are thirty JLP department stores and a further nine John Lewis At Home stores). JLP are planning to open twenty new branches of Waitrose during 2013. Annual gross sales should reach £10 billion this financial year, of which £1 billion is via the web. A Waitrose store within five minutes drive increases the value of your home by a measurable percentage.

Heritage Open Days: Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 September 2013

The weekend of 14/15 September will again see the Ipswich Society organising the hugely popular Heritage Open Days.

There are approximately twenty-eight buildings in this year's event plus Sailing Boat *Victor*. They represent seven centuries in the history of Ipswich, providing a chance to see inside historical buildings, many of which are normally not accessible to the general public.

There will free guided walks led by Ipswich Tourist Guides.

All information will be in our leaflet available from mid-August at the Tourist Information Centre, the museums and libraries.

New blue plaque leaflet

The Society has published an attractive colour guide to all the plaques installed throughout Ipswich commemorating notable (and sometimes forgotten) figures with a local connection. It is available from the Tourist Information Centre.

[More Snippets on page 19

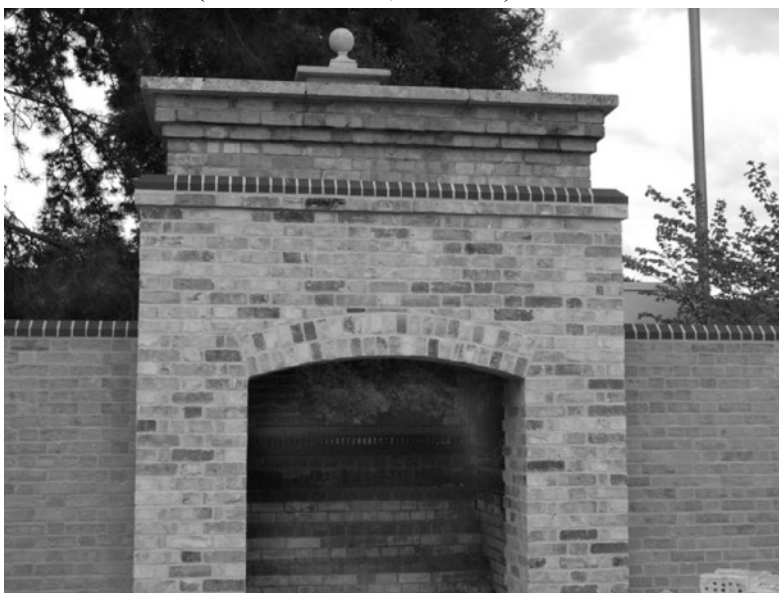
New Buildings in Park Road

How many of you have, like myself, travelled along Park Road and wondered what was happening to the house adjacent to the old reservoirs in Park Road? It's been observed in various stages of what initially appeared to be demolition and, more latterly, partial rebuild.



The house (empty for the last four years or so) is situated right beside one of the two old reservoirs on the site and I had wondered if the demolition of the closest reservoir had disturbed the side foundations. Curiosity got the better of me and I visited the site and met with the site manager.

I was informed that the rebuild was always part of the plan for the site which will ultimately see six detached houses within a secure site (vehicular access will be through the new entrance being constructed and additional pedestrian access through the refurbished brick entrance to one of the reservoirs). The old house will be extended further to the side and rear resulting in the largest of the houses on site (five bedrooms, no less!).



The house was still in the ownership of Anglian Water along with the two redundant reservoirs. The site was sold for redevelopment with planning permission granted for residential build.

The two old reservoirs had been redundant for many years. Similar to the main reservoir refurbished during 2011/12 each reservoir was covered in earth and indeed one area had been is use as a tennis court. They were both older than the refurbished main reservoir, one being built c.1890 and the other in the early 1900s.



The demolition has been a long difficult process but has now reached the stage where building of the new houses has commenced and the project is scheduled for final completion around May 2014. The floor of one reservoir has been left *in situ* with footings for the new construction broken through and provided with 600mm concrete pour. The rear of the reservoir walls are being left *in situ* (they provide some support to the main reservoir behind) and will be earthed up and landscaped.



