

Issue 189 Newsletter Oct 2012

Contents:

- Excitements and Reality
- The Society's Awards Evening
- New Members
- Winter Lectures
- Heritage Open Days
- Chairman's Remarks
- High Flyers
- Notes & Comments
- Planning Notes
- Retail & the Town Centre
- County Hall
- Housing Developments
- New Council Homes?
- 1930s Architecture in Ipswich
- 'Ipswich Bus Wars'
- And now for cars ...
- Pageant, Torch & Games
- Crane, a Local Name
- Buzzards
- Independent Traders
- Lost but not Forgotten
- Letter to the Editor
- Ipswich Transport Museum
- Archaeologists at Work
- Learning from Neighbours
- Using Empty Properties
- Shorts of All Sorts
- Stanford Military Area
- Buckinghamshire Chilterns
- Committee and Members' Events

The Ipswich Society			
NEWSLETTER			
OCTOBER 2012	ISSUE 189		
Contents			
Excitements and Reality	2	And now for cars ...	12
The Society's Awards Evening	2	Pageant, Torch & Games	13
New Members	2	Crane, a Local Name	14
Winter Lectures	3	Buzzards	15
Heritage Open Days	3	Independent Traders	16
Chairman's Remarks	4	Lost but not Forgotten	17
High Flyers	4	Letter to the Editor	18
Notes & Comments	7	Ipswich Transport Museum	18
Planning Notes	8	Archaeologists at Work	19
Retail & the Town Centre	8	Learning from Neighbours	20
County Hall	9	Using Empty Properties	20
Housing Developments	9	Shorts of All Sorts	21
New Council Homes?	9	Stanford Military Area	22
1930s Architecture in Ipswich	10	Buckinghamshire Chilterns	22
'Ipswich Bus Wars'	12	Committee & Members' Events	24



Ipswich Maritime Festival: all sorts of surprising additions on Orwell Quay

Excitements and Reality

The Olympics, the Paralympics and, here in Ipswich, the Maritime Festival, the start of the Tour of Britain cycle race and the family cycling day which followed the Tour on that lovely sunny day (9 September) have created much excitement for many people. But in those heady weeks of August and early September the consequences of our national and international economic problems didn't go away. And social changes, particularly in the way many of us buy our goods, have continued to put pressure on town centres - a theme which crops up several times in this Newsletter. See especially Mike Cook's article on pages 8-9.

Nevertheless you should find plenty of variety in this Newsletter with articles touching on history, commerce, architecture and heritage with some topical 'shorts' and 'notes'. This variety is of the essence of The Ipswich Society; the Newsletter tries to reflect members' interests in many matters which involve the well-being of the town and its people. We have never been a 'one-track-minded' or a 'don't change anything' Society. Nor is the Society - if at all avoidable - a purveyor of gloom. So read on, I hope, for a positive experience.

Neil Salmon

The Society's Awards Evening

Wednesday, 21 November at St Peter's by the Waterfront, 7.30 pm.

The Society's most important single event of the year should again generate a lot of interest. Despite the recession, there have been a number of intriguing new building schemes, both large and small, producing at the time of writing fifteen nominations for awards. Our slightly larger panel of judges this year will have been put to the test in deciding what are the best developments which the town can be proud of.

The students from Suffolk New College who attended last year, with their fresh younger eyes, made some valuable constructive suggestions which we have taken on board, so the evening should be better than ever! We are pleased to say that Bob Allen, our ex-Chairman and now one of our Vice-Presidents, will again present the nominations and report on the judges' comments as the photographs are projected on screen. So, come along to listen and then agree or disagree! Drinks and nibbles will be available after the presentations - a good opportunity to discuss Society matters with friends and with the owners, architects and builders who are present to receive their awards. We hope to see many of you at St Peter's.

Winter Lectures

To be held in the Methodist Church, Museum Street (entrance Black Horse Lane) at 7.30 pm. All welcome, including non-members.

12 December, 'Advanced Medical Research in Ipswich' by Professor Brendon Noble

Professor Noble is Head of the School of Health, Science and Social Care at University Campus Suffolk. He is leading a research programme to develop ways in which stem cell-derived material can be used to treat cartilage damage and joint disease. At UCS, his School is responsible for the training of scientists and healthcare professionals. He grew up in Suffolk and is keen to contribute to regional development through his interests in education and human and animal health. He is a Governor of Ipswich Hospital Trust.

9 January, 'Fifty Years of Planning in Suffolk' by Clifford Smith

Clifford Smith was Chief Planning Officer and then Chief Executive of East Suffolk County Council until Local Government reorganisation in 1974, after which he became Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council. He has been involved in the planning process as a consultant and an outspoken critic since leaving the Local Authority. He knows the town well as he lives in Ipswich and is a member of this Society.

Heritage Open Days

A report will have to wait till the January Newsletter, but it can be said here that a combination of sunny weather and valuable help from a number of people - especially all the arrangements and publicity by Dianne Hosking - led to an enjoyable time for many townspeople and visitors. On the Sunday, the start of the Tour of Britain cycle race from the Waterfront and the family cycling around the town in the 'Sky Ride' (photo below) made our streets all the more busy and colourful.

Chairman's Remarks

Perhaps I'm wrong. Maybe it's time to change tack and admit that the town centre no longer has a future as a retail destination. There is currently a good offer of coffee shops, bookmakers and slot arcades but almost all of the comparison goods have gone. The motor showrooms went fifty years ago, the electrical retailers twenty and the last of the home appliances, ironmongery and stationery stores slowly but surely over the past couple of years. Admittedly fashion still holds a place but F&F, TU, George and Matalan are moving the offer out of town. And there is still some food retail but as you will know only too well this has predominantly moved to the supermarkets (and the arrival of Tesco in Grafton Way will move even more of the retail pound away from Upper Brook Street).

So what's to be done with the town centre? RP (Ipswich), the owners of the Buttermarket Centre, have an alternative idea and that is to change from retail to leisure, to move away from selling fashion to food (restaurant style), anchored not by a major department store (and this shopping mall has seen three try and fail) but by a multi -screen cinema.

