

Issue 177 Newsletter Oct 2009

Contents:

- Editorial: Assets
- Our Annual Awards
- Winter Lectures
- Cocktails & Canapes
- Chairman on Current Affairs
- Our Corporate Members
- New Members
- Film Theatre - Now What?
- Some Shorts
- Recent Planning Matters
- Parks: Latest News
- EEDA Invests in Ipswich
- New Sports Facility
- Ambassador to the World
- News & Comment
- BBQ Summers
- A Mangled Inscription
- Which Cromwell Square?
- A Trip Back in Time
- Tourists in the Book
- Letters to the Editor
- Peter Bruff: Ipswich's Brunel
- Colchester and N Essex
- Two Booklets Received
- Town Hall Galleries
- Your Committee & Events

The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2009ISSUE 177

Contents

Editorial: Assets	2	Ambassador to the World	22
Our Annual Awards	2	News & Comment	13
Winter Lectures	3	BBQ Summers	14
Cocktails & Canapes	3	A Mangled Inscription	15
Chairman on Current Affairs	4	Which Cromwell Square?	15
Our Corporate Members	6	A Trip Back in Time	16
New Members	6	Tourists in the Book	17
Film Theatre - Now What?	6	Letters to the Editor	18
Some Shorts	7	Peter Bruff: Ipswich's Brunel	20
Recent Planning Matters	8	Colchester and N Essex	22
Parks: Latest News	10	Two Booklets Received	23
EEDA Invests in Ipswich	11	Town Hall Galleries	23
New Sports Facility	11	Your Committee & Events	24

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Another of Brian Agnew's photographs showcasing us to look up
Do you know your buildings? Where is this bank? (See page 15)

Editorial: Assets

The greatest natural asset of Ipswich is surely its site and location. Is there a better in England? Sheltered by hills from the prevailing winds and sitting snugly at the head of a navigable estuary, the site must have made the Angles and Saxons gasp with pleasure to find a place more promising than anywhere around the Elbe. (A pity that the inhabitants over the centuries haven't always appreciated the superb possibilities which nature has given them!)

Ipswich's two greatest man-made assets are its dock and its parks - three large parks and many smaller ones and recreation grounds - which have long been regarded as unrivalled by any town of comparable size. Our Newsletters usually contain updates on what is happening around the dock. Less frequently there are updates about the parks, so I commend Pat Gondris's article to your attention. Things are happening there, too.

I'm also pleased to point out that in Letters to the Editor you can find a record number of five letters from members. It's always interesting to read the views of our members. Those who take the trouble to write often provide new insights and, of course, create variety in the Newsletter. Thank you - and may there be more to follow.

We are holding back more previews of next year's 50th anniversary of the Society's history, but there will be many special and absorbing events which you'll be able to read about in the 2010 Newsletters. It should be a good time to be a member of The Ipswich Society.

Neil Salmon

Our Annual Awards

Wednesday, 11 November, 7.30 pm at St Nicholas Church Centre

This is the Society's most important regular annual event. Despite the recession there are likely to be about twenty nominations from members of new buildings and refurbishment schemes. They will be illustrated on screen and will be described and commented on before the judges' decisions are announced.

The judges as usual remain anonymous but they represent different backgrounds - an architect, a quantity surveyor, a planner, a builder and a layman. The presentation will be by Bob Allen, a former chairman of the Society and, as many of you know, a perceptive and entertaining speaker. After the main business there will be an opportunity to discuss matters with friends and with the owners, architects and builders who will attend to receive their awards. Drinks and nibbles will be provided. Car parking in Cromwell Square and in nearby streets where allowed!

Your committee hopes to meet many members, 'old' and new, on this special evening.

Winter Lectures

These lectures will take place in Museum Street Methodist Church on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 pm. Please feel free to bring your friends. There is no charge for anyone.

21 October -- People Commemorated by Blue Plaques

Dr John Blatchly will talk about some of the notable people commemorated by our Blue Plaques. He has long been interested in the lives and achievements of distinguished local people and was very helpful in providing advice and information when we first set up the scheme in 2000. He will also include other candidates worthy of such recognition.

9 December -- The New Wolsey Theatre - its Achievements, Ambitions and Plans

Our speaker will be David Edwards, Chairman of the Theatre's Board of Directors. He has been Chief Executive of Derby Playhouse and much involved with Aldeburgh Music. As a local man and a great enthusiast for the New Wolsey, he is in an ideal position to assess the role of theatre in this community.

13 January -- Flood Protection for Ipswich

Nick Rowlinson of the Environment Agency is Project Manager of the Ipswich flood protection scheme. He will therefore be able to describe and explain the extent and purpose of this £50m project which will protect the Waterfront and much of the town centre.

10 February -- The Problem of Empty Homes

David Ireland, our speaker, is Chief Executive of the Empty Homes Agency, an independent charity which highlights the waste of empty property in England and helps provide solutions to bring them back into use. David has had recent discussions with Ipswich Borough Council about empty homes, so he should have some local issues to talk about, as well as national.

10 March -- Two Distinguished Suffolk Naval Families

This talk about the Saumarez and Broke families will be given by Tim Voelcker who has recently published a book about Admiral Saumarez. The local connections with Broke Hall and Shrubland Hall should make this an intriguing lecture to end our season.

Cocktails & Canapes

... on the Roof of the Willis Building

On Friday 19 June we held our cocktails and canapes evening on the top floor of the Willis Building. Over one hundred members came along, and it was lovely to see some new faces at the event. We were served a variety of drinks and delicious nibbles in the Orwell and Gipping Suites and had unrestricted access to the roof garden. It was a blustery evening but at least it didn't rain. The views from the roof were fantastic and a great many members spent a large proportion of the evening taking advantage of them, despite the chill!