The site is being developed by a contractor that has previously received an award from the Ipswich Society for a nearby development so perhaps we can anticipate a nomination in 2014.

I managed to take photographs of the site and others have been provided by the contractors. Do any readers have more information about the Park Road reservoir site or old photographs?

Graham Smith (May 2013)

Legal London (22 May 2013)

*'The raw afternoon is the rawest, and the dense fog is the densest, and the muddy streets are the muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden headed old corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery'*¹

Following in the steps of Charles Dickens and in the very capable hands of our guide, Owen, Ipswich Society members enjoyed an excellent day exploring Legal London in an intriguing area around Aldwych, tucked out of everyday sight behind alleys, facades and gates. The day was not at all as foggy as Dickens describes in this excerpt from *Bleak House*, but the complexity of how the Inns of Court and the legal system in general operate was fascinating learning for us all.

We started with morning coffee at the George on the Strand, founded as a Coffee House in 1763. Beamed and narrow, with arches and steep stairs, we had very friendly service here and also a first rate lunch later on in the day.

Owen explained that barristers belong to one of the four Inns of Court: Middle Temple, Inner Temple, Lincoln's Inn or Gray's Inn, which all sit on the boundary of the cities of London and Westminster – looking and serving both ways. They can best be described as similar to Oxbridge colleges – originally people lived, studied and worked in these establishments; they have halls for communal dining, libraries, gardens and chapels.

Firstly, we visited Middle Temple, seeing the garden with Fountain Court, standing under the mulberry tree mentioned in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, admiring the magnificent plane trees, wisteria, lawns and peacefulness. Middle and Inner Temples once stretched all the way to the Thames and Owen was superb at bringing to life the history and characters who walked these ways, such as Dr Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Dickens himself and John Mortimer's *Rumpole*.

We visited Middle Temple Hall, just being laid for lunch (lunch can be pre-booked here by anyone – see their website for details). This grand hall, built about 1570, has an impressive double hammer beam roof and a fine oak screen. Elizabeth I came here in the early 1600s to see a production of *Twelfth Night*, a production in which Shakespeare himself was one of the players. The 29 foot-long high table, made from single oak planks was a gift from her. A lantern and table top were said to come from the Golden Hind.

The Hall is a place where experienced lawyers and students meet to discuss points of law over meals and students have to attend a certain number of dinners in their hall as part of their training. A would-be barrister, once having got his or her law degree, has to do bar professional training for a further year, then a year's pupillage and then get a place in a set of chambers. Work is allocated by the Chief Clerk of a chamber and the young barrister looks to build a reputation so that work does come his or her way. The law is not necessarily a highly lucrative profession – students are often poorly paid and, for example, barristers working in criminal or human rights fields, can get paid a lot less than those working in tax! Over recent years,

¹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Everyman's Library no 236, Dent 1949

women have become much more equal in terms of becoming barristers and having access to the legal hierarchy.

Other sights seen were Pump Court, the Temple Church (of, amongst other things, *Da Vinci code* fame), and Dr. Johnson's buildings. This was followed by a brief visit to the Royal Courts of Justice, which hears High Court civil appeals, for example high-profile libel cases, and family disputes. The Leveson enquiry was also held here. Over lunchtime, we had time to revisit the Royal Courts and also the RAF church of St Clement Danes.

After lunch, we took a short coach trip around the area to see the Central Criminal Court, commonly known as the Old Bailey, and various other interesting buildings: former newspaper offices on Fleet Street, the church of St Dunstan in the West, old pubs and bars, the Stock Exchange, Smithfield meat market, Gray's Inn, St Paul's... the vibrancy of history, ancient and modern, all around us.

