

 The Ipswich Society
NEWSLETTER

JULY 2003

ISSUE 152

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Two further new developments in town
Can you place them? (See page 22)

Articles and letters which are not explicitly from the Society are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Ipswich Society itself.

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Editorial

This Newsletter comes to you in sunny and dry July - or cold and wet July? Writing this in early June, I've no idea what the summer will be like but I hope you'll make some opportunities to get out and about to see some of the many changes taking place in our town.

Exotic smells in the town

One smallish change which has rather more significance than might meet the eye is the newly opened Caffè Nero. Yet another coffee bar, some may say! Butter Market now has Caffè Nero at one end and Costa at the other end. The aroma of Italian-style coffee marks out this grand old street so that even a blind person would know where he/she is.

But Caffè Nero has actually been quite adventurous. It uses the first floor above its own premises and extends over the adjoining travel agent's shop in Upper Brook Street as well. So often rooms over shops in the town centre are wasted spaces, even though they are presumably included in the cost of the high rents. It's pleasing that this fine building in Upper Brook Street is being more fully and imaginatively used. Some good workmanship has created an interesting space upstairs. The only regrettable features were that the firm seemed so eager to start trading that external scaffolding has gone up after they've opened, and, worse than that, their planning applications for alterations and new signs were made a few weeks after the business opened!

This is not a rare occurrence. Companies however big and however welcome shouldn't treat the planning processes so cavalierly. The appearances of British towns often leave much to be desired but they'd be much worse without the planning controls so painstakingly developed over the last 30-40 years.

Possible big changes

Your Executive Committee was grateful to receive a briefing about a proposed master plan for the future of the town centre and Waterfront. This was provided by Simon Came of Urban Initiatives, the consultants working for the East of England Development Agency, the Borough Council and the County Council. It seemed to us highly desirable to have available for the future an objective assessment and vision of how the town could be developed ideally. Not all of it will actually be achieved but it should be a valuable frame of reference to offset the usual British way of doing things piecemeal. It should also be a stimulus.

Perhaps the main concern of the master plan is to encourage developments which knit together the present shopping centre, the proposed Mint Quarter, the Waterfront, Cardinal Park and the so-called Ipswich Village, making what the consultants say is "a clear, seamless and coherent town centre without run down areas". This is a concern shared, I should think, by most members Of our Society. A small exhibition, "Ipswich Futures" was held in Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre in early June. Members will have their own opportunity to hear Simon Carne speaking about "The Ipswich Master Plan" on Wednesday, 8 October - the first of our Winter Lectures.

Please send me all material for the next Newsletter by 20 August.

NEIL SALMON

16 Warrington Road, Ipswich, IPI 3QU

Chairman's Letter

Hello again,

Some of you will have heard of my accident when I fell over at the unveiling of "The Navigator" sculpture by the river. I damaged my face and rated a few lines in the local press. I have made a good recovery, and although I was told my nose was broken, I don't think it is apparent now the swelling has gone down. The sculpture was commissioned by the River Action Group, which as you know is closely linked to the Society and is indeed a daughter organisation which has done an enormous amount of improvement to the river above Stoke Bridge, including the improved footpath and cycle path. Its Chairman, Tom Gondris, was speaking about the sculpture when I caused my commotion. There were some rude remarks made about the lengths I had to go to in order to get Tom to stop speaking!

This year we held our AGM at the new venue for Winter Lectures, the Methodist Church Hall in Museum Street. This is a very convenient venue with parking available and it can accommodate a good sized group. We were however very surprised to be told by the caretaker as we were preparing for the event on the evening that wine would not be allowed. There had been no mention of this restriction previously. In the event we managed with soft drinks but it has always been a feature of our AGM to offer a glass of wine to members. The Executive Committee has therefore decided to hold AGMs in future at the Suffolk College, where we had such a successful Awards evening. So in future all Winter Lectures will be held at Museum Street, and the Awards and AGM both held at the College.

The Waterside continues to develop and takes a good deal of our time. The marina on the Island site owned by ABP has been granted a small extension towards the lock gates making the area now very full of expensive fibreglass. We have warned that future expansion will be objected to by the Society. The new hotel on the site of Good's old warehouse is just about to open - the Salthouse Harbour Hotel. It is owned and run by the people who own the Marlborough in Henley Road which will close and become housing. The hotel is a welcome addition to the Waterfront, although we are currently fighting with the planners about whether goods vehicles should access the site from Fore Street or the quayside.

The Waterfront Visitors' Attraction Study is proceeding on time. An interim report indicated that the consultants believe the scheme will be marketable and hope to produce a report which clearly indicates the way forward, not least to include funding arrangements. They have consulted with over 30 groups/individuals and are actively considering themes which include Anglo-Saxon origins, the American connection, Wolsey and the Reformation, and the Maritime connection. The final report is due in the summer and members will be made aware of its conclusions.

The Westerfield housing scheme is proceeding and many of you will have visited one of the consultation sessions held in various locations. The Society's initial position is that given a serious effort is being made to utilise brownfield sites wherever possible and given the Government's insistence on massive increases in house building, then reluctantly we have to accept the development. We are concerned at its final size and the quality of the layout/design, but also the suitability of the present road system to cope with the considerable extra traffic such a development would generate. We shall pursue these concerns with vigour as the scheme emerges. It is also extremely likely that we shall hold a well publicised special meeting to discuss the proposals.

At the time of writing the Suffolk Show is imminent and the weather seems set fine. The Society once again will have a presence in the Suffolk Preservation Society marquee, ably manned by a group of our members. This helps to make the Society known to a wider audience.

Our "routine" work continues steadily - monitoring planning applications, lobbying and influencing policy on various bodies (including MPs) and generally ensuring that as Ipswich develops it becomes a better place in which to live, and not a worse one.

JACK CHAPMAN

Recent Planning Matters

Here are some of our responses to planning applications submitted to the Borough Council.

Erection of side extension at 50 Westerfield Road

"The Society feels that this application should be refused on the following grounds: It is surrounded on three sides by the Christchurch Park conservation area and whilst only partly visible from the road it impacts adversely on Nos 52,48 and 46. It should therefore at least be referred to the Conservation Panel. The design of this huge expansion is unsatisfactory and does not add to the conservation area. The mass of the extension is so big as to affect the outlook from the gardens of No 52 and more severely 48 as well as 46. Because of the slope of the land this can only be appreciated by a site visit..." [Application approved by IBC]

Salthouse Harbour Hotel

"The Executive Committee of the Society are extremely concerned that a major change has taken place to the application since it was granted planning permission. We are enquiring whether these changes should have been advertised and bodies such as ourselves consulted.

