

Issue 190 Newsletter Jan 2013

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Editorial: Bad and Good Publicity

Sir Stuart Rose (ex-Chairman of Marks & Spencer) might have been a successful businessman but he wouldn't make a good diplomat. His performance at the Ipswich Beacon Town conference received plenty of local publicity which was probably the main aim. But if you exaggerate to get people listening, you run the risk of being taken literally.

He is reported as saying, "It is the most depressing place I have ever seen. Standing in the town centre with the empty shops, it is a barren wasteland." As someone who shops in the town centre several times every week, I think Sir Stuart must only visit Ipswich on non-market days in the late afternoon, because it's never like that in the mornings and early afternoons. The danger is that the only people who might think he's right are those who don't come to town already and so they'll conclude "I'm right after all." Yet those are the very people you need to attract into town.

As for clearing the Cornhill for cafe tables and special events, how many days in the year would that valuable space be used, compared with the four days a week all the year round of the market? And markets do bring visitors and vitality to town centres. They might attract shoppers with, on average, thin purses or wallets, when Ipswich badly needs to attract more people with fat purses or wallets. But a successful town centre needs both kinds of purses and wallets. John Norman has written on this subject elsewhere in the Newsletter, but I can't resist having my say. Have your say in the next Newsletter?

I'm writing this as the Christmas lights are creating a talking point. Whether or not you liked the lights and particularly the 'tree', this all represented good publicity because people want to come and see for themselves. The whole lighting project clearly showed an overall design in silver (with some gold) which I thought was stylish - more Regent Street than Las Vegas!

On pages 4 and 5, this issue of the Newsletter contains two obituaries, sad to say. Peter Underwood and Jack Chapman were great assets to The Ipswich Society and deserve all the praise accorded to them by the Society. Those who knew them personally will also remember them with gratitude and affection.

Neil Salmon

Chairman's Remarks

I am aware that although I am writing this column at the end of November it will be well into January before you have the opportunity to read it. However, a happy, healthy and successful New Year to you all.

That might beg the question of how we measure success, a question I have been pondering in respect of the debate we are currently having about the Northern Fringe development. After considerable deliberation, with arguments both for and against individual aspects of the project, there are still politicians who are suggesting that we have not been focused, that the proposals aren't good enough and if others had done the Master Planning it would be better.

Such comments are relatively easy from the outside without consideration of the financial constraints, the topography or the predictions of where residents will be employed and how they will travel.

The Northern Fringe Community Steering Panel on which The Ipswich Society is represented (I am Vice-Chairman) continue to meet on a monthly basis, have taken the opportunity to visit Milton Keynes and Cambourne (near Cambridge), both new developments with good and poor components and have deliberated for hours in Grafton House. The exhibition of Options is taking place as this Newsletter is published (see below).

The second Beacon Town conference took place with Sir Stuart Rose delivering a much heralded keynote address on the future of Ipswich Town Centre. His suggestion of moving the market caused much press comment and my own report occurs later in this Newsletter.

The Griff Rhys Jones lecture was a very full and enlightening evening with the President of Civic Voice in fine form. Griff started on a lighter note but was soon into the serious matters of urban sustainability. Neil's report elsewhere in this Newsletter gives a comprehensive account and Ruth Stokes' 'Puzzled' comments are worth a read. A very special thank you to Vice-President Chris Wiltshire who introduced the evening with a short slide show from our newly digitalised slide collection.

I am indebted to another of our Vice-Presidents, Bob Allen, for all his contributions to our Awards evening. He turned what could have been a fairly dull list of 'also ran' nominations into a lively thought-provoking evening. The judges found three worthy winners which were featured in a full page article in the local press. Here the lack of understanding of the link between the Question Mark on the University piazza and the electronic display on top of the concrete chimney across the road was highlighted; the published photo had been cropped to exclude the LEDs on the chimney.

Both Mike Cook and I were asked again to contribute to the adjudication of the Civic Trust awards - Mike in Essex and myself in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It really does open your eyes as to what is possible in these austere times. The results will be announced in Cardiff in the spring. There is a massive sway away from Civic Societies, particularly at national and rural levels (CPRE and Friends of the Lake District both have declining numbers) and many are struggling in their current form. This trend is causing Civic Voice concerns and the Executive of this Society have debated the need for a national campaigning organisation.

John Norman

Jack Chapman

Most members will know that Jack Chapman, our Chairman until April 2012, died on 3 October. A separate notice added to the October Newsletter promised this appreciation of his services to the Society and to the wider community. It is based on a eulogy written and delivered by Mike Cook at Jack's funeral on 15 October, together with information from other friends and colleagues.

Jack was very much a Mancunian in many ways; his upbringing as a barber's son in Collyhurst, a suburb two miles to the north of the city centre, was in the 1930s very tough. He was selected for

the great Manchester Grammar School; that must have been a trauma, to travel across the city some four miles to a giant of a school with well over a thousand pupils.

At 18 he was conscripted into the RAF and was trained as a radar technician. He spent most of his service time in Ulster which even then was hazardous. After his economics degree at the London School of Economics he started teaching in Higher Education. He thought he was going to stay in London so he and Ann bought half a house with a friend. It's interesting that a new graduate in his early teaching career could afford to buy a house in Highgate!

In late 1969 he was appointed Head of Liberal Studies at the then Civic College. Later he became Head of the Department of General and Pre-Vocational Education. This involved setting up courses for Youth and Adult Training in co-operation with the Manpower Services Commission. Further, he organised the Office of European Relationships at the Civic College and was responsible for exchange programmes, particularly with Czechoslovakia. He was also involved in trade union affairs, becoming Chairman of the College branch of the National Association of Teachers in Further Education.

He became a Magistrate on the Ipswich Bench in 1971 where he continued for 32 years. In addition to regular Bench sittings he was elected on to various committees and appropriately was responsible for the training and continuing education of magistrates. Retirement from the college in 1992 gave Jack and Ann time for travel but this was soon cut short by the tragic early death of Ann.

As Chairman of The Ipswich Society, Jack ensured that it should be concerned with every aspect of the overall development of the town. He formed good relationships with, but firmly independent of, the Borough Council. He held close discussions with IBC's Chief Executives, James Hehir and latterly Russell Williams, which were helpful to all. He was a member, then Chair, of the Waterfront Steering Committee and Partnership during the important years of the Waterfront's development. Delegation was one of Jack's great skills. Not for nothing was he a life-long Fabian, a society named after the Roman general renowned for wearing out his opponents by small repeated attacks to victory. Thus one could say that whilst Jack had no big works to his name his was a work of gradualism to improve life for all. In that, he was successful in many largely unsung respects.

P.S. Jack was very fond of the dock and the river. Even so it was a pleasant surprise to learn that he had set aside money for friends and colleagues to enjoy a river trip in his memory as far as Felixstowe docks on the Orwell Lady. Organised by his son Daniel and daughter Kate. this took place on 9 November when some fifty people were entertained by a jazz band and enjoyed excellent food and drinks and, of course, good conversation.

