



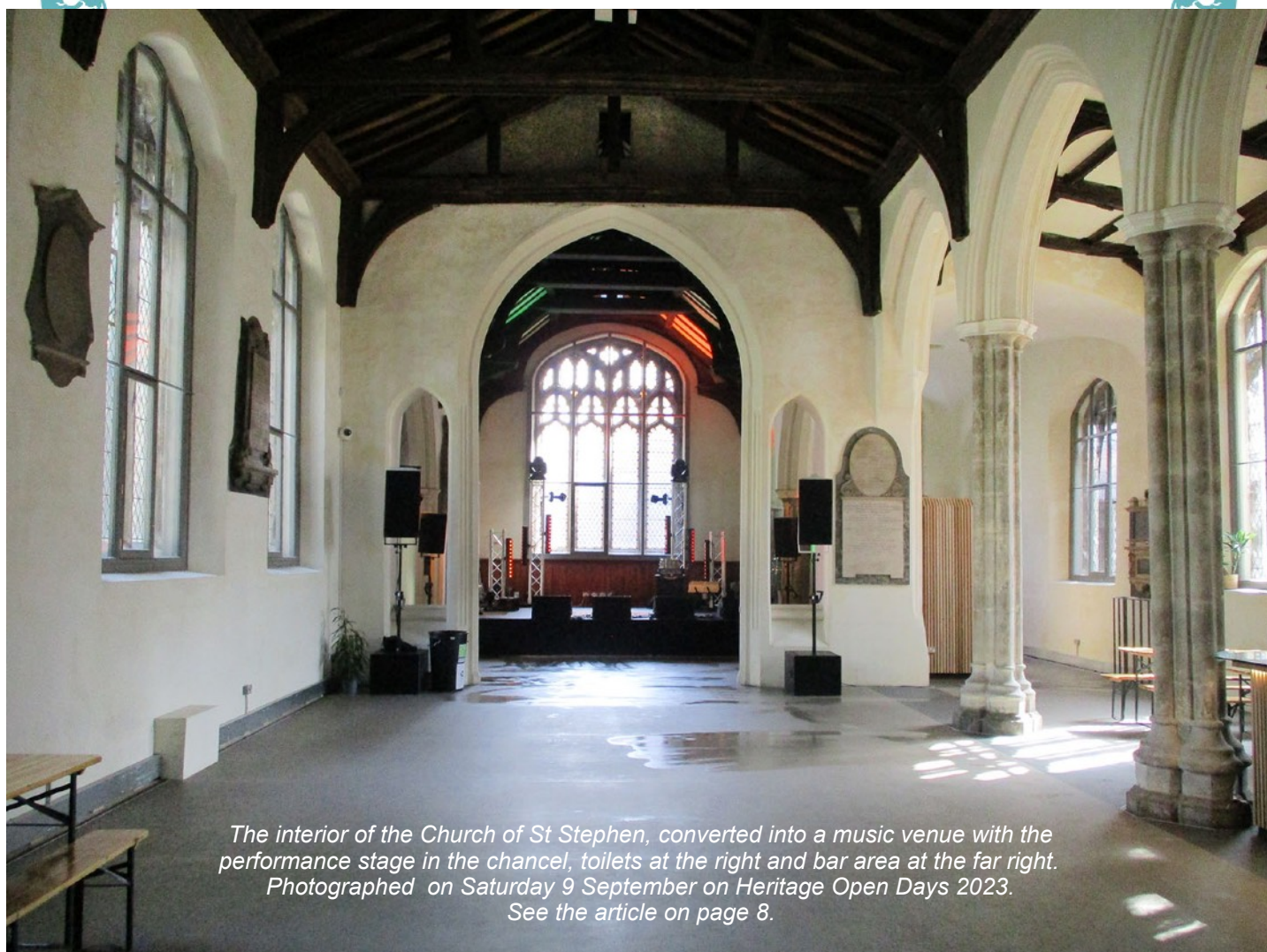
The Ipswich Society NEWSLETTER

www.ipswichsociety.org

January 2024 Issue 236

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The interior of the Church of St Stephen, converted into a music venue with the performance stage in the chancel, toilets at the right and bar area at the far right. Photographed on Saturday 9 September on Heritage Open Days 2023. See the article on page 8.

Editorial

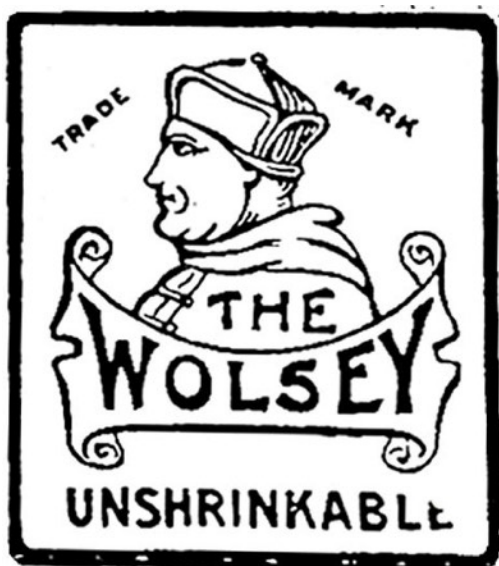
Here is the second (see the third on the back cover) in an occasional series of advertisements from the 1920s to 1930s: 'Wolsey Underwear – replaced free if it shrinks' runs the strapline; with a mildly racy illustration. It's definitely making appeal to patriotic shoppers, too. This time the Cardinal is shown in profile, similar to the Sampson Strong portrait (c.1590) – but a bit more Charlton Heston than Bernard Manning.

Related *Newsletter* links (amongst others) on our website:-

April 2012, April 2022, January 2023, April 2023, October 2023. Incidentally, we featured an image of a tin of 'Cardinal Chocolates' with another portrait of Wolsey in our July 2021 issue.

Web-browsers might have noticed that the last issue of the *Newsletter* was accessible on the Ipswich Society website as a PDF. This rather techy point means that the whole *Newsletter*, including colour images throughout where possible, is available as one file. It makes an easier reading experience of our *Newsletter* online.

Robin Gaylard



New Blue Plaque see p.12



Chairman's remarks

I write this column at the end of November 2023, what a month! On the 15th I was presented (by the Mayor) with the Freedom of Ipswich and just a week later an '*Award of Distinction*' by our Society. The latter was a new award in recognition for my contribution to the Ipswich Society over the past ten years as Chairman.

The Award of Distinction was presented at the conclusion of the Awards evening, in truth an event that might have fallen flat given that there were few buildings completed during 2023 worthy of either a distinction or high commendation. This is probably a result of Covid, developers procuring projects were not at work during 2020, architects were not commissioned during 2021 and contractors have had little to do in 2022-23. No wonder there were very few projects of any size completed, thus the nominations were limited.

We did award two Commendations, both to worthy schemes: the refurbishment and reuse of St Stephen's Church and Ipswich Model Engineering Society's headquarters in Foxhall Road. But for me, obviously, the highlight of the evening was a series of videos by friends and colleagues commenting on my contributions to life in the town, moving and touching, particularly from former students who had gone on to become professionals in the building industry.

A big thank you to all who contributed, especially to Tony Marsden, who spent a considerable amount of time putting everything together which worked extremely well.

Needless to say, the Ipswich Borough Council meeting at which I was presented with the Freedom of the town was very special, not least because such an occasion does not occur very often, the previous recipient being Sir Bobby Robson in 2008. Other notable Freemen include Admiral Lord Nelson and Earl Kitchener.

Actually the award is *Honorary* Freeman which comes with no rights or privileges so any talk of sheep on the Cornhill or walking through town with a sword drawn are hypothetical. This version of the Award stems from the 1972 Local Government Act but is based on the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.

The Council is permitted to admit 'persons of distinction' and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, 'rendered eminent services to the Borough' to be Honorary Freemen of the Borough (section 249(5) Local Government Act 1972).

Local Newspapers

You will know that the world has changed, that social media has replaced many of the multiple ways we can communicate. Nowhere is this more significant than local newspapers. For more than a century the publications have been court-reporting and covering serious incidents of local interest creating a community togetherness amongst what was a loyal readership.

Local newspapers have flushed out social injustice and held those in power to account. Journalists working for these publications know their patch, know who's who and who to contact should some detail need verifying.

The biggest of the 'local' titles include the *Manchester Evening News* (in 2004 they sold 140,000 copies each day), the *Liverpool Echo* (2004 – 129,000) and the *Birmingham Post* (2004 – 102,000). Sales at all three – and the majority of the rest – have declined by 100,000 daily copies (*Manchester Evening News* down to 8,000*).

