

The Ipswich Society
at
60

**AN EXTRA
SPRINGTIME
ISSUE**

Editorial. There really is no need for one: this extra issue of the *Newsletter* speaks eloquently for itself. Many thanks to all the contributors who responded so well and so rapidly. **R.G.**

Chairman's remarks

The only way to describe the current situation is eerie and I have no doubt that it will be world-changing. Almost every one of us has been jolted out of our daily schedule and forced to adopt a different routine. I know some members have been so concerned by the rapid spread of the virus across the country that they have not dared venture beyond the garden gate, hence the rationale behind this bonus edition of the *Newsletter*.

Newsletter Editor, Robin Gaylard, put the April edition together somewhat earlier than expected and our publisher, being a little depleted of other work was able to print the hard copies almost immediately. Thus, I suggested to the usual contributors that we could keep members informed of the wider Ipswich picture with an additional edition.

I had my doubts that there would be anything forthcoming, given that very little is happening across the town. How wrong I was. Robin was inundated with contributions and was able to put this bonus *Newsletter* together reasonably swiftly. Sharward's confirmed that they were still working, that they could receive the 'copy' electronically and that Royal Mail would still collect and distribute hard copies.

Hence you have an additional *Newsletter* in lieu of an AGM, Winter Illustrated Talks, summer outings and other sixtieth anniversary events. A poor substitute, perhaps, but it is our way of staying in touch.

I very much hope that things are back to normal before the summer is over, that the Garden Party planned for July can go ahead and that we can still organise a couple of outings before the end of September.

John Norman

Oak dresser (copied from a South Wales antique) by Titchmarsh & Goodwin. See page 19.



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Planning matters

There was a surprising number of planning applications before the Corona virus lockdown, indicating what was likely to become a healthy summer for the construction industry. Those of significance are outlined below.

The **Burlington Road Conservation Area** has been extended to include parts of Dalton, London, Stevenson Roads and of Clarkson, Benezet and Granville Streets. The Conservation Area appraisal and management plan has been rewritten to Historic England standards.

Ipswich Community Church, Clarkson Street. The proposed miniature walls and cast iron spike topped railings are a well worked out solution to reduce the anti-social abuse the church continually suffers and will help to improve the streetscape of the new Conservation Area.

The **New Wolsey Theatre** plan to add a balcony to the south west corner of the building, this will be a useful revenue-earning addition overlooking the new public space (Theatre Square).

The **Unitarian Meeting House** is currently undergoing a major historic building restoration and there is a plan to discreetly install a WC (the first in the 320 year old building).

33 Knightsdale Road, the Plymouth Brethren are seeking retrospective permission to continue using part of Felgains premises as a private supermarket. This is unlikely to have any impact on the local community and we have no objection.

Former **Odeon Cinema, Major's Corner**. The Hope Church, who are converting the cinema for their own use are proposing to make minor, almost insignificant changes to a rear fire escape.

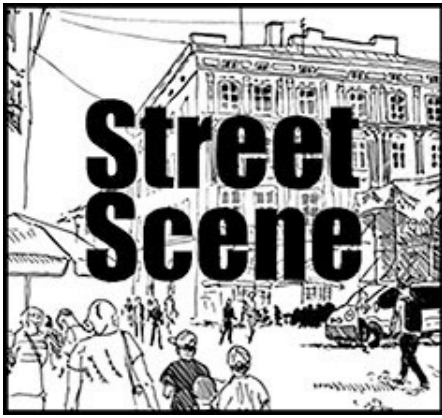
149 Norwich Road. This building is part of the classical and significant Georgian Albert Terrace, built circa 1840. No 149 is in the middle of the terrace and looks quite original. The proposal is to convert to a six bedsit HMO, with a communal kitchen, lounge and dining room, two bathrooms and three toilets, the exterior will not be changed.

16 Fonnereau Road. Replacement of twelve original single-glazed rotting window frames in the belvedere (tower) with similar preservative impregnated softwood frames. The belvedere at number 16 was, when built in 1850, the highest structure in Ipswich. Replacing these arch topped windows is a significant investment in this substantial property.

Aaron House, Finchley Road. Permission was granted to build six terraced houses to an uninteresting pastiche design; remarkably, they now request to change the facades to a much more acceptable modern and exciting design for the two terraces, each of three houses with three bedrooms.

Crown and Anchor Mews car park. There is a proposal to fell a significant group of town centre trees, those just inside the boundary wall alongside Providence Street. We see no justification for the proposal and will object.