Do we need nine additional screens in the centre of town? What will become of the Film Theatre and of the Odeon? And will the eleven screen cinema on Cardinal Park survive? My guess is that this is the right move for the Buttermarket - that it will be a success and that the six new restaurants

promised in the planning application will bring much needed footfall to the town centre in the early evening.

These opening paragraphs bring a string of further questions. What will happen to Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre given that the multi-storey unit previously occupied by Littlewoods is empty and that some of the others have short-term occupiers? Is there a future for Upper Brook Street without any charity shops? A future for Carr Street without the discounters and the bookies? Even Ipswich Central omits Upper Orwell Street from its development plans.

So from now on we promote out-of-town retail as the way forward. comparison goods in sheds next to John Lewis, Swedish flat pack furniture and smart phones from little boxes on what was once the industrial heartland of manufacturing. Massive car parks for easy access to the middle classes (with a token bus stop for the 30% of households without a car) and congestion from the shop door to the nearest A14 intersection!

Some say, if only the planning laws were relaxed somebody would develop County Hall, finish the 'Wine Rack' and build tacky boxes that first time buyers still couldn't afford on every green field within twenty miles of the drive-through office Brave New World. I welcome your comments.

John Norman

High Flyers

A pair of peregrine falcons spotted nesting in an old crows' nest on a disused crane at the Port of Felixstowe halted its demolition until after the breeding season. Peregrines returned to Suffolk some five years ago and have been nesting in a box under the Orwell Bridge. A second box on top of The Mill, the 23 storey block of flats on the Waterfront, has not yet seen any activity.

John Norman

Notes & Comments

New uses for a nearly new building

Landmark House is the large office block at Whitehouse on the hill overlooking the A14. It was built for Agilent (part of Hewlett Packard) but never occupied by them. It was bought by Suffolk County Council and following conversion is now being used by SCC and Suffolk Police. Child protection services and other services such as work involving trading standards and economic crime will be done there. Some 800 staff will work there when all the moves have been completed. Some police will vacate the Elm Street police station and SCC will leave St Edmund House, Belstead House and other buildings.

Telling the time - if only!

Public clocks which have stopped or are wrong are a nuisance and let down the image of a town. (The Society conducted a survey of clocks a few years ago.) Particularly irksome for the many passengers using Tower Ramparts bus station are the clocks on the two Wetherspoons' pubs. Both

clocks are working, but the one on The Cricketers has never been put forward to BST and the one on the Robert Ransome has been some fifteen minutes fast for months.

Another Ipswich Connection

Matt, the Daily Telegraph's cartoonist whose little drawings on the front page are enjoyed beyond the readership of the Telegraph, is now revealed as Matt Pritchett, grandson of the celebrated writer VS Pritchett (1900-1997). The Society's Blue Plaque at 41 St Nicholas Street, his birthplace, was one of the first we installed after one of our members in New Zealand pointed out that Sir Victor was born in Ipswich. The Society was warmly thanked by Oliver Pritchett, Matt's father and also a Telegraph contributor, who brought his mother (V S Pritchett's widow) to see and approve of the plaque soon after it was installed in 2001. We hope Matt has seen it, too.

The future of The Mill

The 11-storey tower block, The Mill has occupants at last. They can enjoy some of the best views in Ipswich. The adjacent Victorian frontages on what was Cranfield's complex site were meant to be retained, but the administrators of the scheme are debating whether demolition is possible and might be helpful in re-starting the project since its Irish bank went under. Our Chairman, John Norman, has said that the Victorian frontages are little more than façades for 1960s silos and "it is difficult to see how it could be used even in the long term." If The Mill can be re-started and if the 'wine rack' at Regatta Quay (formerly Paul's) is sound and can be clad and fitted out and if the derelict buildings closest to Stoke Bridge could be demolished and the site redeveloped, the northern quays of the Waterfront would be complete. Only three 'ifs', but it will take time!

Beacon Town Conference

By the time you read this, the second Beacon Town Conference will have taken place. Sir Stuart Rose is scheduled to be the keynote speaker. Sit Stuart lives just outside Ipswich and thus is familiar with the town, its range of retail offerings and the problems the 'high street' faces in the 21st century. He is also familiar with M&S and how it is losing (high street) sales at an alarming rate. It is however mastering the art of Internet selling and here sales are climbing, particularly those using the very latest forms of access (4G, Ipad and smart phone) who 'click and collect'.

Planning Notes

Northern Fringe

I attended a six hour Master Planning exercise mounted by the agents for the developers, David Lock Associates. Approximately 45 people were present. After the DLA lead made it clear that, despite the objections, the development would go ahead and we would not be discussing anything but the details of the development, she went on to describe the site and what would eventually be there. We were taken by bus on a tour around the perimeter of the site as access for a large group to the interior is not practicable. We learned about its boundaries, its topography, its gentle rises and the railway route. We also looked at possible access points. After the inspection of the waving cereal in the field on Henley Road beyond the railway, I got the sense that pretty well all the party felt this would be a real loss of a fine piece of agricultural land and a loss of green belt.

After lunch, we divided into six groups. We fell to planning what we had previously decided was desirable using the plan of the site and different coloured tiles representing the different uses. The morning group discussion had decided on a huge wish list - one railway bridge, 4,000 dwellings (none more than three storeys high), spaces for two cars, three primary schools, one secondary school, a health centre, a sports ground. a community centre with a hall, a district shopping centre, a

country park, a circular bus route using access points from Henley Road and Westerfield Road (but not Valley Road), a pedestrian and cycle route from north to south through the entire development and continuing south to Ipswich town centre. The groups produced their plans; of course the wish list was so long it was nigh on impossible to fit them all in. More importantly, if all were to be included in the Section 106 conditions, it would be unviable. DLA have gone away to absorb all the ideas and consider the plans. In general terms, the proposals and criteria set by the groups do fulfil all the Society would like to see if it takes place to its full extent. My fear is that without public money, no developer will commit to such an expensive scheme and a smaller one will be pushed through by developer demand.