"In the original consent condition, large scale plans of the access to and from Fore Street are required and the condition allows access to all vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes. We construed this to mean that access from Fore Street for cars and vans would be the normal route. We inspected the plans and listened to the presentation at Conservation Panel and felt assured that the only access to the hotel from the quay would be by pedestrians.

"A new application for signage indicates that this is not the case and that all vehicles will reach the hotel access solely from the quayside. This is entirely contrary to the desires of many in the community who had hoped that eventually the northern quays would have very little in the way of vehicle movements. We look forward to hearing your views on this important change in attitude."

80A Fore Street (Isaac Lord's): to convert former warehouse buildings into restaurant, three shop units and meeting rooms

"This is perhaps Ipswich's most important original medieval building and thus all alterations must be very carefully considered. It is thought that this will be the first time in 600 years that it will not be used for warehousing or storage purposes. We feel the applicant is right to seek change of use to a restaurant as this appears to be the only profitable business use it could be put to.

"However in doing this it is clearly paramount to preserve the external fabric and appearance. In the attempt to do so, the internal arrangements of the dining area have lost all the great feel of a long

warehouse which would have retained the sense of the original. In addition the plan provides very few diners with a view of the Wet Dock which is surely an important aspect of eating out in that location. The application was discussed at length by the Executive Committee of the Society and it felt that the architect should be asked to reconsider the whole internal arrangement.

"One further smaller point we felt inappropriate were the sloping sides to the decorative balcony outside the first floor centre window facing Wherry Quay; indeed, it's a very simple facade and would probably be best left unadorned altogether." [Still under consideration by IBC]

8 Bolton Lane: demolition of commercial building and erection of 4 houses and parking

"It is such a shame to waste a nice site with such a poor design. The developers must be asked to come up with a decent architectural solution in a conservation area." [IBC refused application]

The Factory, Star Lane: use of existing car park (serving adjacent retail warehouse) as long stay public car park

"If we are to reduce car traffic in central Ipswich then we can't permit conversion of a private car park to a public or contract one. At most a one year permission should be granted so that the owner will be stimulated to find a proper use for his land."

Land adjacent British Telecom, Handford Road: erection of 76 dwellings in two-four storey buildings...

"There are three items we would like to raise concerning this development.

1. Change of use from light industrial to residential will mean there is even less employment in the centre of town. On the other hand houses and flats would be located within walking and cycling distance of the centre. Further, a brownfield site development is always desirable.
2. 76 habitations will undoubtedly produce more traffic in Handford Road which is already saturated. Perhaps this is too many for the site. Another set of traffic lights must be avoided.
3. Once again, the design of the houses is mass produced. Surely a developer as large as this could produce better stuff. They also appear to overlook the houses on the east side of Cullingham Road. An overall improvement would be to reduce these blocks by one storey which would lower the site density and reduce their impact on nearby residences."
- 4.

The following letter was addressed to the Chief Executive of Ipswich Hospital concerning the **New block for Critical Care Medicine and Day Care:**

"We are concerned that the Trust should be able to apply some aesthetic consideration to the finished building. At least you no longer have the Regional Health Board dictating what you build. We would like to suggest that you consider consulting the Medical Architecture Research Unit at the South Bank University who take a special interest in the relationship between form and function, i.e. it must work for all users but it must look good."

Light pollution of the night sky

The Council for the Preservation of Rural England is extremely concerned about light pollution. The Society's Executive discussed the problem, as seen for instance in the huge light spill from supermarket car parks all night. Security is important but ! It seems that improvements can be made by merely pointing the lights downwards. We would like to know if there are any members who are experts in this field as the Society badly needs good advice. Please contact Mike Cook, our planning co-ordinator if you can help: tel 251498.

IBC's decisions on applications referred to in our previous Newsletter:

Extra 38 berths at Ipswich Haven Marina - approved

66 flats at 15 Christchurch Street (former Jaeger factory) - approved

Rear extension etc at Carlton Hotel, Berners Street - approved

Conversion of Marlborough Hotel and new houses - approved

Rear conservatory and external alterations at 27-29 Fore Street - refused.

Something for all Tastes!

If you haven't recently taken a walk around the Wet Dock you will be surprised to learn of the increasing number of bars, cafes and restaurants that are now open for business. Although there are more apartments promised than built, here is a clear sign that the Historic Waterfront is alive and successful.

Starting on the Island, we find the Last Anchor has recently been extended and now offers a full bistro service together with a club-type atmosphere in the bar. There is plenty of space outside for dining or simply to sit and enjoy the yachts with the backdrop of the Old Custom House and the glass-fronted Contship building across the water.

Adjacent to St Peter's Church in the mouth of St Peter's Street, on the important walking route from the town centre to the Wet Dock, is Le Detour restaurant. Not quite on the Waterfront but worthy of a mention for the excellent French cuisine.

Likewise Mortimer's is no longer on the quayside but a review of eating-houses hereabouts would be incomplete without a recommendation for this superb fish restaurant. In the award-winning converted sub-station Ken Ambler and his team should be congratulated for their vision in seeing the potential of the location.

In the building which Mortimer's vacated is the Bistro on the Quay for excellent light lunches and evening dining with an extensive wine list. Anthony and Kathy Brooks are providing a worthy replacement with a completely different menu. Opposite, moored against the quay is 11 Punto Brasserie, no longer exclusively Italian but the quality remains.

The smallest and most recent addition to quayside alfresco dining is the Continental Colours, Cafe, open from 8 am for the essential morning coffee and breakfast snack. With a surprisingly varied selection of lunchtime specials it tends to get busy and the tables outside come into their own. If you prefer a pub lunch then the Lord Nelson, the Malt Kiln and the Steamboat all provide hungry office workers with a bar snack. There are restaurants and a food pub on Cardinal Park and the ubiquitous McDonald's is but a short walk away.

As extensive as this list is, there are two more restaurants planned for the Northern Quays. By the time you read this, the Salthouse Harbour Hotel should have opened in the former John Good warehouse building. To earn a four-star grade they will need a restaurant to match, but judging by their previous efforts at the Marlborough Hotel this should soon be forthcoming.

The second is a little further away time-wise but equally exciting and will be the fulfilment of the dreams of two of our members, Stuart and Gina Cooper. The Isaac Lord's complex has recently seen its Listed status upgraded to, in places, Grade I and elsewhere Grade 2*, which is not the easiest starting point for a restaurant conversion. Stuart has found an excellent conservation architect who has solutions for stainless steel vent pipes and the Listed com machinery.

For this number of businesses to survive they need your custom mid-week as well as the custom of visiting yachty types at the weekend, but you are spoilt for choice.

JOHN NORMAN, Vice-Chairman

McDonalds to the Rescue!