Mike Cook, Neil Salmon

Peter Underwood

Peter Underwood, who died on 4 December aged 88, was the most important contributor to the achievements of The Ipswich Society during its first thirty years at least. He was a founder member of the Society in 1960 and served successively as Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Chairman and Vice-President. His knowledge of Ipswich from childhood, from academic study and from knowing so

many people and learning from them was matchless. (Some of this learning took place in The Greyhound and latterly The Dove.)

Added to those qualities, Peter was a person of robust independence but also a natural bridge-builder. For example, he was pleased to represent the Society as a committee member of the Suffolk Preservation Society because a constructive relationship between the county town and the wider county was always dear to his heart. (In the same way, he joined two of the relevant teachers' unions to encourage them to talk to each other!)

In the early 1960s Borough councillors of both main political parties tended to be suspicious of the Society. More than anyone else, Peter helped to establish the Society's credentials and good faith. So when the Borough set up the Conservation Advisory Panel he was elected Chairman and served on it for decades. The Panel also inspired the creation of two charities, Ipswich Building Preservation Trust and Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, Peter being an executive trustee of both. The Society and all Peter's friends were therefore delighted when he was awarded the MBE in 1998 "for services to the Ipswich Society and to conservation in Suffolk".

Much of this voluntary work was by no means straight forward. He often had to make time in his busy life to prepare for appearances as the Society's spokesman on controversial planning matters. Being a geographer, he was also in his element when involved in considering strategic planning issues with the relevant authorities. One of the most memorable of those planning experiences led to the saving of The Sailors' Rest in St Peter's Street. An hour before the hearing of the appeal against demolition, Peter and Don Chipperfield got into the building and jumped up and down on the attic floors to prove that the building wasn't about to collapse as the developers asserted. But I fear that Peter's biggest disappointment was Ipswich's failure to create The Gipeswic Centre which multi-disciplined Peter tried to promote to show the international importance of Ipswich in terms of its geography, history, archaeology and the development of the English language from the "Angle-ish" first spoken here on our shores. He was always keen to point out that 'our' English became the international language of communication in the air and at sea.

Peter was educated at both Northgate Grammar School for Boys and Ipswich School. (Perhaps that combination started off his bridge-building!) He served as an RAF pilot and instructor at the end of the Second World War in Britain and Canada and then went as a mature student to read geography at University College, Oxford. After graduating, he taught in the influential Geography Department at Northgate before retiring in the early 1980s.

Amongst the many other organisations Peter was involved with, I should emphasise his roles as a Magistrate and, with his wife Pam, as a Marriage Guidance counsellor. For many people he was 'Mr Ipswich', the person you went to if you wanted to find out something about the town that seemed a bit obscure. For me, he was also a good neighbour, a valued teaching colleague, wise man and friend.

Neil Salmon

Ipswich Society Awards 2012

Fewer nominations than usual, no big projects and very little that was really distinguished - and weather rather forbidding on a dark November evening. Consequently, could we expect a small

attendance and a depressing experience? In fact, it turned out to be one of our most enjoyable of recent Awards events. More members than usual arrived so more chairs had to be brought out to fill the nave at St Peter's. And the whole evening went well thanks to good organisation with cheerful greeters, effective amplification so not a word was missed, an enjoyable variety of food and drink in the second half of the evening, and above all a constantly thought-provoking descriptive commentary by Bob Allen.

Tony Marsden, who co-ordinated the Awards this year, welcomed members and guests and outlined our procedures. He then introduced Bob Allen, one of our Vice-Presidents and a former Chairman of the Society, who once again kept people interested and entertained.

This is a brief summary of some of his comments on the various projects nominated by members for the judges to consider.

Orwell Quay paving scheme: the Dock showed Victorian vision - wonderful opportunity now for new uses. Quality of paving divided the judges. Future planting/sculptures?

'Just for the Day', bridal shop, Norwich Road: former Hare & Hounds pub bought by Coe's who have made great commitment to this street. Re-painted and tidied up. Fascia lettering?

Clarkson Street large extension to back of big residential terrace facing London Road: valuable extra accommodation. Good brickwork. An odd flat roof between the gables.

Northfields, Valley Road: 4 new detached houses with good brickwork and cladding. Not 1930s' pastiche but could they have been more architecturally ambitious?

Travelodge. Duke Street: large but fits well in street scene. Good use of colours. Escape staircase nicely clad in wood. Big downpipe feeding into a right angle bend!

Park View, Chantry Care Home: different kinds of accommodation needed; reflected in the changes of architectural styles? The grounds pleasingly designed.

Corn Exchange refurbishment: very important Victorian civic building which had been under threat as public venue. Little Waitrose neatly inserted. New doorway from Princes St.

Fire and Rescue Station. Ransomes Europark: fire stations used to express civic pride which was still evident in former Colchester Road premises. This new building purely functional.

UCS Question Mark sculpture: appropriate that universities should probe knowledge. An artistic statement relating also to LED display on chimney at Suffolk College which spells out Q-U-E-S-T-I-O-N-? in successive letters. Pleasing black and white stone materials.

Landmark House: "like an enormous ocean liner" overlooking the A14. Built for Hewlett Packard, now refurbished for SCC and Suffolk Police. Only the new work judged.

Wolsey Art Gallery: early 1930s traditional style; recently refurbished with world-class air conditioning to allow any work of art to be safely exhibited.

Hope Mews, Foxhall Road: an 1882 orphanage extended with some materials re-used, but part of the new building looks like "a collision" with the old. Good design of gates.

Tony Marsden announced the judges' decisions as follows:

A High Commendation for Wolsey Art Gallery:

- Architect, Hilary Brightman
- Builders, Seamans Building
- Clients, IBC

A Commendation for UCS Question Mark:

- Designers, Langland and Bell

- Clients, UCS

A Commendation for Northfields, Valley Road:

- Architects. Wincer Kievenaar
- Clients. Landex Property

Our President, the Mayor of Ipswich. Councillor Mary Blake. presented the winners with their certificates. Chairman John Norman thanked all these recipients. the judges, Bob Allen and the audience - with an hour or so left for us to enjoy our conversations and the refreshments.

Neil Salmon

Recent Planning Matters

Tesco, Grafton Way

The B & Q store has been demolished even though Tesco's application has not yet been heard by the Borough's Planning and Development Committee. The Society continues to object to the principle but I fear the town centre is going to have to change (see my article in the October Newsletter).

Tesco's revised drawings were received on 6 December involving an increase in the size of the retail store floor space by 640m sq (gross) to 9422m sq in total (gross) and re-configuration of the building, access and parking arrangements. Time has not permitted thorough examination of these latest plans but at first sight the Society's objections will be reinforced!

