

Issue 186 Newsletter Jan 2012

The Ipswich Society	
NEWSLETTER	
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Our top award for The Treehouse: East Angles Children's Hospital (page 11)

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Volunteers Needed

After our events like the Annual General Meeting and the Awards evening, for many members it is part of the enjoyment to chat with others while eating some nibbles and having a drink. Committee members who have looked after the refreshments have been kept very busy of late and would welcome new helpers, probably just on those two occasions in the year. If you would like to help in this way, please get in touch with our Secretary, Caroline Markham whose contact details are on the back page.

On 23 June the Society will be taking part in the national Civic Day. Your committee is beginning to consider what our contributions might be. When decisions have been made, various kinds of help will certainly be needed. If you would like to register your possible interest in being involved, please contact our Vice-Chairman, John Norman, who will keep you informed. His contact details are also on the back page. More in the April issue.

Winter Lectures to Enjoy

To be held in the Methodist Church, Museum Street (entrance Black Horse Lane) at 7.30pm All welcome, including non-members.

15 February — 'Producing and Distributing Electricity for Suffolk' by Dr Michael Coleman. Dr Coleman has now retired from managing Sizewell and Bradwell nuclear power stations. A nuclear physicist by training, he was Chairman of Suffolk Preservation Society.

14 March — 'Managing Suffolk's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' by Nick Collinson. Mr Collinson manages The Suffolk Heaths and Coast AONB to which he is adding the Dedham Vale AONB, hopefully to be extended in the near future.

The Chairman on Recent Matters

As I write, the town is gearing up for the Christmas period. Naturally it is not expected to be a bumper Christmas, in the midst of austerity. Some towns have even abandoned Christmas lights but fortunately not Ipswich. The retail position is not good and there are a number of shops (some large) which have closed, but it is important to keep a sense of proportion. Even in this bleak economic climate, there are signs of optimism. New shops are opening, although the headlines concentrate on the ones closing. A shining example of faith in the future is Coe's newly completed re-vamp and its purchase of the former Hare and Hounds pub opposite in order to extend its business; building work has already begun.

There is also the arrival of Waitrose in the Corn Exchange which should bring many more people into the town centre. Unlike larger supermarkets on the edges of towns, with lavish car parking, this Waitrose will rely on shoppers on foot who may well be expected to do other shopping in the town centre.

The John Lewis proposed development of the old Crane's site on Nacton Road is progressing. They have applied for planning permission for a John Lewis At Home store, another Waitrose and there will be other proposals for this very large site.

In accordance with the Government's policy of decentralisation, the Cabinet recently visited Ipswich, where they met Ipswich MP, Ben Gummer. Unfortunately security concerns prevented their meeting in Ipswich centre, and their main meeting took place at BT in Martlesham, but some ministers individually visited many organisations in the town, including businesses and schools. It was also good to note that they travelled by train - standard class - although this gave ammunition to those who claimed the whole visit was a publicity stunt!

Soon after the unveiling of the Wolsey sculpture (which has just won a Society award) the town has another piece of public art outside UCS on the Waterfront. This, however, is much more controversial than Wolsey! It includes a large question mark on its side and has been the subject of much debate in the town and the press. The Society's view is that the more sculpture the better and the more discussion generated the better.

More good news concerns Broomhill Pool. IBC have decided to back the project and developers are being approached to undertake the work, subject to successful grant applications. The clock tower would be reinstated but it seems there may not be enough money to make it a heated pool. Still, the future is much brighter than it was.

Finally, belated good news about our History. It is now completed and is in its final edit. You should hear more in the New Year.

I hope you all will have enjoyed a peaceful Christmas.

Jack Chapman

For all The Saints ...

In the last Newsletter I suggested Ipswich would be a better place by attracting independent shops rather than becoming a clone town with more of the High Street names. I am pleased to report that 'The Saints' (St Nicholas and St Peter's Streets) now make an interesting visit with a wealth of small shops. The icing was a recent Street Fair with numerous market stalls adding to the variety and attracting a multitude of Sunday shoppers.

John Norman

IBC's Core Strategy

IBC's Core Strategy & Policies Development Plan Document

The Planning Inspector's final report, delivered to the Council on 17 November 2011 and to be considered by full Council on 14 December 2011, confirms its soundness legally and in the Council's consultation and, thus, with the focused changes and minor amendments, it should be adopted.

As far as the matters our members are deeply worried about, housing and transport, the Inspector confirms the relevant Core Strategies. As regards transport, the Northern By-Pass, the Wet Dock Crossing and an additional Park & Ride facility are no longer in the plan.

On housing, the Inspector's "limited number of changes" include the following statements: the Plan should "retain the priority for residential development to be given to previously developed land within the Ipswich IP-One area, whilst introducing a mechanism to bring forward greenfield development, should circumstances of unsatisfactory delivery prevail" and "Work on the supplementary planning document in relation to the Northern Fringe will start as soon as the Core Strategy is adopted."

The employment growth estimate is reduced but the need for new dwellings will be at 700 per annum for 20 years - currently it's about 650 completions per annum. This means that the Northern Fringe will be developed, starting with 1,000 houses just north of Valley Road on Ipswich School playing fields. The only major brake to this will be the agreed necessity for a major overall Urban Master Plan for the whole of the Northern Fringe, encompassing up to 4,500 homes, transport infrastructure including railway access, education, health, retail and recreation, including a country park. This will take several years of planning and consultation so the first start date is still 2016 at the earliest.

These conclusions almost completely ignore the people of northern Ipswich, as represented by the Society (1300 members), the Northern Fringe Protest Group (650 signatories), the Save Our Suffolk Countryside Group (335 signatories) and at least 12 private objectors - in total, nearly 2,500 who attended the hearings, spoke and replied to the focused changes consultation. The views of the members of the major house builders (Crest Nicholson, Barratt and Mersea Homes, each of whom had expensive extensive and expert representation throughout the Inquiry) and Ipswich School, have been largely listened to and confirmed. We need to consider what to do next to prevent this unnecessary and premature development.

