

 <b>The Ipswich Society</b> <b>NEWSLETTER</b>	
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<p><i>St Peter's by the Waterfront new gates in the south porch By Paul Richardson</i></p>

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- Your Committee and Events

# Editorial

This Newsletter may not look quite the same as usual. Perhaps that's no bad thing. The main reason is my old friend, a Macintosh Performa, finally expired when I was part way through preparing this issue. That the Newsletter is finished at all is thanks to Dennis Allen and John Kemmett. But if you find some inconsistencies or omissions don't blame my helpers. It's the fault of a computer which gave up after only fifteen years!

I hope you find some cheering material in these pages. Pessimism about the economy has spread rapidly. Still, Ipswich may not suffer the downturn extremes of towns reliant on very high paid jobs or astronomical City bonuses. But to cheer you up, you can read here about magnificent medieval churches brought back to life, ambitious plans for our museums, and things you could do to save money while helping to save the planet!

I was delighted to encounter the international street market in Butter Market on Saturday, 24 May. It brought more of a buzz to the town centre and gave a new temporary character to our finest street - even though not everyone liked the sale of hot potatoes and French bread right outside the Ancient House. My only criticism was that I saw no prior advertising. The market attracted attention on the day, but I fear that those who only stroll up and down 'The Golden Mile' might not have found it at all. Perhaps its time to stop thinking of a 'Golden Mile' anyway. There are excellent shops for example in Butter Market and elsewhere in the centre.

*Neil Salmon*

## Chairman on Current Affairs

The property market has slowed down and various studies give little hope of quick improvement. Repossessions are threatening a number of property owners, particularly on the Waterfront where early sales were snapped up very quickly. To complete the problem there is currently an ongoing investigation into illegal practices which are said to have taken place over some sales of property on Orwell Quay. All in all, there is lack of confidence in the future trend in property (especially, but not exclusively domestic). This loss of confidence is certain to affect commercial developments. Let us hope it results only in a slowdown not a cut back.

APB's Haven Marina has applied for planning permission to extend the marina towards the lock gates. When the last increase in berths was sought the Society expressed worries about the decreasing amount of 'free' water left for other recreational uses, such as boat races (remember Chinese dragon boats?). We are therefore opposing this development.

Another aspect of the Waterfront has also re-surfaced - it never goes away. I refer to pedestrian access around the water. We have moved on from marinas being protected by barbed wire and fences and there is now very good and pleasant access along the water's edge past both marinas. When the current building works are completed on the Northern Quays, there will be pedestrian access to some 90% of the water. The 10% which prevents a circular walk, which was possible for many years when the port was owned by IBC, involves the lock gates. We are told Health and

Safety considerations prevent this access, but detailed reasons are not given. I think it is time to press strongly for this access and I hope the Society will do so, so that once again the citizens of Ipswich can enjoy to the full this lovely stretch of water close to the town centre.

*Jack Chapman*

## Recent Planning Applications

**Railway station, Burrell Road:** construction of footbridge and lifts linking platform 2 with platforms 3 & 4.

'Whilst we support a second footbridge with good access for the disabled we are unhappy with some of the design details. We like the strong vertical concrete pillars of support at either end of the bridge. However we would like to see better screening beneath the stairs. The stairs are understandably in three separate flights whereas the roof is one continuous line. This is inharmonious with the surrounding good Victorian buildings.'

(IBC has refused permission because design does not fit with the station.)

**1 Neptune Quay: demolition of snooker club and erection of new 8 storey extension to Salthouse Harbour Hotel increasing number of bedrooms from 43 to 72.**

'The Society has considered this attractive application. We fully support the demolition of the snooker club and its replacement... We do like the facade and its detailing, the retention of a pedestrian thoroughfare to Fore Street and the proposed use of the ground floor. However we are strongly opposed to its height. Whilst we support the continuation of the rhythmic gables which are now an established part of the architectural language of the north side of the Waterfront, we are sure it would be better for the peak to be lower than the peak of the buildings on either side, the hotel and the Neptune Quay apartments, rather than higher as proposed. This is an absolutely key site; would it not be sensible to ask the opinion of English Heritage and CABE before making a decision. We are also concerned that the bulk of the buildings will deprive the Neptune Inn of light and privacy. Until revised proposals are put forward we would suggest refusal.'

(IBC has refused permission.)

