

The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2007

ISSUE 169

Contents

Editorial	2
New Members	2
The Society's Annual Awards	3
Winter Lectures	3
Chairman on Current Affairs	4
The White Paper on Planning	5
Recent Planning Applications	6
Unitary Ipswich: What's New?	8
Snippets (1)	9
The Calm Before the Storm	10
Road Pricing and Congestion	12
Why More Flats than Houses	13
Everybody Matters	14
Car Clubs	15
Snippets (2)	16
Photographic Collection	16
Pioneer Edith Cook's Place	17
Music at the Meeting House	17
Empty Apartments	18
Ipswich Heritage Group	18
Many Ropewalks in Ipswich	19
Landscape on a Spring Line	20
Data for the Observatory	20
'The Grand Tour' Talks	20
Norwich Society in Ipswich	21
Heritage Open Days	21
Letters to the Editor	22
Leiston Abbey and Red House	23
Committee & Evening Events	24



Franciscan Way: Ipswich and Ipswich Central
 Articles on flats - pages 13 and 18

Issue 169 Newsletter Oct 2007

Contents:

- Editorial
- Chairman's remarks
- Planning for a sustainable future
- Recent planning applications
- A unitary Ipswich – so, what's new?
- Snippets (1)
- A change in the weather – the calm before the storm
- Will road pricing solve congestion?
- Why more flats than houses?
- 'Everybody Matters'
- Car clubs
- Snippets (2)
- Empty apartments
- Ipswich Heritage Group
- At least six ropewalks in Ipswich
- Landscape on a Spring Line
- Orwell Park Observatory; The Grand Tour
- The Norwich Society in Ipswich
- Letters to the Editor
- Leiston Abbey and Red House, Aldeburgh
- Committee & Evening Events

Editorial

So Much Going On

I've so often written about the huge changes occurring in our town that I'm reluctant to do so yet again, but I'll be brief. In any case if you do get out and about, you can't miss seeing the new buildings and fresh starts. For instance, the five tower cranes on the Waterfront, the tallest 86m, can easily be seen from many parts of the town centre. (They might even help to convince sceptics that the Waterfront is only a short walk away!) I remember counting forty-seven tower cranes from the roof of the then recently re-opened Reichstag in Berlin. Well, Ipswich isn't being re-built on quite the scale of Berlin, but pro rata it might compete!

Jack Chapman's Chairman's article describes some of these developments. The only point I'll add about the Waterfront is that in the nature of how we do things in Britain the progress is piecemeal. All these obvious brownfield sites will be built on eventually but during this transition period we still have the burnt out St Peters Warehouse and the last remaining concrete silo at the west end, and the two big gaps between Neptune Marina and Orwell Quay, where the restaurant that has just been built will be isolated from the renewed parts of the quayside. This latter situation illustrates the unpredictability of development progress because in the Ipswich Wet Dock Development Framework drawn up by Llewelyn-Davies nine years ago it was anticipated that the old gas works site on Orwell Quay would be the last part to be built on, but now it's all finished before the two adjoining sites have even been started. I hope I live to see it all completed!

The July Newsletter I am pleased to say evoked quite a lot of response. A number of members said how useful the diagrammatic map of the Waterfront has been. And the article about the eight streets in Ipswich named after leading abolitionists of the slave trade has been passed on to other interested parties elsewhere.

The Borough Council's successful bid for unitary status is put in its historical context by Bill Serjeant in his article in this Newsletter. As you know, all three political parties on the Borough Council supported this bid. The town should benefit in a number of ways – how, and how much, time will tell. At present, however, I don't understand why Norwich must extend its boundaries into its hinterland before it wins independence, whereas Ipswich, much the same size as Norwich and similarly limited by its historical boundaries, has not been expected to absorb the immediately adjoining urban areas. Is it because Ipswich is growing faster than Norwich? Is the Government doing us a favour – or a disservice in the long run?

Jack Chapman also refers to the Film Theatre. I should like to endorse what he says about supporting this valuable cinema in Ipswich. Although regretting that the Borough Council has privatised the Film Theatre, with the inevitable reduction in the number and variety of quality films shown, the fact still remains we do have an alternative to Cineworld. Hollywood Film Theatre in the Corn Exchange will show many worthy films that won't go to Cineworld. Moreover, Cinema One has been refurbished with new seating and a pleasant ambience.

Altogether, these are interesting times indeed! I hope you agree that the Ipswich Society helps you keep abreast of what is happening in our changing town. If you have views on these changes or any other subject relevant to our society, please let me have letters, articles, drawings and anything else for the next Newsletter by 20 November.

Neil Salmon

Chairman's report

Current Affairs

As is apparent to all, it is now all go on the Waterfront. On many sites the demolition phase is over and buildings are beginning to emerge from the rubble. University Campus Suffolk is one of these and it is progressing fast. The old Cranfield's and Paul's sites are also taking shape.

It is unfortunate that the construction process has necessitated closure of the foot and cycle path along the quayside, cutting off easy access between the island site and the rest of the Waterfront. The Society has been in touch with the developers with a view to opening up some public access along the water before the scheme is completed. Currently they have an 18 month closure order on all roads and cycleways within the site. Our discussions with them and the IBC have been helpful and I believe it is possible that some access may be achieved before the end of the year.

At the other end of the Waterfront, the Persimmon development at Orwell Quay is very advanced and one can now see the interesting 'butterfly' canopy of what is designed to be a restaurant. Next door on the site of the timber business at Eagle Wharf Persimmon are all set to develop their E-shaped building with open views of the water. It is in phase one of this site that we are to have a Visitor Attraction Centre, something the Society has backed for a number of years.

Two other important developments about to start soon are St Peter's Port between the churches of St Peter and St Mary at Quay and Custom House Square, the area from Fore Street opposite the Lord Nelson along Key Street. This latter scheme will incorporate a new public square roughly behind the Custom House. Both schemes are large and prestigious.

Other developments of importance are taking place away from the Waterfront. The Mint Quarter, discussed and planned for some twenty years, seems to be on the move again, this time with a new developer promising a new department store, and other retail units and car parking for around 900 cars. This site will become of major significance when the Education Quarter gets built, since it links the area to the town.

The old Civic Centre site has now been sold and the developers held a meeting a week or so ago to outline their thoughts. Three major supermarkets are interested in being the 'anchor' store in the development which at this stage looks very interesting, incorporating a small budget hotel and retail units. The scheme should provide a number of pedestrian routes through the complex.

The Film Theatre has been a source of concern to many for some time, but the new set-up is now in operation with the lease initially for five years. It is important that it gets full support from the public to ensure it goes from strength to strength.

The Society was instrumental in the town seeking an Act of Parliament to enable it to hold market stalls in streets surrounding the Town Hall. The market has expanded into Princes Street, but the proposed expansion up into Lloyds Avenue has not yet happened, owing to serious opposition of some vested interests. However, there is now hope that the extension into the whole of Lloyds Avenue may happen soon, giving us a market from the top of Lloyds Avenue to Giles Square. Since I last wrote, Ipswich has succeeded in its bid to achieve unitary status, freeing it from the services currently run by Suffolk County Council. It will take several years to happen fully but some changes will happen earlier. What has already happened is that IBC has restructured itself and

one now finds new people in charge of key areas. Ipswich Angle will soon produce a list of all new section heads and their responsibilities.