Music for the party was provided by the excellent Westwind Saxophone Quartet. Many thanks to Bernard Westren for their participation. The Willis Company were excellent hosts and their catering

team served us impeccably. The evening finished at 9.30 pm - after we had apparently drunk them out of Pimm's! I hope that everyone enjoyed themselves. I plan to organise similar events in the future.

Su Marsden

Chairman on Current Affairs

Our July committee meeting was held in the splendours of Suffolk New College which is now open. We were privileged to be the first group to use the building. Your committee has previously been meeting in the old College for a number of years and we have held some AGMs and Award ceremonies there, courtesy of the College. The new building is really rather fine and can only be properly appreciated now that the hoardings have come down. The total site is large, even without the southern part nearer the Waterfront which now belongs to the University (UCS). The New College is a low rise building arranged along the periphery of the site along Rope Walk and Alexandra Park.

The rest of the site, including the old tower block (soon to go) is to be left free of buildings. Their sports hall will fill the corner of Grimwade Street and the present entrance to the College, and the rest of the site will be sports pitches and general greenery - a splendid concept. Do go and see it! Currently in the news again is SnOasis. The present company is Irish and in some financial difficulties, one is told. The concept has not been helped by plans from Suffolk County Council to build a major waste incinerator nearby. We await developments.

Mention of SCC reminds me of the proposed re-organisation of the county by the Boundary Committee. Court cases have deferred the decision yet again and with council elections due in May and a General Election, it appears we may be stuck with the status quo.

You will all be aware of the splendid redevelopment of St Lawrence Church into cafe/tea rooms. A complete 'family' of five bells which date back to Wolsey's time have been cleaned and restored and the tower made suitable to house them and cope with their ringing. Ipswich will hear these bells, the oldest complete set in the country, which would have been heard by Wolsey himself! (Editor: job done - well publicised on Radio 4, 10 September.)

In the planning world, the two major prospects are the Tesco application for the old B&Q site and the Ipswich School plans to move its playing fields and develop that location. Both continue to generate great interest. The Ipswich School plan highlights the problem of a suitable infrastructure. All too often (almost always) in this country, developments (sometimes quite large) take place and only afterwards do we address the supporting structures and services. Your Society is pushing hard to have roads, accesses, bus routes etc planned as part of such developments. And there is a good precedent - Ravenswood, on land owned by the IBC - where before you bought your property you knew the bus route and the bus stops which would be provided by the time you moved in. If it could be done there, it can and should be done everywhere.

Such lack of forward thinking and planning is demonstrated in road closures. I was reminded of this when Upper Brook Street was recently dug up again. In this case it was caused by instability of the road surface after last year's renewal of the gas main. But too often traffic disruptions are caused by

the utility companies not working together. There have been demands for many years that the companies which supply sewer, water, gas, electricity get together and plan their maintenance together. Obviously exigencies have to be dealt with as they occur, but routine maintenance can be planned. Come to that, why are all these services put under carriageways? Schemes to put all services into a duct running along the road edge have been canvassed for decades but it never happens, even in totally new developments (like Ravenswood).

You will be pleased to know that our plans to mark our 50th anniversary are well advanced. A programme of lectures and meetings is almost ready, addressed by some national figures. The year will also see the publication of the history of The Ipswich Society, a work that has been in the making for a number of years.

By the time you read this, the Heritage Open Days will have occurred. This year promises to be better than ever with a number of new properties and a bus shuttle between some of them. I mentioned in my last report that plans were afoot to provide Ipswich with a statue of Wolsey. A competition has been established and an artist and proposal will be chosen. Then the fund raising begins!

The Society would also like to see a competition set up to design the redevelopment of the site in St Matthew's Street between Berners Street and St George's Street (to be known as St George's House). This is a vital site which is a natural entrance to the town from that direction. We want to be sure Ipswich gets a building worthy of the site.

I should like to end by offering my and your congratulations to Tom Gondris on the award of his MBE for "voluntary services to conservation and heritage in Suffolk". Richly deserved!

Jack Chapman

Our Corporate Members

The Ipswich Society is very grateful to the following organisations which, as Corporate Members, show their support for our objectives in Ipswich.

- 77 Bar Eatery
- AXA(UK)Ltd
- Archial Architects
- Ashton Graham, Solicitors
- Barefoot & Gilles
- Barnes Construction
- Bennetts (East Anglia) LLP
- Braceforce Ltd
- Castons
- DBK Connect
- Dance East
- East of England Co-operative Society
- Ensors
- Ipswich Building Society

- Ipswich Buses
- Ipswich High School
- Ipswich Museum
- Ipswich Port Ltd
- Ipswich Record Office
- Ipswich School
- Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd
- Johns, Slater & Haward
- KLH Architects
- Mrs E Ambler
- Orwells Furniture
- PKF(UK)LLP
- PR Ipswich (Butterm'kt Centre)
- Playle and Partners
- St Joseph's College
- St Peter's by the Waterfront
- Suffolk New College
- The Dove Street Inn
- The Galley Restaurant Ltd
- The New Wolsey Theatre
- The Suffolk Association of Architects
- V A Marriott Ltd
- Warren & Downey
- West Highland Estates
- Wherstead Road Residents' Association
- Willis Group Services Ltd

Film Theatre - Now What?

News came shortly before going to press that the Film Theatre at the Corn Exchange would cease to operate at the end of September. This is a sad loss to the cultural mix which Ipswich can offer.

When programmed at its best, the Film Theatre was a facility of metropolitan standard: all the best films released in Britain came to Ipswich. Now the majority of high quality films for grown-ups won't be seen here unless some alternative arrangements can be made - a shame because film is surely the most dynamic medium today in all the serious arts.