Local newspapers used to rely on classified advertising for a substantial proportion of their income. Not any more. The mainstay of their revenue has dropped by 96%. Young people's preference for getting their news is from social media platforms. But these channels are increasingly carrying commercial announcements as 'news': McDonald's menu updates', 'Apple launch a new i-phone' and reporting celebrity trivia. Local news is spread by individuals, usually as it happens, invariably inaccurate or missing important details. (continues

Local newspapers (*Eastern Daily Press*, 14,000, *East Anglian Daily Times*, 7,500) serving the rural community are doing marginally better than their city cousins but are still haemorrhaging readers. Mainly, what has failed is the attempt by local newspapers to make electronic editions work; their need for multiple advertisers creates a snowstorm of attention grabbing ‘pop-ups’ across the page obliterating any ‘news’ they intended to convey. I fear that we are witnessing the end of the printed local paper.

John Norman

*Circulation figures for the *Manchester Evening News* are now 21,000, the upturn being free copies distributed to businesses.

Planning matters

New Housing to the north of Ipswich. Barratt/David Wilson Homes have joined with Suffolk’s Hopkins Homes to develop a large site partly within Ipswich and partly in East Suffolk – to the north of Humber Doucy Lane, between Westerfield House and Seven Cottages Lane with Ipswich Rugby Club in the middle. The outline proposals are vague but Green Corridors are emphasised. Their proposal for 600 houses equates to 1,200 cars, 1,200 adults and 400 children. However, there is no mention of any commercial activity, shops, health care, community halls or such like or schools. Considerable space is devoted to describing the ease of access of the site by foot, cycle, bus and, of course, by car but no off-site traffic improvements.

St Helens Street. This deferred application to enlarge the number of HMOs on site was refused because of inadequate storage space, minimal amenity area and over concentration of known HMOs in the street. The number, adequacy and concentration of HMOs is causing great concern to councillors, planners and our members. Currently, IBC only list HMOs of five or more persons because they require a Local Authority licence. Four or less do not, so are not officially known.

Grove Lane (connects Spring Road to Foxhall Road). No 75 appears to be a turn of the century bay-windowed redbrick semi with four bedrooms in good condition and has the original sash wood windows. Currently, it is a five bedroom HMO with a satellite dish and no. 73 is clearly undergoing major building works. The proposal is to convert it into an eight bedroom HMO, some of which would be ensuite but the existing conservatory is proposed to be rebuilt as an eighth bedroom whose facilities would be reached through the communal kitchen/living room. The other two-bed rooms are obtained by subdivision and one, at least, would be small and ill-shaped. Additionally, the area has more than the recommended levels of HMOs registered – as well as many unregistered. It has reached the planning system too soon for Cllr Carole Jones’ change to Article 4 developments. See her article on page 23 which explains it more knowledgeably and trenchantly than I can!

Butter Market. This proposal is to convert the first floor spaces of the former Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop into two one-bedroom flats whilst retaining the ground floor for retail. The entrance would be from Dial Lane next door to the café; in the lobby storage for two cycles would be provided. Two bins would be kept on the first floor! Apart from these last two suggestions, we should surely be aiming to use these spaces for larger apartments which would mean a wealthy clientele living in the centre of the town. This would lead to an improvement in the general quality of life in the centre.

31 Princes Street. The conversion of Direct Line’s former offices in Friars Street continues apace. This proposal refers to the lower ground floor and parts of the upper floors which have already received permission for conversion to thirty-five flats. This application is for a further twelve, so that the relatively modern four-storey Giles House would become an apartment block with forty-seven flats. There is no car parking or amenity area; however, cycle racks are planned. Proposed elevations to Friars Street are not online so it is impossible to say what the outlook of the flats on the lower ground floor will be.

St Peter’s Warehouse, corner Foundry Lane. The previous proposal for a theatre workshop having not come to fruition, the owner, Ipswich Borough Assets, has let it on a 15-year lease to Turley, an AIM (Alternative Investment Market) listed company that runs over 200 middle-

market 'lounges': a restaurant and bar/relaxation concept. They say they are investing £1m and will generate thirty new local jobs. The design, by Bristol architects Richard Pedlar, suggests reroofing and the opening up of various windows but otherwise leaves the building unchanged.

Christchurch Cottage, Bridle Path. The applicant sought retrospective permission for their many (at least seven) deviations from the original proposals. They have added balcony screens, erected a large exterior spiral staircase, the conservatory built of brick, French doors on the first floor and a balcony the entire length of the east elevation. These last two allowed gross overlooking and loss of privacy to the gardens and bedrooms of nos. 10 and 12 Fonnereau Road. This application was refused, thus changes will need to be made.

Castlefields Community Centre, Chesterfield Drive. Based on a large 1870s house by Butterworth, the community centre is flourishing and needs more space. An extension is proposed which is fine, but the proposed new entrance needs reconsideration.

The Railway Hotel, Foxhall Road. This proposal is to build two two-storey side extensions, a two-storey rear extension, external fire escapes and complete re-rendering. This would enable a restaurant, a retail shop and apartments. It appears to be gross overdevelopment and out of touch with its neighbours.

Reeves Yard, Upper Orwell Street. This site has had, at least, one successful permission granted but it has become time-expired with nothing built. The latest application increases the number of flats from nine to twelve in two three-storey blocks. The flats are undersized, the blocks of red brick, inappropriate and of very poor design. The applicants claim that the increase is necessary to make the scheme viable!

Unitarian Meeting House. Following its Society award-winning restoration, the Grade I meeting house has been the subject of much vandalism, graffiti and broken windows together with the detritus of drug use. The existing CCTV does not cover the vulnerable areas so, with a Home Office grant, the Trustees apply to install three poles carrying bullet cameras. The fabric will not be touched and the wiring will run underground to the interior.

Victoria Nursery Site, Westerfield Road. Having lost their appeal, the developer is back with a fresh application. The changes are a reduction in the footprint of the building, mainly to the size of the central structure so that it now sits away somewhat from the boundaries. The balconies have been reduced and recessed into the gables; the roof pitch has been reduced and the ridge height lowered. The previous application was refused at appeal solely on the grounds of lack of parking spaces and the consequential on-street car parking; not, unfortunately, because this is an inappropriate building for the area.

Ipswich Garden Suburb, Henley Gate. Crest Nicolson have published their detailed plans for phase 3b of their development. This area is on Henley Road just beyond the railway bridge and will be reached from the light-controlled junction onto the spine road and thence to the 114 houses. It is laid out in a regulation manner. There is a small attenuation pond. The houses, largely redbrick, once again show no innovative design features and are completely anonymous. 13 of the 114 houses, i.e. less than 10%, will be affordable.

St Clements Congregational Church, Back Hamlet. This large redbrick church has been listed by Historic England at Grade II. It replaced the chapel on Fore Hamlet and was designed by William Eade in 1887. It has a light spacious interior. This is marked by the original fittings even though the organ has now been removed. It is now owned by the University; precisely what their intentions are for the building are unclear. There's an excellent photo album on The Society's Image Archive on the Flickr website.

Mitford Close. A proposal by a Bedfordshire developer for eighty dwellings, 30% affordable, on a horse meadow on the town's northern boundary would be invading the countryside, is not in the Local Plan and would be detrimental to the residents of Mitford Close, turning a cul-de-sac into a busy access road.

Mike Cook

What did you do in the war, Mummy?

Margaret Betts died on the 26 of August, 2023. Born in 1924, she had lived most of her life in Ipswich. Before World War II, she lived with her parents in Melbourne Road then, after leaving school, she worked at the 'Ipswich 2' Tax Office in Princes Street. After the war she got married and lived with her family, first in Warrington Road and, subsequently, in Woodbridge Road. Some of you may remember her as the receptionist at Francis Beaumont's dental practice in Berners Street.

Then suddenly, at the beginning of September this year, Margaret appeared all over the national press. She had been a codebreaker in the war – one of the Bletchley Girls – though she actually worked at Gayhurst Manor, Buckinghamshire. It is thought that she had been the last surviving member of that group.

Two months before Margaret's eighteenth birthday, her brother Patrick, who was in the Gordon Highlanders, had died when the ship he was on, the *MV Abosso*, was torpedoed by the German submarine U575. As a result, Margaret was very keen to join up and do her bit for the war. So she joined the WRENS and ended up as a codebreaker at Gayhurst Manor. She worked in a very hot hut programing the cypher machine called the 'Bombe'. She received a program on a large sheet of paper, which she used to set all the dials. Then she started the machine, which could work for up to eight or ten hours.