Mike Cook

John Lewis at Crane's

Planning applications for John Lewis and Waitrose on the Crane's site, Nacton Road

Every Society welcomes the arrival of Britain's most successful retailer with its quality food, unbeatable value for money, unsurpassed service and excellent employee record for its partners. However, the Society believes that the Committee should consider the points we make very carefully and then refuse the application on this site. Our reasons are as follows:

Manufacturing Zone. Change of use of this site means the end of large scale manufacturing in the Borough. This may be pragmatic but we shall never be able to offer such a facility again. The new job opportunities the developers advertise will be at the upper end of their optimism. Research shows, and Mary Portas confirms, these are often displacement jobs.

Town Centre. The development of a major attractive retail draw this distance from the town centre will take shoppers who are in a higher socio-economic bracket away and thus discourage other retailers and developers from coming to the town centre. The first nail in the coffin was the granting

of Tesco's consent and this would be the second. And we contend there are at least two large sites undeveloped and zoned for retail. We believe this will be disastrous for the quality of the town centre shopping for years to come.

The Portas Report has made two important recommendations which, assuming they are brought into force, are relevant to this application. Number 14 would "make explicit a presumption in favour of Town Centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework." Number 15 would "introduce Secretary of State exceptional sign off for all new out-of-town developments and require all large developments to have an "affordable shops' quota." These two sections which are likely to be advised as relevant in the near future would make refusal more sensible.

The traffic generated by successive developments in north east Ipswich will produce stagnation, not just of the local roads but also of the A14 at the Nacton Road junction (junction 57). 4,100 cars a day are set to visit the site. Half will come from Ipswich and the other half from Saxmundham in the north to Witham in the south, the Essex Coast, Bury and Diss, all driving along the A14. The Highways Agency feels there is no reason to alter junction 57 despite there actually being a tailback on the eastbound carriageway on Google Maps. A third lane, it is agreed, will be inserted at the Warren Heath roundabout and that is the sum of improvements, they state, that is needed in a road layout that we have on good authority is at "capacity most of the day."

At the very least, the Committee should insist on conditions which provide for funding of improvements in the future. This area is one of the Borough's main revenue earning business parks and incidentally houses the main Fire and Rescue station and close by Ipswich Hospital and ambulance station and we really cannot allow it to become gridlocked.

We believe, therefore, that the interests of the majority of the Borough would be best served by refusal of this application and a review of siting in a town centre location.

Town Centre Master Plan

Most of its contents are truths that we recognise and most of the solutions will be provided by others. But it is a strategic plan so it does discuss where the town centre is weak and what changes should be made. Here are some of the key recommendations:

- The connection between the town centre and the Waterfront is tenuous.
- Consequently the current east-west axis should eventually be re-orientated to north-south.
- The shopping offer needs improvement. National chains find the empty shops incompatible with modern trading.
- The Westgate and Mint Quarter empty sites are zoned for retail but may never be developed for that use.
- A third site (EADT premises Turret Lane) is available for building offices, shops, etc.
- Develop Old Cattle Market into street of small shops with residential buildings in the area.
- Create one bus station eventually on Tacket Street car park to replace the two present ones.
- Redevelop Tower Ramparts shopping centre into the vacated bus station with appropriate modern shopping space.
- Construct better access across Star Lane to facilitate easy use of the north-south axis.

The Local List, etc.

In 1985 the Society compiled a Local List of worthy buildings not officially Listed by English Heritage. Several of our members helped with photographing buildings for the book we published. This has needed updating. It became clear that the Borough Council Conservation Department was keen to do this with our assistance, Gail Broom of IBC, has completed the first part of the exercise which is to review all the interesting buildings outside the Conservation Areas, which of course have no protection whatsoever.

Placing a building on a Local List could be regarded as akin to 'Grade In' listing. No legal constraints are applied to alterations or development but central direction suggests that planners and committees should bear it in mind. The Inspector's report on her refusal to allow an appeal against the demolition of Barton House, an Edwardian house in Stone Lodge Lane of particular local heritage importance, is a landmark. Members of the Conservation Panel, on which the Society is well represented, have discussed some 300 buildings in three long meetings. IBC will now inform the owners. I am hopeful that we will then proceed to look at interesting buildings, particularly those built after 1914, within Conservation Areas. Finally we could proceed to publication of a new Local List.

Wayfinding information boards

Wayfinding

All around central Ipswich information monoliths have now been installed. These are high quality street plans with sites of interest added, walking directions and other information. They will replace all other street information in due course and are downloadable to your smart phone. The company responsible is internationally regarded; the results look excellent.

Street clutter

One of Civic Voice's continuing national campaigns is for individual societies to become active in getting clutter - unwanted, unused and unnecessary signs - off our streets. Here in Ipswich, the Conservation Panel is carrying out surveys which IBC's Head of Conservation is leading, together with an enthusiastic Highways Officer. Furthermore there is a budget, so that a remarkable number of signs will in due course be removed.

The Government has issued a policy statement which should allow traffic signage of all types to be employed in a more sensible and less bureaucratic style so that street clutter should no longer be created. Clearly safety must still be paramount but exercised by common sense rather than blind application of the Department of Transport's manual.

Proposed new music centre, Ipswich School

After the initial refusal the School, using the same architects expert in such structures, has come back with a modified design that does answer some of the critics, particularly local residents' worries. The mass has been reduced by dropping the building 0.5m below ground, the percussion practice rooms and plant rooms have been placed in a basement, there are no windows opening on

the west elevation, and the roofline has been lowered. By moving the building 2.5m to the east and slanting it in line with Holly Road, the yew tree will be saved. However, aesthetically it's not a coherent nor exciting building and of a large mass. Further, there remain considerable concerns about traffic generation and parking around events. The School needs to provide a satisfactory travel plan which is adhered to and do some public relations work with its neighbours on traffic.