I suppose this has some connection with the heading at the top of the page, but it's really just a fill-up! It's occurred to me that without McDonalds in Tavern Street we could easily have five mobile phone shops in a row. It's only McDonalds which separates Vodafone and 4U on one side from Orange and 02 on the other. Now we know who's got the means of paying these rents in one of the most expensive parts of the town centre.

NPS

Snippets (1)

A great name revived

After reporting sadly in the October 2002 Newsletter that the name of Ransomes seemed to have gone for ever, it's pleasing to note that Ransomes Jacobsen is the new name for the company's grass maintenance equipment following the take-over of previous owners Textron.

A three-year plan

Ipswich Partnership launched its 3-year business plan in March. This broadly based plan addresses the need for good transport and car parking as well as improving the town centre's attractiveness for shoppers and retailers. They point out that the increase in the numbers of new flats close to the town centre could help to attract more national retailers. It should be interesting to hear more when Paul Clement, the head of the Partnership, talks to the Society next March.

Making a new home

Suffolk County Council's new headquarters in Russell Road will be called Endeavour House. Work has been proceeding fixing the panels to the unfinished parts of the shell. The staff of approximately 1,000 should start moving in early next year. It should augur well that SCC's purchase of the building originally intended for TXU received cross-party approval.

The year has gone quickly

The market on the Cornhill has been licensed to continue until at least September 2004. It has functioned well since moving there in May 2002. IBC is considering the need to make extra space available, probably down Princes Street and into Queen Street, for which an Act of Parliament would be required. There is a waiting list of potential new traders.

Hotline for graffiti

IBC and Ipswich Partnership have set up a hotline (01473 433000) for members of the public to report graffiti so that a specialist cleaning crew can move in quickly. We applaud this initiative. Ipswich may be less affected by this blight than some other towns of comparable size but graffiti in our town can still be dispiriting if left for long.

Taken to the cleaners

Ajax on the corner of St Nicholas Street and Friars Street has long been a useful shop for electrical appliance repairs and accessories. But this characteristic old 17th century building (included in the Society's Local List) was badly neglected. Good to see therefore that it has at last been repaired and redecorated. A reminder below of the before and after appearances.

The Society's Surprise at AGM

The Methodist Church Hall in Black Horse Lane has already been greeted as a pleasant venue for the Society's meetings. However there was some initial consternation as members began to arrive. This was the first of our Annual General Meetings to be held there, events which have usually concluded with a convivial glass of wine or soft drink. But the organisers were suddenly made aware that wine should not be taken on to these premises: hence Jill Lambert's rapid drive to Sainsburys to buy yet more gallons of soft drinks!

Our Chairman, Jack Chapman, opened the proceedings by welcoming people and introducing the Mayor, Councillor Richard Risebrow. The Mayor, our President, conveyed the good wishes of the Borough Council and said how much he had enjoyed attending the Society's Awards evening in November.

Annual reports from the Chairman and Treasurer had been previously circulated in booklet form with the April Newsletter, so there were few matters raised by members at the meeting, but the following points are worthy of note:

Financial reserves: discussion as to whether the Society needed to retain £13,760 of unallocated funds, but it was generally agreed that this was not unreasonable to cover eventualities.

Life membership: this new status had been taken up by (only) two members so far.

Abolition of annual membership cards: no problem, as long as new members get a receipt.

IBC's cultural strategy: concern expressed that this had gone quiet, although probably still alive. Officers and Committee members retiring by totation were all re-elected - namely, John Norman (Vice-Chairman), Ken Wilson (Treasurer), Mike Cook, Tom Gondris and Neil Salmon.

The business part of the evening over, John Norman delivered an engrossing illustrated talk about recent developments on the Ipswich Waterfront. Even those of us who try to keep up with all the new schemes learned that we're not quite up to date!

Finally, on to Beryl Jary's excellent choice of snacks and those very refreshing soft drinks.

NEIL SALMON

The Navigator and the River

Several members of the Society joined a goodly number of people, including the press and television, in support of the River Action Group on 14 May. The occasion was the unveiling of John Atkin's corton steel 16 feet high sculpture, "The Navigator", commissioned by the River Action Group.

The day had been wet but by 5 pm the sun was shining as we assembled on the river path of the Gipping, looking in awe at the huge plastic-covered structure. We were also in sight of the Princes Street bridge and Ranelagh Road, two of the vantage points from which "The Navigator" can be viewed, albeit at a distance.

Tom Gondris, Chairman of the River Action Group, explained the history of the project, the competition to choose the sculptor and the success in obtaining various grants so that the costs did not fall on the Borough Council. An area had been cleared with some planting already in place for the siting of this large sculpture representing Ipswich's industrial past. [The photograph on the opposite page reminds us that it is also possible to see "The Navigator" juxtaposed with some existing industrial premises, the Reavell Works of CompAir Reavell Ltd.]

Unfortunately, these proceedings were delayed by the collapse of our Chairman, Jack Chapman, but we were heartened by the speed in which a paramedic and ambulance arrived, considering the difficulty in negotiating a river path and the crew's care and attention in dealing with Jack's injuries. Tom Gondris then performed the task of pulling a rope to release the plastic and reveal the imposing "Navigator" to a round of applause. People gathered round to inspect the sculpture from all angles and to speak to John Atkin himself.

A reception took place soon after at Christchurch Mansion where an exhibition of drawings showing the preparations for the sculpture could be seen, and John Atkin carried on talking to the many individuals who expressed interest.

JOYCE SALMON

The Future of Broomhill Pool

Function of the Pool

Sport as exercise is recognised as being ignored and even dismissed by some recent governments but the major concern of Public Health doctors now is the rise in obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, particularly in the young. The basis of this huge problem for future generations is the disparity between diet and exercise. Thus any facility that encourages exercise must be supported. It should be utilised by water polo, scuba diving and life support classes as well as those training for endurance swimming.

However this pool has an even more important use; it is used as a social meeting place by its main users, the 12-16 group. The interaction in the open-air without drink or drugs throughout the long summer holidays provides the largely social class C2 to E, multi-ethnic neighbourhood cohort with a vital outlet for the energy and urges of their age group in a safe and controlled environment.

Finally there is a considerable group of adults who prefer the experience of swimming in an open-air pool and swim seriously and frequently.

Popular support

The Friends of Broomhill Pool already have 15,000 signatures; this is a significant number for what is largely a neighbourhood facility.

Conservation issues

The Pool was Listed Grade II only 18 months ago. As originally built, the architects' (Borough Surveyor's) plans were not followed completely. Over the years major alterations have taken place, most notably the demolition of the clock tower. Thus it is not a very original structure. But it is important to note that the condition of a building is irrelevant in the decision that the DCMS in conjunction with English Heritage would make concerning demolition. The Ipswich Conservation Panel and The Ipswich Society have recently discussed the future of the pool and have supported its continuing survival.