Futura (former Crane's) site

The John Lewis/Waitrose stores opened on time on 8 November to huge crowds. Parking marshals were employed but traffic was backed down Nacton Road and to the A14 as predicted here but denied by the Highways Agency and Suffolk County Council. The entrance from Nacton Road will be opened as soon as possible; they are also considering bringing forward other Section 106 highway improvements.

Town Centre

Ipswich Central has organised a modern Christmas tree and brand new lights. There has been a 'Marmite' response -love it or loathe it! But this is good publicity and together with a European market there has been a sense of revival.

Former fire station site, Colchester Road

Planning permission has been granted to Hopkins Homes for 59 dwellings including 25% social housing. The developers have agreed to several changes to the design of the gable ends fronting Colchester Road and reduced their height to conform to the roofline of the other houses after firm comments by the Conservation and Design Panel. Many other desirable changes were applied. Suffolk County Council requires a contribution of £388,000 for education, libraries, waste, extra care housing and broadband.

Golden Key pub, Woodbridge Road

The Borough's Planning Committee refused conversion of this Greene King pub because the Highways Agency stated that it would not be safe opening on to Woodbridge Road at the Roundwood junction. The Planning Inspector allowed the appeal with costs against IBC which were high because Greene King hired expensive traffic consultants who refuted the Highways Agency's figures with more figures. I wonder who pays - IBC or SCC? We don't know who the operator of the small supermarket store will be. It is still open as a pub.

Land next to the Mermaid, Yarmouth Road

Marstons applied to build a 28 bed lodge hotel. The design was so plain, shed-like and unappealing that the developers were asked to come back with a more attractive design. It is worth noting that the hotel employs nobody; cleaning and janitorial services are contracted out. Entry and payment will all be conducted by credit cards.

16 Constitution Hill

An application for an extremely large mansion on the site of the Victorian gardens of the Grade II* Listed 'Woodside' has been withdrawn. Apart from the visual aspects of the design, its size would have impacted severely on the green view from Valley Road.

'The Spinney', 108 Westerfield Road

This house designed for his family by Birkin Haward in 1960 was swiftly 'Spot Listed' by our former Conservation Officer, Bob Kindred, to save it from demolition three years ago. Now Listed with great support from our former Suffolk Twentieth Century Adviser and the Society, it has been bought by a private buyer who wishes to carry out some updating. It has generous glazing but of single thickness glass and a thin roof and largely uninsulated walls. Appropriate changes have been designed which will have minimal impact on its appearance.

Westbourne Library, Sherrington Road

Through the efforts of the Friends of Westbourne Library it has been Listed Grade II. It was designed by the Borough Surveyor, E McLauchlan, as an air raid shelter and gas decontamination centre and built in 1942. It is a rare survivor of such a type of building with a tower perhaps once used as a look out when it was a shelter, but a decontamination centre typically had a water tank in a tower to serve the showers, eye douche and boiler room. There would have been an air lock, undressing area, showers and drying room. It was converted to a public library in 1946-7. (Editor: from fear in war to love of books: great!) It is also unusual in having Modernist decorations, like those of the neighbouring Broomhill Pool, also designed by McLauchlan.

The Friends of Westbourne Library, led by Garath Jones, have done sterling work in saving the library and setting up a credit union. Mark Ling, born in Sherrington Road and Chairman of the Broomhill Pool Trust has driven hard with councillors, the Borough and MPs to improve what has been an under-resourced area. It seems their enthusiasm energy and persistence is starting to pay off.

Mike Cook

Growth & Infrastructure Bill

This Bill is wending its way through Parliament currently and may be more deleterious to the planning process and hence the built environment than the National Planning Framework. Its proposals include:

- Some major planning applications (nationally significant business and commercial projects) will be able to be submitted directly to the Secretary of State, where Local Planning Authorities have a very poor record in deciding applications.
- The affordable housing obligations in Section 106 agreements may be re-negotiated where the development is not viable.
- Stopping misuse of town and village green applications to undermine planned development.
- Cutting back the volume of paperwork which applicants have to submit with a planning application.
- Making it easier for local authorities to choose, if they wish, to dispose of surplus land held for planning purpose, with the aim of getting more brownfield land back in use.

- Removal of red tape around the roll-out of superfast broadband.

Our national organisation, Civic Voice, and the CPRE are objecting but there doesn't seem to be the outcry associated with the National Planning Policy Framework when sustained campaigns led by the National Trust succeeded in moderating the original proposals.

We have been asked to write to our local MPs and to the Planning Minister, Nick Boles; this we are doing before Christmas; additionally I have met with Dr Dan Poulter, MP.

Mike Cook

Ipswich Conservation Panel

Ipswich has had a Conservation Panel for at least 37 years. For about 25 of those years, Peter Underwood was the Chairman and it was through the Panel that he and Bob Kindred had such an enormous effect on the built environment in the town. It has always been a group of professionals together with councillors and planning officers who have sat monthly to discuss all planning applications, highway design and any other measure which might affect a Listed building or a Conservation Area directly or indirectly. It owes its continuing existence to enlightened regimes at Ipswich Borough Council over many years. The Borough has provided the Panel with its meeting place, officer time and administrative support.

For a few years the Panel has been attempting to change its remit. The loss of CABE and the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework have provided the final straw to make the changes to its constitution. One good paragraph in that document is to make it good practice for every local planning authority to have a design panel which should comment on every aspect of planning design wherever it occurs throughout the local planning authority.

So the 'Ipswich Conservation Advisory Panel' has been renamed the 'Ipswich Conservation and Design Panel'. It has been strengthened by the inclusion of more architects and is now receiving training. It is strongly supported by the councillors who sit on the Planning and Development Committee. Hopefully, its views on urban design will be expressed more strongly and more heed taken of them by developers so that they will come to present a better standard of design than heretofore.

Mike Cook

Suffolk Preservation Society

Another task that Peter Underwood fulfilled was as the Society's representative on the SPS. Not many years ago Jack Chapman prevailed on me to follow in Peter's footsteps. Now, I have to be a paid up member and a trustee of the charity, not just a mere observer.

Like many charities with full time professional staff and an office, this long recession has caused the SPS considerable financial problems. It has a complicated subscription structure which has

become too low and it has relied on large bequests with their consequent income to survive. Now its investments have fallen in value and its income plummeted. It has been spending capital at such a rate that it would only survive after 2017 without paid staff.

Cutting expenditure, re-organising its investment policy and actively seeking wealthy donors has increased its life by a few more years. Finally, its extremely able Director, Simon Cairns, has decided to move on to Colchester Borough Council as Planning Development Officer. He has been succeeded by his equally well qualified wife, Fiona Cairns, on two days a week basis. Clearly the service SPS provides will have to be curtailed. It has been agreed that Simon will remain the SPS representative on the Ipswich Conservation and Design Panel.