Alighting at Lincoln's Inn, where Dr John Donne was once chaplain, we stood in the garden and viewed its buildings, including the huge hall and the stone built garden hut with a memorial to William Pitt the Younger. Lincoln's Inn had a reputation for taking in orphans and legend has it that, were a baby to be left at its gates, the child would be brought up within the Inn and most likely have the surname of Lincoln. (Owen mentioned that he is careful about this tale when showing round American visitors!) Almost, then, at the end of our tour, we passed Ede and Ravenscroft, where barristers' wigs are sold (still made from horsehair) and gowns of wool or, for QCs, silk (hence the phrase, 'taking silk').

So many interesting stories, explanations and anecdotes from our guide made this such a rich tour, full of enjoyable and extremely satisfying learning. Together with our driver, Gavin, who had some difficult London driving to do for us and the superb organisation of the whole day by Barbara Barker, this was a day to be remembered. Thank you for all of it.

Christine Hayward

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Civic Voice Membership

Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England. It works to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. The organisation speaks up for civic societies and local communities across England.

Our membership of Civic Voice, the national charity for the civic movement, confers certain advantages on Ipswich Society members.

A National Trust pass can be obtained by writing to Gill Roxborough, Civic Voice, Unit 101, 82 Wood Street, The Tea Factory, Liverpool L1 4DQ enclosing an SAE with your contact details, stating that you are a member of THE IPSWICH SOCIETY and requesting the National Trust pass. This pass is transferable and can be given to friends or family if you are already a member of the National Trust.

An English Heritage pass is available to download by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/civcenglishoffer>. This pass can be used between 1 September 2013 and 31 January 2014 and is not transferable. If you do not have Internet access, follow the instructions for the National Trust pass above, but requesting an English Heritage pass.

An Evening with Sir Michael Hopkins (26 April)

It was an unforgettable occasion even before the talk began. As we sat on the top floor of the Willis Building, I looked out over the high level greensward at the sun-lit top half of the so-called ‘Wine Rack’, seemingly almost next door, as we awaited the lecture by Sir Michael Hopkins, one of the ‘likely lads’ (his words) who designed the internationally famous Willis Faber & Dumas building in 1975, now Grade I Listed.

The talk was advertised as ‘Some Suffolk Buildings’ but to our delight we found that this was a flexible title because ‘Suffolk’ stretched as far as Texas and Tokyo. Sir Michael chose to describe his work in chronological order and we certainly began in deepest Suffolk at Cratfield, where he and his wife bought a dilapidated house which they’ve restored and still live in.



The Willis atrium

And so on to Willis itself. To the surprise of Norman Foster’s ‘likely lads’, they “got the job without putting pen to paper” and started designing without knowing what the extent of the site would be. They planned the building around the central bank of escalators knowing they could “snip round the edges” when the site was finalised. He still feels grateful to Planning Officer Geoffrey Ramsdale and the Borough Council for being brave enough to support the planning application in the wake of public disapproval of the ‘modernism’ of Greyfriars close by. (Later on, Sir Michael transformed part of the Greyfriars building for Willis by creating the fabric-clad tower of the original multi-storey car park.) Still in Suffolk, he designed a new style storage facility for Greene King at Bury.

Then we were off on his travels. First to Cambridge for the University Research Centre and a new building at Emmanuel College, and then a cutlery factory he designed near Sheffield. Designs for other very different purposes followed with the fabric-topped Mound Stand at Lord's and Glyndebourne opera house. Our lucky neighbours in Norwich were soon to see their new library in its Millennium Building, The Forum, (BBC and all) and Parliament acquired proper office space in the Portcullis Building. Back in East Anglia there followed the Apex in Bury and the Norwich cathedral Refectory and Hostry.

Next we were whisked over the Atlantic to see his university buildings at Yale and Princeton and Houston – and, lest we were bored, suddenly back eastwards to Dubai, Tokyo and the new cricket stadium in Pune (Poona) before touching down in England again at the Olympic Park velodrome and St George's Chapel, Great Yarmouth. Exciting stuff indeed, with a variety of solutions and styles to suit each project.