Finally as I write, we are approaching the annual Heritage Open Days weekend. Once again, there is a good range of buildings open and they are all described in the full-colour brochure produced by this Society and available from the Tourist Information Centre and elsewhere. This will be the last year that Pauline West has co-ordinated the event and we thank her for her efforts. Dianne Hosking will take over from her and co-ordinate next year's programme. I hope that by the time you read this many of you together with the general public will have visited and enjoyed many of these buildings.

Jack Chapman

Planning for a sustainable future

Part of the Ipswich Society's response to the Government's White Paper

National Infrastructure

We accept that major national schemes which go to public enquiry, sometimes multiple, have gone on for far too long and cost too much. We support these proposals insofar as they will apply only to major items of national strategic importance whose need will have been announced and then debated in Parliament. It is vital that in any new system full and adequate space is given for the view and objections of local people, and organisations should properly be heard. The devil will be in the as yet unseen detail.

Sustainable Development

We support the permit for householders to develop micro-generation. However we understand that many smaller scale installations are unable to supply enough energy to make them economic or CO2 saving over their life-cycle. This applies especially to domestic installations. We would like to see research and clear advice on this. We are concerned that there will be a rash of politically correct, though inefficient, wind turbines, particularly in conservation areas. It will be important not to allow them as universal permitted development.

Housing and Employment

We are concerned that the proposals to increase responsiveness to economic development will increase pressure to allow schemes that combine housing and employment initially but will change in course of time.

Out-of-town Retail

We should not remove the need for impact tests for out-of-town retail developments, even if a town centred approach is introduced.

Design Quality

If the need for planning approval is reduced we can see an increase of poorly designed non-sustainable buildings. In recent years soe progress has been made to improve design. It would be retrograde if this small improvement were to be lost.

In summary we agree that many of the proposals are to be welcomed, but extreme care in the wording and details of the Bill is essential to prevent the loss of local control of planning (and so favouring) developers and the central Government.

Recent planning applications

The Society's responses to these proposals

47 Key Street: five new blocks varying in height from 3 to 12 storeys comprising 214 residential units with workshops, car parks, etc.

The Society's executive has discussed this enterprising proposal for an important site close to the Waterfront. We welcome many of the positive proposals - separate blocks of housing, the inclusion of 34% public space, the excellent permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, the space for an arts and crafts market with workshops, the incorporation of the Tudor barn, the retention of the 1920s Georgian bankers façade to Salthouse Street and increased accessibility to the Jewish Cemetery.....

(But) if we compare an earlier version of the 12-storey proposal with the latest we have a clear preference for the original. The darker blue glass mitred corner caused the building to blend with the (sky) background; the latest has a cladding of panels resembling light stone. In our opinion there is no local comparator for this type of surface finish and it will stand prominent in the landscape.

The raised plateau in Custom House Square is the most contentious idea because with the current arrangements it won't work. However, the Society supports it very strongly because we feel it will be the catalyst for changes in traffic management hereabouts. It needs accompanying with an overhaul for cross-town traffic management for which a solution could be to reduce west-bound traffic to a single lane, thus reducing the interface between pedestrians and vehicles at the back of the Custom House. These changes need to be major and not limited to this development. However, this development should not be refused because others are unable to sort out cross-town traffic. (The proposal was approved by IBC's Planning and Development Committee on 12 September.)

73-81 St Matthew's Street: conversion of office building to form student accommodation of 7 flats and 19 studios. (This was the house built for Richard Dykes Alexander whose naming of the eight streets to commemorate abolitionists of the slave trade was featured in the previous Newsletter.) We applaud the possibility of this fine town house coming back into residential use... We particularly liked the first floor extension (on the Portman Road corner) and it should enhance the appearance from Barrack Corner.... Proposals to remove and replace the second floor are difficult to assess.... We note with interest the 5-storey extension in the courtyard ad have attempted to establish its visibility from the public highway. Officers should check that it doesn't surprise us with the 'Revet's effect' (i.e. in Norwich Road)!

ASDA, Stoke Park: removal of condition to provide retail units within 12 months and a medical centre.

The Ipswich Society is disappointed that ASDA have been unable to find a user for the medical centre in the proposed adjoining building but accepts that ongoing changes in the way Primary Care Trusts operate make a doctors' surgery unlikely. We are however concerned about the proposals to alter the timescale for the construction of the remaining retail units but accept that these are unlikely to be let until the market is assured that this centre is viable, i.e. when ASDA have been open for some months and footfall becomes known.

Our greatest concern is about opening hours and ASDA's suggestion of being on a level playing field in competition with Tesco, Copdock. But ASDA are building a neighbourhood store and as such the store should keep to hours acceptable to a residential community, should attract shoppers from the locality (and certainly not off the A14 at Copdock) and should do their utmost to provide a variety of retail outlets. (IBC has approved the proposals.)

Lower Orwell Street: student flats on Gym and Trim site.

The Society objected very strongly to this application because the site would be over-developed with too many habitations, it is too high, the massing is uninteresting and the style is not even pastiche. Lower Orwell Street has importance for the future as it will be one of the streets connecting the Mint Quarter development to the Waterfront. Thus we must insist on a higher standard of design because the architectural character of the street must be distinguished and attractive. (IBC refused the proposal for similar reasons, plus loss of trees and green space.)

5 Wherry Lane: change of use from restaurant to restaurant/bar.

We welcome the attempt by the owners to find a use for this building.....Christie's Warehouse is a fine dockside building and although not Listed contributes to the low rise group of buildings either side of Wherry Lane, buildings which bring the high rise residential units approved elsewhere along this frontage back down to a human scale. We are however persuaded that to make this restaurant viable it is necessary to raise the roof of the central section and by careful execution and appropriate materials this alteration will not be unduly visible or noticeable. (IBC approved.)

New Fire Station, Colchester Road.

The Society is pleased that the County Council's PFI deliverers' architects have come up with a greatly improved design for this important building. They have also incorporated the Needham Market ancient fire engine house neatly. (IBC has approved the proposal.)

10-12 St Peter's Street: change of use from nursery to 3 flats & bar/restaurant.

We object on a number of counts, primarily that it is over-development of the site. We accept that the flats and the restaurants could work well together, the flats providing accommodation for the restaurant staff but the number of covers proposed is excessive... We also object to the take-away facility. St Peter's is totally unsuitable for any additional traffic likely to be generated by take-away provision. (IBC approved the proposal.)

31 Stoke Street: erection of 5 houses.

Any scheme that proposes its wheelie bin storage in the front garden deserves rejection without further consideration. Wheelie bins are a 'Welcome to Ipswich' statement for anyone walking from the station to the Waterfront – permanently left outside the front of the property. (IBC approved this brownfield site development with conditions about bin storage.)