I report this demise without specific blame. Yes, IBC having set up Ipswich Film Theatre in 1975 could have done better in promoting it, but they kept it going when many councils wouldn't have done so, while public money has got ever tighter. Yes, Hollywood Cinemas, despite some good efforts, could have run it better in these last two years. But above all the potential audience of discriminating cinemagoers in Ipswich has failed to grow - for many different reasons, some understandable and some bad. At present it looks as if Ipswich Film Society will be left to carry the flag for 'Arthouse Cinema' or 'World Cinema'. However, I hope a satisfactory alternative venue and facility can be created quite soon.

Neil Salmon

Some Shorts

Heritage Open Days (12-13 Sept) will be reported on in the next Newsletter. Suffice to say here that the Society's informative and colourful leaflets plus excellent coverage in the local press should have justified all the efforts of Dianne Hosking and other Society members.

Dance East opens on Friday, 9 October followed by celebratory activities on the Saturday and Sunday, including a dancing procession from the Cornhill to the Waterfront on the Saturday. We wish them every success.

A new IBC appointment, **Waterfront Project Officer**, seems a good idea "to co-ordinate development for residents and businesses." It also recognises the crying need to establish more links with the town centre - a huge task but one the Borough must contribute to.

'**Ipswich in the Sixties**' is a new archive compilation on DVD, available from the TIC at £9.99. It shows trolley buses, street clearances, queues for Beatles' tickets and ITFC's final game clinching the First Division Championship.

Ransomes Jacobsen at Ransomes Europark has made 40 workers redundant. Sales of grass cutting equipment have suffered during the recession. A spokesman said, "We have been manufacturing here for about 200 years and we want to make sure we stay here but we need to reduce costs." History is more complicated than that, but the sentiment is commendable.

IBC is refurbishing **Fore Street swimming baths**, including re-roofing, new floors in changing rooms, new pool surround tiling, etc. It is 114 years old, the second oldest operating pool in England. Next year will be the turn of Crown Pools for refurbishment.

A **Government grant** of £52,000 has been allocated to IBC for unused town centre shops to be adapted for public uses. Although in itself a drop in the ocean it could be useful especially as Ipswich doesn't have a large number of empties. (Woolworths is the big eyesore.) Perhaps more important, it sets a valuable precedent in officially recognising that boarded up shops deter investors and shoppers.

Two members have written to draw attention to **Napoli Dell**, 67 Upper Orwell Street. "Hope members are finding this gem in a still run down area of Ipswich. Parking behind the shop." On the **Waterfront** there are more children than expected living in the flats. Good evidence that this is more of a community now. But the lack of children's play areas is a concern. Diversity has exceeded developers' schemes - and their pockets!

Will a **High Speed Rail** link between London, the Midlands, the North and Scotland ever happen? Admirable if it gets people out of cars and especially out of planes. But British people are so good at finding reasons why not to do something radical! Unfortunately, here's another reason. Cities with the best communications links tend to trade with each other more and more in terms of economics and brains. So East Anglia could be left out even more!

Good news that the **Caribbean Centre** (Ipswich Caribbean Association) has apparently been saved. Not many housing units could have been built on this smallish site, yet this community facility, used by a number of different groups, would have been hard to replace. We hope the ICA can attract the necessary funding to continue using the Centre.

Recent Planning Matters

Mersea Homes have made an application, as yet Outline only, for use of "Land south of railway line, Westerfield Road". This is for a mixed development of up to 1,085 dwellings, a neighbourhood centre including commercial, community and health care uses, a primary school, strategic landscaping, open space and related infrastructure including two vehicular accesses from Westerfield Road. This will be somewhat delayed until the Ipswich School application is determined. Our views are contained in our letters on the School's application. (See the July Newsletter pages 8-9.)

Ipswich School's planning applications. The Society's position remains unchanged. There is huge opposition to any development on the playing fields site. There is some opposition to the Tuddenham Road sports facility. We await the Planning Committee's date.

St George's House, 2-32 St Matthew's Street. The Society said, "It is generally agreed that this 1960s wholesale redevelopment produced one of the poorest and least aesthetically pleasing entrances to the town. It is only redeemed by the fine view up Berners Street to the former Anglesea Road hospital. The town now has a chance to redeem these errors. There have been several proposals for this site. The current plans for ground floor retail units, a 125-bed budget hotel and a care home represent a reasonable use of the site.

"However, the actual plans presented are not appropriate for the site which overlooks the Central Conservation Area. At five storeys plus a plant level it will be a big building placed in an area which is still built to an essentially domestic residential scale. Not only is it too high but its facade is too monolithic which adds to its incongruity in St Matthew's St. Further, the handling of the care home and its relationship to the Listed Grosvenor Hotel and Berners Street is quite out of scale. The juxtaposition of six storey modern and four storey Late Georgian is unsatisfactory. We feel strongly that the current proposals should be refused. We really must be firm and not allow history to repeat itself with another over-development for the sake of progress."

IBC Planning Committee subsequently rejected the application because a) it is too high and overbears the bottom of Berners Street b) it's an unsuitable place for very sheltered housing and c) service egress from St George's Street into St Matthew's Street is a wrong concept.

Flood Defences. There are two separate applications. The current one is for bunds about 1.4m above the present height on both banks from the new barrier in the New Cut. The East runs across to the lock and from the other side to the entrance to the docks. Where it crosses the dock entrance road the road will be raised for a length of 100m. On the West side it will run south to the west dock. Here it will incorporate a right of way. It will be faced by brick or blocks and be grass covered. There will be a safety railing. The second application, probably in the New Year, is for the barrier itself. The Society has been consulted; I have read the lengthy documents. The Society has no objections - rather it welcomes this huge investment of, probably, over £50m which will protect the town's historic centre including, it is said, 600 Listed structures. [IBC has approved it.]