Structural condition

Unfortunately it was built on a slope down which it is very slowly but remorselessly sliding. This has resulted in large and increasing cracks in various parts, particularly the pool box. Further, the ferro-concrete of the period is now showing its characteristic rot due to rusting of the reinforcement rods. Whilst the 1997 structural survey said that the major remedial work should be commenced in 2003, it did not state that the pool would be unsafe to use by then. However major work does need to be done. Additional works to be done at the same time should be considered. These might include heating (interestingly much of the original 1938 system remains in situ), improved catering facilities and the question of changing rooms.

Capital

At least £2.5 m will be needed to produce a facility with say a twenty year life. Clearly we must accept that Ipswich Borough Council has not this amount available for this sort of project. There are however other avenues which must be explored. First and foremost is the Heritage Lottery Fund for whom this project would fulfil many of their criteria. Further capital might be raised from charities and from the community if the opportunity is allowed to arise.

Management

This is probably the most difficult question to solve. Firstly despite the enthusiasm and devotion of the manager and his staff, it is part of the sports domain although it is agreed that its main function is social. It needs a much more leisure industry-orientated entrepreneurial approach. The Council could sell or lease it to either a Trust of which it would be a major part or it could offer it to the leisure industry. For it to survive after rebuilding it will need a longer opening period in the year, possibly all the year for some days in the week, longer opening hours in the season (workers can't swim in the day) and social events with appropriate catering in the evening. Consideration should be given to the abolition of the changing rooms altogether and the provision of a proper cafe. The decisions as to future management would need to be made before the acquisition of capital.

Summary

None of these ideas are fantasies dreamed up by enthusiasts; there are many lidos working successfully all over the UK. We and the Borough must not abandon this useful and much loved part of the town's heritage for the want of trying hard to find some innovative solutions to its current problems.

MIKE COOK

Somerset House

After being greeted by a smiling Mel Johnson we left Crown Street promptly to collect the remainder of our party at Tesco's. We were introduced to our driver who told us that because of our tight schedule there would be no "comfort stop" but that rudimentary toilet facilities could be made available on request. He had a rather robust sense of humour! We moved off along the A 12 at a comfortable speed with our good tour leader struggling down the aisle laden with a bag of one pound coins offering to refund £3 per person as we would be unable to visit the Hermitage Collection as planned.

During the journey, Mel, who had researched the background to the Gilbert Collection, told us that Sir' Arthur Gilbert was born Arthur Bernstein in London in 1913 and on marriage took his wife's maiden name of Gilbert. In 1949 they moved to California where he became a very successful property developer and began his collection of works of art. At that time he also began a close association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and had intended to leave his collection there but was eventually informed that their real interest was in contemporary art. As a consequence the collection is now housed with that of the Courtauld and Hermitage Collections in the restored and refurbished Somerset House in the city of his birth.

My wife Barbara and I chose to visit first the Courtauld Galleries. The sequence of the works is "broadly chronological" commencing with the 14th and through to the 20th centuries. A magnificent collection from Botticelli to Kokoschka. We spent three hours viewing (not nearly enough time) and then a break for lunch and on to the Gilbert Collection.

In the Collection were such memorable objects as gold snuff boxes, Italian mosaic portraits and miniatures, the oldest golden ewer (c. 2500 BC) from Anatolia with a swastika motif worked on to the base for good luck, and a magnificent pair of silver and silver gilt gates made in Kiev in the 18th century symbolising the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven. These were beautifully displayed and illuminated with appropriate choral music playing softly in the background - perhaps a Russian or Ukrainian mass.

We had little opportunity to give more than a casual glance to our grand surroundings at Somerset House but the beauty of the E J Safra Fountain Court within the courtyard must have a mention. As does the flamboyant Stamp Stair which led to the former Stamp Office - "From the ground floor upwards the balustrades are decorative, whereas on the lower floors they are plain, reflecting the higher status of those working on the upper floors".

The coach is waiting and Met rather ominously counting heads. We leave promptly at 5.30 pm and enjoy a comfortable journey home. An excellent day which we have enjoyed very much as a result of the care and attention for our well-being displayed by Mel Johnson.

PHILIP LAY

Christchurch Park Restoration

Christchurch Park is the town's most prominent and best known piece of public amenity land. It lies within one of Ipswich's principal Conservation Areas and possesses one of the most complete histories of any of the parks in the town.

The Park's origins stretch back to the 12th century and it contains 14 Listed buildings and structures, notably Christchurch Mansion (Grade I), an early 18th century ice house, an 11th century Augustinian priory enclosure wall, entrance gates and lodges, shelters, fountains and memorials (all Grade II Listed). The Park is of great arboricultural interest with a number of 350 year old "veteran" beech, oak and sweet chestnut trees. The Mansion was gifted to the town by Felix Thornley Cobbold, on the condition that "Ipswich Corporation" purchase the remainder of the estate. The Park was opened to the public in 1895 as Ipswich's first official public park.

The Park is listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens as a Grade II park and also provides the setting for Christchurch Mansion (Grade I Listed), one of the finest surviving examples of Elizabethan architecture in England, housing the most important Gainsborough and Constable collections outside London.

In March 2002 the Borough Council submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for assistance in the restoration of the historic fabric of Christchurch Park. The project proposals were originally presented in a "Restoration Plan" for the Park prepared in 1999 by Landscape Design Associates (Peterborough). Last September the HLF Trustees awarded a stage one pass, which means that the proposals can now be fully developed and progressed to stage two. The main elements within the proposals that were part of the original submission had a total cost of £4,288,780. At this stage the Council have been awarded a development grant of £130,500 to produce the design work for all the proposals to the required standard and obtain all statutory consents (planning permission and Listed building consents).

Currently, Landscape Design Associates are assisting the Council and the Project Co-Ordinator in providing the design detail, reviewing and confirming all project costs, exploring the potential for partnership funding, producing a 10 year management and maintenance plan in accordance with the HLF guidance and confirm proposals for involvement of Friends, volunteers and the wider community. The stage two submission must be presented to the Heritage Lottery Fund by November to meet their timetable for consideration by the Trustees for their meeting in March 2004. Approval to start the project will be confirmed at this meeting if they feel all the prerequisites have been satisfied by the Council in its submission.

The present author hopes to provide a more detailed picture of the proposals for the restoration project in the next edition of this Newsletter. In the meantime any reader looking for a more detailed picture should refer to the Borough Council's [website](#) or contact Shaun Taylor for further information.

SHAUN TAYLOR, Project Co-Ordinator

Parks' Services Panel

The Parks' Panel has met three times during the past few months. In February Shaun Taylor, Projects' Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund proposals, gave a presentation on the restoration and costings for Christchurch Park. An article by Shaun appears above in this Newsletter.