Every so often the machine would stop, having 'discovered' a possible solution. Then Margaret would note down all the settings and positions of the dials on the programme sheet, and then set the machine to continue. At the end of the 'run' she passed the program sheet onwards and started again. She was not allowed to talk about her work to anyone outside of her own hut.

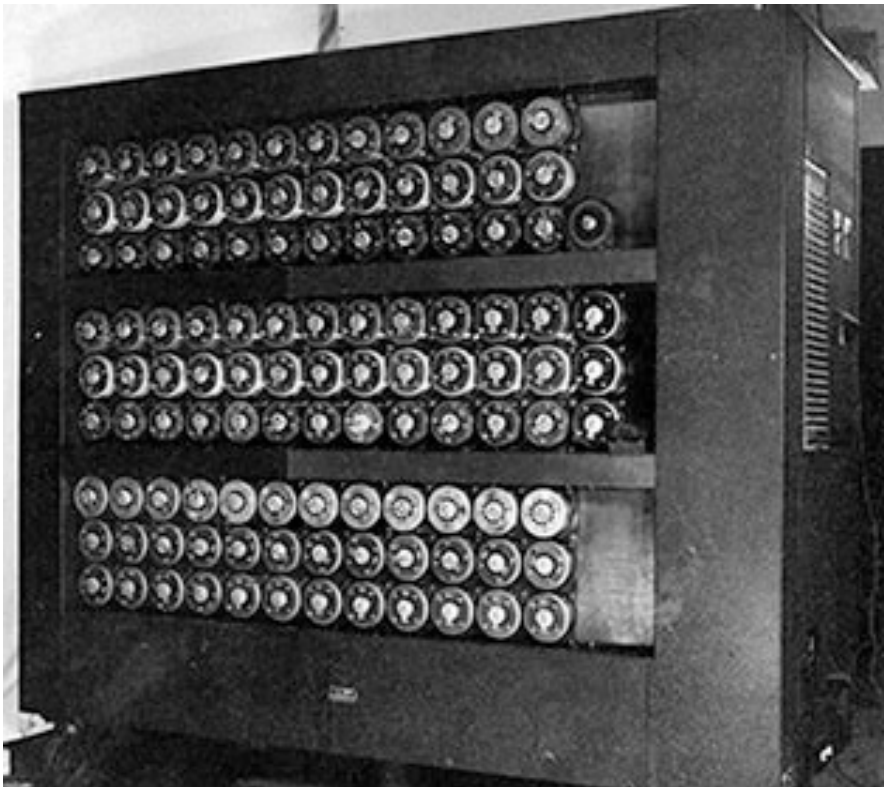
After the war, Margaret kept 'mum' and forgot about her war work. Then, in the 1980s, there were programmes on the television about the Enigma Code and Bletchly Park – Margaret at last understood her part in the enterprise. She could now say to friends and family, 'I did that!'.

She linked up with other codebreakers and went to reunions, proudly wearing the special enamelled codebreakers pin in her lapel.

Louis Musgrove

*Wartime photograph of a 'Bombe'.
Bletchley Park collection.*

Margaret Betts, photo: PA/Robert S Harris



20th Century Society visit to Ipswich

The 20th Century Society (C20 Society) exists to promote the understanding of the Built Environment dating from 1914. To that end, it publishes a glossy journal and occasional books. It employs a director and case workers to further its work, particularly in listing by Historic England and as a statutory consultee on matters concerning modern listed buildings. It supported the listing of the Broomhill Pool, Broomhill Library and it made the case for listing *The Spinney*, Birkin Haward's own house on Westerfield Road.

Henry Moore sculpture in Barham Church

Amongst its activities, it organises walks and visits in London and the whole of the UK as well as trips to Europe and, indeed, to India. Ipswich was privileged to be the subject of one such tour on Saturday 23 September, 2023. The trip was arranged and led by the well-known modern architectural historian, Professor Alan Powers and the Director of the C20 Society, Catherine Croft. The original intention had been to see five churches, an exterior view of the Willis (WTW) building, the Co-op store mosaic above Cox Lane, as well as lunch in The Cricketers. However, access was denied to WTW as Ipswich Town FC were at home to Blackburn.

First call was to the Roman Catholic church in Kesgrave and St Andrew's Rushmere, then onward to Birkin Haward's Grade II Congregational Church at Thurleston. An hour was then spent at the Grade II listed Broomhill Pool, courtesy of Ipswich Borough Council's Lisa Stannard and the Broomhill Pool Trust. Mark Ling, current chair of the Trust, provided a comprehensive tour. We then went to All Hallows Church, Landseer Road (H. Munro Cautley, 1938) listed Grade II. This church is usually kept locked; the interior is a revelation of brickwork and beautiful veneered walnut of the two lecterns and choir stalls.

We then crossed the bridge to go to Barham's 12th century St Mary's Church to view Henry Moore's *Madonna and Child*, which is the village WWII memorial. Finally, we went to view the Church of St Thomas in Bramford Lane, again listed Grade II, by N.F. Cachemaille-Day (1939), an architect of some sixty churches.

I was able to add additional guidance on the tour to some of the buildings we passed. However, we did miss quite a few; we hope they will return for next year's Heritage Open Days when some might be open. Additionally, I wonder whether a guided tour in a small bus of modern structures around Ipswich might be a future draw. The day certainly made me realise that there are many sights to see in Ipswich which others don't know about but would enjoy when they were shown them.

Mike Cook



HOD 2023

The Ancient House

Below: Saturday September 9, 10am on the Cornhill. The Ipswich Society gazebo and banners with Society and IMT volunteers provide a focus for the public on the hottest day of the year. In the foreground a young visitor enjoys the dancing fountains. The scale model of the Ancient House at the front of the stall was moved to that venue for the next day's visitors.



Above: oculus at the foot of the upper gallery stairs.

Ipswich Town Guides welcomed visitors to the Ancient House, shorn of all clutter to reveal the structure and decorated panelling, tiling and ceilings – a rare opportunity.



Left and below: large fireplace and carved wood surround bearing the date 1603 and the initials of the owner William Sparrow.





The Church of St Stephen

HOD weekend in September (Saturday only) was the first opportunity for the public to see inside this former Tourist Information Centre after its conversion to a music venue. Seen on our front cover, the interior has been cleared for a standing audience (how exhausting – us old hippies remember when you sat on the floor for a gig).

Left: a new, wide door has been cut through the north wall.

Where's the font? A late 19th century addition, it was removed by the Borough and is in storage, because it would have been an obstacle in the event of a fire. An octagonal shape in the flooring indicates its former position.

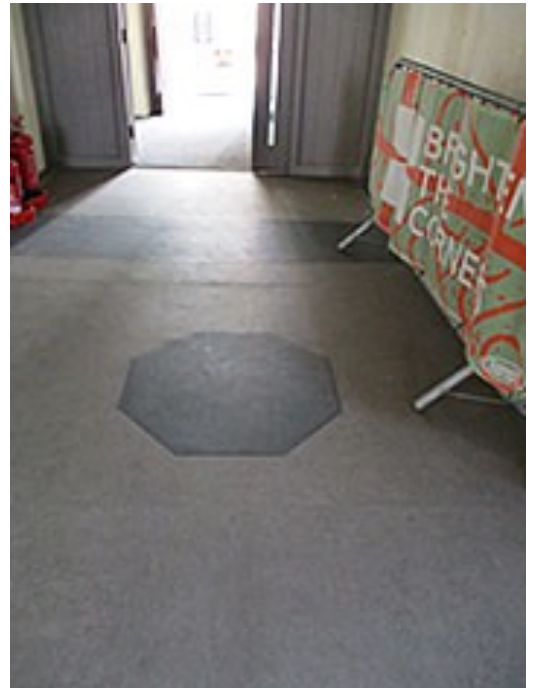
The important 17th century Leman memorial (photograph below) which is mounted on the north wall of the chancel has been suitably protected by a perspex box to protect the carved alabaster, colouring and gilding.



Sir Thomas Rush's chapel was once in the southern part of St Stephen. It was proposed to remove the bressumer beam from Rush's house – once in Upper Brook Street – which for years has been mounted on the rear wall of Wilkinson's (once the C&A store) and mount it on the interior of the south wall. However, to avoid damage or wear-and-tear, of this ancient carving, it remains in the open air.

Brighten The Corners is a local initiative which also runs the The Smokehouse in South Street (80 capacity) and the former Baths Hall on Civic Drive (340 capacity with plans to increase to 450). Investment by Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund has enabled the conversion of St Stephen into a medium-sized (up to 225 audience) venue.

RG





The Tudor Market in the Saints

The splendour of King Henry VIII and all six of his wives (!) visits St Peters Street. Henry addresses his people (bottom image).