Mike Cook

Future of St Mary-at-the-Quay

One of Ipswich's finest medieval churches, redundant for several decades but cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust, now has a much brighter future. The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £3.6m for the church to become a heritage and wellbeing centre, a project set up by Suffolk Mind and the CCT. The grant will make possible the necessary strengthening of the church and a new building at the south-east corner of the church.

Shorts of All Sorts

'Favourite Independent' business - Ipswich Central ran this competition open to the public. Votes were cast for 50 different businesses. Top award went to Image Beauty Salon, followed by Pickwicks, The Tea Boutique, More than Memorable Cheeses and Craftability.

Vue Cinemas have received planning permission to create 9 screens inside the Buttermarket Shopping Centre in the big spaces where a succession of department stores have all closed. It won't open till summer 2014 - an indication of the scale of the work to be done.

The impending closure of what was originally **Reavells** (Compair Reavell was taken over by Gardner Denver of USA) will sadly mark the end of nearly all large-scale engineering work in Ipswich after two centuries of many great achievements by many different firms.

Aurora is the newly opened restaurant in the striking tent-like structure on Orwell Quay. Built as part of Persimmon's development of flats and houses there, it has remained unoccupied till now.

UCS has been allowed by IBC to delay development (because of the recession) of the land south of the James Hehir Building on Orwell Quay. UCS has bought the former Ransome's Shed 8 site (being used as Duke Street car park) on the other side of the Hehir Building. When UCS does build on both sites we should have a splendid waterfront university.

Ipswich was considered **one of the safest towns in the UK** according to a property magazine's survey based on crime figures, house prices, health facilities, education and public transport. Exeter was in top spot, Ipswich 9th.

Ipswich Maritime Trust's 'window museum' (part of The Mill, ex-Cranfield's and visible from the quayside in a lane) features a new display of photographs illustrating the history and development of the docks. It will be open for the next four months and is well worth a look. The New Wolsey Theatre has been acclaimed as the **most welcoming theatre** in the UK by the Theatrical Management Association. The theatre recognises the roles played by all of its staff and its volunteer ushers.

John Lyall (the original architect for The Mill) is working on a scheme to demolish the remaining Victorian Cranfield's buildings (but retaining the waterfront façade and colonnades) and to fit out the rest of the 23 storey tower block. Good news for the Waterfront and for Ipswich.

We are spending £21 m on **Ipswich Transport Fit for the 21st Century** which includes removing railings from most of the road junctions in the town centre - whilst at the same time installing new railings either side of the toucan crossing outside the new John Lewis in Ransome's Way. Ironical? (N.B. the £21m scheme does include much other work!)

Various uses for the **Cliff Brewery site** are being considered by developers. The former Tolly Cobbold brewery itself could include a small concert hall/lecture theatre and elsewhere on the site a supermarket and just possibly a new home for the Transport Museum which will have to move from Cobham Road before its lease runs out. Whether residential uses can be included depends on the future of the nearby storage fuel tanks.

Griff's Voice for Civic Voice

Griff Rhys Jones, professional actor, entertainer, broadcaster, is also President of Civic Voice, the national organisation which our Society belongs to. In this capacity he addressed some very happy members in the Atrium of Suffolk New College on Friday, 12 October. Far from being a 'celebrity figurehead' for Civic Voice, Griff is obviously putting heart and soul into the organisation with all his talents coming together. His enthusiasm and conviction that civic societies exist to be constructively influential came across with the humour and directness of a stand-up comedian. It was inspiring and refreshing.

He values the uniqueness of each town. He'd rather go for a walk in a town than in the country and he's not just interested in the centres of great cities but the characters of side streets and the evidence of heritage and continuity there. In our case therefore it was relevant for him to say how he started to love Ipswich aged eight - although on that first visit it was as a relief from being on his father's boat day after day and they didn't get further upriver than Pin Mill. On a later visit he followed father's sou-wester and oilskins through our town.

He stressed that people today should see themselves as the guardians of a town with a civic responsibility. But he went on to say, "I do embrace the twentieth century. I'm not Prince Charles ... I'm in favour of good design, imagination and creativity of people today." However, in his view, the twentieth century has been "the greediest and most self-centred" century with its obsession, for example, of driving motorways into old towns.

At present, he thinks planning is facing a crisis with the Government's abandonment of many valuable and specific planning criteria to be replaced by a simplified 50+ page document which will favour developers and commerce. As far as towns are concerned, he emphasised the value of more

mixed uses from now on (in line with the 'views of our Society and indeed of Ipswich Central) creating places where it's a joy to live. He mentioned as a nice reminder that multiple uses even in somewhere like London's Oxford Street mean that the shops share areas where lots of people are living nearby.

However, in towns like Ipswich Griff said, "Let the big shops go from town centres.. Trying to keep them is a lost cause anyway. Instead planners, residents and local politicians should work out for themselves what a town is for. And the future of a town involves getting our civic societies' voices on the agenda.

In a following brief question and answer, Chris Wiltshire referred to an "'institutionalised low self-esteem in Ipswich" and instead we should "glory in what we've got, our unique features. - which elicited warm applause.

Before Griff's sparkling talk, Chris himself entertained us with a presentation drawing attention to the Society's very recent digitalisation of our large and diverse slide collection (6500+) which will become much more readily accessible.

I think I can speak for all in saying that the evening was hugely enjoyable and informative. The College kitchens produced a wonderfully varied range of tasty canapé a very good advertisement for what students and staff can do.

Neil Salmon

Bristol and Ipswich

After spending a week in Bristol during November. I was surprised to realise how similar the paths of that city and our county town have travelled over the centuries. Both started as Anglo-Saxon settlements up a river a fair distance from the sea. In the 1800s both established enclosed areas of water for the purpose of improving continuous trade. Bristol with its 'Floating Harbour' and Ipswich its lock-gated dock and both have redeveloped their harbour areas calling them 'The Waterfront'. Centuries earlier both had spawned merchants who were great traders and became rich men, sending their ships to far away ports in search of trade. One big difference was that Bristol grew very wealthy on the horrific slave trade and looked towards Africa and the Caribbean. From the late 1700s onwards they both gave birth to many world renowned companies. Bristol's name being on Fry's chocolate, ground breaking ship building and, much later, Bristol aeroplanes. Meanwhile Ipswich was also becoming famous for manufacturing, with Ransome Sims & Jefferies, Ransome & Rapier, Fison's fertilisers, high class provisions from Burton Son & Sanders and Pretty's produced corsets by the thousand.

The difference now is that Bristol has a large recently opened Museum celebrating the amazing things that have happened during the life of the city; it is on the Waterfront in an old quay shed called the M Shed.

Returning home, I can only dream that one day my town will have such a museum where schoolchildren, tourists and locals can learn about the equally amazing town that stands at the head

of the Orwell before all the artefacts and personal stories are lost. Such a museum would hopefully complement our existing excellent museums but tell the continuous story of the town and its achievements.

Ken Nichols

Editor: our Museum could have been The Gipeswic Centre, as Peter Underwood originally envisaged it.