[Editor: our lecturer on 13 January will explain all the details; it should be very interesting.]

Broomhill Pool. Council officers are acutely conscious of the dangers of unauthorised entry and the remote risk of drowning. They have replaced the totally ineffective boundary fence with a 1.9m palisade fence. They further propose to build an aluminium scaffold frame within the pool and cover it with curved corrugated iron sheets bolted with shear bolts at close intervals. The pool will remain full of water for structural support; it will be protected from the scaffolding by appropriate packing. The diving boards will be dismantled and stored. This has the approval of the Twentieth Century Society, English Heritage, the Broomhill Trust and the Council. Permission from the Government Office for the East is awaited.

Regatta Quay (Paul's Maltings) The apartments already built are not selling well so the developers have applied to replace some of them with an 88-bed hotel. Furthermore they are bringing the off-site affordable housing on-site. This means the hotel rooms largely replace for-sale apartments, and the affordable housing is down by three units. The design has been somewhat changed following comments from the Conservation Advisory Panel and discussions with the Urban Design Team. It has been granted permission with conditions.

Tesco, Grafton Way. It is possible that Tesco is considering its position and may revise the application (discussed in the previous Newsletter). Tesco is in this for a long war!

The Spinney, 108 Westerfield Road. A Building Preservation Order was nailed to the fence in early June. This gives six months for a Listing decision to be made. We know that the Twentieth Century Society has strongly supported Listing; we await English Heritage's view. A support letter has been written by the Society.

Corn Exchange. The new application for a simple slightly sloping 20mm glass canopy is the least bad solution if we must have one.

Morland Road allotments. Proposal for nine affordable bungalows for the elderly. There were no objections raised. The allotments were largely unused.

Local Development Framework and the Local Plan. [Important public meetings will have been held after this Newsletter went to press - Editor] In October a lot of time will have to be put into the Council's final consultation document by The Ipswich Society. More later.

Planning regulations. There will be an easing of the necessity for planning applications for minor alterations and extensions. It will be accompanied by changes in publication of applications.

Mike Cook

Parks: Latest News

Ipswich is not noted for its shopping facilities but it does excel in the provision of beautiful parks and playgrounds, both of which are the envy of visitors to the town.

On the eastern side lies **Alexandra Park** where an enthusiastic group of Friends have recently been awarded a grant by Changing Spaces (the Big Lottery Fund) to restore the historic Byles Drinking Fountain, about which readers of this Newsletter may have read in last October's issue. (The Society has supported the renovation.) This is very good news! The Friends are also applying to other sources for further smaller grants to provide benches, tables and a notice board near the fountain.

Holywells, one of the three larger parks in the town, has been less fortunate in that its application for Heritage Lottery funding was not accepted but, undaunted, its group of dedicated Friends are seeking other ways to raise money and, to date, volunteers from the Prince's Trust and a Payback team have improved steps, constructed a pathway between the fourth pond and the former paddling pool and installed seating. There are plans for a circular walk and for an outside gym for young people and adults - in addition to the established and very popular playground for children. Another proposal is for Genesis, which has taken over three spaces in the Stable Block, to take in and repair bicycles to provide a Green Bike Hire scheme. In the long term this would link up with other parks so that cycles could be borrowed and left at designated points therein. The Friends are holding their ever popular Apple Day on Saturday, 24 October, 11 am-2 pm.

Chantry Park is to have a new playground adjacent to the car park east of the Sue Ryder Home and this should be completed by the end of this year. **Bourne Park's** playground has just been finished and is welcomed by all its users, especially as there is a large enclosed paddling pool nearby. Having young grandchildren, I and local parents did a simple survey of the equipment here and found room for minor improvements such as steps with handrails for toddlers to climb on various items and a strong need for cradle swings for babies. This information was passed on to the person responsible for future play layouts, including a request from several children who thought that an ice cream van would add to the attractions!

On to **Christchurch Park** where a few matters are still outstanding but where the benefits of the Heritage Lottery grant are ever more evident. The attractive new waste bins are being used "more or less efficiently" according to manager Sam Pollard, and the aim is to remove the old concrete bins and replace these with new ones - fewer in number but more strategically placed. The problem of duck feeding seems to be resolving itself with the addition of a 20p in-the-slot dispenser, organised by the Mansion caterers and with notices at all Park entrances urging the public to refrain from giving bread to the birds. Further information to this effect will be placed around the ponds. One feature attracting much interest is the splendid notice board near the Centre, donated by the Friends of Christchurch Park, which is regularly updated by a member, Reg Snook, giving fascinating details of the Park's wildlife. Volunteers for gardening, help at the Centre etc are always welcome. Please contact Sam Pollard on 01473252473 or 252435.

As regards **open spaces**, much work is being done to improve and link up green areas; a fine example is the two mile stretch of lanes, meadows, footpaths, woodlands and reed beds that extends from Belstead House to Bourne Park. The Parks and Open Spaces Forum is organising a seminar at the end of the year for all Friends' groups to enable people to share their views on such matters as producing a constitution, insurance, working with the Council, community interest, displaying enticing notice boards, etc. Date to be given later.

Of natural history interest: a peregrine falcon has nested in a ready-made box under the Orwell Bridge and has raised three chicks; an adder was seen in Chantry Park; and the tawny owl has returned to her roost in Christchurch Park, serenely observing the summer scenes of picnickers, football and gambolling dogs.