Below right: Wolsey biographer Phil Roberts, in the garb of his subject, signs copies of his book.

Below left: Craft fair in St Peters-on-the Waterfront.

All photographs by Tim Leggett.



Left: Vice-Chairman, Chairman and Hon. Secretary of The Ipswich Society brave the blistering heat to run the Society's stall at the Tudor Fair in the Saints.



Rushmere Hall Primary School

Memories of nearly 70 years ago flooded my mind as I walked through the gates of the school towards the main entrance with my daughter and youngest grandson. It was the Sunday afternoon of Ipswich Heritage Open Days weekend and we took the opportunity of visiting the school. Immediately the scene became familiar: there was the Festival of Britain plaque indicating the year when the school was built, 1951, on the left-hand side wall, then the remnants of the orchard on the other side where we used to pick greengages. Next, the car park where my Vespa scooter stood. Outwardly, the buildings looked the same.



Derek in a classroom, HOD weekend 2023.

Entering the school we were greeted by some of the present staff who welcomed us warmly. There was a display of photographs of former staff, events and pupils. Immediately behind was the main hall, used for assemblies, PE, concerts, plays. During the 9 years I was there, we had a special May Day Festival including maypole dancing, country and sword dancing, also a special musical drama with a different theme each year. I was responsible for designing the huge backcloth for each play.

We walked along the corridors, looking into the classrooms. In the early years of the school, each classroom had its own cloakroom and access to the playground. Some of these spaces have been converted to library areas, IT rooms or other special areas. While going around the school, I met parents who remembered me when I taught them as pupils.

When we left, remembering those rows of computers and lap tops, I thought how education has changed since I was there in the fifties.

Derek Bailey

L&G pull out of The Island site

Legal & General (L&G) were planning to build 170 units on 'the Island' on Ipswich dockside. L&G proposed to use their Modular Homes company. Due to major problems in Bristol – a flagship scheme – and elsewhere and huge costs, they have pulled out of modular building and pulled completely out of the Island site development in Ipswich. Their modular homes foray amassed 295 million pounds-worth of losses.



L&G modular units being dismantled at Bristol site earlier this year because of foundations problems.

New Blue Plaque unveiled on the Ipswich Waterfront

On the 1 November The Ipswich Society unveiled our 27th Blue Plaque, to commemorate the life and works of the self-taught, Suffolk artist, George Frost (1745-1821). Frost was born at Ousden in west Suffolk. He moved to Ipswich when he obtained a position with the Blue Coach Company in Upper Brook Street. He lived in a house on the Common Quay of the Waterfront. When his work duties were

completed, he would spend the rest of the day painting and drawing in and around the town. In about 1800, he made the acquaintance of the budding artist, John Constable. They were known to sketch together along the banks of the Orwell and he was one of several well-established artists who may have influenced Constable's style. After his death in 1821 Frost was buried in St Matthew's Church.



John Norman: Freeman of the Borough

A Special Meeting of Ipswich Borough Council was held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall at the rising of Council, on Wednesday 15 November, 2023 for the conferment of the Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Ipswich upon Mr John Norman who is, of course, our Chairman. This was a splendid occasion in tribute to somebody who is passionate about Ipswich.

As testament to the wide interests and influence of John, a large group of supporters including family members, Ipswich Society luminaries, professionals from the architecture and construction industries, Rotarians and others foregathered in the Mayor's parlour. We were eventually led up into the Council Chamber once the normal business of the council was completed. The announcement of the conferment by the Mayor was followed by speeches of support from councillors and much applause.

The register and elaborate certificate were then signed. A reception and brief speeches by the Mayor and John followed.

The previous recipient of this honour was Sir Bobby Robson on 5 May, 2008.

RG



Photograph: Tim Leggett

Formal signing of the register of Freeman of the Borough: Helen Pluck, Chief Executive, John Norman, the Mayor of Ipswich Cllr. Lynne Mortimer

Public benches:

a common good offered free to all which reflects well on the town that supplies them

I am an Ipswich-bred furniture designer/maker who uses sustainable English oak from our beautiful local parks supplied by the wonderful volunteers at the Greenways Countryside Project to make unique chat-friendly benches like those in Holywells Park or St. Peter's Church and at a comparable cost per foot to the public purse.

As a local maker who needs custom, I would love to make more but have found pushback against benches due to their association with anti-social behaviour. No-one can deny that this occasionally happens thanks in no small part to the collapse in social care and – no, I wouldn't put a bench outside my own bedroom window. However, in my experience,



this behaviour generally happens in secluded spots as the culprits want to be left in peace to drink, sleep, whatever, well away from disapproving eyes. My benches are designed to draw people into our town centres, encourage socialisation and create a positive atmosphere to help turn a town-centre hub location (like Arras Square?) into a friendly hubbub while also gently discouraging anti-social behaviour, at least in that location. Too good to be true? Read the independent research by Sheffield Hallam University on www.benchproject.co.uk.

My benches are unique because they are never straight. Benches are, by definition, for two or more people who neither want to sit shoulder-to-shoulder (too neck-twisty) nor face-to-face (too eyeball-y), but at a gentle angle that allows the gaze to wander but also to fall on the fellow bencher during conversation.

Sadly, our traditional, much-loved park benches are *not* designed for outdoor use. They rot.... quickly! Not because they are made of oak (most oak church doors are centuries old and still sound) but because the legs are bolted down to the concrete, rainwater seeps underneath, is trapped and, like the wet sports socks you forget at the bottom of your kit bag, bacteria flourishes and rot sets in. I have campaigned fruitlessly for the council to use metal feet but, while this would, for no cost, greatly extend the life of their benches, it wouldn't definitively solve the problem because mortise-and-tenon joints are another, albeit lesser, rot-spot, too. Solution? My benches have galvanised steel sub-frames with oak slats spaced apart and screwed down from the underside, massively extending their lifespan.

Recycled plastic, touted as the perfect answer, is actually far less sustainable than our local timber due to the energy required to sort, melt, extrude and transport it – see the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's report which is also on the above link. Interestingly, I have already been asked to quote to replace some 10 year-old recycled plastic benches because they have aged so badly.

The right benches in the right places have a part to play in helping our town centre to thrive once again. This Ipswich maker would love to be involved.

Tim Germain

Heritage Harbour Ipswich

Inaugural Meeting at The Custom House, Monday September 25 2023

Around a dozen people from interested parties including Associated British Ports (ABP), Ipswich Borough Council (IBC), the University of Suffolk, businesses (represented by Sean McMillan, founder of Spirit Yachts in 1993) and interested civic bodies such as the Ipswich Maritime Trust

(IMT) and The Ipswich Society spent the afternoon, under the convenership of new IMT chairman Ben Good, discussing the admission of Ipswich to the status of a Heritage Harbour (HH). The Maritime Heritage Trust (MHT) is, as yet, a non-statutory association of historic ports which has the support of Heritage England and National Historic Ships.



