



The Ipswich Society NEWSLETTER

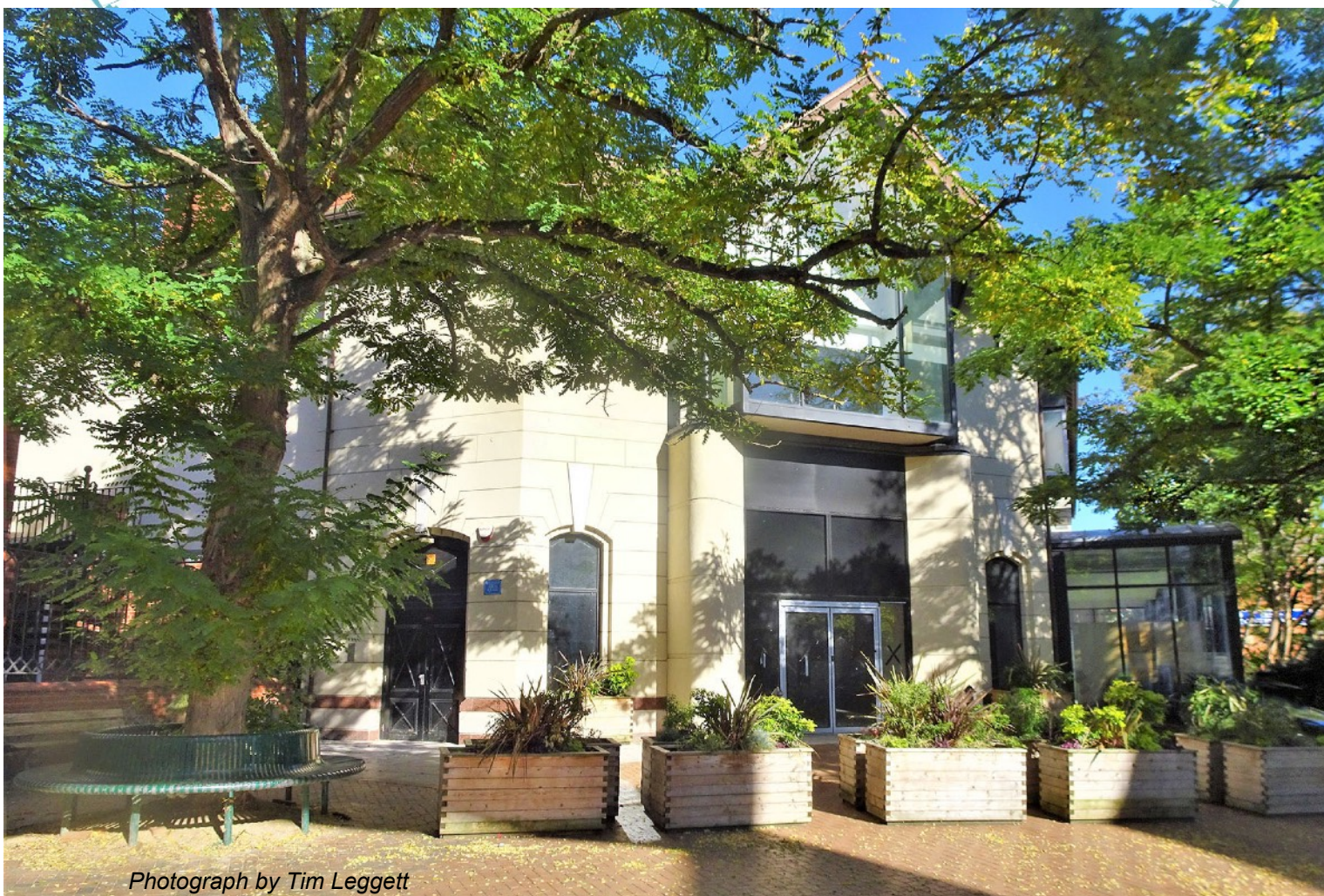
www.ipswichsociety.org

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Photograph by Tim Leggett

Front Cover: Arras Square on a warm October day 2022; despite being empty, the former BHS store looks rather grand, partially screened by trees and softened by planters. Below: a similar scene in the summer when the 'Cornhill cubes' display screens featured the 'Big hoot' owl trail in the town.

Editorial

"The Port of Ipswich is situated at the head of the River Orwell, 12 miles (19km) from the open sea and handles 2 million tonnes of cargo per year. It is the UK's leading grain export port and handles a range of other products such as fertiliser, cement and aggregates."
Paul Litten, ABP Port of Ipswich' (see *Chairman's remarks* on page 3).

Ipswich has been given some media coverage recently by the BBC. As part of a 15-minute series (*Generation gap*) on Radio 4, *The cab driver* was broadcast on 23 November 2022. It concerned Ian Fountain who started working in his father's taxi company office 50 years ago when he was only twelve. Eventually he set up his own cab company and the programme is an intimate look at the life of the taxi driver in and around our town.

Earlier, on 11 November, BBC1 television carried *We are England: Making waves – building boats* which was a 30-minute documentary about the internationally-known Spirit Yachts. Formed by Sean McMillan and Mick Newman in 1993, the company has grown steadily and achieved much success in the high end, timber-built sailing yacht business. They have over 80 boats to their name and now employ over 55 people in the modern building adjoining the 1880 Public Warehouse on the island site of the Wet Dock. Splendid drone sequences of the location, filmed during the height (and heat) of summer 2022, showed off Ipswich at its best. Well worth seeking out on BBC's *Iplayer*, if you missed it.
Robin Gaylard

New Members



Chairman's remarks

Ipswich has been a working, manufacturing, self-governing town since the seventh century; people have gathered here to share ideas, to work, trade and have fun. Today in the United Kingdom, most people live and work in cities and large towns. They are centres for education, entertainment, culture and relaxation. Ipswich is the key town in Suffolk for business, retailing and local government administration.

Ipswich has a history of periodic growth and wealth creation, and periods of decline: a cycle which applies to the population as well as the economy. The Saxons, the Tudors and the Victorians knew the value of the port and of the advantages of trade with our neighbours. Today the port is an important economic link with Europe and beyond, bringing in cement, aggregates, fertiliser and forest products, exporting grain – Ipswich is the country's largest exporter of grain – and other commodities.

Ipswich Port handled two million tonnes of cargo last year generating £600 million worth of trade – a significant contribution to the local economy. In other respects, Ipswich has changed significantly over the past 50 years. Its Victorian specialism of manufacturing agricultural machinery, cigarettes and ladies clothing (notably corsets) has given way to the financial service industry – mainly insurance – and the administrative support of public services.

Like all major towns in the western hemisphere, bulk shopping has moved away from the town centre and is increasingly being replaced with facilities for culture, leisure – especially restaurants – and indoor sport. One noticeable major change is the provision of homes in the town centre: unfortunately a predominance of bedsits and studio flats rather than family houses, although 175 of the last of these are about to be built in Grafton Way. One question however, remains unanswered: with house prices half that of those in London, why isn't Ipswich popular with commuters?

Perhaps it's because of the opportunity of employment in Ipswich. There is demand for labour across all fields and at all levels, particularly for skilled professionals, from nurses and paramedics to doctors, teachers and accountants are required. There are increasing opportunities for part time employment, delivery drivers, care assistants and in the supply chain – from warehouse to retail assistants. Unfortunately, few of these opportunities pay enough to buy a house. Since Robert Ransome offered the rural population agricultural wages to work in his foundry, and on the assembly line, Ipswich has remained a low wage town. What has changed is the price of houses: from four times a man's annual salary in the early seventies to nearer ten times that figure today.

Parallel with this is the increasing demand on the family purse. Today we happily pay for dental treatment, to watch television and carry a mobile phone, to drive a car rather than ride a bike and to enjoy concerts and eating out to a much greater extent than ever before. Our food from supermarkets has traditionally got considerably cheaper, but to compensate we buy increasingly more exotic luxuries and out-of-season staples which means we spend more on food than ever before.

Life in the twenty-first century is certainly different and, for an increasing percentage of the population, noticeably more difficult to manage.

One quick point on which to close, given that Colchester is now a city; am I right in assuming that it can no longer claim to be Britain's oldest town?

John Norman

Planning matters

Boss Hall Dairy, Sproughton Road. The Co-op Dairy, which commenced in 1932, finally closed in 2014 and was later demolished. It is proposed to build a large distribution and storage warehouse on the site. Shielded from the road by fresh landscaping, all access will be from the rear of the premises. The building will be sustainable, 16% of its power deriving from solar panels and lighting control by a sophisticated system.

316-318 Tuddenham Road. Unfortunately, the Montessori Nursery School, opposite the Millenium Cemetery, has gone into liquidation, but the owner now seeks to open a Montessori High School in the same buildings. This will be the first in East Anglia and one of only three in the whole of the UK. Apparently, there is big demand for places, even from abroad. There will be less traffic on Tuddenham Road for the time being.

Car wash, St Margarets Green. They seek an extension of their permission. This is a site allocated to housing at high density. The car wash was allowed because there was nobody willing to build on the site. The Freemasons believe that the high pressure washing is doing damage to the southern wall of the grade 2 Masonic Hall (entrance in Soane Street).

The Alton Building, The Ipswich Hospital. This modular, white, two-storey building was placed in the car park serving the Maternity Block under the Covid emergency planning permission for a short term. It is used for Clinical Support staff and for conducting Virtual Consultations. On a site not renowned for its architectural elegance, this block is possibly the nadir. It will be improved by the addition of a canopy with appropriate signage, the application of vertical bands of panels coloured ivory, three shades of grey and white with additional landscaping and planting.