The Society has objected to a new application for a house in the curtilage of the Grade II* Listed house at 4 Constitution Hill; to the extra height, and design of redeveloping no. 53-55 Westerfield Road; and to an extra betting shop in Carr Street, at no. 34. (IBC approved this.)

The outcome of previous applications we commented on:

Regatta Quay (Albion Quay): We objected to 3 additional storeys next to the Custom House and 2 additional storeys on the other tower block, but IBC has granted planning permission.

Great Whip Street (near Stoke Bridge/New Cut): 351 residential buildings, etc. (IBC approved.)

A unitary Ipswich – so, what's new?

It has been somewhat surprising to me that in the reportage and commentary that has accompanied the recent Ipswich application to Central Government for 'unitary authority' status, much of the discussion has seemed to present it as a bold new initiative for our ancient and historic town. To be fair, the August issue of *Angle* did, in reporting the success of the application, remind us briefly that Ipswich enjoyed such a status until 1974. It omitted, however, to specify since when.

Might we perhaps approach our 'new' situation with extra confidence if we were to undertake a serious exploration of our urban 'since when'? The moment we do this, of course, we are taken back 807 years to 25 May 1200, when King John set his seal to the first of many royal charters granting the burgesses of the borough of Ipswich 'its liberties and free customs' (set out in considerable detail).

This act was in effect a recognition of the crucial economic and social importance to the nation of its urban communities, which could only flourish if in control of their own affairs. That this was well understood by the town's citizens is uniquely well illustrated in Ipswich, for which we have an account of how they assembled in St Mary Tower churchyard on five separate occasions between June and October 1200 to hear the charter read out and agree to all the steps to be taken to put it into effect. (This surely is a splendid example of that 'consultation' of which we hear so much nowadays and which could be duly noted when starting off anew.)

There is not alas a happy ending to this first unitary exercise which, while it did survive for over six centuries, failed to keep abreast of changing times and declined, like not a few of our chartered boroughs, into gross inefficiency and corruption, and was dissolved in 1834. Legislation replaced many of the ancient boroughs, including Ipswich, by Municipal Borough Councils, whose structure has provided a pattern of urban local government which is broadly recognisable today.

Was Ipswich Borough Council a unitary authority? There are three reasonably valid answers – 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe'. The massive economic and social change of the Victorian period and beyond were wrestled with by these local authorities as best they could, but they tended to be playing 'catch-up' in a host of circumstances – health, education, amenities, utilities, and so on, and so on. Essentially, they could all the same, fairly claim to be the principal authority, and to keep a modicum and growing measure of control of the range of urban responsibilities. For Ipswich, the situation changed radically in 1888 when Government conceded that very large towns needed realistically to be empowered to run the whole range of local government services and created a

new element in the structure, the County Borough Council. So from 1888 to 1974 Ipswich became a County Borough Council or, in the current terminology, ‘a unitary authority’.

The demotion of a number of urban communities of six-figure population levels to a ‘District Council’ level -in effect equating them with rural communities of widely-spread and much smaller populations – has presumably come to be realised by Central Government to have failed to recognise the urban factor and its importance in the social mix, hence the decision now to do so where it seems appropriate. Different as our world is now is, the distinction seems as valid today as it was for our burgesses in St Mary Tower churchyard in 1200.

That said, all our Suffolk authorities should have the wisdom to acknowledge the ‘different world’ we live in, and see how best we can be both good and effective neighbours, which has not – let’s face it – always been the situation post-1974. A sentence from a recent Evening Star editorial note is perhaps worth repeating in conclusion – ‘Suffolk County Council, which opposed the bid, and Ipswich Borough Council, which is delighted with the news, will need to work together for the good of the community and the county town.’ That makes sense, surely?

Bill Serjeant

Snippets (1)

The Regent renewed

Installing new seats and redecorating the Regent Theatre (built 1929 and Grade II Listed) is money well spent by the IBC. The wide range of entertainments put on still won’t please everybody, but that’s not the main point – which is that having the largest theatre in East Anglia helps to draw visitors into the town and puts Ipswich on the map.

Silver lining

First wet and then gloomy, the summer of 2007 has been more appreciated by runner beans than human beings. But numbers of visitors have greatly increased at the High Street Museum. The Romans and Anglo- Saxons therein know how to keep dry and cheerful!

St Lawrence for the many

With a Government grant added to IBC’s own input, work is starting on converting St Lawrence Church in Dial Lane into a community centre – replacing Age Concern’s ‘drop-in centre’ at last and being made available for other groups to use. We hope there won’t be too much conflict of interests because it will be difficult to please all users.

Back to school

19-21 Lower Brook Street constitute a building of historical importance. In the early 17th century the town made the house available for the highly influential Town Preacher, Samuel Ward, and later it became home to Ipswich School for the Headmaster and pupils. The Society’s blue plaque on no 19 commemorates William King, son of one of the Headmasters and a pioneer in the Co-operative movement. We are pleased to hear that No 21 is being restored and occupied and No 19 will probably serve an educational use once again.

Building on a flood plain

People criticise this since the serious flooding in Yorkshire and then the Midlands and the West Country. Yet nobody seems to have mentioned the obvious part-solution enforced here in Ipswich and presumably in other places for years. Which is that the ground floor areas are not living spaces but used for garages, services, shops etc. We saw this in the Bellways flats on Neptune Quay and it's standard practice on the Waterfront and the Orwell/Gipping flood plain. A bigger problem is the extent of hard surfacing created in most developments.

'Discovery' back home?

The replica of the smallest of the three vessels which sailed to Virginia in 1607 was boarded by 4,207 people on the Waterfront in early August! Many others went to look from the quay and visited the exhibition in the Custom House put on by the Ipswich Maritime Trust. 'Discovery's' captain on the original voyage was John Sicklemore (or Ratliffe), a local man. This photograph shows the 20 ton 'Discovery' dwarfed by the increasing height of Regatta Quay, which you can compare with the front cover photo in our April Newsletter.

A change in the weather – the calm before the storm

First the good news. As described elsewhere in this Newsletter, the one-Ipswich partnership has held a consultation on its Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Everybody Matters', defining a vision for Ipswich for the next ten years based on delivering six broad outcomes.

As my two previous articles have attempted to show, Ipswich faces change at an unprecedented rate from planned developments, environmental influences, and now from the very structure and resourcing of local government. While all six outcomes may be of interest for the Society, Outcome 4 on the environment is of particular relevance in addressing the impacts of growth, transport and service infrastructure and climate change.

Why is this good news? Why, indeed, do we need a strategy at all when we have perfectly good planning processes? While this question might properly be answered by the one-Ipswich partnership, I suggest the answer lies in the different time perspectives of past, present and future. From the past, Ipswich has a wealth of material investment and cultural heritage, both of which warrant appropriate preservation. But few would wish to live in a museum or a historical theme park, even if it were a practical option, so the value of the past has to be balanced against the demands and opportunities of the present, which is generally delivered by means of the planning processes with which the Society is already engaged. But the present is short lived; the planning horizon is a mere two or three years compared, for example, with the past thirty years' experience of the development of out-of-town superstores as discussed in my previous article, which amply illustrates Burns's assertion from two centuries earlier that 'The best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft a-gley'.