Ipswich Women's History Trail

On Thursday 18 October at the Tourist Information Centre, with the enthusiastic support of the Mayor. Councillor Mary Blake, we launched our Trail booklet which celebrates the contribution of women to Ipswich life over the centuries.

The Trail takes people on a walk around central Ipswich, looking at where the most influential women of the town lived and worked. The booklet gives brief details of the lives of over 20 women, and of what makes them worth remembering - from the three women martyrs who were burned at the stake in the 16th century right through to 20th century high achievers. Artists, politicians, benefactors, writers - virtually every area of cultural life is included. Some women will already be familiar - Edith Cook, for example, the aviator, or the writer Jean Ingelow. Others are less well-known: the embroiderer Judith Hayle or World War One taxi driver Olive Turney.

The Trail has been compiled, with the help and support of Ipswich Borough Council, by Ipswich Women's Festival Group. Group member Joy Bounds said: "Many women have contributed to the dynamic development of Ipswich, but their achievements are not always recognised in history books. This walk provides an enjoyable way to learn a bit about these women and perhaps draw inspiration from them." In addition, for those not familiar with Ipswich, the Trail will take them to many of the most interesting and attractive areas of the town. The walk can be done in either one or two parts - one to the north of the town centre, including Christchurch Park, and one to the south including the Waterfront.

Joy Bounds

The booklet costs 75p and is available from the Tourist Information Centre and other outlets.

A Brief Review of the Trail booklet

I feel sure many members would find much of interest in this well presented colourful booklet. It is stirring to be reminded that Alice Tooley and Emma Pownder survived their illustrious merchant husbands and carried on their businesses successfully. One wonders whether the 16th century was kinder to such women than would have been the case in later days. We also learn about Eliza Acton who wrote the first domestic cookery book and Constance Andrews a leading suffragette and of course Edith Cook (pioneer aviator) and Jean Ingelow (Victorian poet) who are both commemorated by Ipswich Society Blue Plaques.

The authors, perhaps wisely, allow facts to speak for themselves. It would have been understandable if indignation had broken through. We are simply told that one of the most distinguished women,

Nina Layard, wrote a paper for the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1906 about her archaeological excavation of the Hadleigh Road Anglo-Saxon site. It had to be read by a man as women were denied admission to the meeting. Miss Layard is said to have sat behind a curtain to listen. (Marginally better than the women harpists of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra who had to perform behind a curtain.) And it's a reminder of how disgracefully women were discouraged or held back well into 'modern times' when we learn that Mary Whitmore was the first woman Mayor of Ipswich in 1946. (Perhaps some good came out of the war?)

Neil Salmon

Sir Stuart Rose at Conference

Ipswich's second Beacon Town conference, 14 September 2012

I'm not sure if Sir Stuart had read the Mary Portas Report or simply chose to ignore it but some of his suggestions were different from hers. Sir Stuart suggested that the town needed smartening up, which is true, but both Ipswich Borough Council and Ipswich Central might take exception to some of the detail in achieving this, given that they both make serious contributions to litter and graffiti removal.

He went on to suggest a few trees would improve the impressions visitors get but fails to realise that it is almost impossible to plant trees amongst the mass of underground services in city streets. (We tried when Duke Street roundabout was changed, and there might be one, but only one, when the junction of Museum Street and Friars Street outside Willis is improved later this year.)

His most controversial suggestion was to move the 'scruffy' market away from the Cornhill and replace it with continental style tables and chairs. Given that it has taken at least 30 years for the market to progress from Tower Ramparts to Crown Street to Civic Centre to the Cornhill, and that Mary Portas places great emphasis on a market to bring footfall, the Borough Council is unlikely to take up the former M&S Chairman's suggestion. However, the Council leader did jump up and promise £200,000 of public funds to implement some of these suggestions. I'm sure details will follow.

Sir Stuart also suggested improvements to the route from the station to the town centre (clearly nobody had told him of the £21 million investment which includes the removal of subways under the Princes Street roundabout) and implied we need better signposting. My opinion is that the newly installed diagrammatic monoliths are simple and clear, and I note that the same map has been launched in a paper version as an Ipswich town centre walking map, available from the Tourist Information Centre.

It was good to see a number of Ipswich Society members at the conference. I was able to invite them via e-mail after the last Newsletter had gone to press. If you want to be included in similar alerts, please let the Secretary have your e-mail address.

John Norman

The Night Time Economy

The mention in the last Newsletter of the 'Night Time Economy' (NTE) raises an important topic which is starting to be researched and understood. We should all be interested in the welfare and future of Ipswich's town centre, even if we claim not to go out in the evening. The NTE is an indicator of the health of a town's success or failure to manage its services and facilities. Too often evenings and nights in town centres are characterised as populated by vodka-pop swilling louts, but the NTE actually represents a wide range of important opportunities for Ipswich.

The NTE can be defined as the economic, social and business activities which occur between 6pm and 6am ('after dark'). These include the operation of restaurants, theatres, pubs, clubs, football stadiums, cinemas, concerts and other cultural activities. These aspects of the economy are often overlooked, yet they are crucial drivers of tourism, leisure and business growth. It is estimated that the UK's NTE employs 1.3m people and contributes £66bn to the UK economy. Not only do these NTE industries provide taxes for our local authorities, although Central Government takes its share, but there are other employment and economic outputs. Of course there are also costs associated with the NTE, including policing, vandalism, cleaning and healthcare. Only by researching the net effects can it be shown that for most towns and cities, the benefits can contribute much more than most of us would acknowledge. These NTE industries provide jobs and wealth but also deliver social and community benefits too. The key is to have a night time experience which is safe and conducive to the local population and economy.

The Cardinal Park area is an example of some of this activity being concentrated with restaurants, cinemas, bars and nightclubs within a short walk. This is in contrast to more isolated parts of Ipswich such as the Wolsey Theatre or the Regent Theatre which are comparatively cut off from the town centre. Additional considerations to this include traffic, pedestrian flows, customer perceptions and popularity of the services on offer.

Ipswich has gained full Association of Town Centre Managers' Purple Flag accreditation. This means that the "centre is managing its night time experience and thus helps overcome any negative public perceptions that may exist." The Purple Flag also helps to promote areas like Ipswich's centre, attracting residents, new businesses, tourists and visitors. The Purple Flag accreditation has built upon the national Best Bar None scheme "promoting responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises." Whilst there are challenges to managing a night time economy, the benefits in getting it right can extend beyond simply the expandable pockets of chains like Wetherspoons!

Monty Guest

Who runs the Town Centre?

Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Central or Suffolk County Council?

In a letter jointly signed by Mark Bee and Judy Terry in the East Anglian Daily Times on Saturday, 17 November. I read that Suffolk County Council wish to be included in the extensive list of

organisations running the town centre. (In addition, Suffolk County Council are taking over the running of the town's road network from April.)