Sailmakers. The shops we use are on the lower ground and ground floors; these proposals are for the first and second floors which are currently unused, apart from some storage. The plan is to put 15 apartments on the first floor (9 x one-bed, 1 x 2-bed and 5 x one-bed studios) and on the second floor a further 5 one-bed, 5 two-bed and 3 one-bed studios. Swish Architects say that all the habitable rooms have windows and accord with the national space standards (just). We all welcome more living space in the town centre but the proliferation of these tiny cell-like living accommodations is not going to raise the standards we all seek in central Ipswich. This application is a prior notice ('P3JPA') which means that as long as various conditions are being met, planners are, in practice, obliged to grant permission.

Garden of 34 Henley Road. It is proposed to build a three-bedroom, two-storey house in the garden of the Edwardian house on the corner of Elsmere and Henley Roads. It has been the subject of a pre-application considered by officers and the Conservation Panel. Many of the objections have been addressed but it remains, in some people's view, an overdevelopment. It leaves the original house with a garden not on the scale of the house whilst the new build's garden barely fills IBC's dimension criteria. The design by Wince, Kievenaar Architects is basically traditional; but with fashionable use of Corten steel.

Ipswich Garden Suburb Land North East of railway (Crest Nicolson). This application concerns the infrastructure for phases 1b, 2, 3, of Crest's development. It includes detailed planning for roads, lighting, paths, landscaping and pumping stations. There is little architecture to consider except the pumping station which would do nicely for a 1930s garage.

ITFC Portman Road. The football club has purchased the former Staples store and the land between it and the South (Sir Alf Ramsey) stand. It has been able to erect an access to the pitch for HGVs so that the pitch can be levelled, relaid on a modern sand-based hybrid foundation, drained and heated. The ground is the 28th largest in the country but the pitch is one of the last to be traditional soil-based. It will also allow the ground to be used for non-football events such as concerts. The entrance to the South stand will be through 14 fully automated turnstiles, all from Portman Road. So, no pedestrians will access the ground from Constantine Road – much safer. The club has also improved all the facilities at the Rushmere Road training ground and added three full-size Premier league pitches. This serious investment by the new American owner is good news for the club – and for the Town because a successful club gives Ipswich confidence and uplift.

51 Landseer Road. This proposal is to convert an ordinary three-bed semi into an eight-bed HMO by using the extensions to the rear, already granted permission. The bedrooms will be tiny, hardly big enough to take a chair; there are five bedrooms and a kitchen/lounge on the ground floor whilst on the second floor there are three more bedrooms plus a bathroom and a separate

toilet. Outside, the garden would be laid down to parking for eight cars. This is not the way to solve the housing crisis.

3 Barrack Corner. Currently a bridal shop, it stands on the apex of the corner between Clarkson Street and London Road. It is highly visible as one goes west along Norwich Road; it is in a Conservation area though not listed. It is going to be an 'EU Convenience Store' and thus they have applied to install a roller shutter over the door, though there is no detailed description. The Society objects to solid exterior shutters as being forbidding and counterproductive. A perforated shutter inside the door would be preferable.

10 Kemball Street. This proposal is to fit in a three storey modern house at the end of terrace. It would have a lounge/diner/kitchen on the ground floor, and three bedrooms, all with ensuite facilities on the two upper floors. Space for two cars at the front and a small garden at the rear. Designed by Beanland Associates, it is in a refreshingly modern style, avoiding pastiche; but why the chimney?

Ipswich Garden Suburb, Crest Nicolson. When granting permission for the bridges over the railway recently, it was reassuring to be told that the clearance was high enough to allow for future overhead electrification conductor wires. Now, they wish to raise the clearance by no less than 1.4 metres. This will not affect the vehicle bridge greatly but the pedestrian/cycle bridge will need its ramps extending to no less than 80 metres at a slope of 1:22 plus 50 metres of landings. P.S.: They will all be painted Holly Green to 'fit in' (and presumably will require repainting).

104 St Helens Street. Formerly Robertsons, greengrocers, this timber-framed, lath and lime plaster walled merchant's house with the other half – formerly the Freudian Sheep Gallery – dates from 1600 and is listed grade 2; it is in St Helens Conservation Area. It consists of a commercial space onto St Helens Street with a store to the rear and two rooms above. There is a modern one storey extension to the rear. The proposal is to retain the commercial unit and to replace the current rear extension with a two storey one on the same footprint. Therefore there would be space for three student bedrooms with a kitchen/diner/lounge (but no apparent daylight) on the ground floor and a bathroom and ensuite WC on the upper floor. As an added bonus there is a small amenity area and a secure cycle area.

Grafton Way. Formerly the Lower Goods Yard, then B&Q and recently a car park, the site has now been granted permission to proceed with building 147 houses and commercial units. There has been considerable concern as to access to the gardens and their maintenance. Furthermore, The Ipswich Society is reassured about the provision of a wider combined cycle/pedestrian path and access to Princes Street bridge via a demountable ramp. I note there are no affordable units in the development but it is a positive bonus for Ipswich as it brings house-owning families close to the town centre.

14 Stoke Street. This mid-eighteenth century, two-storey, three-bay red brick fronted house is part of the former Defiance public house redevelopment site. The proposal is to fit in as many as eight bedrooms and not to replace the window on the ground floor because it would interfere with the kitchen – and to make a room in the basement with inadequate light.

Former Hussey Knights, 220 Bramford Road. Not strictly planning, more building control. The design/print shop (much used by Society members) is being converted back into a dwelling. Because the ground floor extensions had a small cavity, regulations require small double-glazed casement windows on each street elevation to keep the U-value to the level required for the whole wall. The comparison with the late Victorian sash windows, neatly recessed on the first floor, make for an inappropriate conversion.

1 Kettlebaston Way. The result of the appeal by the Care Home Developers to the Planning Inspectorate, expected in October, had not been announced by the time we went to press in early December.

Members Notice:

There are likely to be a couple of vacancies on the Ipswich Society's Executive Committee following the AGM in April.

If you think you could make a contribution to the running of the Society please get in touch with the Secretary (details on page 27).

Planning issues: new fruit farms

Planners are occasionally presented with cases that are not straightforward: some *change of use* proposals, ideas that border on *permitted development*, and alterations that have got out of hand. One such case has been taxing planners and conservationists in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area north of Stoke-by-Nayland is ideal for growing fruit, in particular apples the majority of which are destined to become apple juice, usually under the Copella brand.

As well as apples the Box Valley produces soft fruit (strawberries), cherries and grapes. On the other side of the River Stour at McLauchlans Fruit Farm you can pick-your-own strawberries, gooseberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, raspberries and sweetcorn. Before the First World War this area was awash with fruit trees but, with the introduction of mechanised farm machinery, arable farming became easier and the trees were grubbed up to make way for cereal crops.

Two fleece-covered fruit farm fields



In the twenty-first century things are changing once again and fruit trees are coming back, firstly because the demand for fruit juice is increasing and secondly because planting trees might help save the planet from global warming. It is the demand for commercially grown fruit that is causing the planners a headache. Modern methods of apple production mean that the trees are grown espalier-style, trained along wires, in two-dimensional rather than their normal three-dimensional format.

These wires need support from metal posts, so the shape of the tree is different to those in your back garden. This alone isn't a major problem in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; most people understand that commercial and agricultural activity must continue and flourish if the landscape, as we know it, is to survive. What is different is that fruit farmers have started

Fruit grown under fleece in the distance beyond pylons



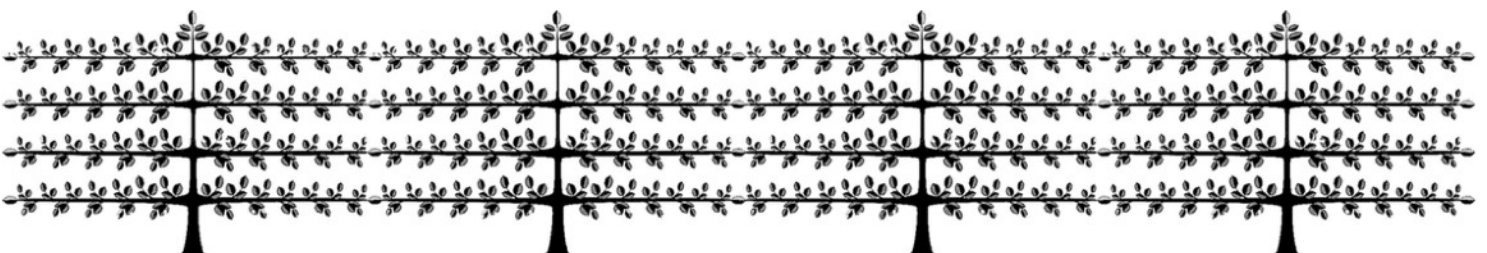
surrounding these plantations with white fleece, suspended from 4-metre-high fence posts. Suddenly, and especially when viewed from a distance, the field takes on the appearance of a factory, a warehouse, a massive solid industrial shed – an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB?

The simple question the planners need to ask themselves: is this agricultural use *permitted development* or is this an essential part of the factory production process (for which planning permission would obviously be required)?

It should be noted that the owners of the fruit farm in question are co-operating with the planners, and with the locals to reduce the impact of their developments on the environment, suggesting some fast-growing external planting alongside the external fleece fence, and the user of timber, rather than concrete posts. General Permitted Development Orders applicable to agricultural development cover many, but not all, developments on agricultural land.