Pat Gondris

EEDA Invests in Ipswich

I'm probably right in thinking most members of the Society are unsure what the initials EEDA stand for - thus are unable to suggest what the august body does. EEDA is the East of England Development Agency promoting growth, expansion and wise investment in the East of England (remember East Anglia disappeared and was subsumed into the six counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.)

Their total investment in Ipswich to date has been some £45 million, which should promote further development, employment and economic growth. For example, EEDA's total investment into Cranfield's (predominantly when it was still an empty flour mill) has been in excess of £4 million.

The result has been substantial further private financial investment totalling £70 million and public contributions to the Dance East development and fit-out.

Less successful has been their contributions to the Harris Bacon factory site. This 18 acre site is a heavily contaminated former meat processing facility which was intended as the Ipswich bus depot. The site is surrounded by railway lines with the only access off the high ground between the two railway bridges in Hadleigh Road. It has proved impossible to arrange access on to the site for buses and other heavy vehicles, and current thinking is for light industrial and office uses. The site is currently for sale.

EEDA have also contributed to the funding of University Campus Suffolk. Bringing a university to the town will have immeasurable benefits to the economy and to the population, and the opportunity for local employers to improve the quality of recruits will bring lasting benefits to their balance books. At the other end of the scale EEDA contributed £27,500 to the Ipswich Waterfront Attraction Study and £20,000 to the Turret Lane (Ipswich Retail Transition Area) Study.

Overall EEDA claim their £45 million investments have encouraged a further £225 million of private funding, a leverage factor close to 500%.

John Norman

New Sports Facility

Suffolk New College has put in its planning application for a multi-sports hall and eleven all-weather sports pitches. The site will be well landscaped particularly along Grimwade Street. The pitches, mostly 5-a side or 7-a side, will be surfaced in the latest third generation artificial turf (known as 3G) as used in a number of installations approved by FIFA. These facilities will be available at certain times for use by local schools, sports clubs and groups. Such a development would be the first of its type in Ipswich.

Ambassador to the World

In recent times no one has done more to put Ipswich 'on the map' than Sir Bobby Robson. I expect many people have had similar experiences to our own. In 1998 my husband and I were in a taxi in Barcelona four months after Bobby had been controversially sacked by their great club.

"Where do you come from?" asked the driver.

"Ipswich."

"Ah, Bobby Robson. He used to ride in my taxi. Good man."

"He still has his house in Ipswich, near where we live."

"So, when you see Mr Robson, tell him Carlos the taxi driver send him best wishes."

More remarkable is that ten years earlier we were in Albania when only a few dozen British people were admitted to the country each year. We found ourselves wandering into the small and deserted national football stadium in Tirana. A groundsman came over to us and seemed to ask where we had come from. When we said "Ipswich, England" his face lit up and he said, "Bobby Robson" - perhaps the only English words he knew!

Such was the impression that Bobby made on people internationally and for Ipswich's benefit. It would be nice to think that someone or something in the future could equally and pleasantly put Ipswich 'on the map' once more.

Joyce Salmon

News & Comment

Reaching for the sky

The modest height of the Willis Building, Ipswich's most famous modern structure, and the way its grand piano shape fits the street pattern probably commands respect even from people who don't like it otherwise. But elsewhere Willis is aiming higher. Its dramatic new HQ which opened last year in the City of London close to the Lloyds Building and the 'Gherkin' is a very tall building. But Willis's purchase of the Sears Tower in Chicago is something different! At 442m high and 110 storeys it is America's tallest building and was the highest in the world until overtaken by Asian giants. (The company's renaming it the Willis Tower has not pleased all Chicagoans!) Meanwhile, the Society is delighted to enjoy the use from time to time of the Ipswich Willis Building - which doesn't pose problems of vertigo.

Most things are relative

Ipswich has again been named as one of the top ten car-friendly towns in Britain. The survey by Virgin Money considered issues like congestion, parking prices and car crime. Some drivers might find this hard to believe, particularly after a bad experience, but independent observers clearly find worse conditions in most other towns.

Not enough jobs for the boys - or girls

Unemployment in the 16-24 age group continues to increase. Ipswich is average in this respect (30th out of 63 urban centres). But it's a serious problem which affects graduates as well as less well qualified people. And the whole community suffers directly or indirectly. We hope that our councillors and officers will do everything in their power to encourage businesses to set up here. Such 'power' is limited but the effort must be rigorous. It should help that there are many attractive features of the area which give us an advantage.

New name in town

The East of England Co-operative Society has leased its Carr Street department store to Vergo Retail Ltd. We hope the range and quality of goods will be maintained - or even improved? These six Co-op buildings from west to east represent a notable visual history of architecture - and arguably a successive decline in quality, with perhaps one exception! Go and have a look and see if you think that's fair comment. But despite Vergo in Carr Street, the name 'Ipswich Industrial Co-operative Society' will surely stay put.

BBQ Summers

In the three months since I wrote my last article, there is little to report on the proposed Tesco development at the former B&Q site; unitary local government has taken a step further backwards; and many commentators are up in arms with the Met Office, whose promise of a barbecue summer didn't materialise for most of the country: "What a waste of public money! Unaccountable quangos! Cut their funding at once!" How very democratic!

But what the Met Office actually said was, "Odds on for a barbecue summer." Have none of these commentators ever been to the races? How much fun would it be to see them remonstrating with their bookmaker because the odds-on favourite which they had backed had not actually won the race! But I suspect the said bookmaker could refute their misguided protestations far more eloquently than I could.