**Unitarian Meeting House: erection of single storey extension to meeting hall.**

'We understand the necessity of finding disabled access facilities available at all times for the meeting house but we do not feel it necessary to build an extension. It ought to be possible to rearrange the current interior to provide adequate space. We would like to see more discussion with the Officers before the current application is considered.'

(Application withdrawn.)

**'Island Site', Duke Street: demolition of commercial buildings and erection of building (8 floors) for student accommodation and commercial uses.**

'The suggested use of this site is entirely appropriate.'

(IBC has approved with four conditions.)

**Reservoir site, Park Road: demolition of existing reservoirs and erection of 6 dwellings and refurbishment of No 3 Park Road.**

'We congratulate the architects and developers for designing this attractive scheme which will utilise a brownfield site, set in an important architectural road in such a way that only the upper

storeys will be seen by passers-by... This will be an expensive site to develop and in the present climate there will be a temptation to water down the attractive details of the construction. Assuming permission is granted, it will be important to ensure through conditions that it is built absolutely according to the plans produced.'

(IBC approved with minor conditions.)

**36 Warrington Road, severance of rear garden, demolition of garage and side extension: erection of detached 2 storey dwelling and new garage for No 36.**

'The design of the new house is attractive, well thought out and highly sustainable... The utilisation of back gardens for housing, particularly close to the town centre, is very tempting when there is pressure to find extra windfall plots in the town. However we feel that this plot is too small for such development... The Society feels that this application should be refused because it is overdevelopment on a backland site and would alter the Park Conservation Area for the worse.'

(IBC refused planning permission.)

**53-55 Westerfield Road: demolition of 2-apartment building and creation of 6 apartments.**

The Society objected because of size, design, overdevelopment, etc.

(Application withdrawn.)

**Elton Park Works, Hadleigh Road, site of Manganese Bronze and Geest offices: an outline planning application for 120 residential units, 70 bed care home, business offices, etc.**

The site is partly in Babergh but rather more than half in Ipswich. There would be several problems facing the developers, but the Society supports the application at this early stage.

The outcome of previous applications which we commented on:

**85-87 Fore Street (next to the Lord Nelson): student accommodation.**

We supported it and IBC approved.

**19 Neptune Quay, revised landscaping of UCS courtyard. withdrawn.**

19 Neptune Quay, revised landscaping of UCS courtyard. We opposed; now withdrawn.

## Ipswich on the Waterfront

Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council commissioned Colin Buchanan to carry out a study of the existing cross-town traffic and make recommendations to improve accessibility from the town centre to the Waterfront and the Education Quarter. Buchanans were selected as consultants for a number of reasons, one of which is the possibility that they are the only major firm of consultants that had not already looked at Ipswich's traffic problems, i.e. they didn't come with pre-conceived ideas.

Buchanan's recommendations are improved access for all road users, including buses, pedestrians and cyclists. Currently the gyratory road system carries high volumes of fast moving mixed, but predominately local traffic (up to 3,500 vehicles per hour)\*. The vast majority of motor vehicles using this route are making journeys that start and finish within two miles of the town centre. Additionally whenever conditions allow (which is most of the day) vehicles are travelling

inappropriately fast (frequently witnessed on approach to the zebra crossing behind the Custom House) but are held up at the junctions at either end of the system.

Separately the Government is considering introducing 20 mph speed restrictions in towns, the lower speed limit reducing accidents and considerably reducing deaths and injury.

For Star Lane, Buchanan looked at new road options and major changes to the existing road layout including a new road across the College site, a Wet Dock Crossing and an East Bank Link Road. None provided the relief required, and without closure or major restriction the gyratory would be preferable to the Wet Dock Crossing for most vehicle journeys.

Buchanan also reviewed a number of options for Star Lane and Key Street/College Street:

1. Traffic Calming (Pedestrian Crossings, reduced carriageway width, etc.)
2. Realignment - new sections of road, including part of Star Lane increased to four lanes, two in each direction.
3. Two two-way roads (allowing both Star Lane and College Street to carry east and west bound traffic).
4. Two single lane, one-way roads (one way, as at present, but with a single vehicle carriageway, reducing capacity and speed but increasing space for pedestrians and cyclists, and making the roads much easier to cross).
5. A two-way Star Lane, with Key Street/College Street limited to buses, taxis and pedal cycles.

Then came the difficult bit, assimilating the cost in real terms, including the congestion costs, but balancing these with the benefits for all road users, and particularly those who need to cross between town and Waterfront.