The point is not to criticise planners or the planning process for any lack of foresight, but rather to recognise that plans are appropriate for the defined circumstances of the present (where perhaps the most significant challenge is to take all relevant circumstances into account, which provides the proper basis for debate and criticism). But a different perspective is needed to accommodate the

unplannable changes in circumstances which may become prevalent beyond the planning horizon. This perspective is provided by a strategic vision, seeking to encapsulate the community's current aspirations, tempered with realism about what will be both achievable and relevant to the changed environmental circumstances of the future, yet recognising that those very changes will prevent the path to the longer-term vision from being mapped out in detail. The business strategy is instead to define the longer term objective and to anticipate the wherewithal needed to reach it, thus to enable the more detailed planning process to take each new step according to the circumstances of the day. Indeed the vision itself can and probably will change with time! As a counterpoint to Burns, WW2 strategist Dwight D Eisenhower said, 'In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.' This is emphatically not to say that plans are useless *per se* but rather the plans and strategy are complementary aspects of planning for the longer term. So the good news is that the one-Ipswich partnership has defined a strategic framework with the potential to address concerns I have raised in the past two Newsletters about the need for a 'big picture' vision for the growth of Ipswich amid the likely impact of actions to mitigate climate change.

On the latter, however, the recent news has been less encouraging. In the three months to June, DEFRA held a public consultation on the Climate Change Bill. The associated documentation presented the scientific case for action and a strategic framework aligned with the European Commission's assertion that the average global temperature rise must be contained within 2°C. This would correspond to a carbon dioxide equivalent level of 550 parts per million and require industrialised countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 60-80% by 2050. But the only instruments for action contained in the Climate Change Bill relate to carbon trading rather than reducing emissions.

Moreover, in his book 'Carbon Calculator', Mark Lynas points out the inconsistencies in even the basic figures behind the strategy and the Bill. To keep within the 2°C target would require CO₂ levels to be capped at 400 ppm by 2015, and we are already at 380 ppm, hence the popular exhortation to act decisively within the next eight years. Capping the level at 550 ppm by 2020 commits us to a rise of 4°C which, according to 'Six Degrees' also by Mark Lynas may well be beyond the 'tipping point' which triggers emissions of CO₂ stored naturally in the earth and the oceans, which then fuel runaway global warming. This is corroborated in the preface to George Monbiot's book 'Heat' in which he identifies the origin of this inconsistency with the Stern Report. I strongly recommend all three books, which are each based on the mass of peer-reviewed scientific papers on the subject.

But perhaps the gloomiest such news comes in a report in the Guardian ('Revealed cover-up plan on energy target', 13 August 2007) citing an internal briefing paper from the former DTI admitting that renewable sources will provide only 5% of the UK's energy requirements in 2020 under present policies, compared with an EU target of 20%. To reach 9% would be 'challenging' and would cost £4 billion per year, though this is only one-third of the 1% GDP that the Stern Report suggested should be spent immediately. Instead the paper urges 'statistical interpretations of the target that would make it easier to achieve' arguing the renewables are more expensive than the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme – which is itself a source of controversy.

It is not my purpose to assert the rights and wrongs of this debate, but rather to ask how can any of us be confident of what is right or wrong? Personally and professionally, I have some insight into the scientific case for action, but when that case is passed through economists, politicians and

journalists before it reaches us, with new dilutions, obfuscations and re-interpretations imposed at every stage, how can any of us make any reasonable sense of it or know who to trust? In 'An Inconvenient Truth', Al Gore points out that 'An astonishing number of people go straight from denial to despair, without pausing at the intermediate step of saying, 'We can do something about this' '. Individually we can, and all four books I have cited contain much information on what we can – indeed must – do if we accept that climate change is man-made and should be arrested. After yet another year of 'freak' weather conditions both here and across the world, this surely becomes increasingly difficult to doubt. But it is clear to me that there are also potential pitfalls, and individual actions alone will not meet the newly-proposed and very plausible need for 90% reduction in carbon emissions across the developed world. Hence there is much that national and local government must contribute.

I am reminded, however, of another WW2 metaphor from 'Dad's Army' in which Corporal Jones runs around shouting 'Don't panic!' while Private Frazer mutters ominously, 'We're all doomed!' The latter is not yet the consensus view, and the former is rarely advisable anyway. Instead we have the opportunity to try to define the kind of community we want in ten years' time, given all that is planned and all that may befall us as a consequence of climate change. It is still early days in all the relevant consultation. Indeed, the latest sets of findings and recommendations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) were concluded in April this year and have yet to be published, and they will doubtless require some time to digest into firm policy, so it is perhaps premature to expect too much clarity. But neither is there any time to waste.

My own inclination is to do what I can as an individual, to urge my elected representatives to take serious and urgent action, to offer the benefit of my own insights into what action is needed and to support consultations both national and local, from DEFRA to 'Everybody Matters'. With regard to the latter, I believe there may be a role for the Ipswich Society.

If you agree, please contact me. One last thought. I may well be preaching to the converted. Whether you are or not, and without prejudice or obligation, please let me know.

Mike Brain

Will road pricing solve congestion?

No but it is probably the best opportunity to reduce the gridlock we are currently heading for. Road pricing is a move away from the current system of vehicle taxation to paying for road use on the basis of distance travelled, the rate varying with congestion. Low densities of traffic out of peak hours equals a low rate per journey: rush hour slow traffic will mean a very high rate per mile. However, the case for road pricing hasn't yet been made but it is being debated and considered. The problem is that as we all become better off we need to travel more and to travel further, and more of us become independent travellers with our own vehicles. We cannot build our way out of the problem. More and better roads make for easier travel so more people use them and they soon become congested (twenty years in the case of the Orwell Bridge). This doesn't mean that no new roads will be built or existing roads improved, but they will have to have a strong economic case and a low environmental impact.

People need to travel (although cutting your personal carbon footprint is probably easiest achieved by reducing your annual private car mileage), and goods need to be delivered on time (and again reducing food miles on what you eat helps.) The target is to cut congestion in half, which will bring environmental benefits, and allow the UK to continue to compete in the global marketplace.

There is widespread support for road pricing, particularly for the business community who cannot operate with an unknown (journey time). They are likely to pay more than their current Road Fund Licence but if road charging reduces delays, enables people to move to their destination on time and goods delivered as required then the advantages will outweigh the costs.

Road charging needs support from other new technologies for improving traffic flow, variable speed limits of congested roads, traffic lights linked by computer to reduce stop-start motoring, and increased use of public transport by the majority of us (particularly for short journeys). The latter will need to be achieved by better quality vehicles, a frequent and regular service and a smooth journey that is not delayed by single occupancy private cars.