Tesco, Grafton Way

This re-application is considerably changed for the better as it is much smaller. There is only a food store which is 35% smaller, plus ten other retail units, 16 four-bed town houses with south facing roof terraces overlooking the river, two hotels, 455 parking spaces and 164 cycle spaces. The development will be connected to Princes Street Bridge by a walkway. As part of the transport plan, the Novotel gyratory system will be changed to a single north-south oblong roundabout. Six crossing points and their traffic lights will control flow of all users. Two new bus stops will be provided in Grafton Way. But the Society is still concerned and is making these points:

1. It will have a footfall effect on the town centre.
2. The parking regulations must be drawn up, as tight regulations are possible and enforced.
3. The transport plan includes two bus stops and mention of the new circular bus service. A condition must be that this service is running on opening day and every day thereafter.
4. We are unhappy with the architecture of the town houses.
5. We shall look more closely at the walkway to Princes Street and make comment.

Crane's site, Nacton Road, now re-named Futura

In the original planning application the large site opposite the John Lewis development was to be a DIY or bulky goods store. Unsurprisingly, since all the usual suspects are well accommodated already, they have had to re-jig the lessees to furniture, soft furnishings and a couple of coffee shops. Yet again these retailers will reduce the town centre.

Premier Inn, Key Street

When permission was granted in 2005 for the construction of a hotel on this island site between Star Lane and Key Street the cladding was to be 'eternit' panels and aluminium windows. The hotel is now to be a Premier Inn and so a change to their brand of purple render and Danehill yellow bricks has been applied for. There were some IBC objections to this colour in a Conservation Area with many Listed buildings nearby, most notably the Grade II* Custom House. The Conservation Advisory Panel was not convinced the Premier Inn purple render was so inappropriate.

Waterfront Area parking

Enforcement notices are being served on car park operators to ensure that they comply with their planning conditions, so that wasteland is not used for general car parking and that all-day parking at low rates does not creep in. These are increasing commuter car traffic.

75 Valley Road

This application is for a 3-bedroom house in the owner's large back garden. A planning inspector commenting on a neighbouring proposal in 2005 allowed the building of annexes but said that the

area is within a green corridor [a continuation of Broom hill Park] on the Local Plan and the building of a house here would set a precedent out of character with the area. The Society agrees and has written to IBC accordingly.

Buttermarket Shopping Centre

The proposal is for a 9-screen cinema of 1350 seats capacity over three floors to be run by Vue, a well-established chain. There will also be six new 'family' restaurants. Currently the Centre has a 50% floor area occupancy. This is a major change from retail to leisure.

Mike Cook

Retail & the Town Centre

There have not been many new planning applications to occupy my mind so the devil got me ruminating on the future of shopping in and around our town. Whilst the developed world remains economically depressed, owners and developers have to run their businesses in the most economical fashion possible to reduce overheads: and concurrently, consumer spending is much reduced. Thus all shops are faced with a depressing financial outlook. Added to this, much purchasing is now done on line -14% is the projected figure for 2012. So retailers are looking for the cheapest site to buy or rent, that can be staffed the most economically with the largest footfall. Easy access and free car parking help but that excludes the poorest third of the community who do not have access to a car. So, in this time of economic stress there is a rush to the outskirts of British towns. Interestingly, it is my observation that it's not occurring to such a great extent in any European country that I have visited. It would have been helpful if Mary Portas had researched more widely before she issued her report.

In Ipswich our empty shop rate at 11.5% is less than the national average of 14.6%, but it will surely increase as planning permissions are granted outside the town centre. By Christmas, I predict Tesco will have been allowed to build their food store on Grafton Way. about the size of Sainsbury's Hadleigh Road, and the John Lewis At Home store and a large Waitrose will be open; soon the Crane's site will be home to DFS and Paul Simons soft furnishings. At Martlesham Heath, there is already a large Next, a Sir Philip Green store, and M&S is to take over the old Glasswell's store. M&S remain committed, they announce, to their flagship Westgate Street shop but it's well known they are fighting for their life. Lastly and possibly most importantly, everyone has welcomed the proposal to convert one of our biggest retail spaces, the ex- Alders and ex-TJ Hughes shop in the Buttermarket Centre to a nine-screen cinema. I regard this as a highly significant change of use as it means day shopping becomes evening leisure. (Note the presence of a 450 space car park on site.)

From these changes, I conclude that more spending and more life will be sucked out of the town centre. In the light of these I now think the UK needs to consider very carefully about how we use our town centres in the future. I do not see how they can return to that golden era when we all did our shopping there. Changes in the economy, the overwhelming presence of the motor car, misguided planning decisions and the internet mean that it is impossible for town centres to make a comeback.

Should we then abandon our town centres? Yes and no. As I have reasoned above, it's time to change its function. It is no longer where we'll go shopping but it should be the centre of our community with more speciality shops, particularly food, a hardware store and a bookshop. Empty consumerist palaces should be used for community halls and schools because the most vital change, literally, will be to revive the town centre as somewhere respectable to live in.

Apart from over the shop, which has some difficulties in this age, there is a large amount of brownfield land unused. The Mint Quarter and its surrounding shops in Carr Street and Upper Orwell Street are largely empty; the Westgate (Civic Centre) site is derelict and could be enlarged with the vacation of the courts and now the police station.

The problem, as ever in this country, is land ownership; these two tracts were bought by private developers for retail development. Hence their owners, understandably, put a high valuation on them, which places them beyond affordability for other uses. I believe that Britain as a society should urgently think about this problem. The Government has failed to move forward from its turn-of-the-century thinking, with its support of the Portas Report and injection of money into her ideas. This will not work in the long run.

I should like to start a debate on how you, our members, think we should proceed. Let's hear your replies in the Newsletter, or directly to me.

Mike Cook

County Hall

The local media (probably being short of real news during August) picked up on the deteriorating state of the former County Hall in St Helen's Street. This is an all too familiar story. A developer purchased this large site from Suffolk County Council (when they moved to Endeavour House) and re-developed the easy bits. So there is a new block of flats in Bond Street, recognisable because of the proliferation of perforations in the facade (gas flue vents and air inlet tubes); and the re-building of the shops on the corner of Grimwade Street and St Helen's Street, with flats above. They will also refurbish St Andrew's House when the economy starts to recover, but St Helen's Court (the former prison-like building) is proving much too difficult to convert (it's Grade II Listed). The constant changes of floor level, particularly on the first floor, make access difficult for wheelchair users, so the original ideas - for a sheltered care home - were dropped before any planning application was submitted.

