

## Issue 185 Newsletter Oct 2011

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# Editorial: Good Examples

Time passes and things change. So it's fascinating to see how several unsolicited articles have come in from members about improving insulation in our houses and generating energy. These are understandable concerns whether or not you think: climate change, for example, is man-made, because the fact is that fossil fuels are finite even if far from exhausted yet. Moreover, reducing the cost of one's electricity and gas is an attractive proposition. So good luck to people who can do it - in the right places.

## **Beautiful streets**

But solar panels on almost every roof? Little forests of wind turbines on houses? (Not to speak of even more satellite dishes.) A very recent visit to Port Sunlight on the Wirral just across the Mersey from Liverpool made me appreciate again the beauty of that urban environment. Lever Brothers sold off their village, built to provide good living conditions for their workers. But the Port Sunlight Village Trust obviously still exercises tight controls on all visible aspects of the street scene. It might not be very 'English' in a country where owners consider they have a right to do what they like to their property, but I did wish that the coach loads of foreign tourists visiting the Lady Lever Art Gallery in the middle of Port Sunlight were also given a tour of the streets to see that the English used to, and still could, produce beautiful urban areas. And there are of course a number of other attractively planned developments in Britain which should continue to set an example - an inspiration not a 'model' because they needn't be mock-Tudor or mock-Arts and Crafts, or mock - anything else - just good and modern perhaps! These are surely the sort of matters close to the hearts of many members of a society like ours?

## **Affordable homes**

Now a personal- probably useless! - thought about little old houses. Claude Street and Navarre Street don't exist now but their sign names around the Charles Street car park remind us of the many terraced houses which once stood here. They must have been pokey and probably insanitary but if they'd been renovated and perhaps with two knocked into one wouldn't they have suited young first-time buyers who'd like to live near the town centre? When they were demolished (1950s - 60s) first-time buyers could afford somewhat better houses in the inner suburbs, because house prices and mortgages were based on one income. Not so now. It's a reminder that what seemed obvious at the time won't necessarily seem right after a few decades - a theme of Ken Powell's talk on Modernism at Isaacs last October.

One more matter. Our printers are very good, but even from them the occasional dud copy can emerge - a couple of blank pages perhaps. If you do receive one, I can assure you it's not as valuable as defective postage stamps used to be. (Does anyone still collect stamps?) Throw it away and ask me for another copy; I always have spares.

Please keep those articles and letters coming. I think we all enjoy the variety.

*Neil Salmon*

# The Society's Annual Awards Evening

Wednesday, 9 November, 7.30 pm at St Peter's by the Waterfront

This is the Society's most important regular annual event. There have been a dozen or so 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 and explained. The presentation will be by Bob Allen, a former chairman of the Society and now one of our Vice-Presidents. After the main business there will be an opportunity to discuss matters with friends and the owners, architects and builders who will attend to receive their awards. Drinks and nibbles will be provided. Your Committee hopes to meet many members, 'old' and new, on this special evening.

## Winter Lectures

To be held in the Methodist Church, Museum Street (entrance Black Horse Lane) at 7.30 pm.

All welcome, including non-members.

**14 December: 'Getting Wolsey's Statue in its Place'** by Dr John Blatchly. Dr Blatchly, formerly Headmaster of Ipswich School, is a local historian, guide and enthusiastic champion of Medieval Ipswich - as many members know.

**11 January: 'Sherrington, Ipswich's Most Eminent Son'** by Dr Michael Cook. Dr Michael Cook was a Consultant Anaesthetist at Ipswich Hospital; Sir Charles Sherrington's discoveries are a central part of the knowledge of the modern anaesthetist.

**15 February: 'Producing and Distributing Electricity for Suffolk'** by Dr Michael Coleman. Dr Coleman has now retired from managing Sizewell and Bradwell nuclear power stations. A nuclear physicist by training, he was Chairman of Suffolk Preservation Society.

**14 March: 'Managing Suffolk's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'** by Nick Collinson. Mr Collinson manages The Suffolk Heaths and Coast AONB to which he is adding the Dedham Vale AONB, hopefully to be extended in the near future.

## Underwood Mild

There's a new brewery in town, adjacent to the Dove public house in St Helen's Street. Not surprisingly it's called **The Dove Street Brewery** which has been brewing since the beginning of August, initially with test brews. But since the recent Beer Festival four quality ales are on offer. Why mention this in a journal of some sobriety? The best tasting beer produced so far is Underwood Mild, named after our illustrious Vice-President, Peter Underwood, who was a regular in the pub when he lived in Vermont Crescent.

Ady Smith, landlord of the Dove and owner of the brewery said, "Peter is a good friend and loyal townsman. The beer is a dark traditional mild, full of flavour yet only 3.2% ABV, exactly as Peter likes."

*John Norman*

# The Chairman's Letter

As I write these words summer, such as we have had, is giving way to autumn. Perhaps we can hope for an Indian Summer? It is traditionally a quiet period but this year the economic slowdown has accentuated the trend. Developments at the end of the northern quays - the old Cranfield's and Paul's sites - have seen no work for some time and developers going into administration. I'm afraid the future looks no brighter for them. The recent Maritime Ipswich weekend, in contrast, was a great success and the public came in large numbers. Much praise for the organisers.

The Tesco development on Grafton Way has not yet begun because of a legal challenge, although it had looked likely to start very soon. Whether fears about an adverse impact on the town centre shops are fulfilled remains to be seen.

There are two other very important schemes in the pipe line. Waitrose have submitted an application for one of their smaller stores within the Corn Exchange. It would have a new entrance on Princes Street and occupy space where the Robert Cross Hall, Gatsby's and the Limelight Bar are situated. The Grand Hall and the Film Theatre will not be affected directly, but internal changes cause some to worry. To address this problem, perhaps bringing the Town Hall into the equation (which already has access from the Corn Exchange) could help. I feel sure that with good will on all sides a successful solution can be agreed, which would satisfy the Film Theatre and the Ipswich Arts Association on the one hand and Waitrose and IBC on the other.

A successful solution would mean Ipswich would have a very popular venue for concerts, other events and a very successful Film Theatre and a very desirable town centre Waitrose. Much hard work lies ahead.

Away from the town centre the very large Crane's site on Nacton Road is proving of great interest to John Lewis, who want to build a Home and Family store there. A planning application has not yet been submitted but their interest is high. Currently zoned for industrial use, change of use consent would have to be given. And it is such a large site that there would be much land left for industrial use or perhaps housing.