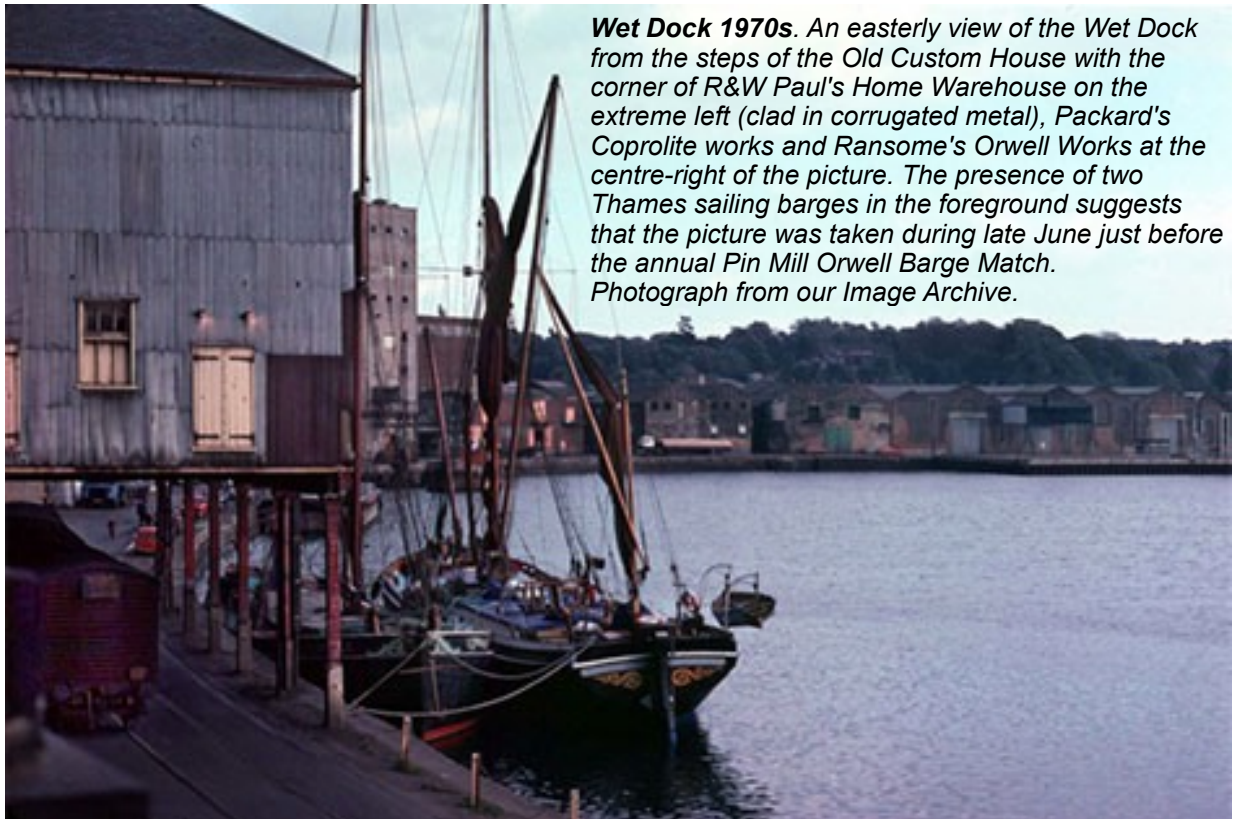
Henry Cleary from MHT told us that it was vital to keep the water free for ships of all types but also the quays, slipways, warehouses and artefacts connected to docks for people to visit and enjoy. Promotion, Support, Protection and Prosperity are the guide points for ten ports which now include Maldon, Faversham and Wells-next-the-Sea.

The Group put forward many ideas for activities; basically anything nautical – historic, pleasure, education and manufacturing. It must be positive.

ABP's intention to expand the Haven Marina and develop the Island Site was explained; it was agreed that discussion of these would not be a part of the HH proposals.

Finally, it was agreed that Ben Good (the new Chair of the IMT) would summarise our lengthy meeting, define our vision, outline the heritage we wish to conserve, record the suggestions for future activities and point out the difficulties on the way. We will meet again in the near future to discuss this and then put out a statement to show our intent.

Mike Cook



Wet Dock 1970s. An easterly view of the Wet Dock from the steps of the Old Custom House with the corner of R&W Paul's Home Warehouse on the extreme left (clad in corrugated metal), Packard's Coprolite works and Ransome's Orwell Works at the centre-right of the picture. The presence of two Thames sailing barges in the foreground suggests that the picture was taken during late June just before the annual Pin Mill Orwell Barge Match. Photograph from our Image Archive.



Des gets award

Des Pawson MBE, late of this parish, is a world authority on knots and sailors' ropework and on 4 October 2023 he presented a talk on 'Artists in the rigging' as the first of the Ipswich Maritime Trust autumn talks in the University of Suffolk Waterfront Building. Des's title is a quotation from Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick* and refers to the

ropework carried out by sailors, particularly in the days of sail.



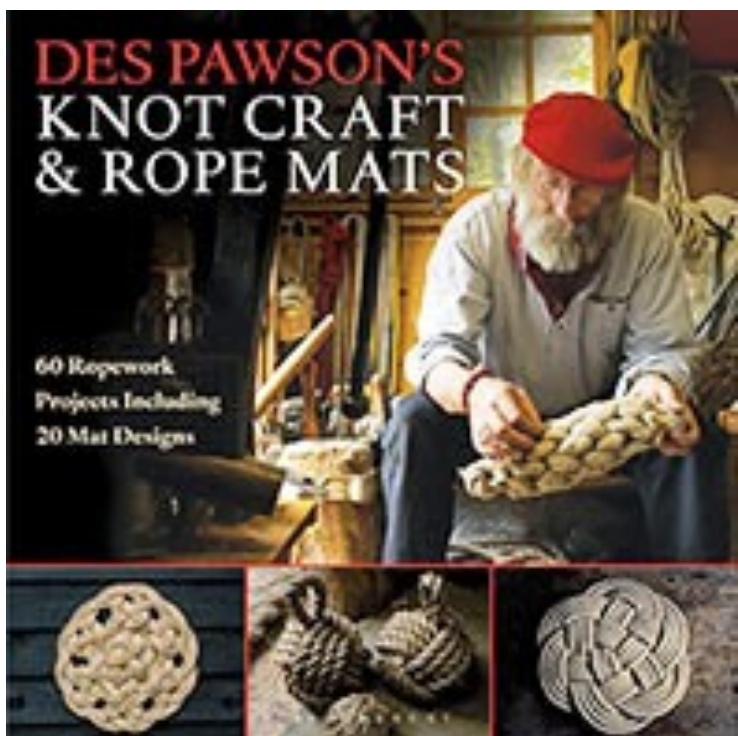
Before the talk, Des was presented with the IMT's Richard Smith Award – previously given to the late Bob Malster and to Wes Westwood, skipper of *Sailing Barge Victor* – for contributing in a significant way to the understanding of local maritime culture and heritage. It was presented, preceded by her homily to Des, by the Mayor of Ipswich, Lynne Mortimer.

Des is a co-founder of the International Guild of Knot Tyers and was an almost constant presence in rope-making demonstrations at Ipswich Maritime Trust Festivals and other occasions. He became a frequent speaker at international maritime events and, together with Liz Pawson, has worked for years to collect and celebrate the knotter's and rope-maker's craft. Many will remember their impressive museum in the garden of their house in Wherstead Road and Des worked tirelessly to ensure that the collection – of international importance – would be quarantined, curated, conserved and digitised at the museum of the Historic Dockyard Chatham.



Above: Des and one of the curatorial staff unload one of a number of van-loads of exhibits which he drove down to their new home.

Photograph: the Historic Dockyard Chatham.



Des told us that, of the 3,000 items donated by himself and Liz, 300 are currently available online, so there is a great deal of work still to be done at the museum and it will take some time.

Once this great task of recording, researching and physically transporting from Ipswich to Chatham was completed, Des and Liz sold the house in Wherstead Road and found a home in Cowes on the Isle of Wight, to which they moved in early 2023. So this was a pilgrimage for them both back to Ipswich – and back to the Wet Dock outside the university's huge windows.

RG

Lady Eve Balfour

Lady Evelyn Balfour (1898-1990) was the founder of the Soil Association, and she contributed to the British organic food and farming movement, as it emerged into public view after the Second World War. Her uncle was A.J. Balfour, who was Prime Minister from 1902-05. Eve Balfour and her sister Mary spent the 1920s and 1930s as owner-occupier farmers at New Bells Farm in the hamlet of Haughley Green, near Stowmarket. Featured on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Great lives* on 12 September 2023, this extraordinary woman, determined and sometimes controversial, is the subject of a biography by Erin Gill.



‘Throughout her twenty years as a conventional farmer, Eve periodically boosted her income through the pursuit of non-agricultural activities. This wasn’t unusual for farmers during the period, although being a young woman with connections Eve’s choice of non-agricultural work differed from that of most farmers. Instead of running a public house or a goods transport service, Eve played in a dance band, co-authored detective novels and, eventually, wrote articles for the agricultural press. It is important to emphasise that during the 1920s New Bells Farm was home not just to the two Balfour sisters. In addition to the sisters’ retired nanny, farmworkers and their families – some of whom lived in tied cottages – New Bells was also home to a gaggle of young women and men who participated in farm work and who, collectively, created a lively, slightly bohemian and modern atmosphere. An example was the practice of sharing clothes, which [biographer Michael] Brander describes: “One of the sayings in the house at this time was ‘first up best dressed’, since their clothes were usually left in a muddle on the floor when they went to bed and the first up had the choice of what to wear. It would seem that Derry and any other males present were not included in this performance, but both Eve and Beb, who normally wore breeches and stockings about the farm, were also sometimes to be seen in trousers.” It is impossible to identify everyone who stayed at New Bells during the interwar years and, no doubt, some did not stay for long; however, a few lived there for years and were an integral part of the farm business. Chief among friends who lived and worked at New Bells during the first half of the 1920s were Beryl ‘Beb’ Hearnden and Derry Hawker. Together with Eve and Mary they were known as the ‘Four Bells’.