Housing Developments

Grant Shapps, the pre-reshuffle Housing Minister, has announced that the first phase of a 22,500 homes scheme can go ahead on 1,000 acres of land in the south-east. Given the amount of time currently being spent discussing the Northern Fringe (which could end up somewhere between

3,500 and 4,500 homes) I wish the community groups, the Local Authorities and the developer a speedy solution to the Master Planning of the Ebbsfleet Valley. Between the Bluewater Shopping Centre and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge the Ebbsfleet new town will be the biggest development in the south-east for the next ten years.

By comparison the Northern Fringe looks small but that does not mean that the community groups who have been working with Ipswich Borough Council have been quiet. Far from it. The debate has been extensive and time consuming. There are some important areas of disagreement which will need careful negotiation to resolve and clearly a variety of vested interests. I am pleased to report however that the discussions are frank and constructive and solutions will be forthcoming.

John Norman

New Council Homes?

Ipswich Borough Council is aiming to build new homes on sites already owned by the Council. A small number would be on areas of land off Coltsfoot Road (Chantry) and in Whitton Church Lane. Local residents have had an opportunity to express their views. In addition, up to 120 homes could be built off Bader Close (Priory Heath) working with the Orwell Housing Association. As there is a great shortage of such homes and the construction industry is crying out for more work it seems too good an opportunity to miss.

1930s Architecture in Ipswich (part 2)

As well as sharp geometric shapes and lines, 1930s architecture incorporated curves into its design, referencing the ocean-going liners which were in their heyday in the 1930s. and there are still plenty of buildings to admire in Ipswich that were built in this style.

Travelling into the town centre from Norwich Road/St Matthew's Street the 'Penningtons' building sails into view at the junction of Crown Street and Westgate Street. Officially called Crown Hall Chambers, it was built in 1930 with a row of shops on the ground floor and offices, or chambers, above. It still retains its cement geometric parapet and its metal Crittall windows, both of them an integral part of the design of many buildings of that period.

A short walk along Crown Street brings you to Commerce Chambers at the corner of High Street. Although this was not built until the end of the decade. it is similar in style to Crown Hall Chambers with the curved end wall and metal windows. It also has a stepped parapet which is very typical of the period. As the line of the building continues down High Street the curve is replaced by a rectangular facade. with long rectangular windows and decorative brickwork adding to the overall 'Modernist' design. (photo opposite)

At the junction of High Street and Westgate Street, the Moss building has a curved vertical parapet which mirrors the parapet of Commerce Chambers at the top of High Street. (photo opposite) The white exterior is echoed by the neighbouring Marks & Spencer building and fortunately all retain

their metal-framed windows. The corner of the Marks & Spencer building is geometric with a wrought-iron balcony and is complemented by the strong geometric lines of the windows running along both sides of the building. This is similar in design to the corner of Electric House which fronts on to Crown Street. The ground floor side of the building shows clearly the horizontal lines which were an essential part of Art Deco design.

It is worth noting that when a rear extension was built, enough care was taken to replicate the horizontal lines on the new part of the building.

The theme of curved buildings continues at the corner of Upper Brook Street and Tacket Street. It was built for George William Hales in 1934, as commemorated by the plaque on the building. It has unusual gable-like structures on the parapet but it still has some typical features that denote the Art Deco style. The windows in the top of the building, which have been replaced, would undoubtedly have been metal-framed, but the beautiful coloured glass at the top of the shop windows is still intact on all but one of the windows (photo opposite) as is the curved apron on the front of the building.

The curved frontage is not so easy to see on the Art Deco H&M building in Tavern Street but when it was built in 1937 for British Home Stores, the curve at the front was echoed by the horseshoe-shaped cafeteria inside the store. However, if you gaze up you can see it retains its vertical element and stylish inset windows with the sills built as part of the building. (photo opposite)

These are just some of the many 1930s buildings that survive in the town and should be cherished and celebrated, so the next time you are out and about, don't forget to look up. You'll be surprised at what treasures you'll discover.

Linda Erith

Download the scans of both 1930s Architecture (www.ipswichsociety.org.uk/assets/Uploads/PDFs/1930sArchitecture.pdf) articles to view photographs.

'Ipswich Bus Wars'

The 1985 Transport Act de-regulated the operation of bus services in the UK. Services would be operated on a commercial basis without a subsidy. Services which were not commercially viable but considered by a Local Authority to be required would be put out to tender and the successful operator awarded a subsidy. This legislation ended the system of Road Service licensing for local bus services set up in 1930 and replaced it by requiring operators merely to register services with the Regional Traffic Commissioners, giving 42 days (now 56 days) notice.

An effect of the Act was that 'bus wars' took place, particularly in some of the large towns and cities, to gain control of the most financially attractive routes. These 'wars' involved large national operators and small mostly local companies. Service frequencies were increased some fare incentives offered to attract passengers. When a large company had gained control, following withdrawal by other companies, frequencies were reduced and the fare incentives discontinued.

Ipswich has been free of any major 'bus war' until 29 July 2012 when First Group. Until recently the largest bus operator in the UK, launched a campaign on routes serving parts of the east of the town.

This took the form of new services on routes very similar to those being operated by Ipswich Buses, together with the complete withdrawal of existing services along some roads, particularly in the evenings and on Sundays, and to a limited extent at all times. Ipswich Buses responded to the attack by increasing frequencies on some routes and the introduction of some modified and new services [X3 to Ravenswood, X5 to the Hospital and 6A to Cliff Lane]. Another result is that with more buses using Tower Ramparts bus station, Park & Ride services no longer stop there.

The present position is unsustainable with more than twenty buses an hour operating between the town centre and one area of east Ipswich. The outcome is awaited.

Russell Nunn

And now for cars ...

This is almost unbelievable! Henry Ford first started making cars in 1903, since when they have (on average) made a car every 10 seconds. That's 350 million cars over the past 109 years. And the Ford Focus has become the world's best selling car, overtaking the Toyota Corolla and the VW Golf - 10 million since 1998, one every 45 seconds. Available in over 100 countries, it has more 'international cred' than Henry Kissinger. By the time you've read this snippet, another Focus will have rolled off the production line, another has been delivered and yet another has joined the tailback on the M25.