The second meeting followed a similar presentation for Holywells Park which will make a bid for Lottery money probably early next year. This beautiful park is of particular interest because of its medieval connections - the Bishops of Norwich are believed to have held land here from the 12th century until the Reformation. The site of their residence was on the moated area which is now a playground. As its name implies, Holywells was renowned for the quality of its water, falling from a spring in a sequence of man-made ponds, inspiring Gainsborough's now celebrated painting (acquired by the Borough and currently in the Gainsborough exhibition visiting Boston, USA). These were the fresh water ponds which established Cobbold's brewing reputation! The Heritage Lottery Fund has asked for more research into the park's history and for proposals for its future, and will offer development money for this research.

In May, Panel members were taken on a walk around part of Christchurch Park to discuss proposals for alterations and restoration as put forward in the Lottery bid. The imposing pineapple-pillared entrance in Soane Street would be repaved and shrubs would be partly cleared to reveal the diaperwork on the brick walls. The lawn would be reshaped to its original oval, with stone balls around its perimeter. As we walked up to the Round Pond, certain proposals caused mild controversy, such as the suggested removal of the scalloped edges around the pond - "How can children feed the ducks?" Over decades, seedlings from mature trees have themselves grown overlarge, thus causing root damage to walkways. Should these trees be removed or the footpaths re-sited?

How many people know of the little horseshoe pond, obscured by undergrowth but once a feature of the formal gardens? In the Lower Arboretum, seated on benches alongside the croquet lawn and facing a wall of conifers, we envisaged a view over a cleared and replanted boulder-strewn rockery to the island, set in a cleaned Wilderness Pond, and to the pine hill beyond. Would there be funds for maintenance of this vision beyond the ten years allowed for in the Lottery funding? One can only hope so.

PAT GONDRIS, Ipswich Society representative on the Panel

Street Scene Observer Needed

Our member, Adam Gordon, used to write an annual article called "Street Scene". When he gave up doing it, the Newsletter lost the services of an architect with a keen eye for new developments and a love of Ipswich. Isn't there a present member with similar interests who could contribute an annual article? Your Editor would be delighted to hear from anyone who might help.

Ipswich Museums

Introducing Tim Heyburn, Society Chairman Jack Chapman referred back to the Action Group of which the Society had been a member and which had recommended that a properly qualified person should be appointed to head the Museum Services. By the end of Tim's talk I am sure that there was no one in the room who doubted that he was the ideal person for the job.

Tim said that his three years in post had been very challenging ones. In response to the Council's decision in 1999 that there was a need to reform the direction of the Museums service and to create one more in line with the needs of local residents, he was developing a five-year action plan which included a complete review of the displays in the High Street Museum.

He described the context in which his review was taking place with the Borough Council's reorganisation, a plethora of strategies, the move towards regionalisation and the emphasis on "best value". He told us of the performance indicators used, such as the number of visits/usages per 1,000 population, including the number of web-hits (170,000 in 2002). And he shared with us his concern that indicators did not always measure the most important aspects; for instance the emphasis on the number of pupils in booked school groups was at odds with his belief in the importance of life-long teaming.

The Government's strategy for museums was based on a top-down rather than bottom-up approach. Its report "Renaissance in the Regions" had divided the country into "hubs" with a core museum and up to three satellites. Our regional hub consisted of Norwich and the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge with Luton and Colchester as satellites. There was no direct provision for Local Authority museums outside of the hub but the theory was that the hub's influence would benefit museums such as Ipswich. The Eastern Hub is to be part of Phase 2 funding starting in 2005-2006. However, there is an initial stream of funding to help with capacity building.

Tim emphasised the importance of Ipswich's museums. Founded in 1847, they contained nationally and regionally important collections. During 2001-2002 there had been 32,107 visitors to the High Street Museum and 68,231 to the Mansion (with 2% at the Museum and 8% at the Mansion coming from overseas). Both were generally popular with all age groups but the Mansion was less popular among the under-10s.

Having given us a vivid picture of the context in which the Museums had to operate and the constraints on funding for the developments which were needed, Tim then went on to spell out some specific challenges. These were: the need to engage the local community, to put Ipswich on the map, to regain the confidence of regional and national bodies after the cuts of a few years ago and, very importantly when museums are a discretionary service, to engage local political support and joined-up thinking so that they are seen as an asset rather than as a burden.

He believed that museums made a vital contribution to quality of life by stimulating human creativity, conveying an understanding of past and present, developing the individual and encouraging sustainability. They contributed to regeneration by developing civic pride, stimulating investment, creating tourist destinations and developing social cohesion.

Tim then listed the steps being taken to implement the development plan. In Stage One (with a small grant) a dedicated display of the town's history, "The Ipswich Story", had been created in the

Museum's gallery and an "Ipswich at War" exhibition is being planned for late September. He emphasised the importance of Ipswich Museum and Galleries providing an inspiring experience which fired the imagination. It was important to preserve, too, what was not directly relevant to Ipswich since there was strength in the breadth of the collection. There was now only one expert (the Keeper of Natural Sciences) and more Keepers were badly needed to stem the erosion of expertise.

For Stage Two (2003) neither growth nor cuts were foreseen. He would concentrate on enhancing community development and life-long teaming and building up a handling collection.

Under Stage Three, the collection (and access to it) would be reviewed. This would include the High Street Exhibition Gallery, to which there was no access from the Museum and not enough staff to open it. There was insufficient support of education at the Museum at present and he hoped to develop the community learning side, with bids for a Community Learning Officer and Community Studies Officer, possibly in partnership with The Ipswich Society and others. Lottery funding might be sought for new posts, facilities improvement and re-display projects.

In response to members' questions, Tim discussed other aspects of his difficult task. Time had been needed to restore stability and confidence after the cuts. While the invaluable contribution of volunteers was now measured, there was a need for staff to back them up. Tim spent a lot of time filling in forms and felt that he would like to spend more time "processing the service rather than servicing the process".

Tim's talk was comprehensive and reasoned, giving us a clear picture of the position of our Museum and Mansion at present and the outlook for the next few years. His passionate commitment to the Museums and to their potential is illustrated by his quote: "A mind once stretched by an idea never regains its original dimension".

SHIRLEY SADLER

Not Full Steam Ahead Yet!

Those of us who travel by train - and we hope it's a substantial proportion of Ipswich Society members - will be watching eagerly for further news of the new Greater Anglia franchise. Only one company will operate trains in the whole area instead of the present three - two of which, Anglia and First Great Eastern, run trains through Ipswich.