The difficulty will be in deciding the system used for road charging. DART on the Dartford Crossing uses microwave technology for frequent users. On the M6 toll motorists stop at a pay booth; and an increasing number of cars have satellite navigation systems that know vehicle location and can calculate its speed and direction. Some drivers even pay their insurance on a distance-travelled basis. But any system must be robust and trusted; we've all heard stories of Norfolk tractors not paying the congestion charge when they've been 'seen' by CCTV cameras travelling through central London.

The system will need to be simple, the charges reasonable but effective and journey costs will need to be understood in advance. All of which will take time -as does my car journey to work every rush our morning!

John Norman

Editor – noted in the press, and providing much food for thought!

'Motorists' groups have warned that any policy to limit driving or make it more expensive would be politically dangerous. Nearly 2 million people signed an online petition calling for pay-as-you-drive schemes to be dropped.'

'According to Government projections, a further 5.7 million cars will be on British roads over the next twenty years, increasing traffic load by 30%.'

'The average adult mileage for shopping was 125 in 1989, but had soared to 444 in 2005.'

'City bouses have increased to a record £1.4 bn this year. Bonuses across the economy rose this spring to £26.4 bn, comfortably exceeding the country's entire transport budget.'

Why more flats than houses?

Many people find it hard to understand why there are so many flats being built in Ipswich when it seems that the greater need is for family houses, especially 'affordable' ones. It's not a problem unique to Ipswich. The proportion of new homes that are house rather than flats has fallen nationally by 25%. Houses now account for just over 50% of total development compared with 80% in 2000.

The situation is worse in those towns enjoying a renaissance in city living. Figures for Ipswich are not immediately available but in similar towns elsewhere back in 2000 some 15% of new homes were high rise appartements: now it is 75%! There is a dual reason for this growth which is particularly clear in Ipswich.

The first is the availability of land – or rather the lack of availability of suburban space for semi-detached and detached houses. But brownfield land close to the centre of towns like Ipswich commands a high price and thus demands high density. Government Planning guidelines also demand high density building to maximise use of the space. Hence the massive apartment blocks on the Waterfront and nearby.

The second reason is demand from purchasers who include divorced and separated couples, at least one of whom needs a smaller property, buy-to-let investors who prefer maintenance-free managed property rather than older stock, speculators and commuters.

As for pricing in this market, within any development there are the penthouses and the 'front row seats' with their Waterfront views commanding high prices, usually substantially more than the true cost of construction. And there are those apartments that don't have a view, where the developer fixes the price to sell, a price that isn't necessarily related to the build cost, but is more likely akin to what a buyer can afford, i.e. the typical salary of a 25 year old multiplied by five, which is the likely building society loan on that salary. Add the required deposit and, importantly, a contribution from a second income and the price of the cheapest property is decided. Which still leaves a poor family needing an affordable house!

'Everybody Matters'

One-Ipswich Draft Sustainable Community Strategy

In June 2007 the Local Strategic Partnership, one-Ipswich, launched a consultation on its new draft sustainable community strategy. One-Ipswich is made up of key organisations from the public, voluntary, community and business sectors to work together towards delivering shared outcomes for the residents and communities within Ipswich.

The consultation document sets out the vision for Ipswich over the next ten years and what the partnership will do to turn this vision into reality. In the foreword one-Ipswich chair, Liz Harsant, highlights the development of Ipswich into the fastest growing urban centre in the East of England, whose present population of 130,000 is set to exceed 150,000 within the next 15 years, with around

a third of a million people living in its immediate catchment area. The town is a key player in Regional Cities East and Haven Gateway Partnership (with Growth Point status). Ipswich is also a centre for sport, entertainment and culture: indeed it is a multi-cultural centre with more than sixty languages spoken in the town.

But Ipswich also has major problems with crime and disorder, drugs, prostitution, poor health, sub-standard housing, poor transport links and congestion. All these problems need to be addressed. After listening to public opinion and having gathered facts and figures, the one-Ipswich Board has agreed to focus on delivering the following outcomes.

1. Everyone should have a roof over their head.

With more people coming to Ipswich to live, work and study, there will be a growing demand for affordable homes and social rented housing. This will be addressed by exploring how housing can be regenerated at and above first floor level in Ipswich, and developing projects to address the impact of new housing on services.

2. For people to enjoy good health.

The death rate among residents under 75 in the Town and Bridge Wards is over double the rate in the country as a whole, and there is a significant relationship between deprivation and the proportion of people with mental health. The partnership must therefore address the mental health and well-being of adults, young people and their carers, tackle teenage pregnancy and to improve the efficiency of the way partners work to improve health and care services.

3. There is work for all.

Ipswich will require a workforce that has the right type of qualifications, skills and abilities to fit the changing profile of the economy. This requires improving access to information about learning opportunities for adults, changing attitudes to skills and training development where take-up of education and training is especially low, and improving engagement between the business community and further education establishment by setting up a mentoring scheme for business to work more closely with schools.

4. Create a better environment for people in Ipswich.

New growth will bring new demand for public services and leisure, sports and cultural facilities. Ipswich residents have identified traffic congestion, public transport and green issues, including recycling, as priority areas for improvement. The partnership will therefore seek to address how to cope with growth, attract inward investment to strengthen the economy of Ipswich, improve transport connections with other regional cities and the rest of the UK, collectively address issues relating to transport and service infrastructure, tackle climate change, create planning policy to address parking issues and promote recycling.

5. Keeping people safe

Ipswich currently accounts for 30% of all crime and 38% of all anti-social behaviour incidents in Suffolk and Domestic Violence accounts for over 40% of violent crime in Ipswich. There is a specific problem relating to Class A drugs by London-based offenders. The vibrant night-time economy in Ipswich presents another series of challenges and the number of incidents of recorded crime attributed to alcohol is above the national average. The partnership will therefore support 'Operation Academy' which is aimed at drug and crime issues with particular emphasis on wider

community issues in the Borough, and promote positive management of the night time economy by working with businesses and communities to address violence and anti-social behaviour.

6. People live in friendly and supportive communities and have a greater say.

Engaging communities is integral to delivering the community strategy. The Area Forum structure provides regular public meetings and 'street-meets' are arranged to listen to what people think are the most important issues and what we should do about them. Neighbourhood policing is also vital in responding to issues at local level, and the partnership will therefore seek to ensure new communities are better integrated in Ipswich while the needs of existing residents continue to be addressed. The partnership will seek to improve access to services for all communities and ensure that Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Area Forums and Children's Clusters work together in a more sophisticated way; improve the quality and accessibility of information for the people of Ipswich; develop more ways for giving people a voice through better democratic engagement; and provide facilities and activities for young people.

The consultation ran from mid-June to 7 September by means of workshops and through documentation on the website for one-Ipswich (www.one-ipswich.org.uk) inviting on-line comments. It is unfortunate that these dates did not allow this consultation to be drawn to Ipswich Society members' attention but this will not be the end of the process. The next stage will be to define realistic goals for the short medium and long terms at local and strategic levels.