On 29 June, the date Ipswich received its Charter 800 years ago, the statue to Cardinal Wolsey was unveiled amid much pageant. A procession walked from St Mary le Tower to the statue's site at the bottom of Silent Street. Many were in costume and accompanied by musicians. An actor played the Cardinal and there was support from a number of local representatives, including John Blatchly who had headed the whole effort.

Planning is currently going on for our next Awards evening on 9 November. The shadows on the economy are (not surprisingly) reflected in the number of nominations we have received. The Executive Committee debated whether to suspend awards for this year but as more nominations started to come in - some of them substantial projects - we decided to go ahead with a somewhat reduced field. I hope it will be an interesting and enjoyable evening.

***Jack Chapman***

# The History of the Society

Our survey of the Society during the half century of its existence is well under way. The text has been written and suitable photographs are being chosen and processed - so after some editing and decisions about production there should be good news to announce quite soon.

## Shorts of All Sorts

**Rosie the Rhino's horn**, or the theft thereof, made international news. It was a sad event for this children's favourite for over a century. Perhaps some good will come of it if many more people visit the High Street Museum to see the truly valuable and wonderful things there.

The **Evening Star** should have become the Morning Star on 25 July, except that another rather different newspaper had bagged that title! Printing the Star and the EADT as morning papers must have made more production sense. But its old title seems odd and its news items are sadly overshadowed by one's national papers in the morning.

**Giles Circus** still has five new trees. The July Newsletter feared for their future but they have been watered by hand and in July and August by nature. Not many leaves on some of them (and no. 4 looks very doubtful) but we hope they'll provide shade if 2012 is a scorcher!

'**Malthouse Conference and Events Centre and Switch Nightclub**' is the new name for the buildings in Princes Street, formerly called Hollywood, then Cartouche and then Zest. 'Malthouse' is at least a meaningful name. Let's hope it will be well run and marshalled.

**The Willis building** featured in a Channel 4 series, 'The Secret Life of Buildings' in early August. The programme considered the working environment and how staff related to it. The central escalators, open plan offices, restaurant and roof garden are all features known to Society members when we hold a function there.

**The Travelodge** in Duke Street is expected to open next summer. It will contain 37 rooms and a bar/cafe. It seems a good site close to the Waterfront and between the College and University. Ipswich-based Barnes Construction will be the design and build contractor.

**St Thomas's** in Bramford Lane is the latest Ipswich church to be Listed (Grade II) by English Heritage. Built in 1937 it is praised by EH for "its accomplished architectural design that uses modern materials and construction technique." It has "a spacious light and uncluttered interior with an elegant sculptural use of contrasting materials." The panels of flint and the bold fenestration are striking features of a church not widely known in town.

## Planning Matters & Waitrose

### **Waitrose in the Corn Exchange**

"The Ipswich Society supports the change of use ... We do however have major reservations with this application and feel strongly that it should be refused in its current form. The Corn Exchange/Town Hall is the major civic building of our town and is Grade II Listed. For the last forty years it has been given over to cultural activities and is thus an icon to many of our citizens. By a large

majority they support the concept of a small Waitrose in the Corn Exchange but feel that the proposals implode on to the historic building and the activities which take place in it. Furthermore at no time have the users been properly consulted as to how the building could be utilised .... The following parts of the application The Ipswich Society finds unacceptable as published and need to be changed.

### **Windows**

Currently the windows on to Princes Street and King Street are clear glazed but the lower portion is used to advertise events in the Corn Exchange, Regent and Film Theatre. Assuming that the posters are successful in attracting customers, both mc and the Film Theatre Trust will lose some revenue. They are to be replaced by vinyls in every window and made obscure by plasterboard. This is an unpleasant interference with a Listed building.

### **Robert Cross Hall**

There seems to have been no thought given to the users of the western half of the Hall. Their breakout area is lost, the bar is lost, the kiosk is lost and the access to the toilets is via a crooked two metre wide corridor. There is, we feel sure, sufficient space to provide a satisfactory solution to all users but not enough top class architectural thought has been given to seeking this out.

### **Film Theatre**

This is the time to revise the Film Theatre box office and foyer with the aid of a contribution from Waitrose, whose aspirations the Council is so strongly supporting. There are also concerns over the safety of the fire exits from the two cinemas when the works are complete. More importantly, Waitrose tramping and trolleying must not disturb the cinemas; a condition of satisfactory sound attenuation must be in the conditions. There must also be consideration of construction noise and its timing, particularly during the building of the steps to the new entrance (in Princes Street)." Subsequently we learned that only minor changes in the plans were proposed and some reassurances given.

### **Postscript**

Planning permission was granted on 7 September. No one opposed the principle of this application although the Society, Ipswich Arts Association and Ipswich Film Theatre Trust spoke strongly of their objections to the signage, the removal of advertising space for events in the Corn Exchange and their concerns about noise, deliveries, fire exits and waste management. As a result conditions and management plans will be set to deal with most of the problems, although the window vinyls will be installed.

A 10mm thick noise reducing panel will be laid over the whole floor. And it is said there is no reason why construction should interfere with Film Theatre showings.

It was suggested that a dialogue should be started with Waitrose; to that end I am proposing that the Chairs of the Arts Association, Film Theatre Trust and our Society should write a joint letter to Waitrose, not their planning consultants, to have a meeting to discuss specific problems.

Some notes on other planning issues.

### **John Lewis at Home and Waitrose, Crane's site, Nacton Road**

Historically this is the most significant application for some years. The site is large, some 44 acres earmarked for manufacturing or industrial use. A change of use to retail will mean the end of any hope of large scale industrial activity in the town. That apart, the town centre has two very large empty spaces which have retail consent (the Westgate/former Civic Centre and the Mint Quarter). But the John Lewis Partnership does not consider them appropriate because they are too far away from major roads.

*(continued)*

### **Gippeswyk Hall**

There are exciting plans for the demolition of a 1960s shed for a new barn-shaped studio in the garden of this Grade II\* early 17th century building for Red Rose Chain. These plans will be commented on in depth later.

### **Hare and Hounds, Norwich Road**

The former pub has been bought by Coe's and will be used as their bridal shop.

### **Proposed children's home at Thurleston cricket centre**

The design of this is Neanderthal, uninviting and most unsuitable for an institution such as this. It's a good idea in the right spot but a clear case of "Get a better architect." [IBC has refused permission - poor design.]

### **First Floor Club, Tacket Street**

An application was made to open a pole- and lap-dancing club. Many objections were raised and a long well argued case by the police led to the application being withdrawn.