‘In 1921, Eve and Mary teamed up with Beb and Derry – Derry’s sister Eileen later joined them – to form the Pickwick Dance Band. Brander asserts that the band was formed out of financial desperation and that prior to its creation the ‘Four Bells’ had played at home in the evenings for their own amusement. The band was hired by the Great White Horse in Ipswich and quickly became popular, playing there regularly. Other venues hired them and, according to Brander, the height of the Pickwick Dance Band’s success came at Easter 1924 when “they were booked to play for a week at Sherry’s, one of Brighton’s leading dance halls. The experience of playing non-stop for ten hours a day, however, proved more than enough for them all. After that they stuck to local engagements.” Brander goes on to note that following the week’s engagement in Brighton Eve and Mary bought a “ten-year old Delage open tourer”, nicknamed the Deluge, and Derry Hawker bought a 1916 Hispano Suiza open tourer. This offers not only an indication of how the Four Bells spent their ‘disposable’ income, but also how significant non-agricultural income was in allowing them to make big, one-off purchases.

‘It is not clear when The Pickwick Dance Band disbanded, but it may have been superseded by Beb’s and Eve’s new joint venture, penning detective novels.’

For further information: www.ladyevebalfour.org, where you can view the Erin Gill biography from which this excerpt is taken.

RG

Ipswich Museums awarded national quality accolade

Ipswich Museums have been officially awarded Designated status by the Arts Council England, for the Post-Cretaceous Geology Collection. The designation identifies the pre-eminent collections of national importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives, based on their quality and significance. The collection, which includes the remains of iconic woolly mammoth and woolly rhino, is particularly special in its representation of Suffolk and the best geological record for the ice age in the country.

Professor Adrian M. Lister, Research Leader at the Natural History Museum in London, spoke at the event: 'The geology collections at Ipswich Museums contain critical material for the British ice age (Plio-Pleistocene) sequence, not found anywhere else'.

Bob Markham, who was Curator of Geology collections in Ipswich for thirty years, was given full credit for all his work in this area – which continues in a voluntary capacity to this day – at an event to mark the designation at Christchurch Mansion on Thursday 21 September. To coincide with this, staff of Ipswich Museums have selected some fine, indeed unique, fossil exhibits which will remain on display in the grand hall of the Mansion. This includes the large skull of a woolly rhinoceros which Bob tells us was, during the early part of his career at Ipswich, dredged from the ancient Waveney river gravel, tipped from the excavator bucket onto a lorry, then onto a sieving machine where it was spotted by somebody who contacted the museum. Bob travelled up to collect this unique specimen which still includes some teeth of the beast and is noticeably red in colour; being underwater for thousands of years with the air excluded had, by chance, preserved the skull.

This is an indication of the great importance of the Museum collections in general and the geological specimens in particular.

RG



Dr Simon Jackson, Collections and Learning Curator (Natural Sciences), Colchester & Ipswich Museums (left) with Bob Markham at the celebration in Christchurch Mansion.

Letter to the Editor

Westerfield Station history from John Alborough

I read with interest the report concerning the history of the Felixstowe Line. This included a picture of Westerfield Station building which was, I believe, the original Felixstowe branch terminus station.

My late father, Cecil Alborough, was a relief signalman covering most of east Suffolk and was often asked to cover Westerfield Junction Signalbox. From a very early age I would spend time with my father in his signalboxes. This continued right up to the time he retired in 1984.

Working in Ipswich, I decided to nip out to Westerfield during my lunch break and see him in the box for a quick chat. During this hot sunny day, I decided to explore the, then, derelict, Westerfield Station building. In pushing open a side door I noticed that the lath and plaster ceiling had collapsed, and the contents of the loft had spilled down onto the floor. It consisted of a huge pile of documents covering every aspect of paperwork for the station. It had presumably been placed up there based on the need to keep records for a certain length of time. It was an absolute treasure-trove of detail concerning this lovely old country junction station.

I scooped up as much as I could and took the huge pile back home and spent many enjoyable hours going through them. I then put them in my own loft intending to do a more thorough 'sort' and eventually to pass them on to a museum.

Unbelievably, a short time later a water pipe burst in the loft and all the papers were turned into an irretrievably soggy mess.

I think of this often and wonder just how valuable to railway scholars this information would have been.

Corrections and Clarifications

Felixstowe Branch Line (original article in October *Newsletter*, Issue 235)

1984. Felixstowe Station was converted into a Co-op Supermarket and Platform 2 cut short to enable a sizeable car park to open (not platform 1 as in the original article).

1999. The section of line through Derby Road station was dualled, of suitable length to accommodate a Freightliner train of 30+ wagons enabling a similar train from the opposite direction to pass. As part of the upgrade, all signals were controlled electronically from Colchester (not Chelmsford as originally suggested) and the mechanical signal boxes at Westerfield, Derby Road, Trimley and Felixstowe Beach were closed.

2020. The passing loop at Trimley was extended to almost one mile (1.4 km) and half a dozen footpath crossings were closed, replaced by a single bridge with approach ramps shallow enough to accommodate horses (Gun Lane, Trimley). This project cost Network Rail £60 million but increased line capacity by ten container trains per day.



Above: John Norman's 1979 photograph of Westerfield Station building which was eventually converted into a residence, which still stands (from his article in the October 2023 issue).

I suggested in my original article that the passing loop through Orwell Station (Nacton) was reinstated; it had been removed in 1959 when the station closed. A lot of the preparatory work was carried out including widening the track bed between the Levington Road and the A14 bridge at Nacton, but the track was never installed. The A14 bridge and the Green Bridge opposite Sainsbury's across Ransomes Way both have abutments ready to receive a dual track.

I may have given the impression that Freightliner is the sole carrier of containers from Felixstowe; not so, on a typical day both Freightliner and GBRf run more than thirty trains each with DB Cargo running half a dozen more. As many as one train every 20 minutes spread over 24 hours with the potential to carry some 3,000 teu's (twenty-foot equivalent unit).

My thanks to Stuart McNae and Stephen Poole for the correct information.

One final point, unrelated to the original article. The most important reason for continuing with HS2 to Manchester is that it will relieve the West Coast Main Line of passenger traffic leaving space for freight – those same freight trains that loaded in Felixstowe. On the West Coast Main Line, passenger trains travel at 100-125 mph, whereas freight travels at 50-60 mph and takes twice as long to cover the distance. So, the freight traffic gets in the way of passenger trains and has to 'give way'. Moving the majority of passengers onto HS2 will create space for freight that can then flow smoothly and swiftly to the freight depots of northern England.

John Norman

Greener Container Ships

The *Laura Maersk* docked at Felixstowe last month: a brand new ship, but of relatively small capacity, (2,100 teu (twenty-foot equivalent units)). Launched in April, christened in Copenhagen in September, named by the President of the European Commission: Ursula von der Leyen after an earlier boat, *SS Laura*.

The *Steam Ship Laura* was the first boat owned by Peter Maersk Moller, father of the founder of the Maersk shipping line. The relevance of all this? The *Laura Maersk* is the first container ship to be fuelled by methanol – a clean green fuel made from waste food – the first in Maersk's ambition to operate a worldwide fleet of green fuelled container ships.

Laura Maersk, 25,700 GRT (Gross Registered Tonnage), 172 m long (564 ft), 32 m beam (105 ft), 2,100 teu.
JN



H. Munro Cautley house for sale

A member let us know that an imposing detached mock Tudor house on Valley Road, Ipswich was designed by noted local architect Henry Munro Cautley and built in 1935. It has five bedrooms and four reception rooms and stands in two-thirds of an acre of ground. In November 2023 it went on sale for £800,000. This may seem a lot, but the Editor knows of a 1930s semi-detached house in St Albans, Hertfordshire which was sold around that time for a million and a quarter. WOE?*

[* 'What On Earth?']





Ipswich Town Centre Churches

Training bells for Ipswich

During the Coronation, there was a nationwide effort to get every church bell in the country ringing out to celebrate the occasion. This meant that teachers of the art of bellringing in Ipswich were busier than ever training recruits using old, historic equipment often in listed buildings.

We have a vision to create a new dedicated training facility at St Mary le Tower by installing six training bells. These are weighted wheels that only produce computer assisted sound, perfect for teaching our own recruits and any other local ringers who would wish to use them.

We are in the process of raising £30,000 to fund the project with £20,000 left to go (as at November 2023). Installation is planned for summer 2024.

One of our fundraising initiatives is the sale of printed cards featuring a drawing of Ipswich's town centre churches by local artist Ben Keating which may be of interest to Ipswich Society

members. The cards are blank inside and priced at £10 for a pack of 15 cards including envelopes. Please email amanda_richmond@msn.com if you would like to buy some.