Area Forums will provide a valuable means for ongoing consultation in the process, though readers of the last two Newsletters will perhaps appreciate the potential synergy between this initiative and the issues I have highlighted in my 'Change the Weather' articles. While the process is clearly open to all residents of Ipswich, I wonder if there is perhaps a role for the Ipswich Society as a resource for consultation on matters of particular relevance to the Society in parallel with Area Forums, street-meets and other mechanisms proposed under Outcome 6 above. If you agree and would be interested in participating in such a possibility please contact me.

Mike Brain

Car clubs

Heard of car clubs? They are becoming increasingly popular in London and there is some pressure to establish one close to the Ipswich Waterfront. They are run by commercial organisations but individuals who don't need a car every day or choose not to own one can join the club and gain use of a car for an hour, a day or a weekend.

The car club provider rents parking spaces, usually in the car park of a residential block, and provides medium-sized cars. Members then use the internet to book a vehicle which can be for as little as thirty minutes or as long as six months – very useful facility for getting to the DIY store or into the Suffolk countryside, for an occasional visit to relatives or to the hospital.

The individual saves on road tax, insurance and on the need for a parking space (making some of the Waterfront apartments very attractive). It costs between £1 and £5 per week to become a member and between £25 and £35 per day to use the vehicle. Cheaper membership club cars cost more to use. The convenience of a readily available car, regularly serviced and ready to drive away

is said to be beneficial not only to the club member but also the environment. Cars are typically Vauxhall Astras or VW Golfs depending on the commercial organisation running the club. They are changed after six months.

Snippets (2)

Holywells Park

We wish IBC well in its bid for Heritage Lottery funding for Holywells Park. The hope is to attract £3m to go with the Council's £1m in substantially renovating and improving the park. As all Ipswichians know, the town is blessed with parks, not just un number or size but in the spread of locations. Holywells has always been appreciated by the residents nearby but is also close enough to the Waterfront to enhance the attractions of living by the water.

Ipswich Buses – public asset

Only 13 council-owned bus companies remain in Britain and Ipswich Buses is one of the smallest left. But this is a case of 'small is beautiful' because standards are high and the company is responsive to the needs of a town that it knows well. Malcolm Robson, the manager, say, 'Herein Ipswich the council seems committed to retaining the bus company and we are doing well at present.' We hope both remain true.

Students squashed

University Campus Suffolk is likely to have 3,000 students who will need housing in Suffolk, many of them in Ipswich, in five years' time. Planning applications for purpose-built of adapted student accommodation are coming in. The Society will be monitoring the quality of the proposals. One recent one, since rejected, was described by one of our planning monitors as providing 'coffins' rather than 'bedsits' or 'studios'.

Not as bad as you think!

An independent survey of traffic in towns and cities in Britain ranks Ipswich behind only Dundee, Aberdeen and Telford as most free from traffic congestion. Motorists who don't drive in other comparable towns might find this hard to believe. However, regional and national authorities will have to realise that traffic in 'the fastest growing urban centre in East Anglia' will get worse unless there are resources made available for improvements in both roads and public transport.

Flowers respected

Ipswich Central's 'Clean and Bright' Project should be congratulated on providing the 45 multi-tier flower planters in the town centre. They have been colourful, well maintained and mostly free from vandalism. Hope it goes on till the end of the season!

Newcomers

Ipswich has received many waves of migrants over the centuries. Our multi-cultural background is illustrated in the exhibition 'Coming to Ipswich' in the Town Hall Gallery 3, the former 'Library' upstairs. There are said to be 60 languages spoken in Ipswich nowadays.

Michael Fryer Photographic Collection

Details of this collection were given in the July Newsletter. But at the time no official deposit number had been received from the Suffolk Record Office. It can now be consulted using the call number K820 at the Ipswich Office, Gatacre Road. In acknowledging the receipt of the collection, Bridget Hanley, the Public Services Archivist, writes that 'it will be of great use to searchers both now and in the future – it is just the kind of material that often doesn't make its way to the Record Office, and yet has a very important story to tell.' The Record Office staff are always very willing to advise on any material relevant to life in Ipswich, or Suffolk in general, so before you bin it, take it along for assessment at Gatacre Road.

Ruth Serjeant

Plaque Design Corrected

Members who noticed oddities in the design of the Edith Maud Cook plaque on the front cover of the July Newsletter are to be commended for their sharp eyes. We accidentally provided our printer with an early version of the design. You will be pleased to know that the actual plaque installed at 90 Fore Street is correct. Perhaps you might like to see it on this fine old building?

It does give an opportunity to say a little more about this remarkable lady about whom little seems to be known locally until her descendants contacted the Society. She is stated by the RAF Museum as being the first woman pilot in Britain. She learned to fly a Blériot monoplane in early 1910 at the Claude Graham-White School at Pau in France and made several solo flights, although she did not obtain a pilot's licence before her death later that year.

Empty apartments

City-living apartments are springing up across the town centre, with a multitude on the Waterfront. They are proving to be very popular with young professionals who frequently share a two bedroom property and enjoy the lifestyle afforded by being so close to work and the bars and the clubs. New apartments are clean, modern and self-contained, usually roomier than renovated older properties, and some even enjoy a view.

But while some are occupied, others remain empty, with an overall feeling that there are insufficient residents to form a community. So who is buying, and can afford to leave vacant substantial numbers of flats? Who are the investors who can afford to mothball new homes?

Sharp investors are prudent with their money. There are traditionally three different markets that offer a return on large scale deposits – stocks and shares, bonds and other government borrowings, and property. If we look back at the relative merits of each over the last ten years property (particularly the domestic market) has outperformed not only the others but substantially outperformed investments such as building societies.

There are other reasons why these multi-storey apartments aren't let. They tend to be geared to limited demographic groups. Certainly 18-30 year old singles are a prime target, offering them a chance to get on to the housing ladder before getting hitched. And couples whose offspring have flown the nest and want to 'downsize', not necessarily to a smaller property but one that is easier to

maintain, more convenient for access to amenities and 'safer' by being above ground. But they are not for families. Planners may insist on developers' contributions to schools and play spaces but high rise balconies are no place for an inquisitive toddler.

So it's city investors using their bonuses to snap up much needed new homes, then sitting on them for a few years; buy-to-let investors who were really hoping for a tenant but are still seeing the value of their investment climb; and the banks, who lent the major slice of capital in the first place, happy if their bottom line is in double figures. Developers are of course keen to sell to investors who are more likely to buy 'off-plan', who have the capital rather than the delays of a mortgage purchase, and are likely to buy more than one property.

The losers are the community the other tenants who don't have the benefit of neighbours for company, the businesses trying to sell the ground floor spaces as restaurants and retail outlets, but most importantly the wider community who see empty apartments and miss out on the contribution these potential residents could be making to the town.