*Mike Cook*

## National Planning Policy

### **National Planning Policy Framework Consultation**

This notorious document is open for consultation until 17 October. It replaces nearly 1100 pages of national planning advice and reduces regulations to a twentieth - so it must be better, said Alice. But life is complex and can't be reduced to a side of foolscap. The opening line, by the Minister for Planning, Greg Clark, sets the tone of the entire document: "The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development." The main premise is that the current regulations are so long and complex that only professionals can navigate through them to make plans. This is patently not true if you have examined 12,000 applications as I have in the last ten years on your behalf. From this false premise you reach the false conclusion that the 105,000 new homes built last year, the lowest ever figure, and the lack of business building are the result of the complex planning system.

The emphasis primarily is that there should always be "a presumption in favour of sustainable development." (para 15) The corollary is that the onus of opposing development will always be negative. In order to increase the supply of new housing LPAs should identify specific developable sites for up to fifteen years and they should not make allowance for windfall sites in the first ten years of a rolling supply.

In para 49, the idea of neighbourhood plans is put forward to allow parishes and neighbourhoods to produce their own plans, set planning policies and indeed give planning permission through Community Right to Build Orders. If this is to work, England will need much more robust very local councils - parishes in rural areas, but in urban areas, what?

The Design Statement clearly favours an attitude of non- interference in prescriptive design codes but does support a Design Panel in every area. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety - a very woolly concept which will be hard to argue. The tenor of the Historic Environment section is generally supportive to existing Heritage assets particularly Listed Buildings, but is very even-handed regarding developments affecting those assets and the presumption for development.

This very brief document is finely written and crystal clear in its objectives. It is necessarily very short on detail so it isn't certain where it will reach. The sentiment is not good for those of us, like the Society's members, who cherish an environment, both historic and otherwise, in a never ending battle against trivialisation and commercialism.

*Mike Cook*

## Town Centre: What's Needed

Ipswich Central's vision for the town centre is for more big name brands, more multiple retailers and more suitably square (rather than long) premises. Unsurprisingly this is not a view I agree with and in my opinion what we need is more independents, more shops offering personal service and more choice. Big chains dominate the high street and more will simply add to the clone town image which does nothing to differentiate Ipswich from Chelmsford or Romford. We don't have a castle, a cathedral or a major tourist attraction so what we must do is differentiate the retail 'architecture', not duplicate the offer available everywhere.

We don't want more big businesses paying exorbitant rents for the prime retail space, and by default pushing up the rents in adjacent spaces. We should think local like Doncaster, Dumfries or Ludlow - successful town centres with independent shops - not copy big retail centres like Norwich or Cambridge. The difficulty is getting the balance of the retail offer right. Several shoe shops make the trip to town worthwhile for comparison shopping. But how many mobile phone shops in a row over-dominate? Shopping malls have exclusivity rights and limit the number of particular types of retail outlet, but for certain popular commodities like couture fashion they are never limited to a single shop, or the comparisons cannot be made and the shopper will go elsewhere.

What do independents offer that the multiples frequently don't? It is much more than personal service; it's being served by people, people you know, not necessarily by name but by faces that become familiar, whose opinions you trust and advice you value. It is discovering different goods, unusual gifts, unique items, not the bland sameness available anywhere. The quality of shopper increases with the quality of shop.

*John Norman*

## News & Comment

### **Wolsey is back home**

The long awaited statue was unveiled with appropriately colourful pageantry on Ipswich Charter Day, 29 June. Brief speeches were made by four local dignitaries representing the Borough, the Law, the Church and Education - respectively the Mayor of Ipswich, Councillor John le Grys; the Honorary Recorder of Ipswich, Judge John Devaux; Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the Rt Reverend Nigel Stock; and the former Headmaster of Ipswich School, Dr John Blatchly, who masterminded the whole project. Then one at each corner, they dramatically whisked off the Royal Standard -and there sat Wolsey, in his teaching mode. Actor Brian Ralph as Wolsey exclaimed,



"This likes me well" and the assembled crowd agreed. Future children, perhaps in school parties, might be inspired to great achievements from relatively humble origins like Wolsey's.

### **Streets and subways**

£460,000 annually is a lot to keep the town centre clean - annoying because the problems are created by a smallish minority. However, our streets are generally well cleaned and so a reduction of cost and thoroughness would penalise us all. It's worth adding that the pedestrian underpasses, so often criticised, are also kept clean by national standards. In the St Matthew's Street/Civic Drive subways, the anti-graffiti paint seems to work and helpful photographs have been added showing which street(s) you will see when you emerge.

### **Birkin Haward**

Members may like to have advance notice of a lecture about Birkin to be given by Martin Harrison. It will be one of the Town Lectures organised by Ipswich Arts Association at Museum Street Methodist Church where we hold our lectures. The likely month is May 2012. Birkin was a nationally respected architect whose work in Ipswich was extensive and varied. He was also a wonderfully thorough architectural historian of Suffolk churches and no mean artist himself - in fact a natural subject for a lecture, although it seems that nobody has devoted a talk to him previously. Full details of the Town Lectures, which will also include a special Ipswich Society contribution, will be in the January Newsletter.

## Ipswich Heritage Forum

Ipswich Heritage Group was set up some ten years ago by Ipswich Museums so that heritage-related organisations could provide some mutual support and exchange information. Since the latter has been predominant the Group decided this year to change its name to 'Forum'. It makes possible the spread of information about the activities of participating organisations when we could easily remain in ignorance of each other however active in our field. The organisations represented are:

- Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service
- Suffolk Record Office
- Ipswich Transport Museum
- Tourist Information Centre
- GeoSuffolk
- Ipswich Historic Churches Trust
- The Ipswich Society
- Friends of Ipswich Museums
- Ipswich Maritime Trust
- Ipswich Institute
- Ipswich Tourist Guides
- Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History
- Clifford Road Air Raid Shelter
- 

We were able, for example, to make a few contributions to the business plan for the combined Museum Service of Colchester and Ipswich. Since then we have been pleased to receive details of such major moves as the Museums' efforts to acquire the former Art School and their ambitious plans for combining the High Street Museum with the former Art Gallery next door and the creation

of a new entrance in the present courtyard area. The Historic Churches Trust has kept us informed about the now largely successful stages of finding new uses for our redundant medieval churches. The Maritime Trust and the Transport Museum have shared with us summaries of their successful events and some of their ambitions. More recently we have been given a detailed account by Kate Chantry, Manager of Suffolk Record Office, of the proposed Suffolk Heritage Cluster in which the Record Office(s), the Museum of East Anglian Life and Suffolk Archaeological Service would combine forces. For our part the Society tells the Forum about our events and our concerns about planning issues.

So we share anxieties and problems as well as successes and solutions. There is so much going on in Ipswich that two hours every two months is barely time enough to take it all in.