It is interesting to note that Buchanan predicts that traffic levels will not substantially grow on the gyratory: they can't - it is already at capacity! Rather traffic from the new developments on the Waterfront will replace some of the traffic currently using the system. This disrupted traffic will fall into one of the following categories:

1. It will go elsewhere.
2. It will divert into 'quieter' time slots, spreading the rush hour over a longer period.
3. Users will divert to alternative means of transport, and here the alternative needs to be in place early.
4. Some users may simply not make the journey at all (confirmation that the journey was not essential, and certainly not essential to the economic development of the town).

Suffolk County Council need to carry out further research including an origin/destination survey of all road users and:

1. A review of business and residents' travel needs, such that demand can be reduced. One serious option here which is about to be introduced in Nottingham is to introduce work-based car parking charges. If you currently park cheaply or for free at work then there is a possibility you will have to pay a reasonable car parking charge in the future, on a scale that makes public transport a viable alternative.
2. An understanding of pedestrians' and cyclists' needs, their source and destination, particularly if it is between the town centre and Waterfront/Education Quarter.

3. The effect that reduced road width for vehicles, wider pavements for pedestrians and the introduction of cycle lanes will have on capacity, traffic speed, traffic flow and congestion.
4. SCC also need to improve local direct communication with individuals, with road users and current non-road users (those who avoid the route because of real or perceived dangers or because no buses currently use this cross-town route even though it is a direct line from the Education Quarter to the railway station).
- 5.

An over-riding consideration is to improve air quality across the whole of the gyratory system which has been measured and recorded as some of the most polluted air in Ipswich, something none of us are prepared to accept.

Where does Ipswich Society fit into this dilemma? Primarily, one of support for change, along the lines proposed by Buchanan, and for a reduction in cross-town traffic, an acceptance that private motoring cannot go on growing at the rate it has been for the past few years.

The East Anglian Daily Times suggested this will take the best traffic management minds to address. Well we have had the best the country has to offer on the case and collectively they agree there is no easy solution. And Ipswich Borough Council? An acceptance of the Buchanan report with reservations.

\*3,500 vehicles per hour represents 1,600 (peak) eastbound and 1,800-2,100 (peak) westbound. The difference is an indication that some traffic gyrates clockwise around the town centre, westbound along the Waterfront gyratory, eastbound along Crown Street. About 1,000 vehicles per hour head southbound along Grimwade Street.

## Annual General Meeting

### **23 April 2008 at Ipswich School**

Jack Chapman welcomed our president, the Mayor Councillor Inga Lockington. She told us how much she had enjoyed the Society's Awards evening, after which she'd been able to make an official visit to St Joseph's Prep School, one of our Award winners, and seen the building happily in use. Apologies for absence were read out and the Minutes of the previous AGM approved. There were no questions concerning the Chairman's report. In the absence of the Hon Treasurer, John Norman offered to answer any questions; none was forthcoming. He proposed the adoption of the accounts - agreed unanimously. The meeting then approved the enlargement of the Executive Committee which was felt to be necessary owing to the Society's active involvement in so many aspects of the well-being of Ipswich. The relevant parts of the constitution now read:

'The officers of the Society shall consist of Vice-President(s), Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, these together with up to twelve other members shall constitute the Executive Committee.' (i.e. twelve instead of eight. A quorum will now be seven.)

This seems a good point at which to reiterate the Objects of the Society.

1. to promote the study of civic design,
2. to stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty, History and character of Ipswich and its surroundings,

3. to encourage the preservation, development and improvement of the features which go to make pleasing and convenient conditions in which to live and work,
4. to pursue these ends by such means as meetings, lectures, study groups, exhibitions and publications.
- 5.

The election of Officers and Executive Committee then took place.

Finally, and for most members the warmest part of the AGM, Beryl Jary's retirement as Hon Secretary was marked by the Chairman's expression of appreciation and thanks. Beryl was presented with some appropriate tokens of the Society's thanks and made a Life Member of the Society, a rare honour.

## Ipswich Development 1974-2007

'Developments of Ipswich during the Period 1974-2007' - this was the title of the talk given after the AGM by Mike Smith, former Head of Planning and Development at the Borough Council, someone who won the respect of all members of the Society's planning committee during those years. Virtually every important aspect of planning and development was covered in his illustrated talk.