John Norman

In the USA vehicles now outnumber drivers by five to four. Los Angeles is the most congested city in the country, with drivers said to waste 72 hours a year stuck in traffic jams. However, a reaction may be setting in. Streetcars are being reintroduced in several cities (even in surprising places like Houston and Denver) and public transport use reached a 54 year high in 2010. Many young Americans in cities are using public transport and bicycles rather than driving. And it's worth remembering that in New York (as in London and Toronto) half the population do not own cars. Even more remarkable is that many of the largest cities in the US are growing faster than their suburbs - the first time in over a century.

Pageant, Torch & Games

In the eyes of many, the BBC progressed from villain to hero in a matter of weeks. But what has this got to do with Ipswich? Just a little.

The Jubilee Pageant on the Thames was not one of the BBC's triumphs. In trying to cover so much almost simultaneously, the editors produced confusion so that it was hard to know what one was looking at and where it was on the river. And the parade of tall ships, including the Victor built in Ipswich and featured in the July Newsletter, remained almost unseen.

The Olympic Torch relays were often broadcast well but the arrival in Ipswich was a disaster. Admittedly an overturned lorry on the A14 was an unforeseen problem but the police got the torch through to the Orwell only fifteen minutes or so late. However, while the boat carrying the torch

was approaching or inside the lock, a BBC commentator bumbled on about the 4-star hotel on the river and the centuries-old dock. Of course, it isn't only the BBC which fails to distinguish between the dock (Victorian) and the river (which by-passes the dock). This is perhaps the most common misunderstanding amongst those who do actually know a little about Ipswich, but it was particularly sad that the BBC's Ipswich born and bred reporter, Kevin Burch, who does know the town very well, was finally left standing on Orwell Quay to commentate on the torch's progress along the dockside after every single person of the thousands who had been there had disappeared. Added to that, there was apparently no camera in the town streets to watch the progress and no suitable commentary position in Christchurch Park from where the runner could be seen approaching the stage and the cauldron.

Still, when the Olympic Games finally got under way. I think we'd all agree that the BBC was terrific!

Neil Salmon

Crane, a Local Name

Recently, I learned that the Borough Council were debating the naming of the internal roadways being created to service the developments taking shape on the former Crane Ltd site on Nacton Road. I discovered with disappointment that the development had already been named, not mentioning the former manufacturer who had owned the site for close to 100 years. I expressed the view that because of the undoubted importance of Crane's having provided generations of Ipswich people with employment -let alone the families, trade and infrastructure which this had supported - some gesture should be made to mark this by using company associated names for the new roads. I stressed - though not generally known - that because the founder, Richard Crane (an American) had very strong ancestral connections with the town, we should regard the company as local.

The Council said that roads in the Borough were not named after people or organisations that were still present in the town, though clearly this policy had not been adhered to in the past and I cited some examples. I further questioned why so many organisations, people or events had been so marked or celebrated where they were not native or even had historic connections with Ipswich. It is claimed that the Crane family arrived in England from Normandy in the 11th century, but with some settling in Cornwall, Essex and Norfolk, the clear majority chose Suffolk. In the 14th century, after a succession of marriages to heirs of titled landowning classes by the Suffolk settlers, a number of lordships and manorial titles were acquired. Of significance these in particular included Chilton and Groton in the west and Ipswich in the east. In the next couple of hundred years, this now powerful Protestant family owned at least 14 manorial estates in Suffolk and perhaps less widespread, this was repeated in Norfolk with substantial estates around Dereham.

By now, for some unspecified services to the crown, favours from King James I were being distributed through numerous titles, with armorials established for at least four of the Crane family groupings including London, Loughton, Camborne and significantly those living at Stoke Park, Ipswich.

In Groton, Robert Crane seems to have been very close to John Winthrop, and following expeditions to what was to become New England, purchased land there. In 1636 Winthrop - with

other colonists including members of the Groton and Ipswich Crane families - established the first English settlements in Massachusetts, where eventually Winthrop was to become the first governor.

Richard Teller Crane, one of their descendants, founded the company that bears his name in Chicago in 1855 and his son - also Richard - took over upon his father's death in 1912. Born in Denver, Colorado in 1882, he bought the site here in Ipswich in 1919 and set up their first overseas company jointly with James Bennett, a London plumbing merchant, and built a new manufacturing plant which was to pioneer advanced American mass production processes. By that time, Crane Company of Chicago was an organisation of global proportions with businesses right across North America. The family owned thousands of acres of coastal land in Massachusetts and built a large mansion there at Ipswich (on Castle Hill!). They were outstanding benefactors to the whole area but seemed also to have great affection for Ipswich here in England, their ancestral home.

Richard Crane Jnr extended this generosity to us here when in 1920 he paid for the archaeological dig at the site of the Roman villa - now buried under Castle Hill estate - and was also a major donor and guarantor of our Wolsey Pageant in 1930 which marked the 400th anniversary of the Cardinal's death.

The branch of the Crane family which established themselves in Ipswich built Crane Hall some 500 or so years ago. They worked Crane Hall Farm on London Road - still known as Crane Hill. The 500-acre farm and associated estate buildings, which were adjacent to Chantry Park, together with 30 cottages were sold in 1902. Although many of the buildings have since been demolished, Crane Hall, a fine Grade II Listed building, still stands, now occupied by a local insurance company. The exterior Victorian brick encasement completely hides the original 16th century timber framed structure.

I have been advised that by my drawing the attention of the IBC to these fascinating details it will after all result in the new site roads being named Crane Boulevard and James Bennett Avenue.

John Barbrook

Buzzards

I was writing an article to inform you that Britain's most successful bird of prey, the buzzard, was to become the subject of a £400,000 research project that would primarily wipe out their nests and capture adult birds on sporting estates when Richard Benyon, the Wildlife Minister, announced a Government U-turn and gave the birds a reprieve.

Buzzards are the UK's most widespread bird of prey. They mainly scavenge for dead rabbits and other carrion but will take young chicks and eggs, particularly of pheasants. Why pheasants? Because they are so plentiful. 40 million or so are bred every year, released into the 'wild' but survive on food given to them to provide game in the autumn shooting season. Buzzards are a conservation success story. Until the mid 1990s there were no buzzards in Suffolk. Now, particularly in the west of the county, there are breeding pairs.