*Neil Salmon*

## A Welcome New Book

### **The Port of Ipswich, its Shipping and Trades**

by Richard W Smith and Jill Freestone

374pp Malthouse Press, 17 Reade Road, Holbrook, Ipswich, IP9 2QL

This splendid book is the result of twelve years of research by two people with a great interest in the port from childhood. They have also learnt much from numerous other sources and local people; and all this information is lovingly presented and lavishly illustrated. Not many Ipswich people, however, know a lot about the port and its many activities of the last two centuries: even fewer around the country know how significant the port has been to Britain's trade. So this book fulfils a real need and will be a mine of information about ships, cargoes, companies and many individuals. Our Society has contributed to meeting the considerable costs of producing such a large and attractive volume.

It is published in a limited edition of 250 copies, at only £30 plus £5 postage and packing. Copies can be obtained from the publisher above or from Ipswich Institute and the Tourist Information Centre.

## Transport Fit for 21st Century

Hands up if you've recently taken up cycling. Wow - one million hands go up. One million additional people took up cycling during 2010, half of them cycling regularly (at least once a week). At last the balance is beginning to swing, particularly in London where congestion is getting less, pollution is not increasing at the rate it was and people are getting healthier.

In Ipswich a near £22 million scheme known within Endeavour House as ITFC21 (Ipswich Transport Fit for the 21st Century) is primarily about making improvements to road junctions that will enhance conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. There will also be improvements to the phasing

of traffic lights (linked along a single corridor to avoid stop-start motoring) and major improvements for public transport, including improvements to both bus stations.

The roundabout at the junction of Civic Drive and Princes Street will be removed and replaced with traffic lights, with a pedestrian phase, to simplify the walking route between the railway station and the town centre. We are also promised electronic signs to tell us which car parks have spaces. Upper Brook Street and the Princes Street/Queen Street loop will have pedestrian priority and Lower Brook Street will be one-way southbound. St Helen's Street (outside the Dove PH) will become one-way in-bound (the inside lane becoming a bus lane) and out-bound traffic will use Woodbridge Road. A second shuttle bus will circulate between the railway station and the university via the town centre.

Twenty-one road junctions will see some change, sixteen of them in conservation areas, where 'improvements' will affect the setting of Listed buildings, changes that could swamp the site with additional street furniture, road signs and traffic bollards. The Conservation Advisory Panel has been so concerned by the proposals, extra meetings have been held to discuss issues and advise AECOM, Suffolk County Council's traffic management engineers. Work will get under way in 2012 and is not expected to be complete until 2014. You can see more detail and talk to Council officers at an exhibition in Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre Wednesday 12 October until Wednesday 19 October, including Sunday. See also the website: [www.ipswichtransport21c.co.uk](http://www.ipswichtransport21c.co.uk).

*John Norman, Vice-Chairman*

## Big Society - Too Big to Fail?

Anyone watching the news reports of the August riots could be forgiven for thinking that the Arab Spring had somehow arrived in Britain. If such scenes strain our credulity, should we look deeper for parallel causes? Is there anything Britain can teach the emerging democracies about democracy itself? Or are there lessons that we should have the humility to recognise and take on board?

Given that Ipswich was thankfully spared such violence, these might seem strange questions to pose in this Newsletter. But we may all be affected by whatever follows the riots: paying the cost of the destruction and the making good; of the trials, the appeals, the enhanced prison sentences; and any wider changes in Government policy and attitude. Indeed, at the time of writing in the immediate aftermath of the riots, the Prime Minister now speaks little of the Big Society, but has reverted to the language of a "broken society", parts of which are "sick". And we might agree, albeit differing on which parts.

What surely beggars belief is that, in such a short space of time, a peaceful demonstration in Tottenham could lead to such widespread destruction and looting in towns and cities across the country, involving people from all walks of life. Could social networking ironically have been the catalyst in a chain reaction of social disconnection? Was this violent outburst of anger and frustration caused by that part of society which was deemed "too big to fail", whose bail-out has impoverished the remainder of society (the "Big" bit) which is left to fend for itself? If "help yourselves" was indeed a mantra for the Big Society, as I suggested in the previous Newsletter, then didn't the looters go a step further and "help themselves" amid the wreckage of the high streets?

So I would like to consider the Prime Minister's not unreasonable assertion that our society might be broken - but also, by implication, our particular version of democracy.

I would propose a different perspective. In spite of the extreme violence, 'broken' is not the appropriate word for the present state of society - for when was it ever whole? - but rather it is and always has been 'divided', which is perfectly natural and even healthy if we value our personal individuality while respecting others'. But this pro-social attitude of tolerance and co-operation is at odds with our "first past the post" democracy: your vote will count only if it helps get someone past the post, and won't count at all if it was for the losers. That would be fine if it made no difference who won. But what if a healthy society actually requires the proper participation of all sides in Government? And even though we now have a significant "centre" party, how can that change anything if all it can do is select which side to help "past the post" and which side to vanquish?"

Nearly fifty years ago, I learnt in O Level Economics that the UK had a "mixed economy", comprising an entrepreneurial private sector working alongside public sector industries and services, a pragmatic mix which was apparently invaluable in the post-war recovery. So did that notion really disappear in the sell-off of the nationalised industries, or does it still have neglected currency for the public services that make for a civilised modern society? For the intervening decades seem to have polarised our democracy between public and private sector values. This is far removed from the productive mixed economy of my youth and, as I suggested in the previous Newsletter, the Big Society is not the rationally devised solution to the conundrum; it is simply a collective label for every ordinary individual- you and me - having to pay the price for the excesses of others, to which we can now add the costs of the riots. Perhaps we are witnessing the social consequences of this ideological division, an imbalance which can only be perpetuated by our divisive version of democracy.

Why can't we all have our respective views and values represented in balanced post-election policies and programmes, including the plethora of legitimate minority interests within our more diverse modern communities? Wouldn't that be a more meaningful democracy? Our elected representatives seem to be asking more of the Big Society than they can muster between themselves.

***Mike Brain***

## The Brand Building, Tacket Street

Built in two stages fifteen years apart this edifice was designed by prolific Ipswich architects, Eade and Johns. Being north facing, four storeys high in a busy narrow street, this fine 19th century frontage is visually difficult to appreciate. It is a scholarly exercise of fine proportion, rhythm and grouping utilising good quality materials - brick, stone, slate and cast iron, backed up by obvious craftsmanship in all trades. In spite of blatant maltreatment from recent tenants - greasy extract fans and disfiguring floodlighting - the original character is likely to survive, although lack of overall maintenance is evidenced by rainwater disposal problems at the higher levels. The corresponding south side, incidentally difficult to observe let alone to access, has suffered from the ravages of time, weather and neglect.