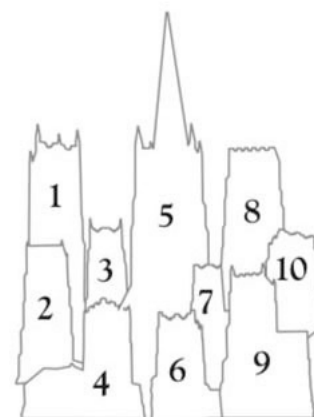
If you would like to make a donation to the project please send it to the SMLT PCC bank account:

The PCC of St Mary le Tower,
Lloyds Bank plc, 13 Cornhill, Ipswich, IP1 1DG.
Sort Code: 30-94-55; Account number: 00059383

If paying electronically please use your Surname and the word "TBELLS" in your payment reference and email the Treasurer halmeakin@live.co.uk with the details. Should you wish to make a payment by cheque please make it payable to St Mary le Tower PCC and send it to Hal Meakin, 27 Warwick Road, Ipswich, IP4 2QE. A Gift Aid Form may be found at: <https://www.smltscr.org.uk/files/GA-declaration-form-SMLT.pdf>

Further details of our project may be found at <https://www.smltscr.org.uk>

Jonathan Williamson & Amanda Richmond
Teachers of Bellringing at St Mary le-Tower



- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1: St. Lawrence | 6: St. Mary at Elms |
| 2: St. Clement's | 7: St. Peter's |
| 3: St. Nicholas | 8: St. Mary at Quay |
| 4: St. Matthew's | 9: St. Margaret's |
| 5: St. Mary-le-Tower | 10: St. Stephen's |

Please note the Membership Renewal form which is included in this Newsletter.

Griffin Wharf

There was some interesting activity at Griffin Wharf last October, not the dispatch of sea dredged aggregate (which happens occasionally – the last load departed on 10 July) but the arrival of a train load of fine stone. Why is stone being moved to Griffin Wharf? My best guess is that was a trial load, destination (by rail) the Sizewell C site. Trial runs such as this do highlight the difficulties of heavy freight on infrequently used track, the tight bends encountered, points stuck due to lack of use and the difficulties encountered when the engine needs to ‘run around’ the load to pull the wagons out of the siding.

If this was a trial load for Sizewell, then it proves the necessity of the fencing around the public viewing area, but doesn’t solve the bigger problem of how (and when) the public will be able to use the riverside open space and watch Cliff Quay shipping movements. JN

The Great White Horse Hotel in Ipswich – which inspired regular guest Charles Dickens’ first novel *The Pickwick Papers*, has hosted British stars including the Beatles, also welcomed notable historical figures over the years including Admiral Lord Nelson – has been declared ‘At-risk’. Historic England said there is active dry rot in the second-floor space named the Dickens Room, alongside deteriorating windows, and gutters and drainpipes which are in poor condition. Over the past year, Historic England has added 159 buildings to its Heritage at Risk Register, while 203 sites have been rescued.

Wellington Civic Society closes its doors after 45 Years

The Civic Society for Wellington in Somerset, established in 1978 with the mission of safeguarding the architectural heritage of the town, has in recent years experienced a decline in membership, prompting its disbandment. Members expressed that the society had lost its *raison d’etre*. The closure of the Wellington Civic Society raises questions for other civic societies across the country. It serves as a reminder that membership decline is a concern that should be addressed proactively to ensure the continued vibrancy and relevance of such organisations.

Take a Walk and Afternoon Tea with Ipswich Tourist Guides

Why not brighten up those dark days of winter with one of our ever popular, themed, guided walks followed by tea and cake in a cosy cafe? Public walks led by Ipswich Guides now start from the Ipswich Institute in Tavern Street close to bus stations and car parks in the town centre. Afternoon tea walks cost just £10 per person (including refreshments) and start at 1.30 pm. Places can be booked directly through the Institute, either in person or via the Guides special section at the bottom of the Institute’s opening ‘Welcome’ webpage:

<https://ipswichinstitute.org.uk>

All are welcome – you do not have to be a member of Ipswich Institute - but advance booking for these walks is essential.

Dates and titles for tea walks in 2024:-

Wed 10 January – Street Art

Mon 22 January – The Other Secret Diary of Gippeswyk aged 1500^¾

Wed 7 February – Take Tea with Mr Dickens

Tues 20 February – Queen Victoria was not Amused

Tues 5 March – Spot the Difference!

Fri 22 March – Christchurch Park

Tues 2 April – The Victorian Dock

Tues 16 April – They Came, They Saw, They Stayed

Fri 26 April – A Tudor Walk from Town to Countryside

Further details about walk themes is available on our website:

<http://ipswichtourguides.onesuffolk.net>



Cardboard Wolsey structure

Building a cardboard model on the Cornhill simply cries out with a number of pleas:-

1. Why wasn't it built on the vacant land behind Wolsey's Gate?
2. Why wasn't it built of a somewhat more permanent material, to last 365 days rather than a simply the number of hours it did? It went up on Saturday 21 October 2022 and was demolished at 4.00pm on the Sunday.
3. Why weren't a greater number of the Ipswich public informed of its construction? A more permanent version would have received much wider publicity over a longer time span.

Perhaps my criticism is uncalled for. It was a great idea, a fantastic

construction (of considerable size – nearly 17 metres or 55 feet high). The construction phase drew a large, ever-changing crowd throughout Saturday, and an even bigger number gathered for the demolition countdown on Sunday. The idea of building in cardboard at this scale came from artist and project manager Olivier Grossetête. Born in Paris in 1973, he lives in Marseille and works all around the world. He has been building similar large models since 2014 and this was an excellent addition to this year's Spill Festival (supported by Wolsey 550, Ipswich Borough Council and Ipswich Central).

The team, recruited from the public, spent all week in the Town Hall building cardboard boxes: either 'bricks', about 1 x 2 metres, or frites (chips), long square-ended boxes. Some of these were then adapted to become arches, decorative lintels, even a coat of arms. The roof was built first, elevated by a team of helpers (passers-by) whilst the next level of corner pieces was slid underneath. Needless to say by the time they reached what were to become layers 3, 2, and 1 lifting proved somewhat difficult, it was late in the day and recruits were thin on the ground.

However, by the end of Saturday it was up, free-standing and magnificent, drawing gasps of admiration from those who came to see it. Let's invite Olivier back to build another next year – any idea what?

John Norman



Houses in Multiple Occupation – and Article 4 Directions!

In January 2019, I opened an email so alarming that I rushed out of the house, jumped into my car and shot off to Kitchener Road. Kitchener Road is in an area of nicely terraced houses: one of the roads between Chevallier Street and the Ferodo bridge, off Norwich Road.

A resident had woken up to what sounded like work going on in his attic. When he opened the hatch, he found the wall between his attic and next door's had been removed, and the sky was visible through the gap. Builders were erecting a dormer extension to the loft of the house next door. No-one had asked him or told him. He was, understandably, very upset.

As the council began to investigate, we discovered that what was happening was part of a pattern. Developers from London were exploiting 'permitted development' rights to expand their property empire. They were buying up modest three-bed terraced houses, building extensions for which they did not need to make a planning application, and then renting out the houses, often to a number of tenants. Local people told us they suspected that five of the houses in this one small road were now HMOs.

A small HMO is a single house where up to 5 unrelated people form a household and share facilities without requiring a 'change of use' planning application.

This was not always the case. In April 2010, in the very last days of the Labour government, they brought in legislation which meant that anyone wanting to create a small HMO would need to apply for planning permission.



However, one of the first actions taken by the new coalition government was to abolish this requirement.

In October 2010, they changed the rules so that planning permission was not required. Planning permission is now only required where there are more than six occupants.

HMOs certainly have their part to play in providing housing. Rents are lower than for flats or houses although nowadays, with the housing shortage and the cost of living crisis, they seem increasingly steep. On Rightmove today (November 14, 2023) the rent for a single room on Felixstowe Road is £600 per month, whereas for a small house on Sirdar Road it is £895. Competition for rental properties is fierce. So the option offered by a shared house is attractive – and it works for many people.

However, for local authorities there is a challenge. Where there is no need to apply for planning permission, we have no powers; we cannot assess the suitability of a property against our usual criteria. For example, do the rooms meet space standards? Will residents have privacy and amenity space? Can bins be properly located? Will increased parking be an issue? Are there already too many HMOs in the neighbourhood? Plus, of course, local residents are not consulted.

The only option available to councils is to adopt something called an Article 4 Direction. If Ipswich were covered by this, developers would have to make a planning application for small HMOs. We decided to go down this route, and our planning officers assessed the evidence for covering the whole of the Borough under an Article 4.