It is not much of a counter effort by The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but they have instigated a scheme with volunteer groups to plant traditional fruit trees on areas of public land, a selection from five different varieties. Each of the young trees are currently approaching six feet and will grow up to fifteen feet high – and wide – as they mature. The crop will become a community asset. A brilliant idea for wide road-side verges but hardly a replacement for the intrusion planned by the commercial growers.

John Norman



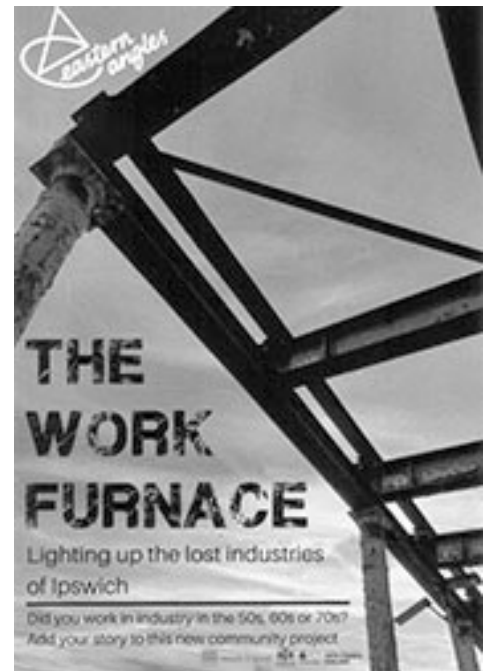
Eastern Angles: The work furnace: lighting up the lost industries of Ipswich

Did you work in Ipswich industry in the 1950s, 60s or 70s?
Add your story to this new community project run by our town's Eastern Angles theatre company which has blazed a trail across East Anglia for forty years, and expanded to national tours and Edinburgh Festival residencies.

From Ransomes and Cranes, to Tooks and Betabake, the project has heard about a wide range of industries and people's various memories. Those memories will be used to create a heritage trail and procession around Ipswich.

The Project Officer, Hannah Houghton, has been busy sharing the word far and wide to reach as many people as possible. A reminiscence Facebook group enables contributions and conversations. Many people have already sent in emails or phoned directly with their stories. The closing date for contributions will be early March 2023.

Contacts. email: hannah@easternangles.co.uk
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/theworkfurnace>
Website: <https://easternangles.co.uk/news/the-work-furnace-our-first-month>
Telephone: 01473-211498



See also the Cobbold brewery article on page 10 for a similar, more focused project.

Ransomes Orwell Works in 1997. Photo by Brian Jepson from The Ipswich Society Image Archive.



Heritage Open Days 2022: the best ever

Following a two year hiatus, we were back! The much anticipated and loved, HOD weekend, held over the 10 and 11 September 2022 arrived.

I was apprehensive back in February 2022. We had only recently emerged from lockdown and, understandably, people were nervous at the idea of gatherings in enclosed spaces. But it all came together, and how...

Twenty-five iconic venues opened their doors and welcomed the world back in. I'm pleased to report that not only was the weekend a roaring success, but it was the best ever. We had over ten thousand visitors enjoying a sunny weekend and exploring our town's wonderful, rich history.

The Ipswich Society is so grateful to every single venue that took part. To all the volunteers who welcomed visitors and helped them understand their venue's history and place in the community. Volunteers are crucial to the success of Heritage Open Days; without their time and care many of our wonderful buildings could not open.

Ipswich Society members were key to the successful opening of three buildings this year. Forty-three volunteers stewarded two thousand plus visitors through 4 College Street, the Ancient House and Pykenham's Gatehouse; they also helped man our stall on the Cornhill. Many other venues, including the Unitarian Meeting House and St Clements Church, used their own volunteer stewards. They are all heritage heroes.

A huge thanks to Ipswich Borough Council which very kindly allowed us access to the Ancient House and the newly-refurbished Tudor merchant's house at 4 College Street. We had a unique opportunity to see inside these historic buildings – an opportunity grabbed with both hands. Nearly 600 visited the Ancient House and an incredible 1,064 lined up along the street for the chance to look around the merchant's house.



The Society's gazebo on Heritage Open weekend in front of the former Grimwade's shop; from left: Mike Cook, Andrew Beale – the Town Sergeant, John Norman – Society Chairman. Photograph by Tony Marsden

John Norman, *Chairman's remarks*, in the last *Newsletter*, spoke about the impact of the death of Her Majesty the Queen on the festival. Like John, I believe that we made the right call to go ahead. Apparently, so did you.

As John commented, there were things we did well along with the occasional hiccup. We will work to

improve things and very much welcome your feedback; also, let us know if there are places you think would add to the festival.

We hope you all enjoyed the weekend, here's to next year, hopefully, bigger and better.
Neil Thompson *HOD Coordinator for The Ipswich Society*

St Peter's by the Waterfront

St Peter's is arguably the most important church in Ipswich because of the 900 year history of its site, its celebrated Tournai Limestone font, and its association with Cardinal Wolsey. The Ipswich Society has provided stewards for opening the church to the public on Thursdays in summer since its renovation in 2008, with Jean Hill organising this for most of that time. Jean is stepping down from her stewarding rota duties now and deserves a big 'thank you' for her contribution to the heritage of our town, helping to keep this important building open for all to enjoy. Thank you also to all who have stewarded at St Peter's. I shall be contacting you in March asking for your help in 2023.



All Ipswich Society members are most welcome to join the rota, of course. Helpers would need to keep an eye on the displays, talk to visitors and sell booklets. They would not be responsible for opening or locking up the church. There is much to explore while you are in St Peter's, not least the splendid Ipswich Charter Hangings and the glorious east window (restoration partially funded by the Ipswich Society). Outside, the building has much of interest - the photo shows one of the limestone lions guarding the south door. They sparkle in the sunshine -- a sort of medieval special effect! Please do contact me if you can give 3 hours on a Thursday during summer 2023 to keep this heritage icon open for the public.

[<http://www.ipswichsociety.org.uk/heritage-icons/st-peters-church>]

Caroline Markham; email: secretary@ipswichsociety.org.uk

Cobbold brewery, 1990s from our Image Archive



The Cobbold Family History Trust is planning a book about the Cobbold brewery in Ipswich and its pubs to be launched next year as part of the tercentenary celebrations of its founding. If you have any connections to The Cliff Brewery, its pubs – or have information which might be useful, the author is Mary Attwood (she is a Chevallier descendant, so appears on the Cobbold family tree) and her email is maryattwood@yahoo.co.uk

The Miller's tale

An encounter with a long gone Ipswich milling business

In the autumn of 1970 I enrolled on a Higher National Certificate in Business Studies at the then Ipswich Civic College, prior to going on to further Professional and Managerial Studies.

At the time I was employed at the former East Suffolk County Council, in the Planning Section of the Clerk's Department, where the section manager was Peter Steggall whom I later found out had an interest in windmills.

In the second year I had to produce a project on a business related topic. Not being employed directly in the world of business and commerce I wondered what I should do. I then remembered my CSE projects some six years earlier when, having to produce a history and a geography project, I decided on one topic. That topic was my home town of Ipswich. One project looked at the history of the town and the other on the geographical aspects. Problem solved: in the main I could adapt whatever information I found.

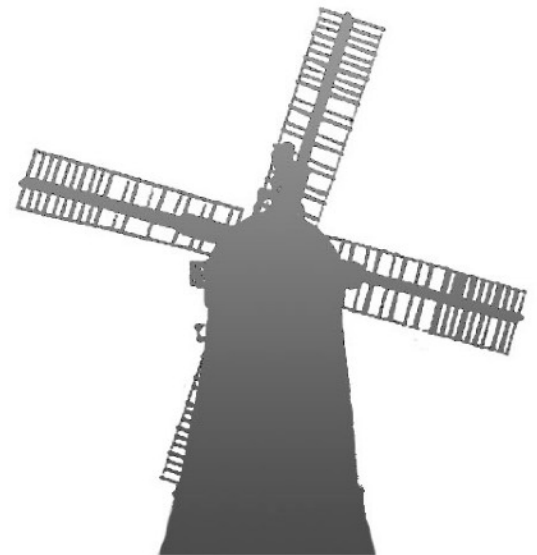
A route home for me from County Hall to over Stoke, where I lived, often involved a diversion along the dockside where I would watch the loaders at Cranfields Mills on the dockside stacking sacks of flour on lorries for distribution. On occasions I would see our neighbour Charlie Teager there, working on the loading gang. At that time I was one of the team at County Hall attending Planning Committee meetings at Lowestoft; given Peter Steggall's interest in windmills we stopped on several occasions at Holton Post Mill near Halesworth and at Buttrums mill at Woodbridge. By this stage I had also bought my first car and could be mobile.

Then the light on the road to Damascus! Problem solved – a comparison of milling processes, ancient and modern. Criteria for project and interest satisfied in one go.

How did I progress from there? I already had some knowledge and material about how windmills worked. I went into the Suffolk Record Office, asked whether they had any financial accounts of a flour miller. After a while some accounts of the mill at Darsham near Saxmundham emerged. These provided an insight into the workings of the mill with receipts for grain, sales of flour and any mechanical expenses, such as repairs to the sails needed to harness the power of the wind. I also explained the difference between Post Mills and Tower Mills, although the basic milling process was the same.