Extension to **Gainsborough Library**. The 2008 library, designed by Pick Everard, was a Society award winner and has been one of the few public buildings in Ipswich of the noughties of architectural note. The application is poorly drawn and as far as one can tell it is an inadequately designed addition to a good building. We will recommend refusal. *Mike Cook*



Since I wrote a piece for the April *Newsletter* over a month ago, things have moved on at a pace and some of what I wrote then will have changed. Several shops have been 'tottering' for some time and may well fall over the cliff during the Covid 19 episode. Bright House announced administration last week and the Aqua Eight restaurant at the top of Elm Street has just closed. Others we were expecting to open soon, such as Deichmann shoes in the old Burton's and Sports Direct in the former BHS, may well be delayed. Cllr. David Ellesmere assures me that the Deichmann deal is already signed and sealed. We try to remain optimistic.

Building projects have been put on hold including 'The Hold' (Fore Street) and 'Theatre Square' (New Wolsey Theatre), where completion will be delayed. It seems likely that the Cornhill snagging work by Brooks and Wood, which was due to start again on 6 April, will almost certainly be put back. Work has stopped on the old Post Office for the time being.

On a positive note, in the more remote areas work continues such as dredging and restoring the Chantry Wilderness Pond. The fountains are back on the Round Pond in Christchurch Park and the park is looking stunning as monuments, drinking fountains and other sculptures have been cleaned up and parks staff have been working hard getting things ready for the summer. The parks remain open for daily exercise and dog-walking providing 'social distancing' is strictly adhered to. No picnicking; the children's playgrounds, cafés, tennis courts etc. are closed. Use of the park benches is discouraged. Park Patrol and Police are doing 'softly, softly' regular checks.

As a result of Covid 19 our photographic display on Cornhill is still there eleven days longer than planned and remains ongoing. If you shop at M&S or Waitrose you still have a chance to pop along and look at it. According to John Norman we could be set to have the record for the longest running Cornhill event ever. The cubes have been in place longer than the Valentine Pleasure Fair and longer than the FA Cup win celebrations in 1978. Will they still be there after Easter?

IBC (Ipswich Borough Council) have plans to add two more retail units in the Anglia Retail Park (near ASDA) on the site of the former B&Q garden centre.

Ipswich Society Chairman, John Norman, sent me some interesting figures last week regarding town centre rents for retail units in Ipswich which appear below. Although cold comfort, it would appear that Ipswich is holding up as well as any town in the UK of a similar size.

There are over 400 vacant retail and commercial properties in Ipswich, a figure close to 10%, which is typical for a provincial retail centre in 2020.

There is little sign of the advertised price having dropped although agents are always willing to negotiate with a genuine enquiry from an established company.

13/15 Butter Market currently occupied by Waterstones (although the current occupier is keen to remain). £75,000 pa for 16,000 sq ft over 4 floors (prime retail 8,500 sq ft).

43/45 Tavern Street, vacant but previously occupied by Cotswold Camping, part of the former Great White Horse: £65,000 pa for 6,500 sq ft of which 2,000 sq ft is the former ballroom (the former ballroom is over Nickleby's Restaurant in Northgate Street).

47 Tavern Street (Starbucks) is also on the market for £37,000 pa.

24 Tavern Street, currently Paperchase, who are searching for alternative premises in Ipswich: £75,000 pa for 6,700 sq ft (prime retail 2,400 sq ft, plus basement and two upper floors).

Paperchase are likely to move into an existing 'department' store rather than a stand-alone retail unit. They are already in NEXT at Martlesham.

51 Butter Market former Jessops Cameras, for sale £250,000 or rent £22,500 pa for 2,300 sq ft. The agent's particulars differ when suggesting the size of the retail catchment area with a range from 270,000 to 320,000 people. The population of Ipswich is 133,400; that of Suffolk: 730,000 (2011 census).



Accepting Ipswich as IP1, IP2, IP3 and IP4 we could add IP5: Kesgrave and Martlesham: a population of 20,000 (8,000 homes).

Who knows what the state of things will be in a year's time? But to remain positive, 'keep calm and carry on' will get us through this and we have to thank all those who are taken for granted such as the bin collection workers, shop staff and pharmacists, post men and women and other delivery staff, all the many businesses and their staff performing in the background to keep things running and, of course, carers and all those in the NHS and other medical and essential services and many, many more unsung heroes.

Tim Leggett

Britain's 'oldest' town

You might think that this short article is about Ipswich, Britain's oldest continuously inhabited town; the Saxons came here in the seventh century (AD625) and established a port, a manufacturing base and a town which quickly grew to 5,000 residents. There have been people living and working in Ipswich ever since.

So if I'm not talking about Ipswich how about Colchester. Colchester was an important Roman town, perhaps the first in the UK. The Roman's came to Essex in AD79 and Colchester's importance grew as a Garrison town with the entire associated infrastructure, a lot of which they are still discovering. But when the Romans left Britain Colchester was effectively abandoned, deserted and didn't re-establish itself until the tenth century.

Historians suggest that there is very little evidence of Colchester existing as a community after the 6th century although snippets of Danelaw suggest there was perhaps something here in the ninth century.