However, whilst Christmas is still firmly in our minds, we should question who was responsible for the Cornhill tree, the Christmas lights and, on the other hand, the four-day Christmas market (that promised 150 stalls and delivered half this number)?

We could also ask what happened to the Ipswich Town Centre Master Plan, suggesting that we turn the 'Golden Mile' from an east-west well established route to a north-south (Tower Ramparts to Lower Brook Street) shopping experience - when the Evening Star offices are rebuilt as shops! My research for articles elsewhere uncovered the demise and demolition of Tollemache's Upper Brook Street brewery in 1961, the site of which became Tacket Street car park. If it has taken 50 years (and waiting) for this town centre site to be developed for retail, what hope is there for sites in Turret Lane?

There was talk of a 'Vision for Ipswich' group, including input from the University; and the Chamber of Commerce has always had the interest of the town at heart. What is clear is that with many organisations pulling in different directions, particularly when the politics of town and county come into play, Ipswich town centre is likely to suffer from lack of steer.

John Norman

Bus Wars - Winners and Losers

Russell Nunn's article in the October Newsletter was of particular interest as I live in east Ipswich roughly in the middle of the two main contested routes and had been coming to similar conclusions about the unsustainable nature of the current services.

It seems both our local Ipswich Buses and the Norwich-based part of the national First Group are throwing all they have into this battle, cutting fares and investing heavily in new buses and additional staffing to provide a more frequent service, which overall is far in excess of our needs. With so many buses running during the day there is currently no need to consult timetables as there will always be a bus of some description along soon, which is just as well as the actual timetables seem less well adhered to than they used to be.

If passengers take pot luck like this, using whichever bus turns up, the patronage will remain evenly split and the 'war' could well be long and protracted. This will seriously drain the resources of both companies and is indeed unsustainable in the long term. The ultimate winner will come out of the battle scarred and less able to continue providing such a good and cheap service, which is not really in passengers' best interests.

Rather than awaiting the outcome, I think passengers can have some say in this by exercising their discretion and choosing to ride with whichever company they would prefer to see running these services in the future. If they vote with their arms in this way, only flagging down their preferred bus company, their votes will count and we will sooner reach a conclusion to this unnecessary battle.

Patrick Taylor

Celebrating Broke's Success

Des Pawson of Ipswich Maritime Trust, Richard Edgar-Wilson, President of the Old Ipswichian Club, and I are progressing with work on three ways of acknowledging Admiral Broke's success and abilities, and the bicentenary of his defeat of the USS Chesapeake in HMS Shannon on 1 June 1813. We plan to:

- Have a one-day symposium in Ipswich at University Campus Suffolk, which is linked to the Universities of Essex and East Anglia.
- Hold a concert at St Martin's, Nacton, Broke's home village, where he is buried.
- Publish a book/anthology of papers by a variety of writers for which I would provide the framework and would edit.

We must stress that these would all be aimed at interesting the general public who are largely ignorant of Broke and the War of 1812, rather than the academic world, although the scholarship should still be of high quality. The agreed date is the weekend of 12-13 October 2013, 10 am to 5.20 pm. The symposium will be held in the 120-seat lecture hall of the UCS Waterfront building in Ipswich's great Victorian Wet Dock. The large attached foyer will be used for a buffet lunch and for the launch of the anthology, as well as a display of other relevant books, especially those of the speakers. The concert is being organised on the Sunday afternoon by Richard Edgar-Wilson, the international tenor. Broke was at Ipswich School before entering the Royal Navy at a tender age and the concert is doubling as the Old Ipswichians' President's Event for 2013. Please let me know if you feel you can contribute in any way.

Tim Voelcker

Demise of the High Street

Footfall in the High Streets of Eastern England fell by 6.2% during the second quarter (May to July) of 2012. The number of vacant shop units rose to 11.5% and the overall picture remains bleak. The High Street is no longer the place we go shopping. So where do we go?

Footfall into out-of-town shopping centres and retail parks also fell, but by an almost insignificant 1% nationally, but spending on the web almost doubled. A noticeable factor in the downturn in retail spending is in areas where a significant proportion of the workforce is employed in the public sector (as in Ipswich).

However, if you think Ipswich has too many empty shops, take pity on the good folk of Bradford West Yorkshire, Britain's fifth largest city by population. The city council gave planning permission for a new shopping centre in 2004, the developer dug an enormous 23 acre hole in the centre of the city and then pulled out as the recession hit. No matter how hard you try, you cannot fill a hole with charity shops, community workshops or even fly-by-night retailers selling Christmas tat.

John Norman

Food in Pubs

Forty percent of Greene King sales are now in food, part of a market worth £42m across the UK. Leading players include the Greene King Hungry Horse chain, Mitchells and Butler's Toby and Harvester Inns (planning permission for one of each has been granted at Ravenswood) J D Wetherspoon (two new pubs in Suffolk this year, viz. Bury St Edmunds' Corn Exchange and Stowmarket's Willow Tree) and Marston's (The Mermaid in Yarmouth Road Ipswich, with a lodge hotel planned on the vacant adjacent site). Family dining out has moved up from the kids' favourite take-away to one where price, service and ambience of the surroundings knock the traditional pub for six.

Two asides to this article. The first is how amazingly popular The Mermaid has been since opening with a full car park lunchtimes and early evenings. Secondly, the application for planning permission for the Marston's lodge hotel was for an unacceptably bland building. Ipswich Borough Council's Development Control Committee rejected the application.

John Norman

Correction - Trees on Orwell Quay

The Newsletter has suggested that the lack of trees on the repaved Orwell Quay was down to an objection by Associated British Ports. I am asked to point out that ABP wanted to retain the flexibility of a clear quayside but did not object to trees in tubs (as can be seen on the east side of the Quay alongside the James Hehir Building).

John Norman

Thursday Thanks

May I thank all the volunteers at St Peter's by the Waterfront for helping out on Thursdays from May until the end of September 2012. It was much appreciated and I hope that they'll all be available to call upon for that same help in 2013. I'll be contacting them from March onwards, and if there are any other members of the Society who would also like to give a few hours on a Thursday, please contact me.

Jean Hill

News and Comment

'Ipswich Icons'

Even if one thinks the word 'icon' is over-used nowadays, it's possible to be very pleased that the Ipswich Star and the EADT are carrying articles by The Ipswich Society on Wednesdays and

Saturdays, respectively. The subjects covered so far are Pykenham's Gatehouse followed by County Hall, St Mary at the Elms, the history of the port up to the opening of the Wet Dock. the Society's Awards, the Custom House and the Running Buck. The articles should prove informative to the general reader and are good publicity for the Society.