However, I am pleased to report hearing from a new correspondent, who points out: "Unfortunately, there is only one option open to us to save the planet that will guarantee that we use less energy, and that is birth control." The logic certainly seems straightforward enough, even if some readers may find the suggestion unpalatable: exponential population growth is fundamentally unsustainable and must reach a limit sooner or later, and given that each generation is bigger and uses more resources than all preceding generations put together, I suggest we should assume that it will be sooner.

But birth control alone cannot provide an answer to the urgent problem of climate change. For if we wanted to use birth control to halve our greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, rather than doubling them as we otherwise will, then we might reasonably expect to have to halve the population in the next forty years, all other things being equal. But compared with our life-span, this suggests no new births at all between now and then, by which time there will be very few women of child-bearing age, and our present civilisation will pretty much come to an end. We need to act much more quickly than simple birth control will allow, yet it is difficult to see what sort of modification we might contrive that would be both effective and acceptable. If natural wastage is too slow, perhaps another natural solution such as a virulent pandemic is needed to provide a practical way forward. Meanwhile, back at the racecourse...

"So here we are at the Save The Species Handicap, where the going is expected to be heavy on a course which has consistently lacked proper stewardship and has become rather dilapidated. They're under starter's orders, and they're off. Straight into the lead goes Spirit of Free Enterprise, but he stumbles at the first hurdle and causes Light Touch Regulation to collide with Credit Crunch putting them both out of the race, together with the joint favourites Laissez-Faire and Status Quo who plainly didn't see what was in front of them. One has to question yet again whether such crowded fields are good for the sport. Coming into the next turn the rank outsiders, Climate Mitigation and Adaptation, are looking increasingly lame, but meanwhile moving steadily up through the field come the four horses from the Apocalypse stables - it's Pestilence (out of Conquest) followed by War, Famine and Death..."

Which horse would you favour? And would you put money on it?

Mike Brain (mikebrainl@btinternet.com)

A Mangled Inscription

While Simon Swann and his team from Wrentham were conserving the inscription under the east window of St Lawrence Church in St Lawrence Street, I used to cycle along most days to follow progress. Greasy soot obscured the end of the inscription particularly badly, and the day they reached it they warned me that I was in for a shock.

Early records showed that the 1488 flushwork read: 'Pray for the soules of John Baldwyn Draper and Jone hys wyf and alle xtn soules am' The three letters 'xtn' stood for Christian or Christen, and 'amen' was also shortened. What the conservators were almost afraid to show me was: 'Pray for the soules of John Baldwyn Draper and Jane hys wyf and for alle the good donors'.

Edward Duck, brazier, whose house was where Edinburgh Woollens are today, recorded in notes now in the Society of Antiquaries Library: "The stone work of the outside of the chancel was so out of repair that the above said was obliged to be cast over with stone mortar this present year 1752." In other words, stuccoed. It was at the 1858 restoration that the inscription was next exposed and by then it was in a poor state. What we see today is mainly a Victorian restoration, and because 'xtn' completely defeated them, and they thought 'Jone' was 'Jane' misspelt, they altered that name too. We have to live with the new ending, awful as it is, but at least Jone Baldwyn gets her correct Christian name back. Do go and see for yourselves.

John Blatchly

[Editor: Dr Blatchly's information above is a useful correction of 'The Writing on the Wall' (July Newsletter) which was based on an earlier publication.]

Which Cromwell Square?

Although one might sometimes be tempted to think that the shade of Oliver Cromwell stalks the streets of Ipswich, there is no record that he ever came here, or that he did the town either good or harm. Thomas Cromwell on the other hand, loyal to Wolsey until the latter's fall in 1530, could be claimed as a benefactor. When Wolsey's College school was closed by the king, the master and pupils had to return to Felaw's House in Foundation Street, but the stipends of master and usher had reverted to the Crown.

It was Thomas Cromwell who petitioned Henry VIII to re-endow them and give the grammar school a Royal Charter. The parishioners of St Peter's lost their church when it became the Cardinal College chapel, and in 1537 they successfully petitioned Cromwell, then Lord Privy Seal, to have it back.

John Blatchly

A Trip Back in Time

On Wednesday, 22 July, forty-five of us embarked on our visit to Hertfordshire, our first stop being Shaw's Corner in Ayot St Lawrence, home of George Bernard Shaw. There we were divided into three groups visiting the village, house and grounds at half hourly intervals.

During that time we marvelled at the old church, partly demolished by Sir Lionel Lyle until prevented by his bishop. In contrast the 'new' St Lawrence's Palladian church was designed in 1778-9, a mixture of external Grecian style, with a Greek temple portico and fluted columns, and an internal Roman classicism.

However, the purpose of our visit was Shaw's Corner, the writer's home from 1906 till his death in 1950 (the result of a tree climbing accident) at the age of 94. The house of dark red brick with an Arts and Crafts influence, built in 1898, was a former rectory, and is a living shrine to a man of genius. Being not only a playwright, author, wit and political activist, he was also a pacifist and atheist, a vegetarian and teetotaler, and called irreverently 'Old Hair and Teeth' by the village children.

The house reflects his love of invention and contrivance, the front door bearing a knocker in his own image, entitled 'Man and Superman'. After deciding to give the house to the National Trust he transferred all his 'Shaviana' from his Whitehall Court flat in London in order "to titivate Shaw's Corner as a showplace" (his own words). So it holds his collections of hats, walking sticks, pens, spectacles, utilitarian woollen underwear, as well as a piano, two cameras, a bicycle and a cycling machine. As well as numerous photographs on the walls, there's a splendid album of photos of Shaw and his friends and famous visitors. Of particular interest to me was the Oscar awarded to him in 1938 for his screenplay for the film 'Pygmalion'.