Alexander House, St Matthew's Street

This is on the Local List and has been afforded some protection in that the Conservation Panel has put forward opinions on proposals for alterations and has successfully had the various proposals improved. The owners now wish to add a second additional storey, again zinc-clad but with odd fenestration consisting of small portholes. Plumbers, installing the outlets of the students' rooms' condensing boilers have peppered the walls in a destructive pattern to the ordered neo-classicism of the original 1840 building. This would add further indignities.

Localism Bill

This has now received Royal Assent. Some key changes therefore are: Regional Strategic Spatial Surveys are abolished so that the factual basis for regional strategic planning is to be ignored and all plans will be local to a specific local planning authority. Neighbourhood Forums now have the powers to produce plans for the future. The Independent Infrastructure Planning Commission is abolished. Its place is taken by a similarly titled group within the Department of Local Government.

Mike Cook

Ipswich Society Awards 2011

There were fewer nominations this year - a reflection of more straitened times in Britain. But it was one of the most enjoyable Awards evenings of recent years. Perhaps holding the event in St Peter's Church was one reason for the bigger attendance (120). It is often said that parking is a problem on the Waterfront, but there are probably more opportunities to park quite close to the church than there are near the Town Hall where we were last year.

Bob Allen, ex-Chairman of the Society and now one of our Vice- Presidents, did us proud. For an hour or so and speaking without notes, he described and commented on the fifteen nominated schemes. Not being one of the judges, he could adopt a neutral attitude in most cases, presenting the pros and cons and thus encouraging listeners to think for themselves and allowing the final decisions to contain some element of surprise. What follows here is a selection in jottings of some of his comments. I hope I've not misrepresented him!

James Hehir Building, Orwell Quay i.e. the second main building for University Campus Suffolk. "A striking and definite" addition to the Waterfront and already a welcome part of the university's facilities. Worthy of its site. Yet, "could it be a Lego building or a computer-drawn abstract or 3D modern art?"

Aspire, new flats in St George's Street/ Bedford Street. Better than the garage that existed here but is it good enough? Gables and what appear to be sash windows could be appealing. But a bland flank wall in St George's Street and clumsily matched roofline in Bedford Street.

Foxhall Road, six new houses on site of Blooming Fuchsia PH. A pastiche Victorian terrace. "Has architecture lost its way?" or is it what customers want? Good quality brickwork. Seems as if there is "more window frame than glass." Proportions of fenestration odd and curious Doric porch at end.

120 Spring Road, new pair of semi-detached houses. In scale with neighbouring houses. Standardised windows look jammed in.

Tydeman Close, Woodbridge Road, new flats next to the large Vista development. Some "bravery" in design which differentiates it from the "architectural frenzy" of Vista. Good to see garden sheds in little gardens.

New detached house in garden of 65 Christchurch Street. Bay window and 'Suffolk White' bricks to echo the old house next door. Is it good enough for a fine Victorian street?

14 Dalton Road, new detached house. Makes a positive impact on the street scene. Windows appropriately recessed, but door case is flush.

Handford House, Cumberland Street, new care home, Featureless approach from the street. A large development which could be "a place of comfort." A curious little porch.

Fore Street/Duke Street, new paving scheme. Looks better than the original roundabout. Pleasing simplicity and curving steps. Unfinished? - a vacant plinth (waiting for the next addition like Trafalgar Square's?) and two trees still to come.

Coe's, Norwich Road, redevelopment of shop front. Plain, simple self-announcement. Not pretending to be a Victorian shop. Relates well to the higher new southern end.

Railway station, new passenger footbridge and lifts. Valuable function. Echoes the Victorian station in its brick towers (blue engineering bricks, 'Suffolk Whites' and reds). But why such weak angled roofs on towers and awkward lintels?

Grimwade Street, 'Goals' football centre. Again, a valuable function, but "a missed opportunity to construct a real showcase" on this prominent site. Awkward projecting air conditioning and poor cladding on balcony.

Thomas Wolsey Statue, St Peter's Street. Good to commemorate Wolsey at last. A face of "wisdom and experience". Some find it inspiring - the extended hand of a man keen on education. Others unsure about the long garment and his seated posture. But good to have some disagreement because it's not "bland or featureless." [Dr Blatchly points out Wolsey is wearing the 'cappamagna' which was 16 feet long, the weight carried by 2-4 train bearers.]

East Anglian Children's Hospice, St Augustine's Gardens, a new building called The Treehouse. Landscape has been incorporated into the design. Wood cladding is "not just a fad." Windows related to children's presence. "Architecture is important in creating a sense of joy and welcome."

277 Cavendish Street, wooden insulation of gable end. "Intrigued" by this addition. An alternative to internal cladding which reduces space.

So, we awaited the results of the Judges' deliberations. Such a variety of schemes in size and purpose! The decisions were announced as follows:

AN AWARD OF DISTINCTION for The Treehouse Children's Hospice. "Uses the site brilliantly."
Client: East Anglian Children's Hospices (EACH) Design: Barefoot and Gilles, Architects
Contractor: Barnes Group Ltd, Barnes Construction Division.

A HIGH COMMENDATION for the Wolsey Statue. "Welcome and welcoming."
Client: Dr John Blatchly, Chair of Patrons of Wolsey Statue. Design: David Annand, Sculptor
Contractor: Ipswich Borough Council

A COMMENDATION for Coe's new shop front - "A well designed building of 21st century architecture."

Client: Coe's Design: Poole and Pattle, Architects Contractor: D C Construction Ltd.

A COMMENDATION for the James Hehir Building, DCS. "A striking addition."

Client: DCS Design: RMJM Architects Contractor: Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd.