In the meantime, I had written (yes, written – no home phone, no internet) to Cranfields. I soon received a reply from Robin Armstrong the Mill Manager and went in to meet him. Ramrod straight, probably with some military service, dressed in a white coat, and wearing polished brogues he explained the history of Cranfields and the operation of the dockside mill. The height of the mill building meant that grain entered the process at the top, and then travelled down through the floors, until emerging as the finished flour, ready for bagging in hessian sacks.

He then introduced me to mill hand George, a one company man, dressed in blue serge overalls who knew everything from experience about the rolling milling process. We climbed the stairs to the top. In the first room, I noticed that the milling machinery had been supplied by Henry Simon



Limited of Wythenshawe, Manchester. Henry Simon was a Prussian who emigrated to England; his first roller mill was for the McDougall brothers of Manchester. George explained, in his Suffolk accent, how the rolling mill process worked. Seven stages in all, each on a different floor, with the end product of each stage travelling by gravity through to the next floor and next stage.

- 1. Preparation;** to remove the layers of bran and soften the endosperm (the edible part found between the skin and the germ of the grain) to reduce it during milling.
- 2. Breaking;** to separate the endosperm from the bran and germ elements by breaking it into smaller pieces.
- 3. Sizing;** separating small bran pieces from the larger pieces of endosperm according to size and density, by means of sifting.
- 4. Reduction;** converting the endosperm into flour.
- 5. Tailings;** separating the remaining bran from any endosperm
- 6. Blending;** adjusting the content of the flour according to what it will be used for, e.g. the difference between plain and self-raising.
- 7. Final treatment;** perhaps enriching or bleaching the flour.

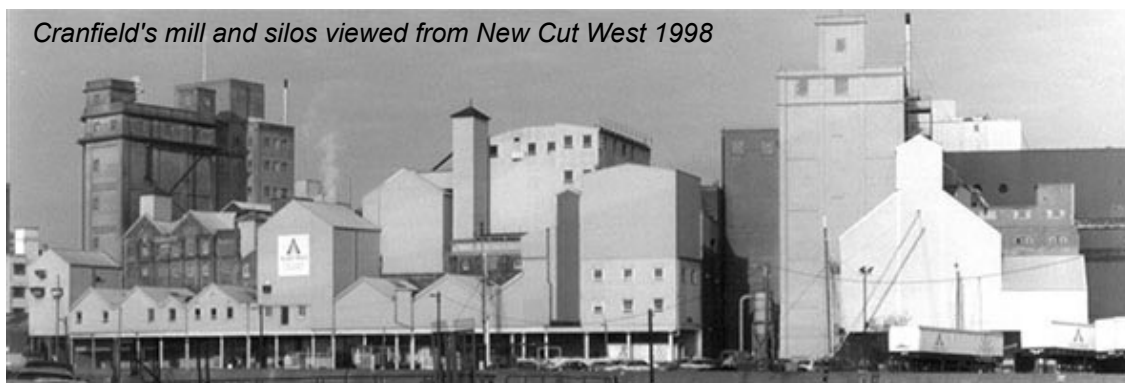
The sound of the machinery was deafening, but George stuck to his task, and imparted to me, a totally untechnical person, sufficient knowledge of the process. We had worked our way down from top to bottom of the mill.

The whole visit took some two hours and, after thanking George and Robin Armstrong, I emerged into Quay Street.

Flour is an essential ingredient in cake-making. The final 'icing on the cake' for me was to use my new found mobility and Ford Anglia to travel around East Suffolk. Using my Instamatic Camera I took photographs of windmills such as those at Framsdon, Friston, Buttrums (Woodbridge) and Holton, to illustrate my work, aided by some brochures obtained from Henry Simon Ltd.

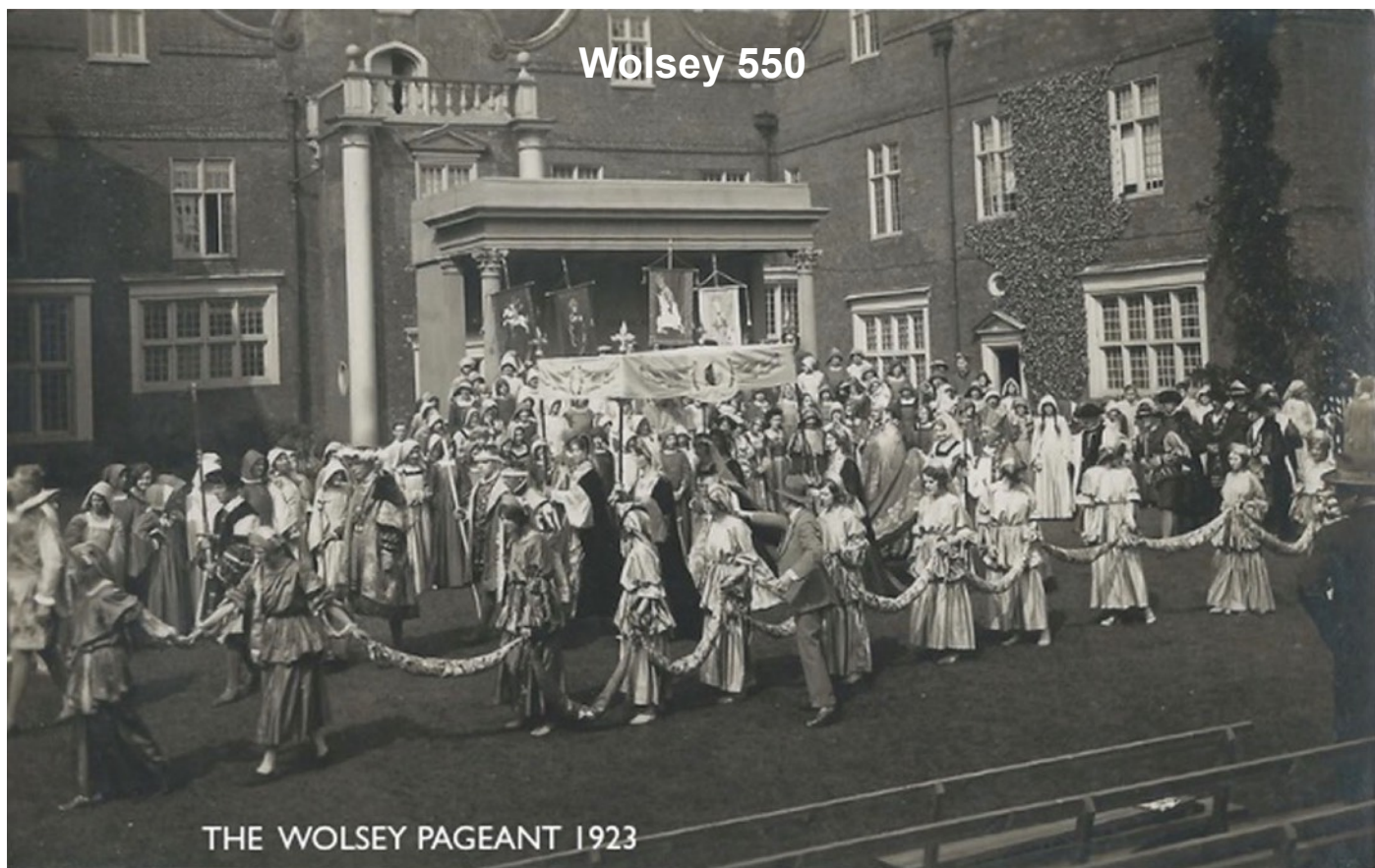
A very useful project to carry out as a 21 year old – it satisfied the needs of my course whilst also stimulating my own interest in the milling industry. It also gave experience useful in later years when I had to produce a dissertation for my MBA; the subject matter was a company I enjoyed working with. No problem then.

Sadly, the accounts of the Darsham Mill no longer appear to be in the archives at The Hold.
Graham Day



From the Society's Image Archive

Wolsey 550



A dress rehearsal of the Wolsey Pageant on the lawn in front of Christchurch Mansion in 1923. Presumably the suited gent in the homburg (front centre) is the director. The empty benches are ready for the audience to arrive.

Cardinal Wolsey: possibly born 1473, died 1530.

Thomas Wolsey was the son of Robert Wolsey, an Ipswich butcher, and his wife Joan (née Daundy). Wolsey was born near the parish church of St Nicholas in the centre of Ipswich. Accounts vary, both as to the year of Wolsey's birthday and the location of the birthplace, the latter probably being either an inn in the parish of St Mary Elm, (possibly the Black Horse Inn?) or a butcher's shop, possibly in St Nicholas Church Lane.

Later this year, and into next, Ipswich will be celebrating the life and achievements of the great statesman. Over a period of 550 days (March 2023 to September 2024), 550 years after his birth a wide variety of events will take place. During his life Wolsey achieved phenomenal social progress, from being a lowly Ipswich schoolboy to holding one of the highest offices of State, the most powerful Minister in Tudor England, a position second only to the King himself. The proposed series of events will be an opportunity to acknowledge Wolsey's outstanding progress, promote the significance of the town over the centuries, dispel the current negativity and encourage a sense of pride.

A committee led by Terry Hunt with the assistance of Katherine Cockshaw have made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for just under a quarter of a million pounds. If successful this will enable numerous events to take place, particularly in schools, but also in community and public halls across Ipswich, spreading the knowledge of Wolsey and his success from those humble beginnings to becoming Henry VIII's Chancellor.