On a more pleasurable topic, the carved head brackets supporting the second floor balcony, the semi-circular infill to first floor windows and the vigorous decorative detailing of cast iron columns are worthy of mention and scrutiny. A flaking of paint reveals a 'glass fascia' apparently indicating that Mr Brand was a noted draper plying his trade in the first half of the 20th century. A present day 'home brewed' comparison can be linked to the Coe family of Norwich Road who with a recent upgrade of premises have been successful for many years in the clothing world.

Let's hope the future of this elegant Tacket Street facade can be preserved beginning at mansard roof level and working down to the recessed glazing at pavement level. Such hopes must be tempered by suitable occupants and use being found to sustain economic viability - a problem for much of our town centre.

***Brian Jepson***

## Geology of Christchurch Park

**Field Excursion Report: a guided walk to examine the geology of Christchurch Park,**

21 July 2011. Leader: Bob Markham

Bob always draws a good crowd for his excursions and this was no exception with 33 people attending on an overcast but warm summer evening. The walk covered the southern part of the park. We started at Christchurch Mansion, made largely of bricks from the local Eocene London Clay. Such an early use for bricks (1594) was an indication of the great wealth of the Mansion owner. Incorporated into the structure as both structural and decorative elements are blocks of pale, creamy Caen Limestone. The approach to the Mansion is a path of Yorkshire flags, slabs of Carboniferous Sandstone, ending at the front doorstep with a slab of Jurassic Purbeck Marble, in which on close inspection could be seen a mass of fossil snail shells. The formal front garden, completed in 1932 is also laid out with cobbled flints from the Bullhead Beds, again local and Eocene in age, and with a row of crystalline granite bollards, certainly not a local rock!

Close to the western side of the building was a Sarsen stone, more of which were seen later in the walk, on a bed of grit made from ground up granite. At the rear of the Mansion, in the Wolsey Garden also created in 1932 when the Art Gallery was built, was another Sarsen with a sculpture by Bernard Reynolds. Bob then showed us a decorative Caucasian Wing Nut tree (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*) of geological interest because the species existed in England long before the Ice Age, some 2.5 million years ago.

We then walked across to the Round Pond, originally created as a fish pond by the Augustinian monks, fed by natural springs. Indeed, springs became a feature of the walk: rain soaks into the permeable sands and gravels of the Kesgrave Formation (deposited before the Ice Age about 750,000 years ago by the forerunner of today's Thames) and issues forth where it overlies the London Clay. The Kesgrave Formation contains pebbles of quartz and quartzite, seen in a small outcrop in the cutting through the bird reserve. Many springs, oozes and seepages were seen during the walk. The springs at one time fed into the brook from which Upper and Lower Brook Street get their names.

In the area of The Wilderness Bob and Caroline demonstrated the evidence for slope processes, where sands and gravels slip or slump over the London Clay, lubricated by the springs. Backward leaning trees in the cutting indicate rotational landslip movements, while forward leaning trees near the Wilderness Pond indicate soil flow and slumping.

We paused at the rockery in the Lower Arboretum. Here Bob explained the origin of the Sarsen stones, from which the rockery is constructed. The stones are a hard sandstone (the Reading Beds) which underlie the London Clay. Geologically referred to as silcretes, the one-time sands were lithified by minerals (particularly silica) deposited by illuviating and evaporating ground water, the product of a once much warmer climate. Many of the Sarsens showed a well mammilated (bumpy) surface texture. The Sarsens were discovered during the excavations for the Wet Dock in the 1840s, before being hauled to their present resting place.

We paused again by the upper gate to Fonnereau Road in Mayors' Walk to see the plaque to Sir Edward Packard next to a tree planted by him. Packard was a leading manufacturer of artificial fertiliser made from phosphatic material excavated from the Suffolk Crag deposits during the 19th century - the locally important 'coprolite' industry (hence Coprolite Street on the Waterfront). Packard helped create the first museum built in Ipswich and was chairman of the committee for some years. He also has a fossil Red Crag beaked whale (*Choneziphius packardi*) named after him.

Nearing the end of the walk, we stopped at the First World War Memorial, made of shelly Oolitic Portland Stone, which was deposited in a shallow tropical shelf sea some 150 million years ago during the Jurassic. A few metres away is the memorial to the South African War, made of Darley Dale Sandstone from the Carboniferous Millstone Grit of Yorkshire, deposited in huge river deltas some 300 million years ago. The memorial dating from 1906 was moved here from the Cornhill when Lloyds Avenue was built. We ended the walk on the southern side of the Round Pond, on the dam built to retain the water, a reminder that the ponds are man-made. Throughout the walk Bob had referred to the role the Ipswich Society had played in developing the assets of the park. And Bob had kept us enthralled and entertained for a fascinating 1.5 hours; he had given us a glimpse into the relevance of earth science and just how it affects not only our landforms but also our history and everyday lives.

**Roger Dixon**

## White Egrets in Ipswich

Fairview's development, Voyage in Ranelagh Road, will not win any architectural awards. The elevations of the residential units are pretty repetitive. As in all recently built waterside property the Environment Agency prohibits the construction of living accommodation within a predicted flood zone (i.e. the ground floor). An alternative use for these spaces is therefore essential. Car parking is the obvious option but this is not favoured by the planners and in an out-of-town centre development like this, bars, cafes and restaurants are unlikely. There are some live/work units where the owner-occupier lives upstairs and runs an independent business on the ground floor, but commercial users are hard to find. The biggest occupier is the construction company, Morgan Ashurst.

I entered the Voyage site across the Sir Bobby Robson Bridge. The tide was falling and the top of the weir was just showing above the waterline. What stopped me dead in my tracks was the sight of little egrets, stark white with long curved bills. I know these egrets are spreading across the estuaries of the east coast but these were in central Ipswich, feeding on the invertebrates being washed over the weir.

I went into Morgan Ashurst's offices and expressed excitement about this discovery but was met with indifference. Apparently egrets are there every day and the staff are used to seeing them as the tide recedes. But egrets have only been breeding in this country since the mid-1990s, firstly on Brownsea Island in Dorset and then quickly spreading around the coast and into Suffolk. Against the drab mud and algae-covered concrete their glistening white plumage literally sparkles when they leap vertically to avoid the screeching black-headed gulls. If global warming and other disruptions to the planet can bring hundreds of these small birds to Suffolk, how long before exotic crocodilia come swimming up the Orwell?