No, I'm talking about Downham Market, Britain's oldest town; that is, the town with the oldest inhabitants or as it is known to the people of Norfolk 'the country's largest care home' Downham Market has the highest average age of any community in England.

According to the 2011 census the average age of the 10,000 residents is 69. It feels older, as you walk around the Clock Tower in the former Market Place. The only people out and about seem to be pensioners with their Zimmer frames, walking sticks and mobility scooters. Perhaps the younger generation are at work.

Generally however it is very quiet, on the edge of the Fens, 40 miles from Norwich, 30 from Cambridge and a dozen from the administrative centre of Kings Lynn it really does need to look after itself. It was the marketplace for the food grown on the Fens but that now goes straight to the big supermarkets and wholesalers who pre-order a season's output.

So, nice try Downham Market but, in my book, Ipswich remains Britain's oldest continuously inhabited town.

John Norman

The boot scraper, a forgotten relic

As time passes with ever dizzying swiftness things that are commonplace become anachronisms in what appears to be the blink of an eye. Then they are forgotten, neglected or destroyed and to all intents and purposes invisible. When did you last see a bike propped on its pedal on a curb? Where is all the tobacco advertising that once adorned the street scene? Chewing gum machine, anyone?

Those of us with an interest in heritage and the built environment are given to exhorting people to “look up”. Usually very wise advice as some of the best and relatively untouched things are above eye level. However I wish to suggest that the occasional downward glance can be rewarding too. Yes, residues of chewing gum, cans, plastic bottles, cigarette detritus and sunflower and pumpkin husks, make such scrutiny depressing. Nevertheless there are some forgotten relics of a more interesting kind lurking down there.



This brings me to the subject of boot scrapers. I presume that most readers of this journal know what I refer to. Younger members may know a version from the sort of gardening centres and stately house shops that aim to recreate Victorian gentility in modern suburbia. However they were once an essential item in most towns.

Some of our sister civic societies in Britain, France, Belgium and the United States have made systematic surveys of their scrapers. This article is far from that but I hope to rekindle awareness of these fascinating survivals, redolent as they are of past social conditions.

The advent of the scraper as we know it dates from the 18th century when improved town streets and pavements made walking something of a fashion for the middling and upper classes. Until then only the poor walked on what were little better than unmade footpaths.

Although the surfaces and townscape might





have improved the squalor left by horse traffic in particular and also limited development of effective drainage made walking hazardous and unpleasant.

The French, so often in the vanguard of fashion, made them objects of beauty and named the scraper 'decrottoir'. I leave Francophone readers to translate this term for themselves. More delicate persons may wish to be left in ignorance. In consequence there are many fine



examples surviving in French and Belgian cities. A survey in Brussels has documented over 1000 different patterns.

In Britain the heyday of the scraper was mid to late 19th century. Many houses that could be entered directly from the street or pavement were provided with them. Where the house is set back or



is rather grander than average there seem to be fewer visible scrapers. More often they will be found at the rear where presumably the domestic servants would have needed to use them. The commonest form is a horizontal blade set into a wall adjacent to the front door. It has a cast iron surround with a more or less ornate decoration. Sometimes there is a tray for catching the scrapings

Other forms are based on an open blade with two supports. The most elegant also have a hand rest and sometimes a brush. This example (see above photograph) is at the 'back door' of Christchurch Mansion. Of note is that there isn't one at the front.

As the state of the roads improved, particularly with better drainage and the reduction in horse traffic the scraper became largely redundant. Relatively rarely are 20th century buildings

provided with them. Sometimes all that remains is a sad little empty grotto from where the scraper was removed. Quite often it is filled in or even rendered out of existence.

I am wary of specifying most of their whereabouts as the reclamation trade sells vintage examples for quite high prices. Just keep your eyes lowered, and not on a phone screen, and these once essential little wonders will enrich your progress even on the least prepossessing of walks.

Chris Wiltshire



Heritage Open Days Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September 2020

I've heard it said these are difficult or unprecedented times. I prefer to think that we live in interesting times. Whilst many places are closed and we are being encouraged to keep our distance or possibly self-isolate, let's not forget, this will end, and we will all be released back into the wild.

With that in mind, the Society is looking to the future and the annual joy that is **Heritage Open Days**. This year we are promoting Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 of September. Many of our regular participants such as Broomhill Pool, The Ipswich School and the Town Hall/Corn Exchange have told me they are planning to join in again this year.

Every year I try to recruit new participants and this year is no different. I'm having a few discussions, but it's early days and I won't jinx it or spoil the surprise by naming names, but fingers crossed. If anyone has any suggestions or is sitting in a building they would like to show off, please let me know, I'd love to talk to you.