Over the past century events have included pageants, stage plays, church services and exhibitions. The latest proposals could include, depending on Lottery funding, creating a 'Tudor Garden' at the Stoke Bridge entrance to the Waterfront, and an exhibition of his life, and of Tudor Ipswich, possibly in St Peter's Church. St Peter's is the church Wolsey sequestered as his college chapel. The parishioners, and daily services, were moved to St Mary Key. *(continues)*

Wolsey started a college in the town that historians believe could have rivalled the colleges of Oxford if the cardinal had not fallen from power. Scholars have pored over, and written volumes on Wolsey's role in Henry VIII's divorce and of his negotiations with the Pope in the late 1520s - but his early life in Ipswich is not so well known and the anniversary celebrations starting in March next year are aimed at shining a light on his whole life.

Terry Hunt said: "Wolsey's story has so much importance, not just for Ipswich but to the country as a whole and the world beyond. This project will unearth his story which is about ambition, aspiration, the importance of education and the ability of anyone to succeed if they are given the right opportunities. An important aspect is that Wolsey was proud of his roots in Ipswich and this initiative can do a great deal for restoring civic pride."

John Norman

Banded brickwork

Whilst watching the slide presentation of the nominations for the Ipswich Society Awards, an interesting quality control issue came to the fore. It demonstrated how easily things can go wrong on a building site, albeit in this case it was probably nobody's fault. But first, a bit of background.

These days, on any building project larger than a single house, the main contractor will sub-contract the brickwork to a team of self employed bricklayers, usually a gang of two with a third person as labourer, mixing the mortar and carrying bricks.

In the case of one of the winning nominations, Grimwade Street flats, a single gang was used throughout the construction of the main shell, the same labourer mixed the mortar and the colour remained consistent. This is critically important when using multicolour bricks, the colour and consistency of the mortar affects the perceived colour of the bricks.

If different bricklayers and labourers are used on different days, at different heights on the same wall there is the probability that a slightly different colour of mortar will result, and the brickwork will appear banded (see photograph). Additionally multicolour bricks should be mixed from different pallet loads as they are transferred from ground to scaffold. Any slight variation in colour will be lost in the finished mix. Failure to randomly mix such bricks will result in darker areas and areas of contrasting brickwork, which can then become stark with a contrasting colour of mortar.

What is really unfortunate about this problem is that the resulting blemish will remain for some considerable time. My congratulations to all the builders who contributed to the Society Award-winning projects.

John Norman



Brickwork on Handford Road Centre, nomination for the Society Awards.

Letters to the Editor

Cycling from Tim Ward

My heart sank further when reading John Norman's description* of SCC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – a so-called plan to get more folks on bikes.

As both a motorist and cyclist in the town, the arbitrary and counter-productive schemes so far introduced help neither group.

The Bridge Street closure sums it all up. Cars cannot use the left turn towards Stoke Bridge and traffic backs up even at quiet times. Cyclists won't weave between the scruffy and ugly flower pots because the road is littered with debris ideal for creating punctures. In any event cyclists will use the docks.

Westbury and Leopold Road flower pots are equally an eyesore and the 'sticks' that appeared on Valley Road etc. again help no one other than inner-tube manufacturers, because the cordoned-off area is full of glass and stones.

These were all introduced as the pandemic started with money from the Government to supposedly help stop a virus spreading. The idea that sedentary folk would suddenly leap onto two wheels to avoid Covid and use that bit of Bridge Street or similar areas, is for the birds. No doubt it was dreamt up by people that never have ridden a bike around Ipswich, or anywhere else for that matter. The planned schemes offer more of the same. It isn't a strategy – it is tokenism.

No doubt someone will say cycling has increased as a result of these token road closures, but I don't see it at all. Folk are either inclined to keep fit and cycle or they are not. Erecting wooden flower pots and closing a few junctions won't make a blind bit of difference.

[**Ipswich expansion*, October 2022 Newsletter, Issue 231.]

Re: cycling from Andrew Pink

I read with interest the article in October's *Newsletter* about the possibility of car drivers becoming cyclists, an interesting idea.

I cycle as well as drive and I must say that Ipswich, in my opinion, is not a good place to cycle around. For a start, we have those ridiculous bollards along some cycle lanes. They are restrictive to a cyclist because they offer no leeway when trying to avoid rubbish that is blown into the cycle lane and another consideration is that they cannot be swept.

Any shared path/cycle routes are restrictive because of the side roads and poor maintenance: the stop-start effect is very frustrating.

I haven't mentioned the state of our roads. Cyclists cannot ride in a straight line; it's not possible because of the potholes and gutter grates. Also, in general our roads are in a very poor state; Suffolk County Council has only ever paid lip service to cycling, unless an event comes through the county.

I like to think that I have good road sense and have good control of my bike, but I don't feel overly safe cycling in Ipswich. Other vehicles, at times, are very close and there are bad drivers as well as bad and unsafe cyclists who don't think that a red light applies to them (a pet hate) which just fuels bad feelings, so education for both cyclists and drivers is a must.

I just hope that the powers that be take the time to ask cyclists for feedback.



Baylham Mill and Mill House

Ian Petchy's book for The River Gipping Trust (reviewed in Issue 231): *Ipswich to Stowmarket Navigation: John Rennie's First Canal Project* threw up an interesting tale of the watermill at Baylham.

This, the only complete watermill on the River Gipping is Grade II listed. It is of early 19th century construction and three storeys high with storage bins in the 4th attic storey. The mill was still being used to grind corn in the early 1960s. The building and surrounding land was part of the Shrubland Estate; the mill was put up for sale in September 1941. The mill and land were purchased by Ernest Norman Onians using money he made from selling 'Tottenham Pudding' – pig swill from waste food, made from leftovers collected from the back door of London restaurants, all said to have been brought by river barges and processed at Baylham Mill. This earned him the title of 'The Pudding King'. So far, so slightly queasy.

However, during the 1940s and 1950s, Onians started buying objects at country house sales (often due to the imposition of death duties from the 1930s, causing sell-offs of stately homes and estates). After his wife Daphne, a former model, died in 1983, he became a virtual recluse surrounded by hundreds of paintings, items of furniture, clocks and china ware. He continued collecting until his death in 1994. The locals thought it was junk, as did the people who carried out three robberies at his home over the years but took only cash.

Eventually, the collection comprised 1,000 items including 500 canvasses, described as 'the art find of the century' by *The Evening Star*. One of those items was a painting bought for £12 in the 1940s. When authenticated some 50 years later as a lost Poussin masterpiece, some art experts valued it at £12 million. Sotheby's valued it at £15,000, but it sold for £155,000. After it was cleaned and restored experts at the Louvre in Paris confirmed it as a 1626 Poussin which had disappeared 350 years earlier.

The Rothschild Foundation bought this Poussin masterpiece: *The destruction and sack of Jerusalem* in 1998 for £4.5 million. Executors for the Onians family sought compensation and sued Sotheby's for £4.5 million, with an out-of-court settlement said to be a six-figure sum paid by the auction house some years later.

Many will know Baylham Mill because they will have passed it on their way to Baylham Rare Breeds Centre.

R.G.



Baylham Mill photographed in 2018; it has since had some exterior renovation. The doorway at the lower left features two eerie carved faces.

Social Club ghosts

Over the years a house has stood sad and derelict on the corner of Rope Walk and Grimwade Street Ipswich.

Driving down Grimwade Street Ipswich recently, I suddenly became aware that the house had been demolished, together with the former County Hall Social Club next door, a casualty no doubt of the move of the County Council from St Helens Street to Endeavour House in Russell Road. A new housing development is taking shape on the site.

My thoughts turned back to a Friday night in 1969, a few months after I had joined the County Council when the Social Club had formally opened. I can recall attending the opening reception with work colleagues including, I recall, David Incoll, Ian Rands and Linda Sheppard. The Clerk of the County Council, Cecil Lightfoot was also there.

The Social Club lived up to its reputation and became a regular venue for dances. As well as staff, it was possible to take guests, and one of my friends Chris, met his wife Judith there! On many occasions in later years, I saw the creme-de-la-creme of local musicians there, including Debenham's excellent Ian Brown, and also the Rocking Armadillos who included the renowned Tim Aves!

When the County Council moved and the Social Club closed, the building did not receive any 'TLC' and became sadly derelict – and finally the home of some of the towns rough sleepers.

At least what was a 'zombie site' is now being put to good use.

However, the good times once had in the old Social Club still remain fresh in the memory.

Graham Day



The SCC Staff Club (upper left) and St Edmund House, Ipswich, 1990s. Rope walk runs from top to bottom (between them). The Governor's house from the original Ipswich Gaol stands on the corner with Grimwade Street; it was once the offices of NALGO. Aerial photograph by Brian Mateer from the Ipswich Society Image Archive.

Griffin Wharf **The Public Open Space adjacent to the Tidal Barrier (Bath Street)**

Some good news: the stakeholders – and there are quite a few – have met, discussed the issues and possible solutions, highlighted the need for working street lights and who should pay for their electrical connection (The Environment Agency) and who should erect and maintain the temporary Heras fencing once the hoardings come down (ABP).



Heras temporary fencing

The Heras fencing will be required to stop the public from entering onto the rail track – a Health & Safety requirement.

The unfortunate news is that ‘opening’ this space to the public will not be for some time yet. On 25 October the Suffolk Local Access Forum received a report from the SCC Officer responsible for Public Rights of Way: ‘there has been some progress since the July meeting. Paul West, SCC Cabinet Member for Ipswich, had visited the site accompanied by officers and a representative of the Environment Agency, as part of a ‘Rights of Way’ briefing’.

