

The Ipswich Society

Chairman's Annual Report 2018

I don't want to belittle 2018 as an insignificant year in the history of The Ipswich Society but as there were no great disasters, unusual achievements or show stopping announcements I am left to report the regular annual events that keep the Executive Committee busy and the membership engaged.

There were no major planning battles, although a number of domestic scale proposals created interest. Generally applications for an additional house (or a couple of houses on an infill plot) will receive a positive response from the Planners. The new National Planning Policy Framework tries to respond to the national housing shortage by suggesting in favour of approval.

Caroline Markham and the 'Outings' team came up with some great ideas for the summer, most of which were fully subscribed. Members were impressed with the American Cemetery and King's College Chapel (how could they fail to be?), entertained and informed by your *Newsletter* editor Robin on a walk around Ipswich's secret street signs and surprised in Harwich by the sheer volume of interesting things to discover.

Once again Heritage Open Days was a resounding success, very ably organised by Neil Thompson who has exactly the right knack of persuading property owners to allow the public into their heritage assets. In Ipswich we do particularly well with the number of buildings open. It makes for a worthwhile excursion from elsewhere and we get numerous visitors from outside the county, some travelling a considerable distance just for the day.

Our Vice-Chair, Tony Marsden, again organised a successful Awards Evening in St Peter's, which was particularly well attended by representatives of the award-winning projects. The judges gave an award to the extension alongside St Augustine's Church on the Felixstowe Road, a decision that was bound to be controversial. The external cladding of the extension is in Corten Steel, a material that has, forever, a coat of rust. In the opinion of the judges this was exactly the right material to be subservient to the concrete rendered church that it sits alongside.

We had some interesting speakers for our Winter Talks programme, notably Brendon Keaney, Director of the Jerwood Dance House. Brendon explained how Dance East contributes to Ipswich's cultural offer and thus how this improves the way that the rest of the country perceives the county town.

Chris Green spoke on Emergency Planning and how the County Council (who are responsible for co-ordinating the response) meet with the other Services to predict and plan for the next major emergency (which incidentally will probably be a flu epidemic). Chris reassured us that the County and our emergency services were ready, rehearsed and prepared. Even the Red Cross caravan was on standby, tea bags and coffee mugs loaded and ready to serve.

The Ipswich Society once again took advantage of the exhibition space in the University. In October we worked with Royal Institute of British Architects Suffolk who presented the last five years of their Design Awards. The Chairman of RIBA Suffolk, Bryan Wybrow, and his wife put together an

exceptionally presented exhibition which was well received. Incidentally for October 2019 the exhibition will be mounted by Ipswich Transport Museum. Expect the foyer to resemble a car park.

In May we published a 16-page guide to St Clements Church, helping to raise the profile of this special building. A marked change to our *Newsletter* was the addition of colour to the cover. We had experimented in the 200th edition (July 2015) with a colour section, essential for the photograph of the 40th (Ruby) anniversary of the Willis Building. From July 2018 the front and back covers have been in full colour.

Significant events in Ipswich include the opening of the repaved Cornhill. There is an unwritten rule in the construction industry that ideally the project should be on time, on budget and spot on with quality. Given that achieving all three is almost impossible the contractor should remember that 12 months after completion the cost over-run will have been sorted, the time delay forgotten but the poor quality will still stare you in the face. I have written my thoughts on the quality of the standing stones in the April *Newsletter*.

My final note is a tribute to Tom Gondris who died on 11th February 2019. Tom had been a stalwart of the Society for almost as long as it has been in existence, and was a member of the Executive Committee for most of that time. He made many significant contributions to the Society (and its spin-off organisations) but if I was to single out just one it would be his ability to recruit new members. Almost everyone he met who had an Ipswich connection (or an Ipswich address) was persuaded to join and as a result membership grew substantially. Tom's contribution will be sadly missed. Our sincere condolences to Pat and their family.

John Norman