*John Norman*

## Park Road Reservoir

When you cleaned your teeth this morning did you give the slightest thought to where the water had come from? Well, the good news is it's local, not Pennine Hills or Scottish Spring. If you live in east Ipswich, Martlesham or Felixstowe it comes out of the Gipping at Sproughton, is pumped over the hill via Copdock to Alton Water where it is stored, then treated before being pumped over the Orwell Bridge to Rushmere. More of that story in a future Newsletter.

If you live in north Ipswich your water is pumped out of a ground source borehole at Whitton and up the hill to Park Road where it is stored in a surface reservoir (the water tower is no longer used). The reservoirs (there were three) were constructed about the turn of the last century. Two of these reservoirs (the two nearest Park Road) have been sold and the site will be used for housing. The largest (nearest Elsmere Road) is to be renovated to make it fit and clean enough for the 21st century.

Project Manager Matt Humphrey said, "The reservoir is an amazing piece of Edwardian engineering. From the outside it looks just like a large grassy bank but underneath is a huge concrete tank holding 21 million gallons of clean fresh water. It's a massive space; the roof is supported on cast iron columns rising out of the stored water."

A remote controlled CCTV camera has been inside to have a look around and now it is necessary to empty the tank and carry out a proper inspection. Water will continue to flow to your tap with a direct pumped supply.

6,000 tonnes of top soil will be removed from the top of the reservoir (and eventually replaced with gravel), the inside deep cleaned and repaired where necessary. It has been well maintained over the last century but the time has come to give it a more fundamental overhaul. Work will start on 19 September and may take up to six months, but the reservoir should then serve Ipswich residents for another 200 years.

*John Norman*, with contributions from *Ciaran Nelson*, Head of Media, Anglian Water Services

# Photo-Voltaic Panels

In this age when Suffolk County Council are endeavouring to create the "greenest" county, there is an opportunity for many of us to play our part in various ways.

I wonder what members' opinions are on the recent announcement that a number of nuclear power stations are to be built, one of which will be in Suffolk. I feel that such a programme might be reduced if more people had photo-voltaic panels on their properties and that it became a requirement in the design of any "new build" housing or commercial developments.

Let me give you a little insight into my own experiences. I had solar panels for water heating installed some five years ago and at that time enquired about p. v. panels which indicated an expensive project with a long payback period. I made an enquiry again with a local company at the Suffolk Show in 2009 and found that costs had come down considerably making it a more viable proposition, so I duly progressed to obtain more details and an estimate for the installation which I found to be acceptable. The work was carried out over a two day period at the end of January 2010 and I am now the very proud owner of a "power station" with twelve p.v. panels, the performance of which in the first nine months is already above the annual output suggested by the installers and I am exporting more than 50% of what is generated into the National Grid.

As far as costs are concerned, I was fortunate to receive a Government grant, which is no longer available under the new "feed-in tariff" scheme, and I also took advantage of an interest free loan arranged through the Local Authority. I am also aware that installation costs have reduced further in recent months.

The outcome is that I anticipate a financial gain of over £1000 this year, made up of the feed-in tariff on all that is generated, a further sum for that which is exported to the National Grid and the fact that any power that is used in the house during daylight hours is generally free of charge. This figure, which is tax free, will give a return on capital of up to 10% (where can you get an interest rate to match?) and a payback period of around nine years. Hopefully the new Government will not alter the feed-in tariffs which are inflation proof and guaranteed for 25 years. I am optimistic that the above figures will be achieved in what has not been an exceptional year weather-wise and of course I get out of bed each morning praying for a sunny day!

Obviously not everyone has the financial ability to progress such a scheme but if there are any members who would like further information, lists of local installers, or even a conducted tour of my "power station" I would be happy to assist.

***Ken Brock***

# Letters to the Editor

## **The History of Manufacturing in Ipswich**

from Shirley Sadler

In the last Newsletter, the Editor referred to the town's great engineering past. He regretted that the industry had not necessarily been noticeable, even when it was thriving, to people who lived and



worked in other parts of the town. Certainly a tourist visiting now would be able to see paintings by Constable, the Millennium tapestries and some of our lovely buildings but would have no understanding of the importance of industry to the town's prosperity. We don't have the fine old warehouses which might have survived in a former wool town and there is now almost nothing left of the engineering industry's buildings, much of the land having been redeveloped. While there are references to the town's industries in the history of the town at Ipswich Museum in High Street they give little idea of the scale of industrial production and how innovative much of it was.

The good work done at Ipswich Transport and Engineering Museum in displaying some of the artefacts is little known. The museum has no paid staff, relying on a dedicated team of volunteers and, situated out at the old trolley bus depot in Cobham Road, it is not on the route of most tourists. We have some wonderful displays at Ipswich Museum. Could not space be devoted, either there or in Gallery 3 at the Town Hall, for an exhibition of the history of manufacturing in Ipswich? Quite apart from tourists, so many people now living in Ipswich must have either worked in the engineering industry or have relatives who did and would welcome such a display.

### **The Northern Fringe**

from Douglas Seaton

How sad that The Ipswich Society supports the development of the Northern Fringe, albeit conditionally. Does this stance reflect the general view of the membership?

Building on this land will destroy a valuable public amenity. It is the only agricultural land within easy walking distance of the centre of our town. A stroll along Fonnereau Way beyond Valley Road soon becomes surprisingly rewarding with almost unbroken views across cultivated land in all directions. The fringes of the fields provide an excellent habitat for wildlife and almost all the land is cultivated. The public path is well walked and the farmers tolerate a number of other 'permissive' paths around the fields. The vision of this good land being submerged by a tide of concrete and brick is frankly Orwellian.

### **A Damp Control System**

from Glory Annette Chenery

I read with some interest the item 'Four Times Better? (Part I)' by Patrick Taylor and his proposal for external insulation to his house. My property has similarities. I too am tired of living in a cold house, and needed a solution to an additional problem.

My home is a two bedroom brick built mid-Victorian semi-detached cottage with solid brick walls. The original frames of single glazed Georgian windows were rotting when I took possession twenty years ago, and replaced with double glazed Georgian style windows. But the cottage has constantly suffered from damp problems, and following severe winters in 2009 and 2010 mould was discovered on walls. Upon noting an advertisement in the local press with a claim to solve the damp, I approached the Dutch company, and monitored tests confirmed rising damp. In December of last year a damp control system was installed by the firm's own workforce. All work was carried out on the external walls. Damp is pulled from the centre of the house to the outside walls where it evaporates with the natural air flow outside, and over time clears damp. The system comes with a life-time guarantee and also claims to be a permanent solution. After twelve months an inspection is to be carried out, and if there is no improvement guarantees a full refund.