John Norman

Ipswich Heritage Group

I have represented the Society on a number of local organisations involved with cultural matters and the most rewarding of these is the Ipswich Heritage Group. It was created by Tim Heyburn, then the Head of Ipswich Museums, who felt that his organisation was the focal point around which all the many heritage bodies could come together. He was right.

It has been a valuable networking forum for many groups and once again I've been impressed with the range of activities and the depth of appreciation fostered by societies in our town. The main contributors to the group are:

Ipswich Maritime Trust, Friends of Ipswich Museum, Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, Suffolk Archaeological Unit, Ipswich Transport Museum, Ipswich Co-operative Society Education, Ipswich Building Society, Clifford Road Primary School Museum, Ipswich and Regional Blue Badge Guides, Ipswich Town Guides, Suffolk Record Office, GeoSuffolk, Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Tourist Information Centre, Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service and, of course, ourselves.

Secretarial support has been provided by the Museums Service and I am pleased to say the since the merger with Colchester this has continued. In fact, Peter Berridge and other leading colleagues from Colchester have been very supportive of our organisation which had no equivalent in Colchester. And Colchester who would be helpful.

At our meeting in July, the question of recording Second World war installations and sites in Ipswich was discussed. Something similar has been done in Colchester. Are there any Ipswich Society members who would be interested in exploring and recording such World War II heritage in Ipswich? If so, please let me know and I could put you in touch with people in Ipswich.

Neil Salmon

At least six ropewalks in Ipswich

Rope is essential for shipping, farming and industry. Over the centuries there have been a number of ropewalks in Ipswich. A ropewalk is a long narrow place where the ropemaker spins his yarns and makes his ropes by walking back and forth twisting yarns into strands and then strands into rope. Everyone in Ipswich is aware of there being a rope walk where the road bearing that name is today. In actual fact today's Rope Walk follows the path of what was originally 'Ropers Lane'. The walk was actually parallel, but to the river side of Ropers Lane, as is clearly seen in Ogilby's Town Map of 1674. It was the biggest and oldest ropewalk in Ipswich and was operating from 1625 to 1798, with a small part still being used until 1818.

Ogilby's map also shows a further two ropeyards (another name for a ropewalk), one at the bottom of Bishop's Hill and another near where the brewery is now. Quite how long they were operating I have been unable to find out. After the Ropers Lane walk closed down and was built on, there was still need for rope in the town. One 1844 directory lists five ropemakers, but where did they make their rope? The Tithe Map of St Mary Stoke from 1839 shows that Nathaniel Rand had a ropewalk at right angles to Wherstead Road, although his place of business in the directories is given as Quay Street where there was probably not the land available to be used in such a crowded area of town. Where the other ropemakers made or brought their rope in from has yet to be discovered. Operating from at least 1867 to 1890 there was a ropewalk in Felixstowe Road, just past the end of Alan Road on the right hand side going out of town. From the Ordnance Survey map of 1882 it can be seen that the walk was about 500 ft long by 15 ft wide. It was first worked by Walter Cuckow and later taken over by one of his men, George Finney.

About the same time from the Ordnance Survey map of 1884, there was another ropewalk at the bottom of Crane Hill. Who worked it I cannot find out as yet. However, apart from the Cuckow there were just two other rope and twine makers who were listed in Stevens Ipswich Directory of 1885 – G W Holmes of Curriers Lane and Charles Taylor of Dogs Head Street, and probably one of them was using this walk. Perhaps their ropemaker was Wm Rose, who was living at the time in Handford Cut and gave his occupation as 'ropemaker'.

Whilst to have a listing a rope and twine makers did not automatically mean that they made their own rope (they may have bought some or all of their stock in) by the numbers listed it is quite likely that there may be more ropewalks still to be found in and around Ipswich. Whilst the 20th century saw more and more ropes being bought into Ipswich from the large industrial roperies in London and the north of England, there was a small walk at Hadleigh up until just before the Second World War, and the last remaining ropemaker in Suffolk, the Haverhill Rope, Twine and Sack Company, ceased trading in the early 1980s.

Des Pawson

Landscape on a Spring Line

On a fine but blustery Felixstowe evening, the gardens of the Spa Pavilion offered a friendly and familiar welcome against the backdrop of the grey and stormy North Sea. As he led us on a walk southwards, Bob Markham explained how the distinctive geology of the sea cliff, which has shelly

Red Crag sand at the top resting on London Clay beneath, has been used to enhance the landscaping of this lovely seaside park.

The steeply sloping cliff provides interesting changes in level, with paths and steps opening up different views at every turn, but it is the water regime in the underlying strata which gives the gardens their distinctive character. Natural springs issuing from the junction between the Red Crag and the London Clay about half way up the cliff provide unique landscaping opportunities and the gardens abound with pools, grottoes and cascades.

The water pouring out of the cliff reduces its stability and we saw much evidence of slope failure in the form of cracks in walls, uneven steps and leaning trees. Bob reminded us of the landslide in 1993 which caused the Spa Pavilion to be closed for the season while the cliffs behind were shored up. The 19th century spa which lends its name to the area, as well as using crag water also used water from a 177ft deep well which went down to an aquifer below the London Clay and which was rich in 'restorative minerals'.

At the end of the walk we were able to view an exposure of Red Crag in the cliffs at the south end of the gardens and then we climbed down onto the beach to see the London Clay platform at the foot of the beach at low tide.

This spring line geology is present on many slopes in East Suffolk, not least in Christchurch Park and Holywells Park in Ipswich. The renovations in Christchurch Park have shown commendable use of the natural landscape in retaining and enhancing the existing water features and it is to be hoped that the same brief will be applied in Holywells Park.

The Spa Pavilion gardens featured in the new Felixstowe seafront and Town Centre masterplan (<http://www.felixstowefuture.com/>) which contains the sentence, "The gardens could all contain revitalised water features to reflect the connection to the sea and spa heritage." Yes, please!

Caroline Markham

Orwell Park Observatory; The Grand Tour

Dates for your diary

I have arranged an Ipswich Society visit to Colonel Tomline's fine Victorian observatory in Nacton for the evening of 28 February 2008. Designed and built in 1872 by Architect John MacVicar Anderson, the observatory houses a 10 inch telescope made by local engineer Wilfred Airy (son of Astronomer Royal George Biddell Airy of Playford). The Orwell Astronomical Society Ipswich (OASI) runs the observatory now, maintaining it in excellent condition and using the telescopes for night sky viewing. Our host for the evening is OASI member Paul Whiting FRAS who will give us a guided tour of the observatory and telescopes and a peek at the heavens if the weather permits. ***Caroline Markham***

The Grand Tour

Members might be interested in a series of six illustrated talks entitled 'More than a Holiday: Travellers to Eighteenth-Century Italy' to be given by Hugh Belsey, former curator of

Gainsborough's house in Sudbury and a leading authority on art and society of the Eighteenth Century. The talks will be given on Monday afternoons (2.15pm) starting on 22 October at Ipswich Institute. Tickets for the whole course are £38 or £8.50 per lecture. Details obtainable in a brochure from Ipswich Institute.