However, the legislation makes this difficult. Councils have to demonstrate ‘it is necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts’ and the application of an Article 4 Direction needs to apply ‘to the smallest geographical area possible’. Planning officers worked to compile the required evidence for nearly two years – a huge task – and concluded that including only specific ‘geographical areas’ where there were already a large number of HMOs and student houses would likely be approved by the Secretary of State. These, broadly, are in central areas of Ipswich.

The disadvantage of this is, of course, that developers wishing to escape the need to apply for planning permission will turn their attention to areas not covered by the Direction. However, we think it is still worth doing, and it has cross-party support at the council. It will come into effect on 1 June 2024 (assuming the Secretary of State does not object). Not sooner, unfortunately, but we need to avoid the possibility of a legal challenge.

Applying for planning permission for HMOs should surely be standard practice. Regulation protects future residents, their neighbours, and the built environment. It should not mean years of work by planning authorities, which is expensive in terms of time and money. However, we hope our Article 4 Direction make a difference for everyone affected ... fingers crossed!

Carole Jones

Portfolio Holder: Planning & Museums, Ipswich Brough Council

Ipswich Hansa Group

The Ipswich Hansa Group was set up last September to promote the town’s history as an important Hanseatic port during the 14th and 15th centuries. Ipswich was a Headport, with a trade rivalling that of London in exporting wool and woollen cloth to northern Europe. Trade was on the same quays as exist today at our modern Waterfront.

In 2017 Ipswich Borough successfully applied to join the modern Hanse movement, with links to over 180 Hanseatic cities in northern Europe as well as five other English ports, Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Boston, Hull and Beverley. Two of the resulting benefits are that we now have impressive coverage as a tourist destination on the Hanse website www.hanse.org. Also access to work experience schemes for young people in a variety of Hanse cities.

Our first project has been to produce a display for the general public about the Hansa in Ipswich. Two information boards give a brief illustrated history and show the links between the shipping trade of the 14th century and the present. The Group is grateful to ABP for technical and financial support in this project.



Reception at the Custom House and unveiling by the Mayor of Ipswich of two display boards for Ipswich Waterfront.

Rendlesham really revealed

After fifteen years of archaeological investigation, the site of the early East Anglian royal settlement at Rendlesham, first mentioned in the 7th century by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* has been identified.

Thanks to Bede's allusion there has long been interest in the site as a possible Anglo-Saxon royal settlement – interest which intensified after 1939, with the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship burial four miles down the River Deben to the south-west. From around 1982 to 2007

archaeological evidence was found for an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Rendlesham – but nothing to indicate high status.

This changed in 2008. The landowner, Sir Michael Bunbury, wrote to a local historian, concerned about illegal metal detectorists looting his fields at night. He wanted to know what could be done about it. His letter was passed to the Conservation Team at Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS), which put together a pilot survey to see what was being taken. Some of the looted finds were in fields not surveyed in 1982, expanding the area of archaeological interest.

The Archaeological Service looked for objects in the ploughsoil with systematic metal-detecting and, for deeper intact evidence, with magnetometry. SCCAS also reviewed documents and aerial photographs. It soon became clear that there were significant Anglo-Saxon artefacts over a wide area. The survey team noticed that footprints and holes appeared after ploughing in these same fields overnight – people were stealing important archaeological and historical evidence even as the archaeologists worked.

SCCAS therefore set up a full project to study the archaeology of Rendlesham, with two aims: to understand human settlement and activity in its landscape setting, and, through better knowledge of the archaeological resource, to develop ways of protecting it here and at other similar sites. Four local metal detectorists, Robert Atfield, Roy Damant, Terry Marsh and Alan Smith – who reported any finds and used GPS to pinpoint them in the landscape – continued their work undertaken in the initial survey. They worked voluntarily and with the agreement of the landowner, in all weathers at times when the land was 'between crops'. This systematic survey of the whole site (50 hectares, 125 acres) provided vital evidence. The metal-detecting team has spent about 170 man-days on the survey every year for the past five years: a huge, meticulous task.

Field-walking, magnetometry and other techniques followed the metal detector survey. The proportion of Anglo-Saxon finds was unusually high (metal pottery, bone), indicating a rich and important community. Though activity continued between the 5th and 11th centuries, most of these finds date to the 6th to 8th. To cut a long story short, experts still didn't know exactly where an Anglo-Saxon royal building might be located. Being built from wooden posts and other natural materials, differences in soil colour are usually the only indication of post-holes and boundary ditches. The answer came, perhaps, from a surprising source: satellite images of the farmland. The outline of a major building was identified from crop-marks – an extraordinary case of evidence appearing in changes in colour of plants centuries after the site fell into disuse by the Anglo-Saxons.

In 2022, under the supervision of Chris Scull, the sandy top-soil was mechanically removed at the identified site and all involved were astonished at the footprint of a major royal building. This



Gold-and-garnet items such as this bead emphasise the high status of the Rendlesham settlement. Image: © Suffolk County Council

timber hall was 23 metres long and 10 metres wide – a substantial building and possibly one of three such on the site. Professor Christopher Scull, of Cardiff and London universities, said the site was of international importance for understanding the Anglo-Saxon elite and their European trading connections. ‘The quality of some of the metalwork leaves no doubt that it was made for and used by the highest ranks of society.’

“Rendlesham can be identified as a royal estate centre, a place where, for some of the time, the kings would have lived, administered justice and collected dues. There are other sites in the region that would also have served as temporary royal residences as the court travelled around the kingdom, but at present Rendlesham is the largest and the longest-lived of these places.

“This part of Suffolk formed the core of the 7th century Kingdom of the East Angles, which not only includes the royal settlement at Rendlesham but also two major cemeteries at Snape and Sutton Hoo, the productive sites of Coddensham and Barham, as well as the port and town of Ipswich.

“During the 7th century, a small settlement of foreign traders was established at Ipswich, in the area near St Peters Church and the modern Novotel hotel. In the 8th century this settlement expanded into a town and port that was the trade and manufacturing centre of the kingdom for the next 200 years, probably taking over some of the functions of the Rendlesham estate.” (Information from the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website).

This brief article cannot really do justice to the scale and international importance of the Rendlesham discoveries. Suffice to say, the actual physical excavation of the site – only about 1 to 2% of the identified royal site has actually been subject to archaeological digging – has come to an end. This has revealed signs of many structures around the main hall. The work now moves on: washing, identification and recording of a mass of finds has been underway for some time. Experts will be digesting and trying to make historical sense of it all; this could take a while.

RG

Source

A series of 2020 online talks gives the background of the project: <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham-behind-the-scenes>. This page on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website contains much more on ‘Rendlesham revealed’.

There will, no doubt, be much more documentation in the future.



The footprint of the royal hall at Rendlesham after excavation in 2022. Drone photo by Jim Pullen, from the booklet Rendlesham revealed: the heart of a kingdom AD 400-800 published by Suffolk County Council, 2023.

The Ipswich Society

Registered Charity no. 263322

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Diary dates

Winter Illustrated Talks at Museum St Methodist Church (entrance in Black Horse Lane); all talks start at 7.30pm and free tea, coffee and biscuits are provided afterwards. All are welcome.

Wednesday January 17: Mark Bailey on 'Global Pandemic: Suffolk towns in the age of the Black Death'. Mark Bailey is Professor of Later Medieval History, University of East Anglia.

Wednesday February 21: John Norman on 'Ipswich in the 21st Century: a new century, new buildings, a new direction?'

Wednesday March 20: Isabel Clover on 'The Ipswich Charter Hangings'.

AGM: Wednesday April 17: Annual General Meeting followed by speaker and refreshments.

Newsletter deadlines & publication dates (the latter may vary by a few days)

Deadline for material:	1 December;	Publication date:	22 January;
	1 March;		2 April;
	1 June;		17 July;
	1 September;		9 October.

Wolsey Underwear,
Number 3 in an occasional
series in this Newsletter.

Wolsey is a Leicester
clothing brand founded by
Henry Wood in 1755;
making it one of the oldest
existing textile companies
in the world.

In 1910 the company built
a factory at Abbey
Meadows, Leicester. In
1920, R. Walker & Sons
merged with W. Tyler &
Sons. As the business was
situated near to Leicester
Abbey, the burial place of
Cardinal Wolsey, the
company established the
trading name of 'Wolsey'
and as such became one
of the first brand names.

Wolsey pure wool
underwear is advertised
here in around the 1930s
by Lawson Wood's
humorous illustration: 'Too
proud to dress'. The
portrait painting may be by
the same hand.

The Cardinal is depicted in
scarlet robes and cap as
rather less pugnacious
than the portrait shown in
our October 2022 issue
(page 2) for the
eponymous clothing firm.

Graduated Sizes!