*(continued)*

## **The Insulation of Houses**

from Ken Wilson

Patrick Taylor's second article on house insulation and Ann Petherick's letter on the same subject raise an interesting question since they both refer to the improved temperature inside a house following extra insulation. Surely most of us will heat our houses to a comfortable level and if we then improve the insulation the result is not more warmth - which we don't need - but lower fuel costs that help to pay for the insulation.

If we hadn't been able to keep warm in the first place then we certainly couldn't afford the insulation either. The interesting exception to this rule is of course double-glazing - referred to in an earlier letter - which was specifically excluded from the examples given.

## Heritage Open Days and a Ghost

A report on the Open Days will have to wait till the next Newsletter. With better weather than forecast, many people should have enjoyed their visits. 5,000 copies of the Society's attractive brochure should have been an encouragement.

Gippeswyk Hall on Birkfield Drive was a new venue but not a new building! Although thousands of people pass it every day, they may be too concerned about the sharp bend in the road to look at the Hall. Pevsner's *Suffolk* (1961) describes it well as "a three bay brick house of c.1600. Diapering with blue bricks. Two-storeyed with a three-storeyed gabled porch. The entrance had a four-centred arch and a square hood-mould." However, the book also said that it "has been demolished". This must be the most ghostly house in Britain.

[If there is any excuse for this mistake by the great Nikolaus Pevsner, it might be because a lower range of buildings at the southern end did formerly exist, as seen in a painting by Fred Russel of 'New Place Ipswich' which Bob Kindred, Borough Conservation Officer, has drawn to our attention.]

## Ipswich Maritime Trust News

In spite of the economic gloom and somewhat unreliable weather Ipswich has enjoyed some great festive events at the Waterfront this summer.

On 25 June the Pin Mill Sailing Club held their 50th Annual Barge Match and this special occasion was marked by the IMT with an evening of celebration at the Old Custom House. The largest number of barges seen for many years was on show in the Wet Dock dressed overall. They had made their way up-river prior to the day of the race and made a truly impressive sight, "A Parade of Sail".

On 24 July the IMT hosted a reception to mark the Sea Cadets' and Ipswich 13th Sea Scouts' Water Sports Event. We were treated to demonstrations of rowing, sailing, canoeing and motor-boating by youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18. They were joined by three Dutch vessels with a total of over 100 officers and crew, some of whom were invited to our evening's hospitality.

We were pleased to see so many people enjoying the Maritime Festival in August. It reminds us that we have a great asset in our Waterfront.

Our Museum Window located at The Mill on Albion Wharf continues to attract interest and appreciation. The subject of the themed display this autumn is "The Port of Ipswich and its Trades". More material from the public for inclusion in our museum storage facility is welcome. Anyone wishing to discuss contributions can contact the IMT at [info@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk). The IMT has financially supported the publication of *The Port of Ipswich, its Shipping and Trades* by Richard W Smith and Jill Freestone. Copies can be purchased at the Ipswich Tourist Information Centre and at College Gate Bookshop in Silent Street.

Just a reminder that our autumn/winter programme of lectures continues at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, Woolverstone on Wednesday evenings (planned never to clash with Ipswich Society lectures). Professor John Midwinter will discuss "Alternative Energy" on 2 November and Jonathan Betts will be talking about "The Work of Greenwich Observatory" on 7 December. Everyone is welcome and there is ample car parking.

**Diana Lewis**

## Where's the Regatta?

*Quays and Wharves of Ipswich* is the title of a new pamphlet produced by Ipswich Maritime Trust. "The aim of the Trust, in asking Bob Malster to research for this article, is to encourage all those involved in the future redevelopment of Ipswich's historic Waterfront to recognise the importance of the old quay names, and of the need to reinstate them in their rightful locations, in preference to new and entirely irrelevant names of no local significance."

In a few hundred words much history of the dock is interestingly covered. Reproductions of paintings and old photographs illustrate some of the places mentioned. The aim is to seek public interest and support before further steps are taken. More details can be found at the IMT website ([www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk/](http://www.ipswichmaritimetrust.org.uk/)) or by contacting Des Pawson.

## Goodbye to the High Street

Last year the number of shops selling goods for a pound or less increased by 11 % (Local Data Company survey of 500 towns). The number of charity shops increased by 9% and bookmakers now outnumber banks in main shopping centres. As Middle England's middle class consumers become increasingly mobile and internet savvy, the need for quality shops, department stores and small shopping centres decreases alarmingly.

But, no worries - Ipswich is getting a Little Waitrose (a sandwich and dinner in a box shop), a John Lewis At Home (touchy feely, order for delivery the next day store) and a proper Waitrose, the latter two on the Crane's site, Nacton Road. The developer assures me that this re-development will have no effect on the town centre - in much the same way as the developer of Westfield Stratford assured the planners that the two million sq ft of retail space next to the Olympic Park would not have an effect on the regional towns in the catchment area. Stratford is 55 minutes by direct train from Ipswich and every pound you spend in Westfield will be another pound you don't spend locally. On the day T J Hughes moved out of the Buttermarket, Colin Roberts the Centre manager said he was at a loss to know what other retail company would ever move into the vacated space. After Owen Owen, Allders and now T J Hughes there appear to be very few, if any, stores that require 100,000 sq ft of retail space. I understand there are retailers who are interested in a move into Ipswich but require a large column-free space on a single floor in the prime shopping area, the agent for one describing existing available shops as "medieval sheds."

Nationally the percentage of empty high street shops is 14.5%. In Ipswich the current figure is 11.5%. (Norwich 12.3%). These figures have remained static for the last two quarters. We've lost some nationals but there have been a small number of new independents opening.

But here is the dilemma. Does The Ipswich Society object to AquiGen's proposals on behalf of the John Lewis Partnership at Crane's? They will clean up the whole 44 acres, install the infrastructure and make available 19 acres for retail (John Lewis taking two units totalling 70,000 sq ft) with the remaining 25 acres for 'employment'. They claim they have 30 to 40 other businesses who have expressed an interest in moving on to the 'park' once Waitrose opens. Clearly additional out-of-town retail will have an effect on the town centre, especially with the Tesco development in Grafton Way - but we've been waiting for a Waitrose for years!

*John Norman, Vice-Chairman*

## Of Henslow and Poets

On the corner of Museum Street and Arcade Street, Arlingtons Brasserie is growing. By incorporating part of next door's property the Henslow Room will be created. How appropriate that the most distinguished active supporter of that original Ipswich Museum should be so remembered, alongside Arlington's existing Darwin Room, named after Henslow's most famous protégé. At the other end of Arcade Street, a newly opened bistro is called 'Poets' - a name presumably inspired by the Society's Blue Plaque and another plaque which both commemorate Jean Ingelow, the Victorian poet who began her career as a writer during the time she lived here (1834-44). History Revived!