John Norman

Independent Traders

We have read with interest the Society's concerns about the relatively low number of independent traders in Ipswich and their plight in the current economic conditions. We wondered if it might be useful to outline some of the challenges that businesses like ours face day to day. Some of these are shared with other, non-related independents; some are specific to our trade.

We need to persuade more people through the door, as many independents do. It's not just because we can't run to bigger or flashier or more central premises; we suffer from a widely held misconception that, as a small specialist we must be more expensive and less approachable than the nationals. It is particularly galling when this erroneous view is expressed by someone who has never visited the shop before. Many independents are frustrated by this.

The UK wine trade has one of the highest alcohol duty rates in Europe imposed upon it and it is increasing; it has risen 46% in the last four years and, since it forms part of the cost price of every bottle, has VAT added to the shelf price - a tax on a tax - which has had the effect of squeezing the quality out of less expensive wines as the tax occupies a bigger proportion of the shelf price. We also have the health lobby to contend with. There is no escaping the fact that irresponsible selling and consumption of alcoholic drinks fuels trouble and considerable national expense.

We fully accept that it is an issue that must be addressed. Perhaps a minimum price per unit of alcohol might be a step in the right direction but currently our Government does not seem brave enough to fully embrace this.

The intrusion of the multinational grocers into all our lives has become a habit of convenience for millions who are drawn in by the constant drip-drip of mass brand advertising and the illusion of supermarket price wars. Lured by unfeasible half-price offers and constant claims of cut prices and 'roll-backs', the draw has become the size of the discount, not the bottom line or even the quality of the goods. All independents miss out to these siren voices. For some, the tactics of the national grocers are also questionable; it's not just our beleaguered dairy farmers who have seen the shelf price creep up while the producers' price has fallen.

The glimmer of hope is from those who understand the difference between 'cheap' and 'good value', who are more selective about how and where they spend their money. More consumers now realise that the only way to discount wine deeply is to overprice it in the first place. Have you noticed how well the supermarkets' profits hold up despite all their 'discounting'?

If Ipswich wishes to avoid just another cloned retail offering consisting of the usual High Street suspects and out-of-town multiples, it needs a significant retail point of difference. Independent shops are vital to the attraction of a town providing variety, character, service, range, passion and product knowledge. Add plentiful (and inexpensive) parking along with good public transport, as well as clear routes in and out of town for the shopper who has to drive here and maybe we can recover some of our trade from Norwich.

The multiples are a fact of life; no amount of whinging from us will change that Surely though, we independents are worth encouraging; we might be a bit eccentric with our various enthusiasms, we might be a bit bristly with our opinions, but we are the spice in your shopping experience, the

ingredient that makes you smile, that makes a difference, that reminds you what shopping should be like, and without your valued custom we wouldn't exist.

Jonathan Hare & Jonathan Williamson Wines of Interest 46 Burlington Road

Lost but not Forgotten

Lost - But Not Forgotten Now: Ipswich, Lost Inns, Taverns and Public Houses by David Kindred. Old Pond Publishing Ltd, £14.95

Our last Newsletter (July) informed members that No 16 Butter Market was built as Ipswich's Grand Hotel. That was one of the surprising facts I learned from a pre-publication copy of David Kindred's book. I feel sure that anyone reading this new book will find equally surprising things about our town, whether or not you are keen on pubs. The splendid range and variety of photographs will open up different vistas of history.

There is a sociological interest in these photos. For instance, the list of historical titles and licence terms amounts to six categories, which in alphabetical order are: alehouse, beerhouse, hotel, inn, public house and tavern. To see what I mean, try arranging these establishments (omitting the more generic name, 'public house') in ascending order of social class!

The sheer numbers of lost pubs is staggering when you also consider that the population of Ipswich was so much less in the 19th century. In 1893 we are told there were 308 licensed premises in the town. In the last section of the book, pubs closed before 1920, the names come thick and fast and the reader is grateful that locations are given so as to distinguish between those of the same name, e.g. there were four different pubs called The Cherry Tree. Where people appear in the photos we can see what a different world it was -like the charabanc outing from The Vernon Arms in the 1920s; all men and only one without a hat. Or the outing of cyclists from the (original) Safe Harbour in Borough Road (now part of Grimwade Street); not even the 2012 Olympics will produce such an outing as that.

Most of these little lost pubs look quite mean, but we have lost a few (to my eye) quite distinguished looking buildings, e.g. The Crown in Norwich Road, The Duke of Kent, The Rainbow, Hotel and The Royal William, and some "Tolly Follies" like The Safe Harbour in Meredith Road and The Waveney.

David Kindred acknowledges the .. thousands of hours" of research done by Jack Ruffles who died in 2006. Similarly, all reviews of this fascinating book should make clear that Mr Ruffles' labour of love must have been crucial in producing this book at all. One last thought - the Grand Hotel (later Limmer's and now Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society) in Butter Market really deserves much better maintenance now. Go and have a look. Ken Nichols' letter recalls happier days for the building.

Neil Salmon

Letter to the Editor

Limmer's and Burton's from Ken Nichols

What a pleasure it was to once more hear the Society's excellent Newsletter plop on our doormat; it was as usual full of varied and interesting articles, two of which prompt this letter.

The first was the small snippet and photo about the history of the Grand Hotel in the Butter Market. I remember when it was Limmer's for two reasons; firstly the wonderful smell of coffee every time I walked up the Butter Market in the 1950s, a smell of the Continent for a teenager at that time. The second connection is that my wife and I held our wedding reception up in the first floor room with the stained glass and bow window overlooking the street.

Linda Erith's article about Art Deco shop fronts in the town could have included Burton's shop in Tavern Street. It has a handsome front and, remarkably in this age of change, the same company who built it are still trading there. Linda's article also reminds us that when in the streets and lanes of Ipswich we should always LOOK UP for most of the glories of our town are above shop front height.

Ipswich Transport Museum

The letter by Shirley Sadler about the paucity of information concerning the manufacturing industry in Ipswich was most pertinent. She acknowledged the work that we do at the Ipswich Transport Museum in preserving plans, photographs and documents relating to these industries and also the actual exhibits relating to companies such as Ransomes, Rapiers, Cranes and Reavells.