The Norwich Society in Ipswich

We were very pleased to welcome a large party of Norwich Society members on 20 June. Their coach dropped them off in Coprolite Street, because our first aim was to show them the Waterfront developments which can be seen best of all from the mezzanine floor of Coffee link in the Neptune Marina block. But the very name 'Coprolite Street' is intriguing to visitors. I'm told it's probably the only street in the world so named and that geologists from other countries have been known to pose proudly beside one the street name plates!*

However we didn't dwell much on that since enjoying a cup of coffee was top priority. Then three of our members who are also experienced town guides – Margaret Hancock and Lois and Chris Terry - each took a group of thirteen on a tour, walking along the northern quays to see Isaac Lord's, the Custom House and the work at Regatta Quay and so up to Fore Street and cutting through various lanes past the remains of Blackfriars, the Sutton Hoo screen at the Old Cattle Market and breaking for lunch at Cromwell Square.

After lunch we reconvened to visit the Unitarian Meeting House and Willis, followed by sharing a chuckle in front of Giles' Grandma and on to the Cornhill, the Ancient House, Northgate Street and finishing at Christchurch mansion. Those visitors who still had plenty of energy left dispersed to see the Mansion. We hope that those who merely wanted to rest and drink their tea will come back to Ipswich and explore the mansion. We shall be arranging a visit of our members to Norwich next year when their Society will be the hosts.

Neil Salmon

*(If you didn't know, coprolite is fossilised dung rich phosphates and found in Suffolk coastal areas. It was a valuable source of fertiliser exploited by the pioneering Edward Packard in his factory built here on the quay in 1850.)

Letters to the Editor

New 'Shared Space' in Ipswich from Mike Brain

As a former scientist and engineer, I usually applaud the exploration of new ideas by means of well planned experiments. The 'Shared Space' in Ipswich (Newsletter July 2007) is literally close to home for me, and I agree that there is much in the development to recommend it, and not merely compared with what went before.

Author Anita Seymour admits, however, that it was debatable to apply the 'Shared Space' principle to a major arterial road such as Handford Road, and this represents the gravest of several concerns for me. Handford Road is used not merely by light vehicles but by HGVs of all kinds, from buses and coaches to the largest articulated delivery lorries serving the town centre shops. Since there is barely room for two such vehicles to pass each other in the roadway, there is no meaningful sense in which this 'Space' can be 'Shared' with pedestrians: the vehicles have no option than to take whatever space they need, and the consequences for pedestrians can be frankly, terrifying!

I would therefore be interested to know whether the residents and other pedestrian users of Handford Road consider the experiment an improvement or a cause for concern. I wonder whether such a narrow arterial road, flanked in places by claustrophobically high retaining walls could be seen as anything but 'a runway for motorised vehicles', and seeking to 'reduce the sense' of this by removing road markings and lowering the pavement merely serves to heighten the sense of extreme vulnerability and danger for pedestrians.

Moreover, the height of the kerb has to be restored at bus stops in order to provide disabled access, creating a further hazard for anyone stepping on or off what they expected to be only a 50mm kerb. However, I am very happy that Handford Road should be included with the central aim of 'giving streets back to local communities', since this may help with another significant challenge faced by this neighbourhood. So how might his goal be achieved? By ceasing its use as an arterial road, perhaps?

Handford Road 'Shared Space' - A reply from Anita Seymour, Senior Planning Officer, Suffolk County Council

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Mike Brain's letter. We acknowledge from the outset of the project the Handford Road presented a challenge in respect of 'Shared Space' and the approach undertaken reflects the constraints presented to the design team and advice from our Highway colleagues. As a demonstration project the lessons learnt will feed into subsequent projects in this county.

We have recently completed traffic survey of Handford Road assessing speeds and usage including pedestrians and cycles. A further perception survey will be undertaken later this year. Results of the monitoring study along with our European partner's experience of 'Shared Space' will be published in a final document at the end of the project.

Listed Parks in Ipswich from Bob Kindred, Conservation Officer, Ipswich Borough Council

I was slightly puzzled by your reference on page 8 of your July Newsletter to Ipswich having three Listed parks and I assume you are thinking of Christchurch, Chantry and Holywells?

I wish this was indeed the case but the position is that while they are all within designated conservation areas – Christchurch 1974 (part) and 1985; Holywells 2003 and Chantry 2005 – only Christchurch (added June 1984) and Chantry (July 1988) are on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, both at Grade II.

Our several attempts to get Holywells added to the National Register have been rejected despite the eligibility for the Heritage Lottery Fund Historic Park Restoration Programme.

The third Ipswich item on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens is Ipswich Old and New Cemetery added December 2001 although it is neither a park nor a garden.

Leiston Abbey and Red House, Aldeburgh

The Ipswich Society visit on 8 August 2007

At 9.30 am on a very pleasant morning thirty of us set off by coach and were soon enjoying a coffee and visit to the farm shop near Aldeburgh. Our next stop was Leiston Abbey which belongs to English Heritage and is managed by the Pro Corda Trust, a national school for young music players based at Leiston Abbey House.

St Mary's Abbey was founded at Minsmere in 1182. Owing to this 'unhealthy swampy site' the Order of Augustinian Canons Regular obtained permission to transfer to the present site near Leiston in 1363. After the Dissolution Leiston Abbey was granted to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. It was used for various purposes until in 1946 it was bequeathed to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. In 1977 it was purchased by the Pro Corda Trust.

It was very interesting to explore the abbey ruins and read the English Heritage notices about life in the past. In contrast we could see the youngsters with their instruments milling around the buildings used by the school as rehearsal studios, barn concert hall, recital hall and recording studios. Next we called at Aldeburgh church to see Benjamin Britten's and Peter Pears' graves and the stunning John Piper window depicting the three church parables of Britten. As a cat lover I became fascinated with a book in the church about Samson, the Aldeburgh cat, and a carving of him. Finally, the coach driver managed to squeeze the coach down the lane to the Red House, the former home of Britten and Pears. As a fan of Britten for over forty years I was thrilled to visit this house. In fact he was one of the reasons I moved to Ipswich from Lancashire in 1970.

We were made welcome with a drink and an introductory talk and DVD. We were invited to look round the library and exhibition. I have seen all Britten's operas and was delighted to see the exhibits concerning *Death in Venice* and *The Turn of the Screw*. There is so much stored in the archives that there is only room to show so much at a time.

We then went round the actual Red House which has a long history and was originally a farm. It has a lived-in feeling as it is still used for entertaining. It was very touching to see the cosy 'old dining room' where the Queen and Prince Philip had lunch before opening the Maltings. It was also affecting to see Britten's and Pears' old comfortable arm chairs and all their furniture. As Pears was a great collector, there are many superb paintings by artists as varied as Constable, Gainsborough, David Hockney, Harry Becker, Philip Wilson Steer, Mary Potter and many more.

Everyone seemed to enjoy this visit even though they were not as obsessed as I! We are all very grateful to Beryl Jary for organising such a superb outing.

Valerie Lloyd