The Mayor, Councillor John Le Grys, presented the awards. Jack Chapman, the Society's Chairman, thanked the Committee, Bob Allen and the panel of judges. Most members, I suspect, were happy with these decisions. But in any case, they proceeded to enjoy some excellent food and wine! Let's hope there'll be some interesting nominations next year despite the recession, so keep your eyes open.

Neil Salmon

Living by the Waterfront

There is very little which changes in certain parts of the Waterfront; the timber boat's arrival as Montis or Suntas slowly manoeuvres alongside Anglo Norden at the height of the tide on a Sunday or early Monday; the persistent and bothersome peep of the reversing fork-lift trucks; the insistent activity with St Helena Road closed by stacked timber walls and finally the arduous movement astern as the craft slides sedately back out of the dock two high tides later.

This regular activity is part of the cadence of the dock pulsating as it has since the Wet Dock was constructed in 1842 which was at the time "the biggest enclosed dock in the kingdom".

The yachts and cruisers have displaced the lighters, coasters and bulk carriers. The tone of the waterside has mellowed; only the sailing barges, many locally built, still return now plying a trade in evening river trips and day sailings which chime with the new needs of a 21st century populace. Still, the resonance of the past quietly rings on the Waterfront while beyond the lock gates the main business of Ipswich docks thankfully booms with urgency.

We all witnessed the successful resurgence of the renamed Waterfront in the mid 90s with award winning structures: the DCS buildings, the revamped Isaac Lord's and the Salthouse Harbour Hotel extension providing a poised theme of inspiration. Other projects included Neptune Square, Neptune Marina and Orwell Quay which as residential properties generally added to the harmony of the place. With high occupancy in these apartments and the nearby houses on this eastern half of the Wet Dock there is a commonly held view that life at the Waterfront is good. Noise and parking issues are high-lighted and are under discussion, but an air of muted satisfaction pervades the place.

But we are also only too aware of the failure of development companies in the western half of the Wet Dock which has resulted in the unfinished Regatta Quay 'wine rack' and the Cranfield Mill Tower remaining virtually uninhabited. Were it not for Assis Carreiro's exceptional qualities in raising the funds to fit out the outstanding Dance East studios, John Lyall's 23 story tower would be bare of occupants. Sad it is then that the promised Witchbottle Theatre for the Red Rose Chain also fell by the wayside.

Two recent publications throw into interesting relief the situation which exists on the Waterfront. Time was when we felt an age- old certainty in the names of the wharves and docks, compared with the sprinkling of new-minted aspirational labels of the developers. The recently published Quays and Wharves of Ipswich by the Ipswich Maritime Trust proclaims its intention "to reinstate the old names in their rightful locations". Admirable and timely this is, coming now when officials from Ireland's National Asset Management Authority (NAMA) have decided to combine the discordant Regatta Quay and Cranfield Mill sites into a single unit under the aegis of administering agents. Having seen how advanced the developments were when building work was stopped in 2009, NAMA believed "it should be possible to finish the project reasonably soon." Serendipitous is it not that the return to the old names, as proposed by the Maritime Trust, coincides with the arrival of new agents now to be entrusted with the resurgence of St Peter's Quay, Albion Wharf and Common Quay. An opportunity presents itself for the agents of change to dispense with strident invented names and return to old names and old values which still manifest themselves elsewhere in the Wet Dock in the syzygy of celestial bodies. There is no likelihood of a return to simpler, possibly rougher, days but the old names do resonate - save the one exception that the residents of Orwell Quay may find it difficult if their previous moniker is restored: Gasworks Quay.

Tony Marsden

Trains & Buses: Update

Railways

The Greater Anglia franchise involves the operation of all the main line, commuter and local passenger services in East Anglia. Following the withdrawal by the Department of Transport from National Express, Abellio has been selected to operate the franchise for the remaining 29 months of the period, commencing on 5 February 2012.

If the performance is good, Abellio should be a strong contender for the next contract commencing in 2015 and expected to be for a period of at least 15 years, which is longer than the 7 to 10 years previously, one objective being to encourage more investment by the operator. Abellio was formed to acquire and operate the railways in the Netherlands. The company already is a joint operator of the Merseyrail and Northernrail franchises and also bus services including some in London.

There are limitations to the improvements which Abellio can achieve in the short term on the service on the London to Norwich main line. Some of the problems are not the responsibility of the train operator but result from under capital investment in the infrastructure over many years. The rolling stock is provided by the train operator and at present involves the use of locomotives more than 20 years old and coaches more than 30 years old. In the case of infrastructure one problem has been failures in the electric overhead wiring system. Another is the limitation in capacity for the large number of passenger and freight trains between Colchester and Shenfield with the availability of only two tracks.

Bus Services

Ipswich - Transport Fit for the 21st Century is a major transport scheme aimed at improving the way that everyone can travel around the town. Approval has been given for the project which

involves a capital expenditure of £21.5m, of which £18.3m is funded by the Department of Transport. Construction work is scheduled to commence in the summer of 2012. Suffolk County Council has carried out a public consultation on the proposals, which included a public exhibition held in the Tower Ramparts shopping centre. The consultation closed on 25 November 2011.

One of the proposals is to pedestrianise Upper Brook Street. This will require the bus services using this street to be diverted via Tacket, Upper Orwell and St Margaret's Streets.

Another proposal is to extend the present bus lane in St Helen's Street from Grimwade Street to Grove Lane, making this section of St Helen's Street one-way for all traffic. It would necessitate the diversion of all the outward bound buses to operate via Grimwade and Fore Streets, Back Hamlet and Grove Lane to reach Foxhall and Spring Roads. Some responses have been made to this proposal. While an extension of the existing bus lane is very much required, the large diversion of the bus routes is opposed. As an alternative it has been suggested that the lane should commence at the Rope Walk junction and follow the route along Rope Walk and Bond Street.