Sir Michael presented all these impressive achievements with a pleasing informal ease. The only surprise was he gave no sense of the size or composition of the teams of architects who must work for him. The evening was happily completed with refreshments provided by the Willis cafeteria and, of course, we enjoyed good conversation.

Neil Salmon



Above from left: Sir Michael Hopkins, with his wife and architectural partner Patty, Lady Hopkins (who operated the presentation laptop) and our Chairman, John Norman.

Ipswich celebrates Broke of Broke Hall

An international Symposium will be held in Ipswich on Saturday 12 October and Sunday 13 October 2013 to celebrate the bicentenary of Broke's victory in the Shannon and Chesapeake engagement of 1813. The Symposium, supported by an array of eminent speakers from the UK, the USA and Canada will be based at University Campus Suffolk, Neptune Quay, Ipswich IP4 1QT. A concert will be held at St Martin's Church, Nacton on Sunday 13 October. Full details are available on www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk

In conjunction with this event the eighth Window Museum display on Albion Quay, not far from DanceEast, features some very special artefacts to commemorate the bicentenary – well worth a visit (see photograph).

Diana Lewis



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Brass on the Grass

On Sunday July 21 the Ipswich Society is sponsoring one of the Friends of Christchurch Park 'Brass on the Grass' afternoons. Join us at the Arts and Crafts shelter (Henley Road entrance) in the Upper Arboretum 2.30 - 4.30pm for a performance by 'Stacks of Sax' - a saxophone ensemble based in Ipswich.

Pykenham's Gatehouse

On Saturday August 3 Pykenham's Gatehouse is open to the public from 10.30am - 12.30pm. With Ipswich Society volunteers on duty, this is an excellent opportunity to explore this fifteenth century building opposite the Library in Northgate Street.

Royal Gunpowder Mills (13 April)

The Royal Gunpowder Mills (RGM) cover an area of 170 acres, including a nature reserve, and is a site on the European Route of Industrial Heritage and an important part of the SSSI within the RGM site.

Gunpowder production began at Waltham Abbey in the mid-1660s on the site of a Late Medieval fulling mill; the Crown acquired the gunpowder mills from private hands in 1787. From then on, RGM developed into the pre-eminent powder works in Britain and one of the most important in Europe. Under Crown ownership the site expanded and developed along the waterways at the south-west of the site. These waterways totalled over five miles in length over the whole site and linked to the River Lea, which was strategically important, as barges could reach the Thames and Woolwich Arsenal. This expansion in the mid-1850s was due to the demands of the Crimean War and the need to 'rule the waves' and territories of the British Empire. Steam power became available and incorporating mills were built. By the end of the nineteenth century chemical explosives were replacing gunpowder and these mills were converted to produce cordite; new buildings were constructed. After the Second World War the site changed again, to a research establishment for non-nuclear explosives and propellants (top secret and still so after its closure); some of the buildings were converted into laboratories.

I visited the main exhibition building: the short introductory film chronicled the discovery of gunpowder by the Chinese in c.800AD and its eventual usage in the west (as early as the Battle of Crécy, I believe). Footage of the two World Wars brought home the violence, horror, carnage and the sheer noise of shell warfare. Our party of 40+ was split into two groups for the guided tour. There are many buildings of various ages; a team of volunteers is slowly renovating them but it will take a long time to complete. Many of the buildings are in the nature reserve which is rich in wildlife, has a conservation team to look after it and had the largest heronry in Essex. We saw a remarkable and unique relic of the old days: a Victorian gunpowder press house with a cast iron waterwheel, probably the only surviving one in England. We passed plantations of common alder – the best trees for the production of charcoal, one of gunpowder's ingredients, the others being saltpetre and sulphur.

The 1940s Gallery features a post office, a kitchen and an air-raid shelter complete with the sound of a siren. A brisk walk past the incorporating mills to the Wildlife Tower with its views over the Reserve. I strolled beside a water-less canal; there was a feeling of melancholic decay, but the narrow-gauge railway lines reminded me that small engines and wagons were once noisy and busy here. Women made up a large part of the work-force, a fact that was emphasized in the exhibition. I went round the Rocket Vault – RGM expertise lay behind many rockets, including the Waxwing Project – and the Mad Lab where 'Prof. Nitrate' enthralled the children.