It was a surprise when the Strategic Rail Authority ruled Great Eastern out of the further bidding. Many people regard their commuter-style trains to London as "cheap and cheerful". But if less comfortable than Inter-City type trains, they do offer certain advantages. You can nearly always get a seat to London because the trains start in Ipswich. And the Great Eastern Off-Peak Day Travelcard not only allows all-zone travel in London on tube and buses but can also be used on any return train, even in the rush hour. It is greatly to be hoped that the new franchise won't remove these advantages for those of us in Ipswich.

The owners of Great Eastern, FirstGroup, have been invited by the SRA to bid for the Thames franchise which will eventually be merged into a Greater Western franchise - much bigger than

Greater Anglia. And the FirstGroup has also been accepted as one of five bidders for the new Northern franchise. Rumour has it that they conceded our franchise much against the wishes of local management. An SRA spokesman said FirstGroup's application was "appallingly weak". In the circumstances, Anglia Railways based in Ipswich and with a good record of customer care would seem to be our best bet for the future. But whoever wins the franchise, the outcome is important for the continuing regeneration of Ipswich which is, as the Great Eastern Travelcard recognises, within the London area of travel for day visitors, as well as for commuters.

Ipswich Maritime Trust

The Trust is currently collaborating with the architect of EEDA's chosen developer for the Cranfield's Mill site, Wharfside Regeneration, to secure a public display and storage area in the scheme for the potentially large volume of maritime artefacts now being offered to the Trust for safe keeping. Both EEDA and the Borough Council have expressed their support for the Trust's aims in this respect, and it is understood that the designs for a planning application will be completed in the early autumn.

In the meantime the Trust is seeking temporary storage accommodation for its artefacts, with the co-operation of the Port owners, ABP. If any member of the Society would like to contact the Trust about these or any other aspects of the Trust's work, they are welcome to get in touch with the Chairman of the Trust's Committee, Des Pawson, on 01473 690090.

STUART GRIMWADE

Snippets (2)

On the buses

Ipswich Corporation started running the town's tram network in 1903. A specially gold painted bus has been in service for some months commemorating the centenary. The main celebration will be held on Sunday, 13 July - an open day on Ipswich Town's practice pitch just across the road from the Constantine Road bus depot. Ipswich Buses don't rest on their laurels however. That depot will close next year and the site will become part of a big redevelopment area for houses and offices as part of Ipswich Village. A new bus depot will be built on the former Harris bacon factory at Hadleigh Road industrial estate.

New steel for the law

It's not a peculiar obsession with big steel frames which has led the Newsletter to feature so many in recent issues. There really are a lot of new buildings going up. Whole areas of the town wouldn't be recognisable to someone returning after a few years of absence. Many new buildings are fairly ordinary. The new Crown Court could well be more striking when finished. It's a 4-storey construction which will include five courts, waiting rooms, coffee bars, etc. It looks so big that one hopes it's not in anticipation of large increases in numbers of criminals!

New brochures to catch the eye

The Society's colourful new brochure was introduced in April. It is to attract the attention of possible new members and make the Society better known in the town. So in some ways it's not relevant to you, existing members. However, if you'd like some to show to friends, members of the Committee would be pleased to supply you. The Borough Council for its part has produced a particularly good new version of their annual "Ipswich & District" brochure with little articles about "My Ipswich" by different local people. Your Committee took the unusual step of writing to James Hehir, IBC's Chief Executive, to congratulate the Borough's Design and Communications Unit for the quality of their work.

Grassing it over

It's good to see a planning application in for St Nicholas churchyard. In fact, it's part of the application to convert the church into the Diocesan resource centre, "including landscaping of northern churchyard". If approved, the churchyard will lose the concrete paving which has been an attraction for skateboarders who have damaged tombstones and created rubbish and noise. Let's hope they will use the new facilities provided at the Stoke Bridge skateboard park.

Thanks to the Council for spending our money

No, that's not sarcastic! It's a welcome for the repairs to the Town Hall. The scaffolding is not exactly a tourist attraction for the summer months but the work needed doing urgently. Those who took part in IBC's Scrutiny Committee consultations heard alarming reports on the state of the building - the roof and the masonry. Ad hoc repairs have been made over recent years but cost cutting had prevented a continuing maintenance regime. Half a million pounds has been allocated in each of the next four years for essential repairs and improvements to the Town Hall and Com Exchange. They may not be the most celebrated buildings in town but because of their location and history they are the most important, and can't be neglected if there's any civic pride!

Gatehouse again

Don't forget that Pykenham's Gatehouse will be open on the first Saturday of the month, i.e. 2 August, 6 September, 4 October, 1 November. The hours of opening 10.30 am till noon.

Good food in The Stables

The Stables Restaurant in the restored old stable block in Chantry Park has been warmly commended by members. It makes a most pleasant stopping-off place when exploring Chantry Park, the only one of our parks with such a facility. It is open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 5pm and offers excellent value-for-money fare - morning coffee, lunches and afternoon teas.

The Station to the Town Centre

One of our members, Philip Lay, has drawn attention to a recurring complaint - that the pedestrian approach to the town centre from the railway station is far from ideal. In many ways it is better than equivalent journeys in some other towns, and there are some good and some very good buildings on the way. But first impressions to a newcomer might be the broken down railings on the corner of Ranelagh Road and Princes Street. The two busy streams of traffic crossing Princes Street are not

too difficult to negotiate thanks to pedestrian-controlled traffic lights. But then comes the major hazard of the Civic Drive/Franciscan Way underpass system.

The condition of this is rather better than it was because the Borough Council has made efforts to clean and maintain it but tiled surfaces, railings and steps are fairly easily damaged. However, if you've kept on the right hand side of Princes Street, you can avoid the underpasses but you end up in Cromwell Square. On the other side of Princes Street and making directly for the Cornhill you must use the underpass or dodge between the traffic coming down or into Civic Drive.

Many pedestrians hate such subways, especially after dark. It is interesting to see that the consultants of Urban Initiatives in their current work on a master plan for the town's development have apparently understood this whole problem. One of their suggested solutions, a new pedestrian route towards Cardinal Park and the Waterfront, might be welcome, although it wouldn't fill the need for a better direct route to the Cornhill.

Christchurch Mansion Explored

On 19 March, Bob Markham led a small group of members on a merry dance through the main ways and by-ways of the Mansion. This was a different view of a house which many participants thought they knew well, but this was history-as-you-go, attention to many small details and viewing remote attics.

Members heard about Queen Mary's being entertained to tea in the Great Hall in 1938 with tables and chairs provided by Green and Hatfield and tea given by Waterloo House. The kitchen and scullery were used for cooking lessons with menus carefully graded to suit three different social classes. The tour included being able to stand on a place of honour - the porch over the front door. In every way, Bob was an ideal guide for this great Ipswich asset.