He began with recalling his first impressions in 1974, especially the waste land along the river corridor, now being gradually developed. One of the most interesting parts of the talk concerned the Belstead Road/Stoke Park area because this was fairly new to members who don't live there. The planners' insistence on keeping and creating green spaces is now pleasantly apparent in this naturally undulating area. But he pointed out that the relatively low density would not be permitted by today's higher density requirements. Housing today is much more likely to consist of three-storey town houses and four-storey flats. And here the planners have to fight hard for the provision of children's play areas which developers aren't so keen on!

In town centre redevelopments Mike expressed satisfaction with some of the fill-in changes, notably two examples in Museum Street and the appearance of the office building next to the Sailor's Rest in St Peter's Street. He is less happy about the mass of Crown House in Crown Street which the planners found hard to refuse.

Some important older buildings have been effectively retained. The Philips and Piper building in Old Foundry Road/St Margaret's Street was not Listed and could have been lost, but it defines the character of the area and with better management now by a housing association provides valuable accommodation and a reminder of our manufacturing industry. The Grimwade Hall in Fore Street, so recently refurbished (with 'perhaps the most complex new brickwork in Ipswich since the Victorians, thanks to Polish craftsmen!') is another example of a worthy rescue.

Waterfront projects still owe much, he thought, to the owners of Contship whose passion for modernising their building set the standard for what could be done at the docks. Difficult decisions had to be made over the isolated early developments there - for example Neptune Marina flats did look oddly tall but the new UCS building bridges the gap and the heights are appropriate. If there is

a pause now in starting new developments on the Waterfront that may not be a bad thing. There would be time for all concerned to evaluate what is needed next.

Ravenswood has posed different problems, not having hills or trees like Stoke Park (it was an airport after all!) so he welcomed the creation of a strong layout design from the start with a green and some radiating avenues. The architecture has been mostly pastiche in style but it has enabled the 'affordable' houses to be visually similar to the private. There are some sections of Ravenswood in a more modern idiom but, as he said, 'volume housebuilders' are so much more comfortable building in traditional styles.

Looking ahead, he recognised that Britain is entering a difficult time. Redevelopment of the Mint Quarter is essential for Ipswich to keep pace with competitors, Norwich and Colchester. He is satisfied that the concentration of tall buildings on the Waterfront is suitable for the area and relates well to the expanse of water. But he hoped that the Island Site facing it would be a substantially green area. As for our Society, he thought that it was essential for us to keep up a watchdog role - politicians respond to pressure, and if we don't exert it others will!

Members who stayed on enjoyed some drinks, nibbles and discussion. The Society thanks Ipswich School, particularly Andrew Gregory, for making the premises available.

## Museums' Ambitious Plans

The Colchester and Ipswich Museums service has produced a Development Plan for the years 2008-2011. Even if you disliked the merger of the museums' services, you might nevertheless be pleased with these plans for enhancing the Ipswich Museums. Perhaps the most striking aim is to provide a new glazed entrance in High Street, covering over the whole courtyard between the actual Museum and the Exhibition Gallery (i.e. the Art Gallery, for the older members!). This would incorporate both buildings into one complex and be a welcoming information space rather than a display area for artefacts. A Louvre Pyramid for Ipswich!

There will be increased emphasis on locally specific collections, for example at the Mansion adding to the Constable and Benton End art collections and concentrating more on the history of the house; at High Street Museum, making more of the Egyptian treasures and the Anglo-Saxons. One reservation about the latter is that it does make sense to concentrate on the Romans at Colchester and the Anglo-Saxons in Ipswich but not at the expense of significantly downgrading the Roman collections in Ipswich.

Being part of a bigger organisation (now a 'Hub Museum') makes it more likely that external funding can be won. Certainly substantial extra money from Government sources and other bodies will be needed. We commend this ambitious approach.



# Dance House for Dance East

Not many speakers on arrival would take in their stride the news that they couldn't use their PowerPoint display. We regret that our misunderstanding meant that Assis Carreiro has to rely on her own voice. Far from being deterred, she spoke for well over an hour and we were captivated. I feel sure that Dance East would never have been in their promising situation without the drive and communication skills of Assis, their Director. She first outlined her own background - born in the Azores, brought up in Canada, worked for the National Ballet of Canada, Director of a Birmingham dance school and then a London company where she was a successful fund raiser.