Gunpowder continued to be produced at RGM up to the end of the First World War. The last mill was demolished in 1956 and the Ministry of Defence closed the site in 1991. A charitable foundation was set up to safeguard the site in perpetuity, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the MoD. People of all ages will be fascinated by a visit; even a non-scientist like me found much of historic interest. Our thanks to June Peck for her cheerful organisation.

Richard Worman

Toxic Ipswich

I'm sure Ipswich is not unique but it appears, after conversation with a number of developers and commercial building contractors, that the banks are still reluctant to lend money for residential development in Ipswich.

Although the cost of building has become very competitive with margins for the contractor almost non-existent, the return generated by the sale of the completed property does not currently cover the building cost, or if it does it is only marginally on the positive side of break even which is insufficient to cover the risks involved. And as we can clearly see on the Waterfront the risk of non-completion is high and the chance of finding sufficient purchasers to 'sell' a complete block of apartments very low. Hence there has been no building activity on the northern quays since 2009. Across the river on the site previously occupied by Graham's Plumbers Merchants; Genesis Housing Association are currently contracted with ISG to build 600 units to add to their own housing stock, taking advantage of both the low cost of building, and of borrowing in the current climate and the increasing demand for rented accommodation. Three very tall cranes on this site at least give some indication that not all builders are at a standstill.

Developments of detached and semi-detached family homes carries less risk in that they are normally sold 'off plan' with the purchaser viewing a show-house rather than the actual property being purchased. But again there is an almost complete lack of activity. Charles Church – the quality division of Persimmon – are sitting on their hands at Ravenswood and although some building has taken place on the site of Hayhill allotments sales are according to Crest Nicholson 'slow'.

Landex Living built and sold all four units at Northfields off Valley Road (Ipswich Society Award winner 2012) and has started on a quality scheme of seven properties on the site of what was previously Park Road reservoir.

Meanwhile back on the Waterfront a contract to fit out The Mill, the 23 storey tower block which appears finished but is currently an empty shell, has been out for some time. A contractor has been selected but the banks are still reluctant to sign the contract; again the cost of fit-out pushed the boundary of acceptable financial risk.

The ultimate confirmation of the reluctance of banks to lend against building development in Ipswich came with confirmation that Tesco are pulling out of Grafton Way. Yes, it was a big scheme with a large store, integral flats and two hotels but if Tesco cannot make it work then who will? [See *The Tesco Affair* on page 3.]

Overall, Ipswich is awash with undeveloped sites from the former Tooks bakery in the north west to County Hall in the east and multiple sites around the Wet Dock and Stoke Bridge.

JN



Snippets (2)

University Campus Suffolk

The 2012 student intake at UCS was some 2,250 students of whom 1600 (70%) were over 21 and 420 from overseas (from 70 different countries including Ireland and Poland). Across all years the students are split 65% full time and 35% part time, 31% male and 69% female.

Letter to the Chairman

Dear John

I hadn't seen Sir Michael Hopkins for some time and I wasn't aware he is circa 78. It was a privilege to have heard him in his iconic Willis Building. The innovative architecture of the new (Willis) melds into the old (Unitarian Meeting House) so very sensitively. As Unitarians we recall the shabby, run down Unitarian Gardens; no great loss given the gain to Ipswich.

Regards, Janice Croucher

Griff Rhys Jones speaks out on behalf of communities

Civic Voice President, Griff Rhys Jones, says localism ignores local opinion.

The importance of community involvement in the planning system was put under the spotlight on 13th May at a debate of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies when MPs and other interested parties gathered at Portcullis House.

Civic Voice President, Griff Rhys Jones said: "With the localism agenda, what the Government is essentially saying is, we want you to get involved, decide what you want locally, but, oh, for the really important decisions we are going to ignore you and do what we want. I am sorry, but that is just not good enough."