The two existing bus stations will be retained, with no major improvements. 'Real time' information will be installed at each station and also new passenger shelters. A limited increase in the number of bus stands will be made at Tower Ramparts.

Russell Nunn

Future of Broomhill Pool

At last the news is good for the pool. Ten years on from the last swim the Executive Committee of Ipswich Borough Council has decided to go ahead with restoration and management by an outside operator.

The strategy that persuaded the Committee and its officers is to let the entire site on a very long lease - at least fifty years - to an operator, Fusion Lifestyle. Fusion, spun out of the leisure department of the London Borough of Southwark, are a highly respected not-for-profit trust who run nearly fifty leisure outlets in the south of England including three open air pools, two of which are Listed and required similar regeneration.

Fusion will raise the capital necessary (£3.5m) for the re-opening from several sources including IBC who have budgeted £1m, the Heritage Lottery Fund who are extremely supportive, other grant funding bodies and raising some on the market, supported by the long lease and their reputation. The work to be done will include repairs to failing concrete structures, the pool tank, the south grandstand and the north changing rooms. The clock tower will be reinstated, a fifty station health and fitness centre open all the year round to provide an income stream will be installed under the south grandstand and the car park will be enlarged and improved. The jury is out on the fate of the diving boards and it's unlikely that the pool will be heated.

It seems a long time since the Chairman sent me to sit on an IBC Scrutiny Committee on the future of this asset. The enthusiasm of its supporters led me to being the Chair of the Trust we set up and

thus to the present position. Optimistically, and I have never wavered in my confidence, the pool should be open to the warm skies by 2015.

Mike Cook

Mildenhall Dish & the BM

The Mildenhall Great Dish is coming to Ipswich! The British Museum have secured Arts Council funding to move 100 objects, objects selected by the public as part of 'The History of the World in 100 Objects' project, to provincial museums and galleries. Ipswich has been selected as the first location and the Mildenhall Dish the first piece to go out on loan as indicative support by the British Museum for the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £10m towards an Arts Quarter in Ipswich. The proposed Arts Complex comprises Ipswich Museum, the former Art School in High Street and the Wolsey Studio. The bid is further supported by the Saatchi Gallery in London which loaned nine objects for the opening exhibition in the Art School last year, with the possibility of a further exhibition later.

Permanently on display in the British Museum, the Great Dish is an exquisite piece of 4th century Roman silverware, almost two feet in diameter and decorated in low relief (embossed from behind) alluding to the worship of Bacchus on land and sea. This will be the first time the Great Dish has returned to Suffolk since it was found by an agricultural worker in 1942.

The British Museum hosted members of Colchester & Ipswich Museums Service (who were thanking donors to the fund for purchasing the former Art School), Ipswich Borough Council, our Society and other contributors at the launch of this second phase of 'The History of the World in 100 Objects'.

John Norman

Localism: Too Small?

On the fifth anniversary of the five Ipswich murders

In the previous Newsletter, and in the wake of the August riots, I asked whether the "Big Society" shares the same status as the banks in being "too big to fail". A rhetorical question of course: for while such important but difficult questions should not be treated glibly, neither should we turn blind eyes to them. But readers will hopefully recognise a consistent theme linking many of my articles, around the question of how we make democratic and fair decisions on what we want, both as a national society and as a local community. How can we hope to reconcile widely varying and often diametrically opposed views on issues from town centre shopping and local transport provision, via the restructuring of local government, to national policy on planning and the environment, to international issues such as climate change, when our system of democracy emphasises adversity rather than mutual accommodation - or "win-lose" rather than "win-win"? Why should significant sections of the population be condemned to being on the "losing" side when there could be more balanced solutions which would include them?

It remains to be seen whether "Localism" will do anything to resolve this conundrum, or instead prove to be of similar substance to the "Big Society". But in the meantime there is a worrying trend that any discussion of local challenges is now seen as "talking Ipswich down", to be discouraged at all costs. A reader's recent comment in the local press describing Ipswich as "a cesspit" is plainly an exaggeration (as anyone who has been anywhere near one will surely testify) but such irrationality should not provide cause to suppress rational debate on how life in Ipswich might be improved. So I hope to cast some light on the problem by discussing an issue whose inclusion in this Newsletter is perhaps unexpected, yet which surely represents an important influence on the life of the town in the recent past, from which some notable success has been distilled from tragedy. It must surely be an exemplar of aspiration for both the Big Society and Localism: dealing with street prostitution.

Prostitution is immediately an emotive issue, provoking arguments about morality on the one hand and women's rights on the other which, being both unchallengeable and irreconcilable, provide classic fodder for the media to exploit. And, in the process, the real plight of modern-day street prostitutes is obscured, namely that the vast majority are themselves victims of Class A drug abuse who would not willingly choose this "profession", rendering the foregoing arguments futile and irrelevant.

When the problem moved into our neighbourhood nearly ten years ago, we mostly regarded it as an intolerable intrusion that should be deterred, only to find that the law was inadequate for the purpose. Slowly, through an introduction via our councillors and MP to the Home Office and a nationwide consultation in 2004, we learnt the wider truth about the link with the drugs trade, and the need for support for the victims and protection for vulnerable young people, alongside deterrence against kerb crawlers. But even when a national Home Office strategy was published in January 2006, there were still deep ethical divisions between agencies which held up progress - until the five murders of the following December.

Even after those dreadful events, it took a further two years of concerted effort to engage with the sex workers and support their return to more conventional lives. But that has been the outcome, and one to be celebrated since it is "win-win", as the reformed addicts who have recovered their lives will testify, alongside our community which has reclaimed its neighbourhood. It is a tribute to a thoroughly researched and comprehensive multi-agency strategy implemented by dedicated professionals in close co-operation with the local community. This certainly would be my interpretation of the Big Society, and emphatically not one where the community had to fend for itself.