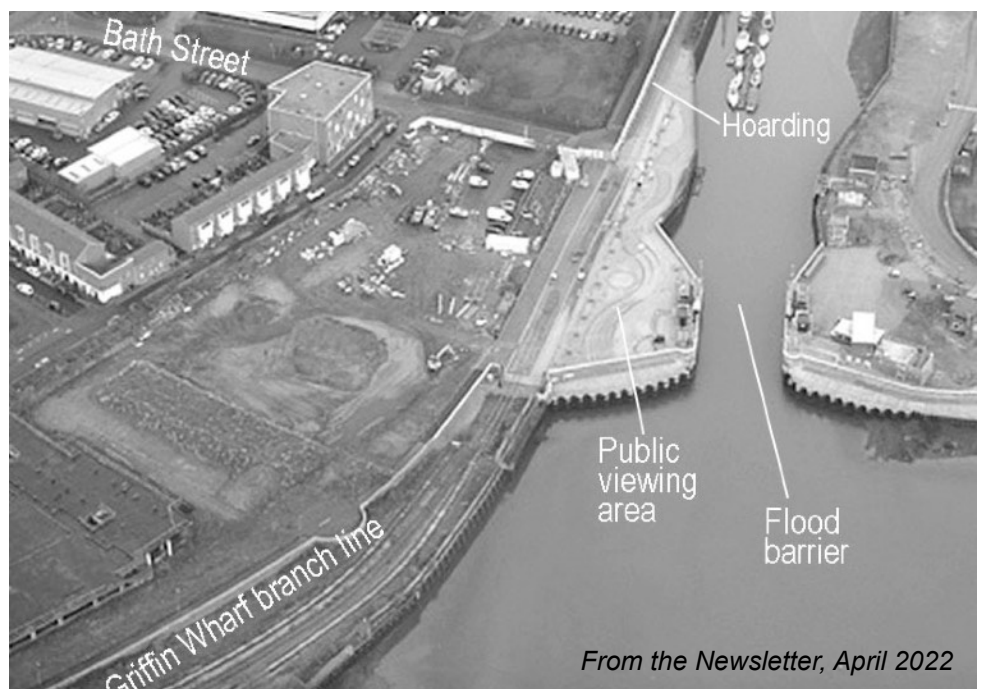
‘The works to make the lighting operational had been calculated and a purchase order processed (with the work being funded by the Environment Agency).’ Further meetings of stakeholders were held in September and October; the work to connect the street lighting couldn’t start until a ‘Street Works Licence’ had been issued and, once complete, the space will need cleaning prior to opening; the Environment Agency has agreed to pay for this.

Don’t hold your breath, however, for the area to pass into IBC’s control and subsequent maintenance; further investigations are needed into exactly which bits of the Public Open Space and Cycle Track IBC will be responsible for. This was apparently discussed and agreed ten years ago but the individuals negotiating today need an update – the planned cycle track, now built, doesn’t actually go anywhere.

None of this has stopped individuals accessing the space, sitting on the river wall and doing what the space is designed for, fishing, boat spotting, and enjoying refreshments. ABP Port Security, having been called by nearby residents reporting anti-social behaviour, have asked the visitors to leave, replaced the temporary fencing and on two occasions had to deal with a small fire.

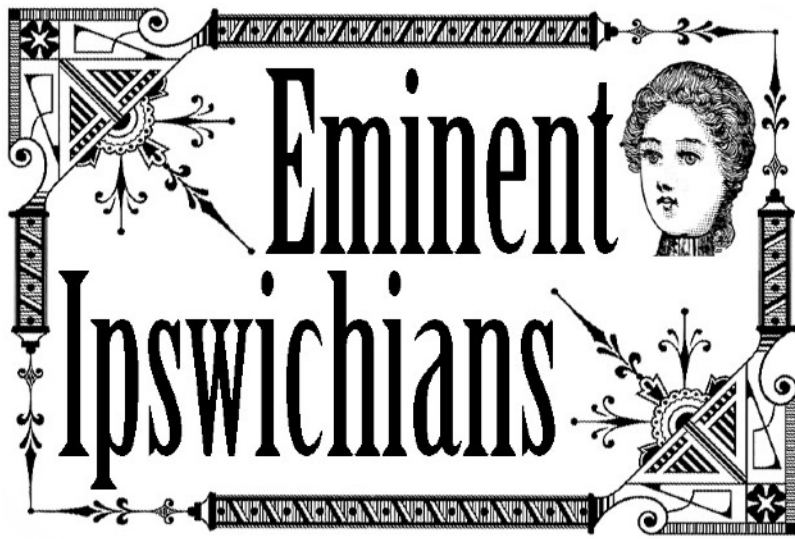
And just to confirm the requirement for a safety fence around the rail track, two trainloads of sand left Griffin Wharf in the first two weeks of October.

John Norman



From the Newsletter, April 2022

Eminent Ipswichians



Brian Cant

Some months ago, the Society received a request to consider the late Brian Cant, a well known and loved Ipswich born actor and television presenter, to receive a Blue Plaque. Unfortunately, he had passed away in 2017 and did not qualify under the Society's '20-year rule' which was designed to protect the integrity of our Blue Plaque scheme.

After further consideration it was thought that it would be fitting to include an article

on his life in the *Eminent Ipswichians* feature of our *Newsletter*.

Brian Cant was born in Ipswich on 12 July, 1933 and was educated at Northgate Grammar School for Boys, now known as Northgate High School.

He was a keen footballer and trained with the Ipswich Town youth side. He also volunteered as helper at the Ipswich theatre. A career with Ipswich Town did not materialise and he found employment with an Ipswich printer as a lithographic artist, later moving to London where he took part in amateur dramatics before turning professional. In 1958 he spent the summer season with the Buxton Rep in Derbyshire. By the 1960s he was appearing in TV dramas and while working for the BBC he auditioned for the new pre-school children's programme *Play School*. He was cast as a presenter and first appeared in May 1964, staying with the programme for twenty-one years.

He was also working on other programmes between 1966 and 1999 including *Camberwick Green*, *Trumpton*, *Chigley*, *Play Away*, *Bricabrac* and *Dappledown farm*.



Brian Cant outside the house in which he lived as a youngster in Lancing Avenue, Ipswich.
Picture credit: SIMON PARKER / ARCHANT ARCHIVE.

His television appearances in the 1960s included two episodes in *Doctor Who* and also *The Dominators*. In 1979 he presented the BBC programme *The Great Egg Race* and in 1982 he was one of the guest presenters of the series *It's a Knockout*. He later returned to TV drama, appearing three times in BBC's drama *Doctors*.

He made a few brief appearances in films including in 1965 *The Pleasure Club*, in 1966's *Sandwich Man* and in 1995 Christopher Lee's *A Feast at Midnight**

Brian Cant lived in Chalfont St Giles. He married his first wife, Mary Gibson, in 1959 and they divorced in 1984. They had two sons, Nicholas and Richard, who is also an actor. In 1984 he married the writer and director, Cherry Britton who is the sister of the TV personality Fern Britton. They had three children, Rose, Christabel and Peter who is also an actor.

He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1999 but kept on working, not making his illness public until 2010. That same year he received a well-deserved special award at the Children's BAFTAs for his work in children's television.

Brian Cant died on 19 June 2017, aged 83, at a London retirement home favoured by the acting profession.

Tony Robson

[Sources: Wikipedia, *The Guardian* obituary, *East Anglian Daily Times* obituary.]

*Also notable for being the feature film debut of future Conservative politician Michael Gove as the chaplain.

Ipswich Tourist Guides Association – Afternoon Tea Walks

Why not brighten the dark days of winter and early spring with an afternoon tea walk? These extremely popular events include a themed guided walk followed by refreshments and a relaxed chat with your guide in one of Ipswich's local cafés. Price: £10 including refreshments. Advance booking is essential: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/suffolk-archives>

2023 Programme

Friday 20 January – Personalities Behind The Plaques

Monday 6 February – Secret Diary of Gippeswyk Aged 1500³/₄

Wednesday 22 February – Victorian Dock

Tuesday 14 March – The Tudor Heritage of Ipswich

Tuesday 21 March – Waterfront Churches

Thursday 6 April – The Life & Times of Thomas Wolsey

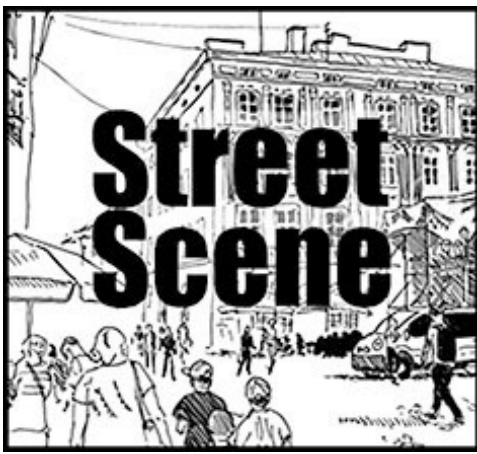
Wednesday 19 April – Ipswich Medics

For full details of all walks visit: <http://ipswichtourguides.org.uk>

A Message from Friends of Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House

The Unitarian Meeting House, built in 1700, had £800,000 spent on a major renovation scheme completed last year. Volunteers from local businesses, residents and many other organisations (including Ipswich Society), have joined people who worship at the Meeting House to form a Friends group. Our aim is to promote the building and ensure its sustainability for generations to come. Regular events encourage more visitors and help raise funds to cover further works not included in the renovations, such as internal decorations. Individual membership is just £12 a year; by joining you will help support this wonderful building – as well as benefitting from discounted tickets to some great events!