Letters to the Editor

A THEATRE IN IPSWICH RECALLED from Vera Underwood

I have been reading The Ipswich Society Newsletter of this April and the article on the history of theatre in Ipswich has evoked a memory of a theatre which is not mentioned. No, I'm not talking through my hat as they might say because the recollection I have was of such an important event in the life of a child of 8 or 9. I do recall some events of World War I but this play I think was probably after the war as theatres would not be putting on shows during the war. I was so delighted when my parents took me to see the famous London actress Sybil Thorndyke in St Joan at the Lyceum Theatre in Carr Street which stood near to the East Anglian Daily Times building with its impressive facade. I hope there is somebody else living locally who can also remember this theatre.

Licensing Bill: Our Concerns

The Civic Trust has expressed grave concern about aspects of the Licensing Bill currently working its way through Parliament. The Trust has asked affiliated societies to contact the Government to make known their concerns, too, if they have any. The Ipswich Society has written to the Minister responsible, Kim Howells, with copies to our two MPs and others.

The key section of our letter is as follows:

"Pubs and clubs may create noise and disturbance into the early morning. In the fulness of time we accept that the abolition of 'licensing hours' may well result in an improvement, in that the English predilection for 'vertical drinking' may well be a consequence of having a deadline of 'closing time'. However, we fear that in the short and perhaps medium term, unlimited hours may well exacerbate the problem of noise and disturbance ... The purpose of this letter is to alert you to our concerns, particularly about late night drinking as opposed to evening drinking and to seek assurances that full weight will be given to the environmental impact on our towns."

Mr Howells replied that transferring licensing powers from the magistrates to local authorities would go along with powers to consider the cumulative affect of awarding licences in a given area, and he took heart from police support for the abolition of traditional closing times. There does seem to be some recognition that the English have a drink problem! But the Society still wonders whether this is the right way to deal with it.

[Editor: Since then, it has become apparent that in Ireland their liberalised licensing laws have failed to effect a change from a pub culture to a more continental-style cafe and bar culture. On the contrary, alcohol consumption has increased by nearly 50% over the past decade. The Irish Government is hastening to reverse this trend - nobody under 18 will be allowed in any bar after 8 pm, under 21s will be required to carry ID and closing times are to be brought forward!]

A New History of Ipswich School

"A Famous Ancient Seed-Plot of Learning

A History of Ipswich School"

by John Blatchly, published by Ipswich School 2003

The history of Ipswich School is in many ways the history of organised education in Ipswich because the School has been at the centre of public life in the town for centuries. To readers today it is immediately helpful to learn that the School has had so many different names which convey this central public role: names such as The Grammar School of Ipswich, The Free School of Ipswich, King Henry VIII School, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School and Ipswich Grammar School. It was only in 1945 that the School became fully independent.

All who know John Blatchly will also know that this book is a labour of love for a Headmaster who led and served the School from 1972 to 1993. But the emphasis should be on "love", for there is nothing laboured about the book. Indeed its other characteristics are wit and wisdom: as always, the author's humour and scholarship go hand in hand.

We read about brave, even heroic headmasters - the most outstanding being James Lemman who defended the School's endowments from the town corporation for 14 years (1608-1622) and whose petition to Parliament included the words John Blatchly has used as his book title. But we are also taken behind the desk to learn about misdemeanours, and much else. For members of The Ipswich Society there is a wealth of interest in the various locations and buildings which the School has occupied since the late 15th century. But for everybody there is so much of human life in this story.

Copies of this 400 page substantial and fully illustrated hardback cost £17.50 and can be obtained from The Headmaster's Secretary, Ipswich School, 25 Henley Road, Ipswich, IP1 2SQ.

Another Day in Norwich

The English Historic Towns Forum is a group set up by English Heritage and the Civic Trust to promote an active interest in the economic and aesthetic improvement of the core of English towns. This year they have organised some ten all-day meetings around England, the morning consisting of lectures on local issues from local architects and the afternoon devoted to a tour of the town/city. Thanks to the Society I was able to attend the Norwich meeting in mid-March. After an introduction by the Regional Director of English Heritage we were led through "Buildings in Context" by the author, Francis Golding, a guide to regenerating urban areas by looking at fifteen successful projects. (The Society has a copy.) The first case study was of Juniper House, Kings Lynn. The brief written by the Council was for offices, preferably naturally heated and ventilated, residential accommodation and a public garden next to a Grade I church and a Listed cottage on a central site. Jeremy Stacey has designed a scheme which fulfils these requirements and complements its surroundings. (He pointed out that PFI produced poor and expensive buildings.)

We next looked at the Forum in central Norwich. (Lucky old them to have had their library burnt down and doubled the insurance money from the Millennium Fund!) Michael Taylor, a partner of Michael Hopkins, pointed out the difficulties in persuading the librarians that it was safe to have an open library within a building that has to pay its way. Thus much floor space is given over to the food industry, to a Norwich tourist information shop and to the excellent widescreen film on the history of the city in the undercroft. The BBC is transferring there soon. All this makes for good mix of users of the Forum. Michael Taylor was a delightful and unassuming guide to his building. Hopefully even more will come when the Chapelfields (Rowntree) site is completed (being demolished at the time of the visit).

The Riverside site has caused much heartache. Mostly owned by Railtrack and Asda, the reclamation of the land was expensive so that it was difficult for the planners to gain much Section 106 development. Eventually they now have a retail park with the usual chains, of which the largest and most successful in architectural terms is ironically a Morrison's. A large residential development connected by two exciting footbridges across the Wensum was felt by our group to be banal and very dense. The replacement swimming pool has just been opened on an adjacent site.

Finally we returned to the City Hall through the King Street rejuvenation area where not only sympathetic restoration but also an exciting modern building is leading to a thriving new quarter. Live/work units, expensive houses and affordable flats are enlivening this rundown part. As usual pedestrianisation is playing a major part.

I would recommend a visit but I'm afraid you won't have the expert guides I did - Michael Taylor and for the later part the Head of Development Control for Norwich City Council. My thanks to them and the EHTF and the Society for such a stimulating day out.

MIKE COOK

Suffolk Photographic Survey

Firstly, a little information about the Suffolk Local History Council (SLHC) of which The Ipswich Society is a member and is represented on its Executive Committee. The SLHC is the umbrella organisation which shelters a wide range of local societies - historical, archaeological, transport, museums - for whom the Council disseminates information on their interests through its Newsletter, its Calendar of Events and its journal The Suffolk Review. Individuals as well as societies can become members and receive all these publications. Once a year it organises a weekend school at Belstead House. The work of present-day recorders is another aspect of the Council's umbrella activity - what is recorded today becomes the history of tomorrow! SLHC also has a very informative website: www.suffolklocalhistorycouncil.org.uk

And so to the project! Do you want to help? An opportunity for Ipswich Society members to be involved! Now read on....