Buildings 'At Risk'

English Heritage has a national list of Grade I and II* buildings which are vacant and in poor condition. Local Authorities are encouraged to list their Grade II buildings similarly 'at risk'. IBC's list consisted of Cliff Brewery, the Old Bull in Stoke Street and County Hall. But they have now had to add St Michael's Church in Upper Orwell Street (badly damaged by fire), 4 College Street (house on corner of College Street and Bridge Street), and 1-5 College Street (next to Wolsey's Gate). IBC urges the buildings' owners to make them weather-proof and secure while still vacant.

Two New Names

We are getting used to 'The Saints', i.e. St Nicholas Street and St Peter's Street, a useful name for an area which includes a variety of shops and other businesses. The owners, supported by IBC, have obtained funding from the Government to help promote the area. 'Blackfriars' might take more getting used to. Although the remains of the Blackfriars monastery are still to be seen between Foundation Street and Lower Orwell Street, this is to be the 'brand' name of the wider Fore Street, Orwell Place, Eagle Street and poor old Upper Orwell Street. Both these 'new' areas are crucial to the admirable aim of linking the Waterfront to the town centre. Christmas lights in Fore Street and the new name should be a welcome start to what will be a long and gradual process of linkage.

Sherrington Blue Plaque

The Society's most recently installed Plaque was unveiled on 20 September. It is on the east wall of Ipswich School chapel and easily visible from Henley Road.

Sir Charles Sherrington, the great neurologist, was a pupil at Ipswich School and after retiring returned to the town living briefly in Graham Road and then 73 Valley Road. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1924, was President of the Royal Society and appointed to the Order of Merit. Mike Cook, you may remember, gave a lecture about Sherrington which was reported in the April 2012 Newsletter.

John Norman

Puzzled

Griff Rhys Jones' talk on 12 October was both enlightened and thought provoking but was there not an elephant in the atrium? The future direction for all planning and building design, including in Ipswich, must adjust to any anticipated future changes, such as the climate, yet no mention as far as I recollect was made of this. Are we not fiddling while Rome burns, or now more likely, floods? Flood damage claims are already increasing significantly year on year. It seems unlikely that the predicted sea level rise of less than a metre this century is realistic, bearing in mind that the report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on which it is based made no allowance at all for ice melt. Now we are experiencing ice loss in the Arctic and West Antarctic which exceeds the most pessimistic of the models, due to the dreaded tipping points which are already kicking in. Last year we experienced the wettest spring since records began some 150 years ago, the autumn rains caused widespread flooding and hurricanes are apparently beginning to encroach on areas previously thought to be safe.

The Environment Agency now has the power to restrict residential development in flood areas, but it needs to go much further and faster on all fronts. We have to dramatically cut energy consumption if we are to keep carbon levels down to a figure which will prevent a catastrophic irreversible temperature rise. It's estimated that some 60% of the saving will have to come from a reduction in heat loss from buildings. However, our relatively puny new building regulations don't come into full force until 2016, and we are still giving awards to buildings with no solar collectors at all. In Germany, as from next year, all new buildings must be capable of producing 40% of the energy they consume themselves. What I wonder are Griff's thoughts on this?

Am I being irresponsibly alarmist? We almost certainly won't know until it's too late. but surveys indicate that well over 90% of those scientists who have been actively involved in the research (and there are literally thousands of them; the Met Office alone has some 200) now accept that not only is global warming happening, but that man is largely responsible. Bearing in mind what a disputatious lot scientists are, this is probably a higher consensus than Newton enjoyed, and nobody has messed with him for over 200 years now. Amazingly, the first laboratory experiment to demonstrate the greenhouse effect was carried out by an Englishman back in 1836, and the investigations have continued ever since, so an extraordinary amount of work has been done on the path to our present understanding: far too much to sweep under the carpet.

But little seems to be happening. Why are we not galvanised into action? What is happening to the proposals for large wind turbines in the area? Is anyone investigating local suitable sites for river turbines which are proving so popular, and in many cases profitable, in Europe?

Griff referred to the damage done to our infrastructure and housing stock by the Luftwaffe, but this will prove a mere pinprick compared with any future world conflict. Am I being unjustifiably alarmist again? A largely ignored Pentagon paper in 1997 proposed that climate change will be a greater threat to world peace than terrorism. Pakistan for instance gets nearly all its water through the rivers that first flow through its old rival India, which itself has serious water shortages, and like Pakistan has nuclear weapons.

It is my generation that must take most of the blame for the carbon level increase. (Incidentally I am 70.) We were the first to heat the whole of our houses at the same time as we cooled local areas of them with fridges and freezers, one energy source fighting the other. Also there was little attempt at conserving all the extra heat within the area for which it was intended. Wherever you look, the energy consumption of our generation became profligate. We were the first to drive or fly everywhere. If one looks at the graphs showing atmospheric levels of carbon, it was precisely at this time that they started to take off so dramatically, to a level not experienced for some 4 million years, when temperatures were a catastrophic 4 degrees higher. Furthermore, recent studies suggest that humans only flourish when temperatures are within just 1 degree of the present level: a sobering thought. As we drove the short distance home after the meeting (I could have walked, but thought it might rain) I recollected sitting in the atrium, pleasantly warmed in an attractive space probably three times the volume of space needed, absorbing Griff's thoughts, and eating unsustainable quantities of red meat (I have to confess to the consumption of at least three sausage rolls) and with my feet probably little more than a couple of metres above sea level.

I found myself increasingly puzzled by the complete lack of curiosity about these problems, either by Griff or by me and other members during question time. I would love to learn if there are other

members of the Society (as well as Mike Brain, of course) who share any of the same anxiety, and who like me are having increasing pangs of guilt.

Jo Stokes

Harman, Henry VIII, Hansa

If you find yourself in the charming Cotswold town of Burford in Oxfordshire do try and make time to visit the church of St John the Baptist. As you enter the church look across the north aisle wall where you will observe an imposing piece of masonry, described as "not so much a funeral monument as a thanksgiving for a successful life set up in 1569 by one Edmund Harman."

Born in Ipswich in approximately 1509, Edmund's first appearance in history occurred in 1530 when he was admitted to the Barbers' Company. Then in February 1536 he is described as being a King's barber and a member of the Privy Chamber. His paternal grandfather was a "gentleman" and his maternal one may also have been entitled to bear arms. But it is unlikely that a young man from the provinces would have got so far so fast without a patron. Yet it is not clear whose Edmund was.

Wolsey of course came from Ipswich but after his fall in 1529 a connection with him would have been more of a handicap than an advantage. A more likely figure was Sir William Sabyne, an Ipswich merchant who owned the house called the Steelyard: he was not only a ship owner and "vice-admiral" but also a sergeant-at-arms responsible for the King's safety. His duties included care to see that the men who brought razors close to the royal throat could be trusted not to cut it! What better way of ensuring this than to choose for the job people whose background one was familiar with? Moreover there is evidence that Sabyne shared the progressive religious views for which Edmund was to be conspicuous. It may be relevant that Butts, the King's physician, also came from Ipswich. In 1537 Edmund had been elected as a member of the Court of Assistants in the Barbers' Company, appearing eleventh in the list of seniority. In 1539, described as a "Groom of the Privy Chamber", he became Senior Warden and in 1540, at the presumed age of 31, Master.