Join through our website: <https://iumhfriends.com> or contact us: iumhfriends@gmail.com



As someone who was born in Bury St Edmunds and lived there for many years before moving to Ipswich, I am fascinated by the similarities which you don't see when you have never lived in a town. As a day visitor you get a completely different perspective from that of a resident.

I have lived in several towns and cities in my time, long enough to get a wider view of the situation in each town than the day visitor, and it seems that most towns have very similar problems and the locals, who have never lived anywhere else, seem to think it is only their town that has these problems. They look at

other towns through rose-tinted glasses, impressed by the glossy shops they've not seen before. It has been said you should go at least two streets back from the centre of any town before you start to see the 'real town. 'All that glisters is not gold'. Day visitors often miss the busy traffic at rush hour and anti-social behaviour at night and don't notice the potholes etc. The graffiti and deprivation in parts of Norwich are awful.

Cllr David Ellesmere mentioned in his talk to The Ipswich Society at the Methodist Church in October last year that people who move into Ipswich from other towns seem to love it; it is mainly the long-term residents who have never lived anywhere else who 'run down' the town and give it its poor reputation. I remember dear old Bob Pawsey, a member of the Executive Committee of the Ipswich Maritime Trust who sadly died recently, saying that if Ipswich was closer to somewhere like Haverhill or Harlow people would realise what a great place Ipswich is. The trouble is they will always compare it with Norwich which is not a typical UK town. Indeed, it is known as 'A fine city' and is really the only place in Norfolk with the big shops.

Bob and myself were both born in Bury St Edmunds and both adopted Ipswich as our home town. We both loved Bury but agreed that Ipswich was a much nicer and more interesting town to live in than Bury, as do many other people I know who have done the same thing. When my old neighbour in Ipswich, who had been born and bred in Bury, told me he was moving, I asked if he was moving back there. 'Good God, no!' was his immediate reply. I'm not knocking Bury, just pointing out that a day visitor's perception of a town is very different from that of a local.

I have an old friend called Bob who lives in Harrogate which always rates as one of the happiest places to live in the UK. Even Ipswich has often rated in the top five of such rather futile studies. It depends on who and how many people you ask, what the weather is like that day, is it Monday or Friday and where they live in that town. As my younger brother said: 'They've never asked me.'. Harrogate is also rated to be one of the prettiest towns.

Bob's son came into Ipswich on a Tall Ship a couple of years ago and Bob, who had never been to Ipswich before, phoned me and said he was coming to pick up his son and suggested we meet up. He came down the day before and stayed over and we had a wander round Ipswich town centre, Christchurch Park and the Waterfront. Bob said, 'Isn't it lovely here?'. I exclaimed, 'But you live in Harrogate!'. Bob replied, 'But we don't have anything like this in Harrogate' (referring to the Waterfront) saying, 'It's a two-and-a-half-hour drive to the sea from where we are!' I mentioned Betty's Tearooms. 'Betty's!' he exclaimed. 'We don't go near Betty's; that's where the tourists go. There's always a long queue, it's very expensive and most decent towns have something similar anyway, but not as hyped up.' Me: 'What about your parks?' Bob replied, 'I've only seen Christchurch Park in Ipswich and I know you have others. Christchurch Park is as good as any of our parks.' So that was the view of a day visitor to Ipswich living in Harrogate.'

Getting to the point of *Street Scene*: many people in Ipswich will say that Ipswich has no shops. 'We go to Bury to shop' they say. Quite frankly, Colchester is much closer, cheaper to park in and has many more shops than Bury. However, when I lived in Bury St Edmunds we used to go to

Ipswich to shop. Apart from the many smaller shops in Ipswich which Bury didn't have (I used Tecno a lot for my video gear), Ipswich also had the bigger shops such as BHS, Littlewoods, C&A, Co-op Department Store, Owen Owen, Habitat, Maplins, Toys-R-Us and many more which Bury has never had. This is partly why Bury has fewer empty units than some other towns today. It never had these shops in the first place to lose. It has, as with everywhere else, lost all the big names it did have such as Laura Ashley, Woolworths, Top Shop, Debenhams and many others. It lost its Thorntons several years before Ipswich, the same with Patisserie Valerie and Mothercare – it never had Mamas and Papas – and its HMV has been closed for some-time where, as I write, it's still hanging in there in Ipswich. Bury also has its fair share of vape shops, phone shops, coffee shops and barbers.

Bury St Edmunds' Cornhill Shopping Centre has been empty and derelict for six years now with plans to turn it into flats. Like Ipswich, in the 1980s developers created a shopping mall in BSE called St Edmund's Fayre with small units not unlike the shopping mall annexe to the Buttermarket Shopping Centre which eventually became BHS. Like Ipswich, the mall in Bury was a disaster and after a couple of years of mainly empty units was converted into one shop where Iceland is today.

When you go to another town for the day you will always see shops that they have that you don't have in your own town and think you are missing out. It's quite likely that your town will have something similar under a different name that the others don't have, such as the abundance of jewellery shops found in most towns. You can be sure visitors to Ipswich have a similar experience. People from Bury who come to Ipswich will see Trespass, Tessuti, Primark, Deichmann, Flying Tiger, Blue Inc. and Leading Labels, Yours, The Military Unit, Twist 'n' Shout, Geek Retreat and things like SuperBowl, the Boom Battle Bar and many more which they don't have in BSE. Out of town there are John Lewis, Go Outdoors, Smyths Toys and numerous other stores not found in BSE. Alas, day visitors regularly miss the little gold mines of St Nicholas Street and St Peters Street and other side streets crammed full of independent shops and cafés.

When The Ipswich Society gave a tour round Ipswich for some pupils from King Edward VI Upper School in Bury recently, apart from being surprised and impressed by the Waterfront which they had been totally unaware even existed, they got very excited when they found Krispy Kreme in the Buttermarket, unheard of in Bury. So, different people and different ages have different priorities. Older people will look at our wonderful hospital, theatres, dance school etc.

Now and the future

Let's look at Ipswich today. Ipswich has a number of empty shop units today just like every other town. Ipswich is doing better than many, but like all towns today you will find Turkish Barbers, Nail Bars, Phone Shops and Kebab Shops galore, not to mention Coffee Shops. Do you ever see an empty Costa or Nail Bar? There were always lots of Charity Shops, it's just that they have become more prominent as they move more central, filling the empty units with next to no rent under their charity status. Charity shops are becoming more and more in demand with the recent 'Cost of Living Crisis' and the charities rely on them to survive.

Like many towns and cities Ipswich boasts an empty BHS, Debenhams and Co-op Department Store. The last time I was in the fine city of



Norwich there was a row of tents and sleeping bags belonging to homeless people along the front of the old Debenhams – much the same story in many other towns. In Ipswich we are lucky that all three of these big stores have found buyers and although it may take some time, eventually they will all be in use again. The Fraser Group own both the BHS site and the H&M site and have retail plans for both of them and it was announced this week that H&M are looking for another site in Ipswich town centre and have considered the empty Grimwades store amongst others.

Sailmakers/Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre had new owners in September and now nearly every unit is in use with others marked ‘Let agreed’. On the ground floor of the Buttermarket Centre there is only one empty unit: the former small Boots branch – whilst the upper floors have been converted to leisure with a gym, a thriving Superbowl and a 14-screen multiplex with recliner seats and sofas. There's also a big open space often used for public events.

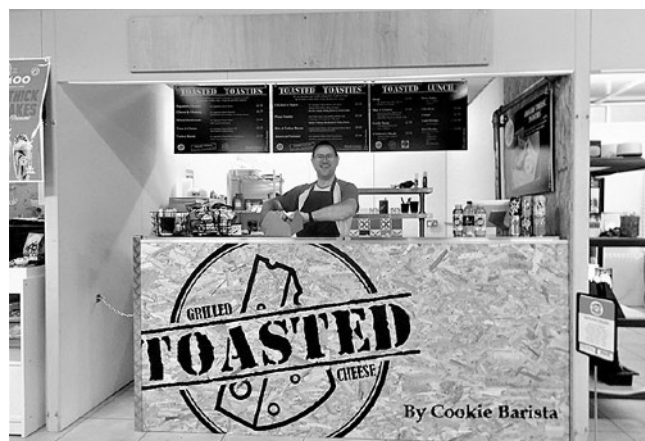
As a ‘Bury boy’ I love Ipswich being surrounded by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, amenities: Jimmy's Farm, Alton Water, Suffolk Food Hall, Suffolk Ski and Leisure Park, Foxhall Stadium and small towns such as Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Hadleigh, Constable Country (Willy Lotts Cottage and Flatford Mill) and the Shotley Peninsula and Pin Mill etc. All of these are just minutes away by car; also Ipswich has a main line railway station. The nearest amenity to Bury was Ickworth and not a lot more. The trains were less frequent and the station parking was awful. We always used to go to Ipswich from Bury for the football and the wonderful theatres and choice of shops.

I think I have made my point. Ipswich with its lovely buildings, theatres, parks and river and fast connections to London is surrounded by AONBs and is a stunning place, wildly underrated by the few who make the most noise. Bury raves about their Abbey Gardens which, apart from the Cathedral and Abbey ruins, is not much more than a flat area with a few flower beds. Castle Park in Colchester has better flowers and facilities than the Abbey Gardens but Bury, quite rightly, are good at ‘crowing’ about the things they have. Ipswich should be doing the same.