Planning Minister, Nick Boles MP, who also addressed the meeting said: "When talking about neighbourhood planning in the early days, maybe a fault of the Government was allowing people to believe they could do what they want, when in reality it has always been about how things will be delivered, not what would be delivered. However, I do genuinely believe that in twenty years' time, people will look back and say this policy was a real game changer for getting people involved in their local area".

Laura Sandys MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies said: "I was grateful that the Planning Minister and Griff Rhys Jones were able to attend this meeting. I think as a movement we now need to feed back to the Minister our thoughts on how communities can influence the planning system further."

Civic Voice is calling on all communities to submit ideas on how you think communities can have a greater say in the planning system. Send your ideas to info@civicvoice.org.uk.

Have we got your email address?

The Ipswich Society is keen to ensure we can get in touch with our members by email. It gives us the chance to remind you of winter lecture dates or get early messages to you regarding events etc. If we have not got your current email address or you are unsure please send to: enquiry@ipswichsociety.org.uk

Please put 'Ipswich Society email' in the *Subject* field and put your full name and postal address as the message to ensure that we can identify you.

O Brave New Ipswich

The Greyfriars development 50 years on

Trevor Hart's letter to the editor printed in the April Newsletter contained a reference to a publicity document Trevor included which was produced by the developer of what was then seen as the utopian Greyfriars complex (1964-66) until the Government abandoned the planned expansion of the whole area. Hindsight, of course, is a wonderful thing, but the language used and attitudes expressed in the document are very striking. They ring very hollow over the decades and evoke a mid-1960s struggling to leave the grey austerity of post-War Britain and fling itself towards the white heat of technology proclaimed by Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Two photographs are juxtaposed captioned 'The Old Look...': a street of Victorian terraced housing with corner shop in the foreground – 'Players Please' above the door and newspaper headline boards below the shop window; '... and the New (note roof-top parking)': an architect's scale model of the Greyfriars development with tiny cars visible on the top deck. A major feature of the project, we are told, is greatly increased parking for cars which will attract pleasure-seekers, shoppers and diners to the town to spend money and appeal to "further organisations to join Shell and Fisons as major users of office space in the area, possibly as regional headquarters." Most ironic of all is the caption above an elevated view of terraces, two churches (probably St Nicholas and St Peter) and the distant dockside silos:

'The Ipswich of a bygone age will give way to "a lasting tribute to the architectural and building skills of the 1960s".'



Some of the attractions planned for the complex (apart from the copious parking) are 'a large department store, a supermarket [Tesco and their S&H pink stamps] and one other large shop, and about 30 smaller shops arranged on two levels, a covered market with 75 stalls and an agricultural showroom below, designed to attract visiting farmers to exhibitions of agricultural machinery etc. on market days... an auction room suite, exhibition hall, public house – and, on the top floor, a restaurant. Proposals are also made for a bank [there was a branch of Midland

bank], a small "arts" cinema to seat 300 which can also be used for fashion shows and conferences... a coffee bar, a record shop [remember them?], self-service shop and travel agency and both ladies' and men's hairdressers.'

In reality, what ensued in the tortured history of the development will be well-remembered by many Ipswich Society members. The travelator (moving pavement) which never moved in this writer's memory, the ramp entrance to the multi-storey car park in New Cardinal Street which never seemed wide enough for any car climbing up it between those dangerous-looking concrete edges and tight bends, the wood-grain texture on the poured concrete walls formed by the timber shuttering used, and left as a 'natural-looking' finish. See the article on page 14 for a note about the way in which the site was eventually rescued and reborn.

RG



The Society's photographic archive is now live on Flickr

It is possible to connect with the photostream, as it is called, via the Society's website or at the internet web address below:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ipsoc/>

There are as yet only about one hundred images from the archive of nearly six thousand slides. It is expected that the rest of the images will follow soon, although the data connected to them will be limited as the process of tagging and titling the images is time-consuming. Please view the slides at the address and give some thought to helping with the task of editing titles and descriptions. If you could help, then contact us by email (enquiry@ipswichsociety.org.uk) and permissions and access to Flickr can be granted.