But if those five murders had not been committed, would this have been another example of an issue that many people in Ipswich would prefer to ignore, as is arguably the case in some quarters with the very similar issue of street drinking? Would vulnerable victims of substance misuse, and their unwilling host communities, be left to "help themselves"? With hindsight we might like to hope not, but five years of stalled progress before the murders might suggest otherwise, and the blame surely lies not with any culpable individuals but with the diversity of human nature.

The original five-year local strategy for prostitution has now been revised and extended to cover all forms of sexual exploitation across the county, seeking to support victims of trafficking and coercion in the same way that the original strategy recognised the hard realities of dealing with drug addiction.

Similarly there is a local strategy to address street drinking and to support the chaotic victims of alcohol dependency and misuse. Neither problem will simply "go away" or solve itself. Nor can the communities affected resolve the problems for themselves. Both require the concerted efforts of political leaders, dedicated professionals and ordinary residents if Ipswich and Suffolk and indeed the victims themselves are to be relieved of their burden. And Ipswich and Suffolk have the experience and wisdom of hindsight to lead the way - if we so choose, and can muster the resources.

Mike Brain

Mike Brain is a Residents' Representative on two local multi-agency Strategy Implementation Groups addressing Sexual Exploitation and Street Drinking, and is a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme co-ordinator.

David Kindred's new book

***Ipswich: the Changing Face of the Town* by David Kindred**

Old Pond Publishing Ltd, 176 page hardback with over 300 photos. £19.95

"Changing" indeed. These very well chosen photos from eras such as the 1880s, the 1930s, the 1960s and the 2000s show that Ipswich has been subject to constant change. Some areas of the town are completely unrecognisable, all buildings, whether good or bad, gone.

One valuable lesson is to realise that simplistic opinions about "the good old days" are wrong. We have clearly lost some splendid buildings, for instance the EADT premises in Carr Street, and many older ones of real character. But it's equally apparent that there was nothing very elegant about our shopping streets. Nothing was sacrosanct - the older the building the more likely it was to have painted adverts all over it. (No wonder Napoleon had called us "a nation of shopkeepers" a century or so previously.) Yet these same 'decorated' buildings were locally owned shops, not national clones like most of today's; they were advertising, however horribly, the uniqueness of the shops.

There are several other appealing features of the book. One is the number of fascinating aerial photos. Another is the many names of former businesses, which will interest older readers. Yet another is the author's judicious use of dates - the Hippodrome Theatre opened in 1905, became the Savoy Ballroom in 1957, then a bingo hall and was demolished in 1985. And trolley buses finished in 1963. We are also reminded that in a town sometimes criticised nowadays for its 'inconveniently' narrow streets, several of them have actually been widened and they're still too narrow!

Surprisingly from such a knowledgeable townsman as David Kindred, there are a few errors. Sedan Street was demolished, not Redan Street which very much still exists. The fine timber framed building in Silent Street has been deliberately named Curson Lodge, not House, to emphasise its likely relationship to Curson's great House, which Wolsey hoped to acquire but has long since been demolished. However, these little blemishes shouldn't put you off.

In all such books, old photos need to be thought about - sometimes to orientate yourself - so readers should take their time. It's worth it, because I suspect it's now the best book of its type.

Neil Salmon

I'll Drink to That! (Part 2 of *Park Road Reservoir* in Issue 185)

In the late 1960s it was becoming obvious that the bore holes supplying water to Ipswich and surrounding communities were going to be insufficient for the growing population. The difficulty facing the Water Board was from where to source more water?

Twenty sites for a new reservoir were investigated, with the valley between Tattingstone and Holbrook being selected for a number of reasons. It was of sufficient size and had few properties to demolish (amongst them Alton Hall and Stutton Mill, the latter being dismantled and moved to the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket). The major advantage of Alton is that it sits on a bed of clay which offered reduced water loss through the bed of the reservoir and a suitable source of material for the dam. Throughout the 1970s the valley was excavated (deepened) and the arisings deposited on the new embankment above Holbrook. This dam incorporates a bentonite core to ensure it doesn't leak.

The stream that runs down from Copdock into the Stour at Holbrook Creek carries insufficient water to either fill the reservoir or supply the good folk of Ipswich. The majority of the water in Alton Water is pumped out of the Gipping at Sroughton, over the hill close to Tesco and into the reservoir at Tattingstone.

Alton Water with a surface area of some 400 acres came on-stream in 1987 after taking 13 years to fill. Just below the dam is the treatment works capable of treating 10 million gallons a day. The potable water is then pumped over the Orwell Bridge to the service reservoirs on Rushmere Heath and hence to the taps of Ipswich and Felixstowe. These works also supply water to the Shotley peninsula and most of the villages in South Suffolk.

Meanwhile in Elsmere Road work continues on the refurbishment of the Park Road reservoir. I am indebted to Roy Bush who has been researching the original contract documents to discover how the tank was constructed. The six inch thick concrete roof is supported on cast iron columns but is not reinforced! This has led the current contractor to remove the overburden by suction rather than mechanical excavation. The reservoir was built for Ipswich Corporation Waterworks by main contractor, George Bell of Tottenham Hale, for a cost of £19,807 and it opened in 1903.

John Norman

Remembering the Reservoirs

I was very interested in the October article about the Park Road reservoir and to learn what its future may be. It is very sad to see No.3 all boarded up, as this was my home for several years from the 60s to the early 70s. When I was thirteen my father, Arnold (Jack) Stiff was promoted to the Ipswich Corporation Water Works to the position of Chief Maintenance Engineer and Pumping Superintendent. The house in Park Road "went with the job". The reservoir area was my back garden! Beside the house were the two tennis courts rented by NALGO, so it was quite a busy place even in winter and lots of friendly people to talk to.