To finish, here are some of the new businesses which have opened in town since the last *Street Scene* in the October 2022 *Newsletter*:-

HARRY'S
Handcrafted
Doughnuts and
Coffee Shop;
I LOVE NOODLE;
GRAPE ESCAPE;



Ipswich Microshops, Carr Street

LEADING LABELS and BLUE INC.; BROWS ON FLEEK;
STEAM HOUSE CAFE; BAR A- to-Z ; CANCER CAMPAIGN IN SUFFOLK;
MADE IN SUFFOLK Art Shop; YMCA; MULAN KITCHEN; TOASTED.

Coming Soon:-

BODY in MIND; MINUTEMAN PRESS, Tacket Street; FRANKLINS moving closer to the centre; H&M looking for a new site in the town centre.

Tim Leggett



Copperas

This article was ‘...sparked by a walk along the shore between Lower Holbrook and Harkstead, where Google Maps shows a stretch marked "Copperas Reach". (There is now a modern £1m+ house of the same name on the lane from the shore back up to Harkstead). Apparently it was the practice of the wives and children of local sailors (bargees, I assume, rather than the Royal Navy) to go beach-combing for mineral Copperas. How it was transported from beach to processing works is another unanswered question, but my guess is by a small boat as far as possible.’ ‘Another thing that piqued my initial curiosity was a brief mention in the book *Balls and rollers: a history of printing ink 1440-1850* by one C.H. Bloy (1967). The things one finds in charity bookshops!’ (James Meek)

Copperas is an old name for green iron-sulphate crystals, also known as Iron pyrites, or ‘Fools gold’ because it was sometimes mistaken by prospectors for gold. (Derivation: Middle English - Coperose; Old French - Couperose. Medieval Latin - cuprosa / cuperose; origin: *aqua cuprosa* - copper water). John Norman found two Copperas Woods, one in Essex and one near Campsea Ashe – were these the sites of the source mineral? This mineral was apparently used in industrial processes in Ipswich (possibly in Victorian times). So who used it, and where?



Copperas production in the 16th century

Dr John Warren (JW), the Chairman of the River Gipping Trust which contributes to the restoration of the river, was able to provide most of the information which follows.

Brightlingsea has a similar history, well-researched here: <https://morganmarine.com/news-events/copperas-a-small-bit-of-history>. There are plenty of ‘copperas’ names on Suffolk and Essex maritime charts.

So, a medieval resource taking Fool’s Gold to make sulphates for a variety processes. The coprolite industry may initially have used this as a source of sulphuric acid. This was added to the coprolite to release phosphate, eventually used as an agricultural fertiliser. Incidentally, later manufacture of sulphuric acid generated much arsenic as an unwanted by-product. This contamination is one reason why the abandoned factory site at Paper Mill Lane, Bramford – once the Packard and Fisons works – is a challenge to developers. JW thinks that the Packard barges used to take jars of sulphuric acid up to Bramford and had to be careful that the kids on the bridges did not break the jars by throwing stones.

There is some text in the Stowmarket Food Museum. It describes Prentices, Packards, and Fisons each manufacturing sulphuric acid in the 1840s and 1850s to make superphosphate fertilizer. All three companies built a factory alongside the navigable Gipping above Bramford, adjacent to

each other – fewer neighbours to complain about the pollution; the companies eventually amalgamated.

From <https://www.cumbria-industries.org.uk/a-z-of-industries/chemicals:->

The manufacture of **copperas** held a key position in the early chemical industry from the 17th century, but especially from the mid-18th to the mid-19th centuries. Copperas had nothing to do with copper, but was made from iron pyrites (alternatively referred to as ‘fool’s gold’, ‘marcasites’ or ‘brass lumps’) mainly found in coal measures.

The manufacturing process involved laying small pieces of pyrites to a depth of two feet in a tank, which was left open to the elements to “ripen” for 4 or 5 years. The liquor that was produced was collected in a cistern, boiled and cooled, with the addition of amounts of scrap iron to control its strength. Crystals of copperas, “green vitriol”, formed on twigs and branches suspended in the liquor, and were used to produce ink or black dyes (or to darken other dyes). The remaining liquor would be heated to produce “oil of vitriol” i.e. concentrated sulphuric acid, and the residue of red iron oxide used in pigments for the paint trade. The “oil of vitriol” was used to prepare Epsom salt from magnesian limestone – for medicinal purposes or as a mordant in dyeing – or with alum as another mordant.

The Carlisle Journal of 1st January 1820 includes the following sale notice:

‘A well established works occupying 3 acres and having a long range of buildings, mostly cellared, containing 1 lead boiler which contains 5 to 6000 gallons, 4 coolers, 3 of which are lined with lead, several lead pumps (which are well supplied with water) and troughs and all other necessary fixtures and fittings. The cellars are flagged and walled round with freestone and bricks for the reception of copperas liquor to which belong the extensive beds or brass lumps near the same. There is no other copperas works in the County... A sufficient quantity of brass lumps may be obtained from the collieries at Whitehaven from which copperas may be conveniently exported.’

This was the works established by Sir John Lowther in The Ginns at Whitehaven in 1718 and referred to in R.R. Angerstein’s illustrated travel diary of 1753-1755 as the “vitriol works at Whitehaven” with this description:

‘The iron pyrites, which is found in the coal here, is sold to the vitriol works situated near Whitehaven. The price is the same as that for coal, 3s 4d per ton. The pyrites is laid out in rows on a piece of ground that has been walled in. The vitriol is leached out gradually, depending on how much rain falls, and is led to a cistern. From here it is pumped up into the lead vessel where iron scrap is added in a certain proportion... In this way 3 tons of vitriol can be boiled here per week, for which ½ ton of scrap iron is used. The vitriol is sold to Ireland for £9 per ton. The scrap iron comes from Holland, is bought in London packed in barrels and consists of old nails, locks, keys and all kinds of rusty iron.’

Rowell Bell suggests that the processing of copperas wasn’t confined to Victorian industrialised Ipswich, but goes back a lot further. He points to ancient processes such as those carried out in tanneries – a trade with a centuries-old presence in Ipswich. Incidentally, James Meek has also made the link to the production of printer’s ink.

R.G. *Thanks to the contributors.*

Notes

Prentice Brothers. Prentice’s Gun Cotton Works, of Stowmarket.

1856: business founded.

1891: the company was registered on 4 August, to acquire the business of chemical manufacturers of the firm of the same name.

1929: in response to deterioration in the business climate, Packard and James Fison (Thetford) Limited amalgamated with two East Anglian competitors, Joseph Fison and Co and Prentice Brothers; the resultant company was named Fison, Packard and Prentice Ltd. [Information from *Grace’s guide*.]

Road upgrades

A12

The fifteen mile stretch of the A12 between Colchester – Junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange) to junction 19 (Boreham interchange) – will be widened to three lanes in each direction. At an estimated cost of £1.2 billion this improvement doesn't come cheap, nor does it come without its objectors, it includes two major by-passes, one between Marks Tey and Kelvedon North (junctions 25 to 24) and a second at Rivenhall End.

Other junctions along the length of the proposed work will be improved to reduce accidents and to enable traffic to flow freely onto, and off the triple lane dual carriage way. This proposal has been the subject of a planning application and a six month development consent process but is due to start later this year (2023).

There is ongoing discussion about the need for junction 23, south west of Kelvedon (junction 24 will provide access to Kelvedon and Tiptree). Reducing the number of junctions reduces the number of accident black spots. Junction 23, if built, will provide access onto the realigned A120 (see below).

This section of the A12 is a very busy stretch of road, currently carrying some 90,000 vehicles per day, and it carries a higher than average proportion of Heavy Goods Traffic: containers from Felixstowe and Harwich heading for London. Freight can amount to 12% of all traffic, whereas the national average for trunk roads is in the region of 5%.

A120

Also on the cards, but with the route not yet finalised and the funding not yet agreed, is a replacement dual carriageway parallel to the single carriageway A120 between Marks Tey and Braintree. Not quite parallel to the existing road as it will probably start at junction 23 (A12) south of Kelvedon and head north-west to Galley's Corner roundabout at Braintree adding three miles to the journey from Ipswich to Stansted. This road was one of a number in the 2020 Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) planned for an on-site start before 2025.

M25 Junction 28

Further works proposed in Essex (that will interrupt journeys from Ipswich towards the capital) include a £170 million upgrade of Junction 28 on the M25.

The most noticeable change will be a new slip road between the anti-clockwise M25 and the A12 heading north-east. The existing slip road is too short for the volume of traffic carried and cannot be easily extended because the Great Eastern main railway line crosses the motorway close to the top of the slip road. Instead a new slip will be constructed in the space to the west of the junction creating a 270 degree near-circle to join the roundabout, under the M25 (one leaf of a four leaf clover).

This work has been agreed by the Secretary of State for Transport and should have started by the time you read this.

John Norman



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Diary dates

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

Wednesday January 18: Borin Van Loon on **The Beat of the Ipswich Streets II**. The creator of The Ipswich Historic Lettering website will focus on a wide range of signs and lettering which evoke the past of the town and its people, including many unseen examples.

Wednesday 15 February: John Field on **Giles in Ipswich**. John Field, who has been researching the work of Carl Giles and in particular those drawn using a background featuring typical Ipswich buildings and streets, has put together an interesting collection of images which he will share with members.

Wednesday March 15: Tony Redman on 'Suffolk Building Stone and the people who worked on it'.

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.

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