In the garden covering three acres of lawns, flowerbeds and trees, is his Hut, designed to be turned at certain times of the day in order to give him maximum light for writing. Linked to the house by telephone, he would be summoned by his wife for meals and important visitors. Also in the garden tucked away in 'The Dell' is a serene statue of Saint Joan.

At 12.20 pm we reluctantly left for Hitchin where we would spend the rest of our day. After a suitable time for lunch, shopping and sight-seeing in the environs of St Mary's parish church by the river, we all met in the playground of the British Schools Museum in Queen Street. Opened in 1810 as the first school in Hertfordshire "for the sons of the labouring poor" and founded by Joseph Lancaster who believed that all children had the right to be educated, it is now a museum of education in a unique historic elementary school. After an introductory talk in which we were told of the monitorial system of teaching whereby the Master would teach bright boys (monitors) who would in turn take groups of boys elsewhere in the room in order to pass on the information, we were divided into groups ourselves. We in turn visited the Master's House, the Edwardian and wartime classrooms, the Lancastrian schoolroom, which could accommodate 300 boys, and the 1853 Galleried Classroom, built on the advice of Victorian poet and school inspector, Matthew Arnold.

A highlight of the visit was a session in a Victorian classroom, where we received tuition in the three Rs, using slates, pencils and dip-in pens with 'real' ink from 'real' ink-wells! Seated at wooden

desks with lift-up lids (those were the days) we were drilled in our knowledge of pounds, shillings and pence, and one unfortunate having fluffed her sums (oh, Margaret) was forced to sit in the corner on a stool, wearing a dunce's cap. After being released, we had a welcome refreshment break, before visiting the shop, but a shop with a difference, selling as it did educational toys, eagerly purchased by dutiful grannies. At 4.30 pm we boarded our coach for our return to Ipswich, with thanks to Caroline for organising another splendid, interesting and educational day out.

Jean Hill

Tourists in the Book

We all recognise the syndrome of 'familiarity breeds contempt' combined with 'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence'. So I had a look in the Visitors' Book at the Tourist Information Centre. Not surprisingly, most comments praised the TIC, its helpful staff and the wonderful use of St Stephen's Church. But I also found these remarks about the town.

"Interesting mix of old and new." (Winnipeg, Canada)

"Nice town, especially the new Waterfront." (Venlo, Holland)

"Very attractive town centre," (Oakden, S Australia)

"A lovely town with lovely things to visit." (Inveruno, Milan, Italy)

"What a treasure, Ipswich!" (The Enfield Society)

"Lovely people and town." (Dallas, USA)

"Tres jolie ville et attachante. Les habitants sont tres sympathiques," (Aix-en-Provence)

"Brilliant place. You are lucky to live here!" (Manchester)

"I liked it very much to see Ipswich and we are glad we stayed in Ipswich and we didn't go to Cambridge because Ipswich is beautiful." (Utrecht, Holland)

"Ipswich ticks all the boxes architecture, cleanliness, friendliness. Must come again." (Canterbury, UK -particularly interesting!)

Yes, there was a comment on the lack of public lavatories, and one on the need for leaflets in other major languages, And I can't be sure that the comments in Spanish and Japanese were complimentary - but I suspect they were!

Neil Salmon

Letters to the Editor

THE MILL AND LAMP-POSTS From John Brown

'The Mill' has had adverse criticism from many quarters (page 20 of your July edition et al) and I do agree with most critics, particularly those who cite the view from the Wherstead Road approach. However, as one who uses Northgate Street/Upper Brook Street almost every day, I feel obliged to say that I find the simple layered slabs, which The Mill presents on its north side, do make a pleasing statement in juxtaposition with the first floor street fronts and nicely terminate the view at the end of the street.

However, any praise I have for The Mill is swept aside by my feelings for the pathetic attempt at street lighting on the east side of Upper Brook Street. How could anyone of sound mind think that those poncey curved lamp-posts might be suitable to match the mainly Victorian buildings and the excellent pavement below? If those lamp-posts were a job lot from a bankrupt business, thank goodness the supply ran out before Northgate Street was repaved! [Editor: I disagree with John Brown on one of these points but not the other! What do you think?]

WETHERSPOONS AND THE USE OF HISTORY

From Bob Roberts, Framlingham & District Local History & Preservation Society

I can reassure members of The Ipswich Society that J D Wetherspoon does not assign to its pubs names such as 'The Rat and Dunghill' (Newsletter, July 2009, page 12). Often the names given relate to local historical figures, as with The Robert Ransome, or to an earlier pub name (The Cricketers, just opposite) or, most frequently, the former use of the building concerned (for example, The Postal Order in Worcester, about which I recently answered an historical enquiry). Society members visiting a strange town or city exploring its history would be well advised to enjoy a soft drink in its local Wetherspoon's as their pubs display on their walls enlargements of original photographs and other images of the town and its worthies, with informative and well researched captions. (I say 'soft drink' advisedly since alcohol sales account for less than half the total retail income generated by the Wetherspoon chain.)

THE VALUE OF PUBLIC CLOCKS From Tom Gondris

In the July Newsletter your frontispiece featured the renovated frontage of The Robert Ransome pub, recently Yates's Wine Lodge. I wonder whether it is only those catching buses at Tower Ramparts who will have noticed that The Robert Ransome's clock has at last been repaired and complements that of The Cricketers nearby, another Wetherspoon pub?

Some years ago Society member Brian Jepson carried out a survey of the state of all the town's public clocks and we had a useful campaign to get all those out of working order repaired. I wonder whether we should carry out a re-survey. Could this perhaps be carried out by one or two individuals who could act as Clock Champions?