She came to Suffolk in 2000, to Suffolk Dance which became Dance East. They are based at Northgate Arts Centre where there is only one dance studio plus other rooms with concrete floors - not ideal! Their new building on the Waterfront adjoining the 23 storey tower will occupy four floors. The shell is nearly complete and after the fitting out they expect to open in the autumn of next year.

Assis described the impressive range of activities run by Dance East. It involves adults as well as children with particular groups of, for instance, children in foster care, children in hospital, obese young people and, of course, high powered work and study for young people with potential as dancers - different kinds of dance, because as she insisted it is not a ballet school as some might assume.

Fund raising and invitations to donate equipment are being co-ordinated in the Red Shoe Appeal. Our Society has subsequently decided to sponsor a seat to underline our support for this significant cultural organisation in Ipswich.

*Neil Salmon*

## Snippets

### **Next stage of the Plan**

The Local Development Framework occupied a lot of the April Newsletter. Some 2000 responses to IBC are being evaluated and a report will go to the IBC Executive before the next consultation. It is said that by 2021, 90% of the required 15,400 new homes in Ipswich will have been built on brownfield land. Worth remembering!

### **Westgate Centre**

This seems to be the likely new name for the Civic Centre site. It makes geographical and historical sense, thank goodness. Contrast more new names of big developments like Voyage in Ranelagh Road, Vista in Woodbridge Road and Modus in Duke Street. Confusing and hard to remember?

### **Another good name**

The Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park was officially opened on 6 May. This new visitor centre near the Bolton Lane entrance will be a welcome addition to the splendidly restored park.

Reg was the first chairman of the Friends of Christchurch Park. As well as being a key figure in the British Legion and a former Borough Councillor, he was a long standing member of our Society.

### **SWISS Centre**

Not all members agree with the Society's Executive that the new sixth form centre should not be built out of town with all the extra car journeys that will encourage. But IBC's sale of land to the County Council will certainly bring in some valuable capital receipts. We look forward to seeing how IBC will allocate money to 'improve facilities within the town'.

### **Great changes for Great Blakenham**

SnOasis is moving closer to getting Government approval. It's hard to tell what effect it will have on Ipswich itself. More jobs, more visitors, more money, more cars. If only we could maximise the best and minimize the worst!

### **Ipswich Transport Museum Golden Jubilee**

Congratulations to all the enthusiasts who have created this uniquely valuable Ipswich attraction begun in 1958 and located at Cobham Road former trolley bus depot since 1989. Everything in the Museum was either built or operated in the Ipswich area. It is open Sundays 11.00-16.00 until late November and on weekdays 21 July-29 August 13.00-16.00.

### **Magistrates to move?**

A new court house may be built next to the Crown Court in Russell Road with the main public entrance from West End Road. If so, the present site in Elm Street opposite the police station could become part of the second phase of redevelopment of the Civic Centre.

### **Where is Suffolk?**

We were pleased to hear and see the great achievement of Erdem Misirlioglu, winner of the piano section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in May. Not so pleased to hear that his school, Northgate, is in Essex according to the BBC. To add further insult, a few days later something in Suffolk (not sure what) was described as being in Sussex. Surely the name of the ancient county is to remain despite possible reorganisation!

## **Ipswich Maritime Trust**

Another year has rolled by with an excellent record of events at the Waterfront, lectures at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, a growing membership of 170 and an ever increasing collection of artefacts in Ipswich's rich maritime heritage.

Out Winter Programme lectures will be held at the royal Harwich Yacht Club on the first Wednesday in the month - dates chosen not to clash with the Ipswich Society lectures!

- 1 October : Brian Kennel/Rupert Marks on the rebuilding of the smack 'Pioneer'.
- 5 November : Paddy Hazell on 'Orfordness - Bangs, Beams and Boffins'. (A date for bangs!)
- 3 December : 'James Lawrence - Part III'.

I hope to be able to arrange guided walks to complement some of the Waterfront events. These will be publicised nearer the time at the Tourist Information Centre.

You do not have to be a member to attend our events and lectures. However, the annual membership fee of £5 is modest and worth considering.

***Diana Lewis***

## St Mary at Stoke

It is perhaps not generally known that St Mary at Stoke is, in addition to being one of the only two Grade I Listed churches in the town, also the only one which was privileged to have benefited from the work of William Butterfield. He was an outstanding architect who designed many exceptional public buildings, schools and Oxford colleges, in addition to countless church and cathedral masterpieces - both in this country and across the world. In 1870 he was commissioned to design and build a very large extension for St Mary's which would accommodate the soaring population brought about by the arrival of the railway in the parish and the industry which followed.