## Rye and Great Dixter

**May 21st 2011**

It is a lovely sunny Saturday morning and Rye High Street is bustling with locals and tourists visiting the excellent specialist shops and sampling the coffee and cakes in the pavement cafes. The visitor numbers are swelled by 50+ Ipswich Society members all intent on making maximum use of

their time in this ancient town which has managed to preserve its rich architectural heritage and retain a vibrant town centre.

I, however, am not going to shop (for the moment!) and I make straight for St Mary's Church at the top of the hill. I have not been to Rye before and am hoping for a good view of my surroundings. The tower is open, manned by extremely helpful volunteers who look me over and announce I will make it to the top. (Apparently there are ladders!) It's worth the climb - I emerge from the final ladder to find Rye and much of South Sussex laid out before me in the sparkling sunshine. To my north are the Georgian buildings of Rye town centre, amongst them the town hall, pump house and grammar school. On the south side, I look to my right down medieval Mermaid Street towards the quay and to my left towards the 13th century fortification, Ypres Tower and beyond across the marshes to Dungeness. Time to go back down, and half way I pause to inspect the workings of the 16th century French church clock. This is absolutely fascinating - still in good working order it has a spectacular 18ft pendulum which swings backwards and forwards in the body of the church.

I spend the rest of my time taking a close-up look at some of the medieval and 18th century buildings I have identified, and trawling the many antique and second hand book shops. I find a Mary Webb novel I've been wanting for some time and sample excellent coffee and cake in a craft gallery before returning to the coach park on the quay.

In the afternoon we drive north through Sussex to Great Dixter, the home of Christopher Lloyd and still in his family today. At the behest of Christopher's father it was restored to its 15th century splendour by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1910 and the Great Hall is the largest surviving timber-framed hall in the country.

Barbara Barker, to whom we are much indebted for organising this outing, and I enjoy together a tour of this wonderful house, and further delights which await us when we enter the garden. It is May and this superb English country garden is looking its best. Alliums, geraniums, foxgloves and tulips spill out of the long borders on to the neatly mown grass and paved pathways. We look for ideas for our own gardens - how to use roses in a mixed border; lots of self-seeded plants of differing heights and little patches of annuals in amongst the perennials. Then we stroll through the vegetable plot with its spectacular compost heap and into the meadows which are still full of orchids. We finish with an ice cream and I buy a pink phlox which reminds me of the garden I grew up in. Thank you Barbara- a fabulous day out.

*Caroline Markham*

## Felbrigg Hall

Nobody volunteered to do this write-up so I have concocted something myself. Our trip to Felbrigg Hall on 16 April was another successful day. The weather was wonderful and enabled everyone to appreciate the gardens, which were in full swing as the weather had been so mild. The blossom in the Walled Garden made a good picture; it was so well cared for and the fruit trees trained on all the walls looked fantastic; even the guinea fowl were fatter than any we had seen before. Brian and I enjoyed a walk through the West Garden, beautifully shaded by the trees, past the Orangery, which had enormous plants there. One or two of the group visited the little church, which was quite a walk from the Hall.

The house was quite small and intimate but lovingly well cared for and the guides in each room were full of interesting information. [The following text is taken from the published information.]

Felbrigg is a fine, almost unaltered 17th century house with eighteen rooms open to the public. Visitors enter through the main door and begin in the Morning Room with its collection of family portraits and on through the Great Hall with superb stained glass windows. From here visitors pass through the Dining Room and the splendour of the Drawing Room. The Cabinet then houses one of the National Trust's most complete Grand Tour collections and one of the largest by a single artist, Busiri, who specialised in gouache painting.

Upstairs the Library is outstanding with a superb collection of books built up by successive generations. Following the route through the Yellow, Rose and Red Bedrooms the visitor comes to the Chinese Bedroom with its fabulous hand painted Chinese wallpaper, conserved in 2003. Life below stairs is well represented by the kitchen with its vast array of copperware and the early 16th century charcoal stove. The servants' wing and especially the Estate Office were in use until the death of the last squire.

Hopefully this will reflect everyone's own experience of the day to some extent, but please do think about possibly writing a piece about the trips you take part in. It is always good to have some different views about the days out.

*June Peck*

## Down House and Rochester

**24 August 2011**

### **Darwin's House**

Charles Darwin and his large family lived in Down House, Kent, for forty years. The house and its contents are of the period and give a feel for the life of such a family. The ground floor is as it was in their day: the furniture, paintings, books, scientific instruments, even the china, are the ones they used.

The upstairs rooms now are an informative display of Darwin's life and experiences including the writers and thinkers who influenced him - and with whom he took issue - and the many works he produced as a result of his investigations. His voyage with Fitzroy on the Beagle (of which Darwin's account is very readable) and his extensive observations on the voyage, led him to a lifetime of study.

The notebooks in his own hand show that his greenhouse, garden and study were also a laboratory during his life at Down House. His observations of insectivorous plants, orchid pollination, cross-pollination of plants and the role of earthworms were all new at the time. He was a great correspondent and wrote more than 14,000 letters. This was a most interesting and informative visit.

### **Dickens and Rochester**

Though born in Portsmouth, Dickens as a youth lived in Rochester and in later life returned to nearby Gad's Hill Place. Our tour, with a guide dressed as a Dickensian character, led us round the

many historic buildings in the centre that are mentioned, barely disguised, in his novels. As each new site was reached, a relevant passage was read, and the past and present occupancy of the building explained. Our guide also touched on many buildings from the Norman castle to the Georgian period which Rochester has happily retained. An hour and a half served to whet the appetite for a more leisurely return visit to its museums, parks and public buildings.

A most interesting day - with someone else to negotiate the traffic. Many thanks to Caroline for her organisation.

***Geoff and Mark Knight***

***Ipswich: the Changing Face of the Town*** - this new book by David Kindred arrived the day before the Newsletter went to press. It's a well selected range of old and new photographs making some fascinating comparisons possible. All beautifully produced for £19.95. More about it in next issue.

## Committee and Society Events

9 November — The Society's Annual Awards at St Peter's by the Waterfront

14 December — 'Getting Wolsey's Statue in its Place' by Dr John Blatchly

11 January — 'Sherrington, Ipswich's Most Eminent Son' by Dr Michael Cook

15 February — 'Producing and Distributing Electricity for Suffolk' by Dr Michael Coleman

14 March — 'Managing Suffolk's AONBs' by Nick Collinson. All lectures at Museum St.

29 March — Outing 'Kill or Cure' London Tour