Early this year we were pleased to accept a fully restored example of a very high specification compressor built by Reavells in Ipswich in 1968 for the then new nuclear submarines. They were built regardless of cost. It was poignant that the restoration was carried out on a voluntary basis by a team of workers at Compair Reavell so it will survive as a tribute to them as well as to the company.

Recently the Ipswich Transport Museum lost its company secretary and publicity officer and restoration planner, Peter Bannister, aged just 57. He left a generous bequest to the Museum and plans were developed to use this money as 'seed funding' to secure a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the Museum. A necessary pre-requisite for such an application is to have at least 30 years remaining on any lease. Ours runs out in 2026 so we approached Ipswich Borough Council to negotiate an extension. Imagine our disappointment when we learned that they could only extend it by a few years. Why? Well, IBC owns all of the land surrounding the Transport Museum, including Holywells School. IBC anticipate that this will re-locate, providing them with an opportunity to re-develop the entire area.

Faced with this difficulty, the Transport Museum have used Peter's bequest to purchase an industrial unit in Quantum Park, Whitehouse Road, Ipswich which will be used as a store. This will allow the existing storeroom at Cobham Road to be re-developed as further exhibition space.

In the meantime the clock remains ticking towards 2026. It has been suggested that the former tram depot in Constantine Road might become available but that has three problems. The first is that it, and much of the land around it is owned by Ipswich Borough Council, so we could face the same problem in the future. The second is that Ipswich Buses still operate from this site and have no current plans to move. The third is that the site will require considerable expenditure in order to provide accommodation to the same standard that we have at present in Cobham Road.

In parallel with these developments we have been working closely with Ipswich Museum in High Street in conducting a collections review. This is expected to lead to their collections of transport and industry being transferred to the Ipswich Transport Museum. A large number of such items are presently held on loan at the latter as Ipswich Museum does not have the space to store or display them. A transfer of ownership would make logical sense but will probably need Council approval. Such a transfer would not prevent items being loaned back to Ipswich Museum for temporary exhibition purposes.

Brian Dyes Hon Archives Manager, Ipswich Transport Museum

Archaeologists at Work

As usually happens in a historic town like Ipswich, especially on one of the oldest settlement sites, an archaeological dig is undertaken for as long as the archaeologists can persuade the developers to let them work. This dig will have lasted about three months and is due to finish this month. The site is at Great Whip Street bordering on Stoke Quay, overlooking New Cut West and facing across the river to The Mill (Cranfield's) development. Being so close to the lowest crossing point on the river it has long been an obvious area to explore for human influence. A large medieval cemetery has been discovered (possibly 11th century) and graves dating back to Saxon times (6th-7th centuries). Rubbish pits will also reveal a good deal of evidence about how people lived.

When built this will be a development of new homes (280 flats, 25 town houses and an extra-care home with 79 beds) with basement car parking (which will also serve as a flood defence measure) and some commercial accommodation. Our Newsletter of April 2011 (Issue 183) described the plans which we welcomed in general, even though it is big and "will over-power Stoke and its Conservation Area considerably."

Learning from Neighbours

If the Northern Fringe of Ipswich is to be built on eventually, what should it look like? I was pleased to see that both Ben Gummer MP and Paul Geater, Ipswich Star's political reporter, recommended that those responsible should be prepared to learn about aspects of urban design from best practice on the European mainland.

The Ipswich Society's many visits to the mainland in the 1980s and 90s were at least partly motivated by our wish to learn - which we did in all the countries visited. We heard about the

problems of urban planning in a city where its most famous building is Charlemagne's 8th century Palatine Chapel, now part of the cathedral (Aachen). We observed how an underground car park could be built underneath a city centre square (Ghent). We appreciated the aim of 'social housing' in-fill to bring life back to the city centre (Antwerp). We saw the value of retaining the facades of typical old buildings with new build going on behind, and this in a city starting to re-invent itself (Lille). And we learned about constructing a completely new town on land reclaimed from the sea (Almere, near Amsterdam).

But we were only interested lay observers with no influence. The people who ought to go and learn now are the big housing developers and their architects and planners. They initiate and make the major decisions about urban designs which local planners must respond to. The British house-building industry has much to be proud of. I'm sure - but I'm equally sure it is an industry which tends to be complacent and insular.

Neil Salmon

Using Empty Properties

Cemetery Lodge, just inside the Belvedere Road gates was recently listed by SAVE (Save Britain's Heritage) as being a 'Building at Risk'. There are similar lodges of much the same age, the others being just inside Ipswich parks. The Borough Council is restoring and redecorating them and some are on the market as being available to rent. The lodge in Soane Street (Christchurch Park) has already been renovated and has generated much interest as a convenient town centre property.

Shorts of All Sorts

Wolsey's Gate has suffered from graffiti and rubbish dumped behind it. The brickwork has been worn by traffic pollution but it is basically sound. Dr Blatchly points out that if IBC could buy a small strip of land behind it, the gate could become part of St Peter's churchyard.

A '**Clean Team**' run by Ipswich Central complements the usual street cleaning done by me. They concentrate on a problem area in the town centre - a time for cleaning, weeding and painting. This is an important contribution to the town's appearance, especially for visitors.

Edith Cook, the first British woman to pilot a plane solo, is commemorated by our Blue Plaque on her birthplace at 90 Fore Street. A group has been formed to promote a statue to create more recognition for this pioneer of the air. They aim to raise £50,000.

Assis Carreiro, Artistic Director of Dance East, is joining the Royal Ballet of Flanders. Without her drive and influence it's doubtful whether the DanceHouse on the Waterfront would have happened. You may recall she gave the Society a fine lecture in 2008.

Associated British Ports and IBC have signed an agreement to clear litter from the water along the Waterfront. The popularity of the area has this downside of debris in the dock. It is to be hoped that a thorough cleaning every two weeks will be sufficiently frequent.

Chantry Park's plant nursery is being used by Suffolk New College for their urban and park horticulture course, due to start this term. A good use of IBC property.