Having not originally been regarded as part of Ipswich, Stoke had a character all of its own and from the earliest times, crossing the river and 'going over Stoke' was viewed as a journey into a different community. St Mary's standing aloof for over a thousand years on Stoke Hill is now entering a new phase with the centre of population of Ipswich moving steadily towards it as the Waterfront developments take shape.

Throughout the summer the church will again be open to visitors on Thursday afternoons, 2-4pm when a guide will be on hand to show people around. The church is also participating in Heritage Open Days. It is anticipated that the Over Stoke History group will be staging a display of fascinating local archive material.

***John Barbrook***

## Churches 5,4,3,2,1 ...

Mission accomplished? The Ipswich Historic Churches Trust may not be quite ready to agree to that, with the future of St Clements nearly but not yet finalised. However, remarkable progress has been achieved, especially in recent months.

Five redundant medieval churches in the centre of town were handed over by the Church of England to Ipswich Borough Council which then entrusted them to the loving care of Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, founded in 1979. Whilst the fabric of the churches has been kept in good repair, there have been frustrations for the Trust - tantalising but disappointing negotiations with organisations which showed some interest in using the buildings but then backed out.

First St Stephen's was found a new use as our award-winning Tourist Information Centre. Then St Nicholas became the Diocesan Centre for their own public use. The Society's last two Awards evenings were held in this pleasant and comfortable setting.

Now, with very satisfying timing, both St Lawrence and St Peter's opened for new uses during May. St Lawrence in Dial Lane had long been disused and internally was in rather poor state. Thanks to funding from IBC and a Government Growth Point grant it has been sympathetically restored and becomes the St Lawrence Centre, a caf during the day run by Whitehouse Enterprises and Genesis and available for hire at other times. Age Concern seem happy with this new venue for their purposes.

St Peter's which Wolsey adapted and used as a chapel for his college, had been partly kept alive by the efforts of Roger and Stella Wolfe who, joined by Jill Freestone of the Over Stoke History Group, organised its opening to the public once a week in the summer months. But now it is St Peter's by the Waterfront a centre for music and the arts and home of the Ipswich Hospital Band. Their admirable vision and persistence, with help from Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, won major funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Those of us who were there at the opening on 15 May and also enjoyed the Band's opening concert on 24 May can vouch for the success of the refurbishment and its use as a concert hall. St Peter's also houses very fine new display boards describing the history of this important church, which is also the new home for the Ipswich Charter Hangings. Our Society has contributed towards the cost of the new guidebook to St Peter's. Dr John Blatchly, the fourth chairman of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, at the opening of both these 'retired' churches, spoke warmly about the churches themselves and all who had contributed to these admirable and useful conversions. He spoke like a man with a mission almost accomplished.

*Neil Salmon*

## Sustainable Lifestyles

### **What's to be done about climate change?**

Readers may wonder what sort of response I've had to these articles on the inter-dependent changes, both local and global, that will affect our lives. My postbag is divided evenly between those who are sceptical of climate change or even the imminent exhaustion of fossil fuel supplies, those who are quietly getting on with modifying their lifestyle and "spreading the word" on climate change, and those who ask me what I want them to do about it.

I would like to thank all three of those readers for taking the trouble to reply! But why only three - out of a membership of over 1200, whom I would have expected to be the 1% or so of people who most care about their town? Then again, I might have struggled with the deluge if you had all replied, and maybe those three are all that I need to make the argument for sustainability, quite independently of climate change, by raising the following two questions.

### **Why do we need sustainability?**

It's obvious really: if we live unsustainably, life will not be sustained. If my first correspondent prompts the question, "Why is our present lifestyle not sustainable?", my answer is as follows. The earth is estimated to have existed for 4.5 billion years, and its environment has eventually evolved into a sufficiently favourable and steady state for complex life to evolve. Many factors are involved, but crucially we would not be here now had it not been for early plant life slowly removing large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and instead enriching it with oxygen. Much of the absorbed carbon became buried as organic material which decomposed into coal, oil, and gas.

About 150,000 years ago, homo sapiens appeared, beginning the evolution of the wide variety of culture, civilisation, and technology that defines modern life. Many a worthy TV series has been devoted to the various aspects of this story, but for how long will it continue? Over the last century or so, man has exploited the energy stored in fossil fuels on a massive scale, apparently overturning the disastrous consequences of over-population predicted two centuries ago by Thomas Malthus, freeing much of the developed world from the tyranny of hard physical labour, and globalising the benefits of culture, civilisation, and technology. Who in their right mind would possibly want to undo all that is good in that?