The Suffolk Photographic Survey - well over 20,000 items and still growing - owes its existence to the work of the SLHC in the early 1950s, in encouraging people to give or loan early photographs to form a pictorial record of Suffolk life in both town and country. Through the dedicated work of organiser/collector Bob Pratt, under the aegis of the SLHC, the collection had grown to such an extent that by 1976 it was transferred into the care of the Suffolk Record Office and housed at the Ipswich branch, Gatacre Road, where it can be consulted through the use of the accompanying card index. And it is the upgrading of this card index on to a computer database that forms the SLHC's 50th anniversary project and for which **volunteers** are sought.

There are two sides to the work, and volunteers can be involved in both or either. Firstly, each photograph has to be viewed, described and categorised. When this has been done the results are fed into the Record Office database. When completed it will be possible, using any descriptive words you wish, to search for relevant photographs on a much wider and detailed basis than the present card index offers.

Volunteers meet once a week on Thursday mornings at the Ipswich branch of the Record Office for about two and a half hours. It is not necessary to attend every week, but it would be an advantage to attend as regularly as possible, and certainly two or three weeks running at the beginning to get used to the system, and when individual one-to-one tuition will be given.

If any member would like to help, please contact the SLHC Hon Secretary, Jonathan Abson on (01473) 725402.

RUTH SERJEANT, The Ipswich Society Representative, SLHC

Heritage Open Days

13-14 September 2003

The Society is again co-ordinating this annual event for the Civic Trust. We plan to publish our information leaflet early in August. As usual it will be available from the Tourist Information Centre, the Central Library, Civic Centre, the Corn Exchange and a number of other outlets. New this year will be the Museum Street Methodist Church. Heritage Open Days enable the public to view a number of properties not otherwise accessible to the public.

Belton House, Grantham

Forty-eight members of the Society left for the visit to Belton House on 26 April. On arrival, we were impressed to see a "welcome" notice board with the Society's name on it at our setting down place. After a short break we assembled in the magnificent Marble Hall, the principal room of the south side of the house, where a member of staff gave us a brief history of the house and family. We were then free to look over the house and extensive parkland at our leisure.

Belton House has been the home of the Brownlow family for over 300 years. It was designed by the gentleman architect William Winde and built between 1685 and 1688 for "Young" Sir John Brownlow. Built on an H-plan it has a hipped roof with dormer windows and an elegant cupola. Between projecting wings a broad flight of steps leads up to the main doorway, above which is a pediment with the Brownlow coat of arms. About 1776 the architect James Wyatt altered the house and in 1811 his nephew Sir Jeffrey Wyatville built the orangery.

The stunning interior contains exceptionally fine plasterwork and woodcarving (some attributed to Grinling Gibbons) and in every room there are important collections of paintings, furniture, rare porcelain and silverware. The layout of the rooms presents an easy progression throughout the house for the visitor. Each room has its own outstanding features. For example, the black and white squared marble floor gives its name to the Marble Hall. The Saloon, a formal reception room, contains a beautiful Aubusson carpet commissioned by the 1st Earl and the Tyrconnel Room has a painted floor incorporating the Brownlow greyhound crest and coat of arms.

The Chapel, Chapel Drawing Room and Chapel Gallery are next in the progression through the house. The Gallery follows an arrangement common from the end of the Middle Ages, whereby the family "closet", perhaps the most private part of all the rooms in the house, opened on to the Chapel at first-floor level. Recent renovation indicates that the Chapel Drawing Room contains one of the few surviving 17th century interiors at Belton.

The Staircase Hall leading to the upper floor and placed off-centre is the only structural feature to break the overall symmetry of the house. It formed part of the ceremonial route for important visitors, linking the Marble Hall to the Great Dining Room (now the Library) on the floor above. On the upper floor the Yellow Bedroom has another of Wyatt's surviving interiors. The decoration of the Chinese Bedroom dates from about 1840, although the wallpaper is 18th century. The

Queen's Bedroom takes its name from Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV, for whose visit in 1841 it was redecorated.

The Windsor Bedroom is named in honour of Belton's association with the Duke of Windsor who was a close friend of the 6th Lord Brownlow. Lord Brownlow was appointed Lord-in-Waiting to the King when Edward succeeded to the throne. It was Lord Brownlow who escorted Wallis Simpson to Cannes during the Abdication Crisis. Whilst a cadet at nearby RAF Cranwell the present Prince of Wales was the most frequent visitor to use the room in recent times.

As with many country houses of the period Belton required an appropriately elaborate setting of gardens and parkland. "Young" Sir John Brownlow surrounded his new home with a highly formal scheme of parterres and walks, which now includes Italian and Dutch gardens and an Orangery. The 18th century sundial in the Italian Garden achieved fame as the "Moondial" in the BBC television series adapted from the children's book of the same title by Helen Cresswell. The hedge maze was dug up during the Second World War but is now being reconstructed according to drawings found in the library. There is also a lakeside walk and Swiss-style boathouse. Within easy walking distance of the house is the church of SS Peter and Paul, which contains a remarkable group of monuments to the Brownlow family.

All too soon it was time for us to board the coach for our return Journey after a very happy and interesting day. We must thank June Peck for her excellent organisation of this outing.

AVRIL FARA HAR

Ipswich Archaeological Trust

The Ipswich Archaeological Trust was formed in October 1982 to inform the people of Ipswich about, and involve them in, archaeological work being undertaken in the town and surrounding area.

The archaeological deposits which underlie Ipswich town centre are of international importance. Excavations carried out since 1974 demonstrate that Ipswich is one of the earliest English towns and one of the first in north-west Europe. The town was probably founded by the East Anglian Kings buried at the famous Sutton Hoo cemetery in the early 7th century. The archaeology of Ipswich provides a unique opportunity to understand the early development of our present-day urban society.

The Trust's activities depend partly on what is happening in archaeological exploration at the time but they comprise:

- **lectures** on archaeology in general, work in the town and elsewhere
- **newsletters** giving up-to-date information about sites being excavated, finds and activities
- **exhibitions** about the archaeology of Ipswich
- **walk and talk** activities covering the general history of Ipswich
- **visits** to excavations and sites in the town and elsewhere.

Any Ipswich Society members interested in joining this "sister" society should contact the Ipswich Archaeological Trust's Membership Secretary: Mrs Eileen Ward, Springcroft Cottage, Whight's Corner, Washbrook, Ipswich, IP8 3LB.

Subscriptions are £2.00 for individual membership, £3.00 for family membership, £1.00 for senior citizens.