FORMER IPSWICH CORPORATION WATER WORKS PUMPING STATION From Shirley Sadler

I am interested in industrial buildings and made a detour into the hidden valley between Thurleston and Akenham to see the pumping station so well illustrated in your April Newsletter. The reality was a sad disappointment: the fine building apparently derelict and boarded up and the gate locked, it was impossible to get near because of the vegetation and I was unable to see whether the interior was equally interesting.

It was distressing to find the building so neglected and it would be good to know whether it is still in use (which appears unlikely) and if not what plans there are for its future. Since it is within the Borough boundary, is this a cause which The Ipswich Society could adopt?

"A PLACE OF HISTORY" From Sonia Brown

I have recently moved to live in the centre of town, and find my feelings about Ipswich changing considerably. It was a place of shops and shopping; now I see it as a place of history. The centre is full of alleys and narrow streets lined with well cared for houses and charming and unexpected views. I specially enjoy the way trees are included wherever possible. One recent visitor whom we took round was constantly likening Ipswich to York! Thank you, Council.

Colchester and N Essex

Our party of 53 headed for Stanway on 13 June to pick up Jan, our guide for the day, and then headed for Tiptree in Essex, the home of traditional jam making. On arrival we were met by the manageress and made welcome. Coffee, cakes and delicious scones were the order of the morning and were served promptly for us. We had plenty of time for a browse around the museum setting out the story of the Wilkins family and their preserve making business. After this a visit to their shop and a little retail therapy was a must and many of us came away with jars of jam or marmalade or chutney.

Heading for the garrison town of Colchester, known to the Romans as Camulodunum, we arrived outside the castle where Jan took us on a tour of the castle grounds. Colchester castle is the largest keep in the UK and built of mixed materials having been used throughout the various ages. The ramparts near to the castle never enclosed water but the slopes have been used by the Dutch weavers who settled here to stretch their cloth attached to 'tenter hooks', hence the derivation of the word today. The siege of Colchester in the Civil War took place in 1648 and lasted eleven weeks. We saw an obelisk in the grounds which commemorated the siege. This was the time of Humpty Dumpty, the name given to a large cannon sited on the thick outer walls beside St Mary's Church. During the siege it was attacked and fell from its mountings and the nursery rhyme refers to the event. As we were about to leave the grounds we were able to watch the Colchester Town Watch march through, which is a civic escort to the mayor. The watch is based on the Elizabethan period of around 1595 with the borough arms and colours on jackets, knee breeches, front and rear plate armour and headgear. This occasion was for the Royal Gun Salute marking the Queen's official birthday.

We left the castle grounds and passed into the Dutch quarter where the weavers worked and lived. We came to a small church which today is used by the Greek Orthodox Church leased from the Church of England. It was dedicated to St Helen who is said to have gone to the Holy Land and found a part of the 'True Cross' which features in the town insignia together with three crowns. St Helena is the patron saint of Colchester and her son was Constantine the Great. Further up the road we were able to view through a window the recent find of a Roman amphitheatre together with an indication of its size denoted by coloured bricks on the pathway outside. Walking through St Martin's churchyard we could see over the roof tops the Town Hall which was built on the site of a Saxon Moot Hall.

Lunch at this point beckoned and we reassembled at the castle to continue our tour. Jan proved to be a wealth of knowledge giving us a running commentary about the Essex countryside and the villages that we passed through on our way to Maldon. This whole area was renowned for smuggling as there were so many small sea inlets which were unable to be patrolled successfully. The area was also known for its sea salt. One area in particular known as Red Hills dated to Roman times. They used to collect sea water in earthenware pitchers, boil the liquid and then cool it. The pots were then smashed to gain the salt crystals. If seen from the air the ground is red with the colours of the broken pots left there over the years. Labourers were paid in salt as it was such a vital commodity and the more you earned meant that you were 'worth your salt'. Maldon is now a quiet town with a bustling quay giving berth to quite a few of the Thames barges and pleasure craft that take tourists on river trips. We took afternoon tea here before travelling back to Ipswich. Our grateful thanks to Jan, and to June Peck who organised our very interesting and varied day trip to Essex.

Jean Smart

Two Booklets Received

'Seahenge: Sun, Sand and Winter Solstice' by Patrick Taylor, £2.00

'Flixton: Neolithic Lunar Observatory' by Patrick Taylor, £2.00

Both from Polystar Press. 277 Cavendish Street, Ipswich, IP3 8BQ polystar@ntlworld.com

These two booklets discuss Neolithic remains at Holme-next-the-Sea in Norfolk and Flixton in Suffolk. The former is the surviving remains of a wooden circle on the edge of the sea and the latter was a series of post holes now lost to gravel extraction. Both sites are East Anglian examples which could be compared with the stone circles of areas where stone was available.

In both booklets Patrick Taylor's approach is one of archaeo-astronomy in which he deduces that Holme was a kind of 'Seahenge' aligned on the direction of the winter solstice and Flixton a lunar observatory to 'fix' the moon's northernmost setting point. Although these subjects are at some distance from the main concerns of The Ipswich Society, there are undoubtedly members who would find them intriguing.

Each booklet contains 20 pages and is illustrated with diagrams and colour photographs.

Town Hall Galleries

Keep an eye open for the exhibitions in the **Town Hall Galleries**. There have been a number of excellent shows in the past few months. In the case of the Curwen Studio exhibition of artists' prints, there were probably more famous names in one room than have ever been assembled in Ipswich previously - and the work was good, too! A forthcoming open exhibition - "all media accepted" - will have the theme of wildlife (28 November-9 January). Contemporary art is being shown more extensively in Ipswich now with the Town Hall Galleries added to established venues such as the always interesting **John Russell Gallery** in Wherry Lane on the Waterfront.