Therein lies the paradox. On the one hand, it seems to me that the early environmentalists were seen as precisely some sort of killjoy, denying humanity the benefits offered by the earth's resources, and urging restraint "for the sake of the planet". But actually, the planet doesn't need us, it is we who depend on it, and it will still be here long after we are gone, still revolving about the sun with the moon in tow, possibly for another four or five billion years before the sun's nuclear energy is exhausted. On that time-scale, even solar power is not sustainable!

More immediately for us, however, Malthus's predicted apocalypse may merely have been postponed. For the other side of the paradox says that by burning fossil fuels on this massive scale for mere decades, we have unwittingly undone the work of millions of years by the early plant life that made conditions suitable for our own evolution. The environmental impact of greenhouse gases (GHGs) has long been predicted but is unfortunately slow to accumulate: climate change due to global warming has taken decades to become apparent beyond reasonable doubt, and will continue for decades to come, from the GHGs we have already emitted.

This is the broad conclusion from over 600 scientists in the 4th Assessment Review of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, based on wide-ranging and increasingly abundant evidence gathered over several decades (the IPCC was formed in 1989 when the case for investigating climate change was already substantial). Unless we begin immediately to make drastic cuts in GHG emissions, the human race risks a man-made climate catastrophe, which may take decades more to emerge fully with its attendant risks for mankind's survival, yet we have only the next few years in which to arrest the emissions that are causing it.

One way or another, our GHG emissions cannot be sustained. We don't have processes to re-absorb them from the atmosphere at the rate that we currently emit them, and it is not we in the developed world who will be predominantly the first to pay the price. But it is we who have the choice: "Do we simply let nature take its course (for the outcome will be natural, what ever it may be); or do we try to do something about it in the few remaining years when that will be possible?" Even if you remain unconvinced by climate change, the argument for sustainability applies equally to the exhaustion of the finite resources which we are consuming at an ever-increasing rate, and to the ability of the earth to feed a population which demands an ever-increasing level of nutrition. We are drawn inexorably back to Malthus's assertion that populations have a natural tendency to grow faster than the means of subsistence, which modern technology has enhanced but, far from overturning the assertion, it may simply have postponed the consequences - unless we change to a sustainable pattern of living. Hence:

### **What can we do to make our lifestyles sustainable?**

Purists may argue that life cannot be sustained indefinitely, but do we really want to jeopardise succeeding generations through our evidently unsustainable burning of finite reserves of fossil

fuels? But what is the target level for cuts in emissions? The IPCC recommends 60-80% by 2050. The EU has set an intermediate target of 20% by 2020. The UK Climate Change Bill specifies at least 60% by 2050, with 26-32% by 2020. These challenging targets may actually prove to be conservative, since the work of the IPCC does not take full account of "tipping points" for positive feedback mechanisms which bring the risk of runaway global warming.

The Suffolk Climate Action Plan calls for a more stringent target of 60% by 2025, and there are growing calls for 90% cuts by 2050. Where is the consistency, and is any of this feasible?

I suggest that the possible actions fall into four broad categories. Firstly, there are many simple actions which most of us can undertake, which include switching "off" rather than using "standby", using washing appliances only when fully loaded, using a washing line or airer rather than a tumble drier, boiling only the water you need rather than filling the kettle for just one or two cups, installing low-energy lightbulbs, walking or taking the bus rather than the car; and in winter, closing doors and windows, turning down the thermostat and wearing more clothes. These simple actions save money as well as carbon emissions. They become more attractive as energy prices rise: but they aren't enough.

The second set of actions cost a little more, but pay for themselves quite quickly. If your house has cavity walls, insulate them. Likewise insulate your loft. As you need to replace appliances, from fridges, freezers, and washing machines to your central heating boiler or your car, choose the most energy-efficient options. Thus we may reach our 2020 targets, but not for 2050.