The 'Rail Chord' (the 'Bacon Curve' after the Harris bacon factory which was nearby) is getting closer to reality. Preliminary testing work has begun on a new 1 km track. Felixstowe freight heading for the Midlands won't need to come via Ipswich and the London mainline. The Transport Minister has approved it and work will start this year and finish in 2014.

Five wicker 'sculptures' have created an unusual Floral Trail in town this summer. They were a shoe, a wristwatch, a crown, a boat and a cup and saucer. It ought to be taken for granted that they'd remain largely undamaged and (fingers crossed!) that's still true in early September, so they must have been widely appreciated. Originality each year helps to make the town centre a more attractive place to visit for shopping or leisure.

Stanford Military Area

'Stanta', said the road sign. We were nearly there, the weather was perfect, and the evening had not been cancelled because of possible military emergencies. Enter the Army's Stanford Training Area (Stanta) to a slight surprise - a farrier making horse shoes! Our guide for the evening, Range Warrant Officer Mez DeMeyer, soon informed us that this is because the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment were 'on holiday' here. First a loo stop, giving time to view the exhibition in the Lecture Room of former inhabitants of the area evacuated in 1942. There was Mrs Fuller, Headmistress of Stanford School with a group of children in 1936, unaware - how could they be? - of the future of their village.

Over a cattle grid and we were in the military area - on the left the impact area where live firing had finished an hour ago, on the right the dry training areas (blanks used). Our first leg-stretch stop was Frog Hill, with beautiful grand-scale scenery of Breckland of former days, sheep peacefully grazing, a scene much admired by Ipswich Society members. But how different for the Army personnel earlier in the day and again tomorrow - grenades, mortar bombs, booby traps, C130 Hercules aircraft battalion drop zone, special forces camouflaged as trees (were there any watching us?). And the sheep? They are cleared each morning by a shepherd with dogs before firing begins; of the c.18,000 sheep only about fifteen are lost to bullets each year.

Past Tottington (once a village with council houses and church still remaining) then to Bridge Carr village. But today Bridge Carr is no longer an English village; it is 'Sharabak' of Afghanistan. Here we wandered into compounds, down alley ways and visited shops. The villagers, the enemy and booby traps were absent after Army training earlier in the day. but the deserted alley ways, the physical evidence of night-time training were all too real and quite frightening, but reassurance came from our guide and (incongruously) our Soames coach waiting for us further up the road. In my view our tax money is well spent to help our troops train before the life and death of the real thing.

We had our picnic tea by Buckenham Tofts Lake (or was it the Helmand River?) sharing it with the wonderful wildlife in the training area. Then to St Mary's Church, West Tofts - a Pugin restoration church well looked after by the Army. I quickly looked at the gravestones; the newest I found was 1919. But there was one from 2008 - a 76 year old, an 'original inhabitant' allowed to rest here. Was he one of the children in a Lecture Room photo?

We said farewell to two barn owls and to Warrant Officer DeMeyer who had informed us for four hours, and we returned home with a magnificent sunset. A wonderful trip - thank you Caroline.

Bob Markham

Buckinghamshire Chilterns

On Tuesday, 26 August a smaller than usual group of members went on a trip to the Chilterns. As usual we had an excellent City and Village Guide, whom we picked up in Beaconsfield. She kept us informed all day about places we would visit.

We made our way to the Hit and Run pub at Penn, by the village cricket ground - hence the name! We had coffee here and would return for lunch. We started on our drive noticing red kites flying overhead. There had been a release programme in the area after the Victorians had caused their demise through shooting them. We passed many locations used in film and TV work including Midsomer Murders. Property here gets up to £5m for houses that would be quarter of the value in Suffolk. There were lots of posters protesting about the High Speed trains which are due to cut through the Chilterns. We visited St John, Little Missenden, a 13th century church with wall paintings. This was a Saxon original with Norman alterations with interesting arches and windows. It had survived Tudor and Victorian changes.

We passed Chequers, the Prime Minister's country retreat and the guide told us it was given to the nation for the use of the Government leader. We were told of the bodgers who lived and worked in the beech woods around High Wycombe, which was the centre for furniture making - Ercol was one of the firms. In the pub there was a chair displayed by the wall showing how it was put together. We then travelled to the Hughenden Valley where Benjamin Disraeli lived. We saw his grave in the churchyard. He is buried between two women - his wife and a lady who gave him a sum of money for the house if she could be buried next to him. Inside the church is the only memorial from a monarch to a commoner. Queen Victoria so admired Disraeli that she had this put up in his memory.

After lunch we travelled to Jordans Meeting House, built in 1688 after the Declaration of Indulgence passed by James II gave freedom to Friends to build their own meeting house. It was built in six weeks using simple brick for the floor, which is still there. The original walls and 80% of glass are also still there despite a fire in 2005. Outside were simple graves in the Quaker fashion including that of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, USA. Nearby was the Mayflower Barn, said to have been built from timbers of the Mayflower which took the Pilgrim Fathers to America. A very interesting and informative day was enjoyed by all.

Barbara Barker

Committee and Members events

12 October -- An Evening with Griff Rhys-Jones at Suffolk New College, 8 pm.

21 November -- The Ipswich Society Annual Awards at St Peter's on the Waterfront. 7.30 pm.

Winter Lectures at Museum Street Methodist Church, 7.30 pm

12 December -- Professor Brendon Noble (UCS): 'Advanced Medical Research in Ipswich'

9 January -- Clifford Smith: 'Fifty Years of Planning in Suffolk: what have we learned?'

2013 Outings - dates for your diaries

- 13 April -- Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Forest
- 21 May -- Legal London
- 12 June -- "I never noticed that" - an evening walk in Ipswich
- 11 July -- 'Ipswich's Oldest Valley' - an evening walk in Henslow Road
- August -- Ingatestone Hall
- September -- John Norman's East London, including the Olympic Park

The Purple Flag

This is an award which recognises all the work done to make a town safer for users of the night-time economy. In the previous Newsletter Mike Brain described the background of the scheme and its value to the community. It was originated by the Association of Town Centre Management and is supported by the Home Office. National Purple Flag Week was held in September, during which the Town Hall was lit up in purple.

In The Next Newsletter

A report and reflections on the second Beacon Conference, aiming to boost Ipswich's future.