In 1543 Edmund is for the first time described as "The King's Servant", a title of which he was not the only holder. Whereas previous grants to him had only been of positions bringing in money, he now received one involving tenure of land, namely the Hospital of St John Evangelist Burford, with certain lands belonging to it in Burford itself and in neighbouring Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire villages. Although this is the first mention of Burford in connection with Edmund, he must have been there already since his wife Agnes was a daughter of Edmund Silvester, a prominent merchant of the town. 1539 has been suggested as the date of their marriage and their daughter Agnes was born in 1542 followed by fifteen further children (9 boys and 6 girls) all of whom are depicted on Edmund's monument in the church.

In 1546 the King's rapidly failing health increased the jockeying for position at court, so as to decide who should be in control when Henry was replaced by the boy Edward. But no matter who won the struggle, Edmund was likely to lose. There would be a reduced demand for royal barbers when a boy of nine became King. Edmund must have viewed the future with dismay. On 26 October, in one of the King's last lucid intervals, Edmund Harman, the King's Servant, was granted

for his services the Lordship and Manor, the rectory and the advowson of the vicarage of Taynton, which had formerly belonged to Tewkesbury Abbey.

On 26 December Henry's illness took a turn for the worse and he sent for his will. It was found to require revision and was brought back again when it was signed "with our own hand" in the presence of seven witnesses among whom Edmund stood second. He also received a legacy of 200 marks (£133) "in token of our special love and favour". After the death of King Henry the barbers on 1y went on being paid for two quarters and it is a reasonable hypothesis that Edmund came fairly soon to live as a country gentleman on his estates in the middle Windrush valley. His wife was buried at Taynton on 30 March 1576 and Edmund himself died at Burford on 19 March 1577 and was buried at Taynton on 10 April 1577.

The 1574 heraldic visitation of Oxfordshire by Harvey and Lee recorded a Harman genealogy which was almost certainly supplied to them by Edmund himself. The family name seems to have been spelt indifferently "Harman" and "Herman", which points to them having been of Germanic origin. It describes his father Robert and his grandfather Paul as being of Ipswich, Paul being a "gentleman". But Edmund's great-grandfather Peter was said to have been "of the Steelyard". The best known Steelyard was the depot of the Hansa merchants in Lower Thames Street, London, where imports were weighed on the King's Beam to assess their liability for duty. But the Hansa also appear to have had a minor depot at Ipswich during the fifteenth century, although its exact location and dates are obscure. In the following century Sir William Saby's house, situated near the quay, was known as the Steelyard. In 1460 an Ipswich merchant, John Caldewell, in making his will, had expressed the hope that his son might have "the place at the cay where Herman dwelleth".

In East Anglia other Hansa depots, also known as Kontors, were located at King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth. The Hanseatic warehouse in King's Lynn is the only surviving Hanseatic League building in England and was constructed in 1475. There is a suggestion that certain German cities of the League had a bias towards a Kontor; thus Bremen with King's Lynn, Hamburg with Great Yarmouth and Cologne with Ipswich. Sources: Tolsey Paper No 6, The Tolsey Museum, Burford, 1988. Internet, Hanseatic League

Michael Atkinson

Shops Empty and Full

Empty shops throughout most of the country are blighting the look of our streets, not to speak of the consequences for businesses. In Ipswich the situation is not as bad as in many other towns and cities, but the locations of some vacant premises are particularly sad aesthetically - for example in The Walk and Thoroughfare, that unique and quite intimate precinct, and in Butter Market where Clarks and the Early Learning Centre occupied an attractive building. Yet next door the newly opened Patisserie Valerie has enjoyed great success and almost always there are people ogling the cakes in the window as well as eating inside.

A Day out in the Fens

On 12 September, fifty Ipswich Society members set out to discover the unique blend of landscape, engineering and history which characterises The Fens. Our first stop, Prickwillow Drainage Engine Museum, is in the original pumphouse on the River Lark. It houses an Ipswich-built Vickers Petter diesel pump which drained the fenland here during the first half of the 20th century, pumping water up to the river. After a short excellent talk on the history of fenland drainage, the Vickers Petter was started up for us - impressive, noisy and very effective - and next door. the modern electric/electronic pumphouse keeps up the good work.

Our journey north to Wisbech traversed the peat fen below sea level and then the slightly more elevated silt fen. Bob Markham's commentary helped us to pick out features of this subdued different landscape. Periodically we travelled over slightly raised sections of road, identified by Bob as 'roddens', abandoned river courses left above the fields as the peat has shrunk after drainage. Most of the dwellings in this area have been built on 'roddens' for their greater stability - we saw many tilted telegraph poles and experienced much hummocky subsidence in the road across the peat! At Welney we crossed the man-made Bedford Level which carries water northwards to The Wash along its two great waterways separated by flood meadows. They flow several metres above the peat fen and the banks, needing constant care, are maintained by 'bankers' - a vital occupation in this part of Cambridgeshire.

The Wisbech & Fenland Museum is free. and packed to the rafters with well-labelled specimens. Entering gives an immediate sense of déjà-vu, time-travelling to Ipswich Museum as we know it from 140 year old photographs of what is now the Arlington's Restaurant on Museum Street. The two museums have an identical opening date, 1847. Octavia Hill, founder of the National Trust and the Kyrle Society (forerunner of our own Civic Societies) was born in Wisbech. 2012 is the centenary of her death - a good time to visit her birthplace, a Grade II* Listed Georgian town house. Born the year after Queen Victoria's accession to the throne, Octavia was an advocate of public open space - as she put it. "Places to sit places to play in. places to stroll in, and places to spend the day in."

We returned home across the Suffolk fenland (yes, we have some) via Lakenheath with a stop for tea at the fine church here. The exterior is a mosaic of building materials from the Cambridgeshire/Suffolk borderlands: clunch, a type of chalk found locally; carstone, brown sandstone from the fen-edge: brown cobbles from ancient river terraces of west Suffolk and grey flints from the fields. The interior takes the breath away- murals as old as 12th century adorn the walls, with St Edmund opposite the door, watching you enter. The church has a crucifix of contemporary design made from bog oak from the fens. Farmers often plough up huge tree trunks out of the peat - remnants of long gone forests many thousands of years old.

Caroline Markham

Street Markets

Town centre traders certainly can't rest on their laurels in this continuing Age of Austerity. One sensible response is to hold street markets where some of the local shops bring their wares out into

the open, sometimes together with other traders. Markets held in Dial Lane (October), Giles Circus, Queen Street and St Nicholas Street (November) and Fore Street (December) have all helped to bring people into some of the less 'obvious' but important streets. Ipswich town centre is so much more than the 'golden mile'!

Lectures and Outings

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