My father's area of work was expanded beyond the boundaries of Ipswich and he was on 24 hour call, so could be in the depths of the countryside in midwinter, at night. He sometimes had to go to the top of the water tower. No Health and Safety in those days! Eventually Anglian Water was in charge and my father took early retirement, going to the Civic College as an engineering technician. So ended my time at Park Road. It is good to know that at least part of the site will remain.

Sonja Nestor, nee Stiff

An Arch and a Shelter

I was contacted as a member of The Ipswich Society by Tony Martin. His grandfather was James Mason Martin of the solicitors, Turner, Martin and Symes. His father was Leonard Martin who owned a dental practice in Northgate Street, next to the County Library. The family lived in the house on the floors beneath the dental practice during the period before and during World War II. Tony remembers that his father installed an ancient arch in the wall of the garden. He believes his father obtained the arch from an old local church. During the war his father also installed a rare concrete air raid shelter in the garden. Tony remembers using it. Both these artefacts still exist where they were originally installed by his father and can be seen *in situ*.

They can be viewed by entering a gateway in Old Foundry Road alongside the library in an area which I believe is a car park for library staff. Tony wondered if the arch and shelter had any architectural merit and he asked me to contact anyone who might be interested. I spoke to John Norman of our Society and he suggested that I contact Bob Kindred. Bob has kindly responded to my enquiry with the following e-mail.

Merv Russen

Thank you for alerting me to this. I was aware of the arch but not its provenance. The semi-circular arched head to the stonework is a puzzle as it is not usually associated with architecture apart from Norman arches - which are usually recognised for their antiquity and rarely dismantled or removed from the churches with which they are associated. The wall and arch are curtilage structures within the curtilage of the Listed buildings in Northgate Street and I would assume them to be safe from any ill-considered proposals without our prior knowledge.

The air raid shelter does seem to be an uncommon survivor, probably because it is of very robust construction and because it has not been in the way of any proposed extension to the premises it adjoins. The Council is currently preparing an inventory of buildings of special local interest and as this may be of historical significance I will draw the attention of my Conservation Officer to it. As it is in the Central Conservation Area it could not be demolished without consent so is currently protected to that extent.

Bob Kindred, Conservation & Urban Design Manager, Ipswich Borough Council

Heritage Open Days report

The Open Days (10-11 September 2011) were very successful according to the feedback I have received from the participants. It was certainly helped by the fine weather that weekend, despite the relative lack of publicity from the local newspapers.

The Magistrates' Court, new this time, was very popular with at least 200 visitors. A mock trial was held, plus a visit to the cells, which according to my grandchildren were horribly fascinating. Also new was Gippeswyk Hall, home to Red Rose Chain, also Suffolk New College who organised guided tours. Both venues were very pleased and surprised at the number of visitors.

St Stephen's Church, the Tourist Information Centre, were fully booked for their tours. Over 1,300 people visited the Centre. The Willis Building had 991 visitors, an increase on previous years. It also had a coffee table, enabling visitors to have a light lunch or snack whilst there. St Peter's Church, heritage centre and concert/ rehearsal venue, had 500 visitors. The Town Hall had three tours this year, which attracted extra numbers. Isaac Lord's Machine Room, extremely popular but limited in viewing numbers, had 250 visitors.

One of the major attractions was the vintage bus travelling between Ipswich School and the dock area. This was supplied by Ipswich Transport Museum and the conductor on board was very popular with the children and visitors from various parts of the country and some from overseas. 270 passengers travelled on the bus, which was completely free.

I should be very interested in any feedback from members regarding the Heritage Open Days and also suggestions about any buildings within Ipswich which they would be interested in viewing for this year's event.

Dianne Hosking

Portrait of a Park: review

'Portrait of a Park: A Year with the Wildlife of Christchurch Park' by Reg Snook. Gresham Publications in Association with The Friends of Christchurch Park

As a user of Christchurch Park for more than 30 years, I was really pleased to see that this book has been published. When I've walked through the park on the way to work, or gone on my Sunday morning run, I've often paused to read Reg's wildlife jottings on the notice board next to the visitor centre. These are so entertaining and informative that the idea of gathering them together in book form can only be a good one.

Whatever the subject matter, he always strikes a chord and brings back a memory of some of the wonderful wildlife we've seen and also some that's been lost. He's not the only one to miss the Spotted Flycatchers, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Hawfinches of yesteryear, but he does tell us about the many wildlife wonders still left to us. Mabel the Tawny Owl, of course, gets an article to herself, as do those gaudy Chinese intruders, the Mandarin Ducks.

Whether you're a wildlife enthusiast or just enjoy walking in the park, I can guarantee you'll find something to interest you in this fascinating and beautifully illustrated publication.

Richard Attenborough

The Question Mark at UCS

Art or 3-dimensional graffiti?

Artists Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell have spent the past two years designing and creating the two-part Question Mark public art work for University Campus Suffolk.

Two-part? The physical sculpture is a four metre high edifice in Portuguese marble and Uruguayan granite on the piazza in front of the UCS Waterfront Building. The second part is an LED light display on the concrete chimney towering over the Northern Campus (the old Suffolk College site). The two parts are designed to link the separate halves of the campus. The Question Mark is a reminder to students to question everything.

Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell met whilst at university in 1977 and have been working together ever since. They have been commissioned to create some important artwork worldwide including a Turner nominated design for Eurostar's 10th birthday. They have exhibited at Tate Britain and Tate Modern, the Serpentine and Whitechapel Galleries, New York's Museum of Modern Art and at a host of other national galleries of modern art. They have a particular theme of using text and abbreviations including those used by international airports (LHR, JFK etc) and on Eurostar (LON, PAR) so the Question Mark theme for UCS was simply a development.

The installation of the Waterfront sculpture has created a lot of media interest and debate about what art, particularly public art, should do. Given that all buildings of this size need to contribute financially a percentage to art, then UCS and the Arts Council should be congratulated.