Tony Marsden

Letters to the Editor

Back to the High Street from Tony Cheney

With reference to John Norman's note in the January newsletter "The Demise of the High Street", I thought that this little cartoon might make a suitable comment. It is from "Private Eye", no. 1335, 8-21 March 2013 (p.12).

With regret, the editor is well aware that Private Eye never gives permission for cartoons to be reproduced. However, think of an elderly cove leaning on his stick surveying open fields and trees: "I remember this when it was all just shops".

Ransomes at M.E.A.L. from David H. Powell

Reading the Chairman's Remarks in the April 2013 Newsletter regarding the Ransomes companies' artefacts held by the Ipswich Transport Museum has prompted me to wonder if members of the Society appreciate the large numbers of very interesting artefacts, particularly from Ransome Sims & Jefferies, that may be viewed at the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket. The Bone Building, constructed through the generosity of the Bone family, houses The Ransome Collection. This includes such items as the Hindustani Plough, a Clover Harvester, Horse Plough (1852-1869), Threshing Machine and an 1881 Traction Engine. Also on display such items as a Strong Room Door and a printing press.

A wide selection of other RS&J items may also be seen around the site which houses the largest collection of Ransome Ploughs in East Anglia.

The Society's raison d'être from Chris Wiltshire

I am proffering for publication this quote from James Lees-Milne's autobiography *Another self* (pub. John Murray): I think it sums up so well the crucial reason for the Society to exist and continue to give voice to concerns about the built environment.

"..of all the arts architecture is the only one which cannot be ignored either by the philistine or the indifferent. It is there. It cannot be avoided and has to be seen. It must shape the minds and thoughts of all men [sic] whether they dislike it or like it. We cannot turn our backs on it as we can painting, sculpture, and music, and pretend it does not concern or influence us-- that we do not notice it. I also realized the terrible fragility of architecture. It is vulnerable to every insult, whether direct mutilation or indirect neglect, ignorant improvement, or environmental change."

St Peter's Church from Beryl Jary

In May 2008, St Peter's by the Waterfront officially opened as a community based arts and heritage centre, being the home of our Ipswich Hospital Band. On Saturday 4 May 2013, to conclude an open weekend, they gave a Fifth Anniversary Concert which clearly demonstrated what rapid strides have been made in the intervening period. Their programme included participation by St Peter's Band, the training band, not to mention a specific Brass Ensemble and a Wind Ensemble each with their own conductor. Congratulations on the achievements! St Peter's is also the base for the Ipswich Youth Steel Band and Suffolk School of Samba.

[Readers will recall the many years during which all three dockland churches were largely inaccessible; the first Ip-art festival in 2003 was my first chance to go into them and I recall the rickety wooden block flooring of St Peter's and the unpromising condition of the interior. Today it is a fine venue for music and other activities (such as recent Ipswich Society AGM). -Ed.]

The Ipswich Society

www.ipswichsociety.org.uk

email: enquiry@ipswichsociety.org.uk

Registered Charity no. 263322

This Newsletter is the magazine of Ipswich's civic amenity society established in 1960

Dates for your diaries

July 21, 2.30-4.30pm: Brass on the Grass, Upper Arboretum (see page 16).

August 21: Great Dunmow Maltings and Ingatestone Hall outing (in previous newsletter).

September 14/15: Heritage Open Days. A chance to visit Ipswich heritage buildings.

September 16: John Norman's East London outing (see enclosure).

November 20: the Ipswich Society's Annual Awards Evening.



A new Ipswich Society competition

Above: the neatest set of commercial wheelie bins in a public place in Ipswich.



Submit your nominations to the editor before 31 August 2013.

“Infinite in their variety,
May their lids never sunder
And their toothed wheels revolve
With ne’er a thunder
‘Til eternity.”
John Dunne