The third set of actions comprises the things you might do but would not have done otherwise, such as generating your own renewable energy, or significantly modifying your home. They include double-glazing, solar hot water systems, and newer technologies such as solar photovoltaic panels, heatpumps, micro-wind-turbines, and external insulation for houses with solid walls. Not all of these will be suitable for all locations, nor will they necessarily offer complete energy solutions or be compatible with existing energy-efficiency measures. Crucially, they will tend to be expensive, and may struggle to repay the investment over their operating lifetime. If they serve one valuable purpose, it is to focus the mind on the important role of economics in tackling climate change! Yet the Stern Report of 2006 suggested that an effective response to climate change could cost as little as 1% of Gross Domestic Product annually if undertaken soon enough. And more action will indeed be needed.

There is therefore an essential contribution to be made by a fourth set of actions, which lie beyond the individual, such as wave and tidal power, windfarms, nuclear power, carbon sequestration, and so on.

***Mike Brain***

## Orwell Park Observatory

On 28th February the large group of members met in the car park and awaited the full complement so that Pete Richards could lead us to the top of the tower, just perceptible in the gloom. In the chill of the car park we waited with squash players as they moved into the gym which was being vacated by the boys after their evening sporting activities. The sky looked cloudy and there was a little

disappointment at the prospects for a good viewing. However, our guide was hopeful. Pete led us round the back of the gym and up the numerous steps- a lighthouse-like trail up the tower through the boys' boot-room and past the haunting sounds of a boarding house preparing for showers and lights out.

We were grateful for the Society's offer to show us their telescope and to the Orwell Park School. The school is an educational trust which now owns both the mansion and observatory, and licenses use of the observatory to the Society. We were informed that Orwell Park Observatory dates from the Victorian era. The wealthy Victorian luminary, Colonel George Tomline, purchased the Orwell Park Estate in 1848, and retained ownership until his death in 1889. Tomline entrusted design of the observatory to Wilfrid Airy, civil engineer.

Within the tower, provision was made for private stairs to all levels, Turkish bath chambers, a Belvedere below the equatorial room (dome) for viewing the surrounding countryside and sometime around the mid 1880's, Tomline had a water powered lift installed to all levels of the observatory tower - sadly this was no longer in use.

The Belvedere was our first stop. It was chilly up there but it contained informative displays of society matters and a cosy cubbyhole for the committee. The most impressive part of this space was the three meter high windows overlooking the west and north. The balconies at this level were surrounded by some huge but exquisite stone buttresses, which added to the magnificence of the level. On one of the balconies the Society had placed a small telescope for us to view Saturn. After a briefing there we moved onwards and upwards.

Revealed to us as we reached the top of the stairs was the equatorial room with the dome which housed the telescope itself. The dome and shutter, we were informed, are constructed from wrought iron frames covered in deal; they are copper clad on the exterior, which explained their wonderful green patina. The dome was lined with polished mahogany planking, the appearance was of the interior of a very smart, expensive boat. Our guide suggested that a boat-builder had played a major part in its construction. We were able to see the dome rotating on wheel sets inset within the circular wall of the equatorial room. All of this was mounted in a tower seventy-two feet high to give a clear horizon over surrounding roofs. This was a spectacular sight - especially when the shutter was opened and we could see the night sky. Unfortunately we could also feel the draught!

The mount, an enormous grey metal arm and clamp held the telescope and we were told weighed approximately tons. It is thought to have been cast by Ransomes of Ipswich at their Orwell works. The 26cm refractor (now known as the Tomline Refractor) and 7.5cm transit telescope in were installed 1873. The telescope was supplied by Troughton & Sims of London, the object glass having been obtained from a prestigious firm in Munich.

It was not long before we were able to familiarise ourselves with the Tomline Refractor which was also aligned on Saturn. Despite the distinct chill everyone was able to enjoy the sighting of Saturn through two telescopes and hear a great deal about the history of the observatory and the society. We must thank Caroline Markham for establishing the link between our societies and arranging the visit. To the Orwell Astronomical Society Ipswich (OASI) we extend our thanks and hope for a repeat visit in the future.

***Tony Marsden***

# Your Committee and Events

## Evening Events (lectures at Museum Street Methodist church)

- 22 Oct : Roger Gilles on his work as an architect
- 12 Nov : The Ipswich Society Awards Evening at St Peter's by the Waterfront
- 10 Dec : Bob Markham: 'A Lifetime with Ipswich Geology'
- 14 Jan : Ivan Cutting on Eastern Angles Theatre Company
- 11 Feb : Jayne Austin & Emma Roodhouse on Ipswich Museums' collections
- 11 Mar : Stuart Grimwade & Des Pawson: 'Aspects of Maritime Ipswich'