John Norman

Promoting the Town Centre

The first winter lecture could hardly have been more important. William Coe (Chairman) and Paul Clement (Executive Director) came to speak about Ipswich Central and their BID. On that evening of 12 October they weren't certain they would have a future, but writing this in November I am pleased to say that the 700 Ipswich shops and businesses in the town centre voted them a clear majority to continue for the next five years. Let me explain.

Actually, William Coe did the explaining. Town centre management used to be a local government matter. A forward looking Borough Council appointed John Field as Town Centre Manager, only the seventh such appointment in the country. But subsequently local authorities handed over the work to businesses themselves - in our case Ipswich Central, which has put in a bid for a BID! A BID is a Business Improvement District, originally an American concept to counteract all the factors in society today which militate against town centres. A BID works like this. In a chosen geographical area, a majority of businesses need to support the BID and pay their contributions according to size, but within a structure which prevents the big firms from dominating policy. Ipswich's BID was the 30th in the UK and there are now over 120 in the country.

Paul Clement emphasised the necessity for such pro active business involvement. As he put it, the 'elite' town centres will continue to prosper, but many others will be 'relegated'. Ipswich is in 'the mass in the middle' and could go up or down. "Towns need to re-invent themselves, because today's consumers are in control and many won't go to town if it's to visit the same old shops." People are looking for a more satisfying, rounded experience. He argued the case for some re-shaping of the town centre, essentially to link the present centre with the Waterfront and therefore changing the emphasis from the present east-west axis (the "golden mile") to a north-south axis (town centre to Waterfront). Re-development of the present East Anglian Daily Times site in Lower Brook Street will provide opportunities for this link - although the Old Cattle Market bus station is inconveniently situated and would eventually need relocating.

Promoting the town to potential new businesses is crucial. Most investment will have to come from the private sector and nobody can make them do that. And encouraging companies to set up here is not simple; some know little about our town. One possible decision maker was asked what he thought Ipswich was best known for. Racking his brains he ventured that it was our castle.

A few specifics from the lecture. The Town Rangers employed by Ipswich Central are well liked by businesses and apart from providing information to shoppers they have helped to reduce shop lifting. Improved lighting in Giles Circus and Dial Lane should improve the appeal of these areas. Our Christmas lights are outdated; new ones are planned for next year. The successful BID would bring in an additional £3.5m to use over five years.

In answers to questions, the speakers wanted to limit parking costs; regretted the loss of Bury Road P&R; had new ideas for 'softening' the effect of the Star Lane traffic 'barrier'; and hoped more houses of "an executive type" would bring more spending power into town.

Because of out-of-town and internet shopping, town centres will sink or swim. Messrs Coe and Clement are great assets to Ipswich and are determined that we shall swim.

Neil Salmon

Summer Opening at St Peter's

Once again I would like to thank all the members of The Ipswich Society who have volunteered to be on our St Peter's rota over the summer of 2011. Your contribution to keeping the church open every Thursday is invaluable and visitor numbers continue to increase. For 2011 the number of recorded visitors was 2311, an increase of 251 over the previous year. We also had a further 462 visitors during the Heritage Open Days weekend in September, and over the Maritime weekend in August we opened and over 400 people dropped in to see the church.

The church is used throughout the year for rehearsals on four nights per week. The St Peter's Band and our Training Band rehearse on a Monday night, the Ipswich Hospital Band rehearses on Tuesday nights, the Ipswich Youth Steel Band on Wednesdays and The Suffolk School of Samba on Thursdays. Apart from our regular concerts, this year we hosted An Audience with Roy Hudd for the Suffolk Alzheimer Society, Hamlet was performed in April, a Didgeridoo Concert was held in

February and we have hosted several conferences and meetings throughout the year including The Ipswich Society's Awards evening in November.

In October I handed over the management of St Peter's to Andrew and Amanda Mayhew who can be contacted on the St Peter's phone (Tel 225269) or by e-mailing the Centre. They are planning to increase the opening over the winter period with a number of weekend events.

We re-open for the summer season on Tuesday, 1 May 2012. I have been most grateful for your loyal support since we started in 2008 and hope you will continue to support us and the new managers in the future.

***Bernard Westren** (former manager of St Peter's)*

The Ipswich Society Thursday rota has been very well organised by Jean Hill. She would like to have more volunteers for 2012.

Shorts of all Sorts

The Council's Solar Panels

IBC is proposing to install solar panels on several publicly owned buildings. These should save costs on the Council's energy bills. One obvious intended location is the south facing roof of Crown Pools where flocks of pigeons currently enjoy the warmth of the sun.

Useful coach service

A 24 hour service from Ipswich OCM bus station to Stansted and Heathrow has re-started. Run by National Express and Galloways with six new coaches it also calls at Colchester bus station.

A colourful sight

A variable colour lighting scheme has been set up to illuminate the buildings at the west end of the Waterfront, from The Mill tower to the old Paul's silo. In the evening this brings a welcome attraction to the unfortunately dead end (apart from the Dance House) of the Waterfront. Funded by the Arts Council it will run for two years.

Ipswich made

Kocewek, the Ipswich based firm which makes demolition machines, has produced a 67m tall monster for a job in Glasgow. Their machines also demolished the 'indestructible' concrete silos on the Waterfront. Although very much smaller (70 employees) than Ransomes and Rapier used to be when they built giant cranes, it's good to know that a big machine can still be produced in Ipswich.

Multi-cultural

At least 48 languages are reported to be in use in Suffolk - foreign languages not varieties of Suffolk speech! This is according to police records on the various translators needed. This extraordinary number is headed by Poles, followed by Lithuanians and Russians. Most of these languages are probably to be heard in Ipswich streets and shops.

Come and park here

Parking charges at Crown car park are scheduled to be reduced from January for a six month trial period. At £2.50 for two hours this is intended to attract more shoppers and other visitors.