You may not be aware, but every year, the national organisers suggest a theme. Promoting the theme is always voluntary so rarely shouted about. This year's theme is hidden nature and I know one or two participants are giving it some thought. Let's hope the weather is kind and we get the chance to search for frogs amongst the tombstones. You might need to get the wellies ready!

I know things are strange at the moment but – deep breath – spring is in the air, summer is coming, and **Heritage Open Days** will take place. Put the dates in your diary. In the meantime, try not to worry too much, stay safe and look after each other.

Neil Thompson (hodipswich@gmail.com)

John Charles Butters (1920-2020)

Born in Ipswich in 1920, John Butters remained here for his entire life, except whilst serving in the Royal Air Force and also whilst studying architecture in London.

He worked for the Ipswich architectural practice Johns, Slater & Haward where he was job architect for various schools in Ipswich and elsewhere. He was in charge, with Birkin Haward, of the first secondary school built after World War II (for Essex County Council). In 1958 John moved to Ipswich Borough Council. Initially, he was part of a small group of architects and technicians. Three years later, John was promoted to Chief Assistant Architect, under the Borough Surveyor.

1974 he was invited to join the Planning Department, which needed advice upon architectural aspects of planning applications. John enjoyed this work, as it meant he could help shape Ipswich more widely. With a change in the Planning Office and the arrival of Conservation, John became very interested in the history of Ipswich. He walked miles and took many photos, even preparing a town trail. John remained with the authority until retiring in 1982 but did not stop working. John's great-grandfather, Frank Woolnough, was the Curator of Ipswich Museum for twenty-four years and a prolific writer.

Mike Smith informed us of the death of his old planning colleague at 99 years old; John was also a member of The Ipswich Society and well-known in the town for many years.

The mighty leviathan!

On a dull Sunday in March, and with the continuing impending onslaught of the coronavirus, some interesting distraction was necessary.

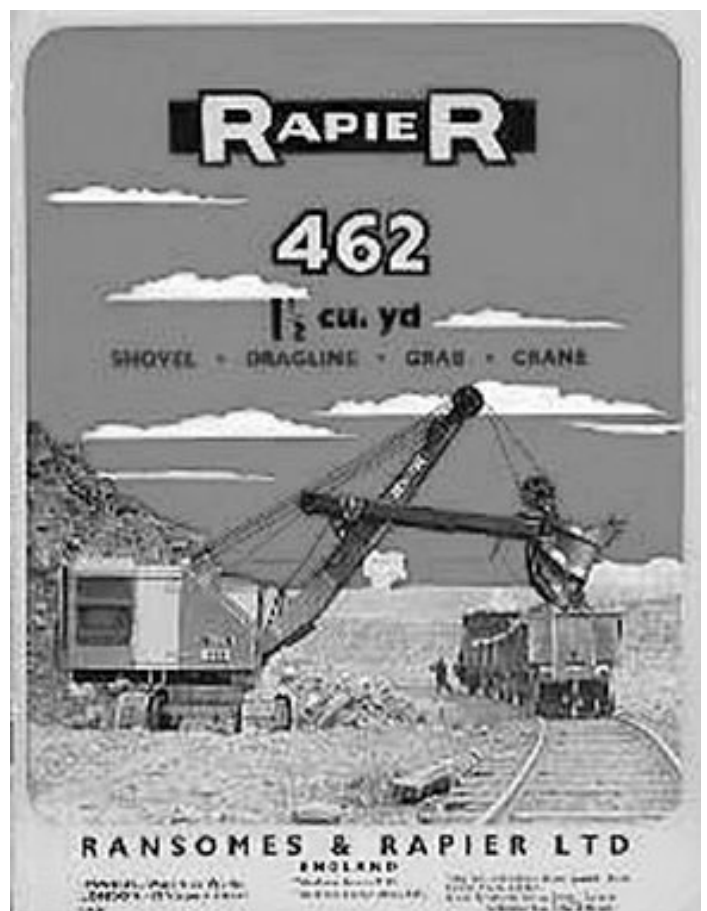
I was pleased therefore to be able to attend the Ransomes & Rapier reunion at Kesgrave Social Club, a venue I had visited to see soul singer Geno Washington many years earlier*. My late father had been an inspector in the machine shop at the Waterside Works in Ipswich for many years.

A proud R & R man through and through, he would have been delighted to see what is being done to keep alive the legacy of this once great world-wide engineering company. From the first railway in China, to revolving stages for the Palladium theatre in London and the Post Office (later BT) Tower restaurant, and to the giant Walking Dragline machines used for open-cast mining, the inventiveness and ingenuity of the R & R engineers knew no bounds. After business collaborations and mergers, becoming part of the Newton Chambers Group, over a century of engineering excellence evaporated when the eventually disgraced 'businessman' Robert Maxwell visited the works by helicopter in the mid-1980s and closed it down. The manufacturing heartbeat of the Stoke area of Ipswich was irretrievably lost.

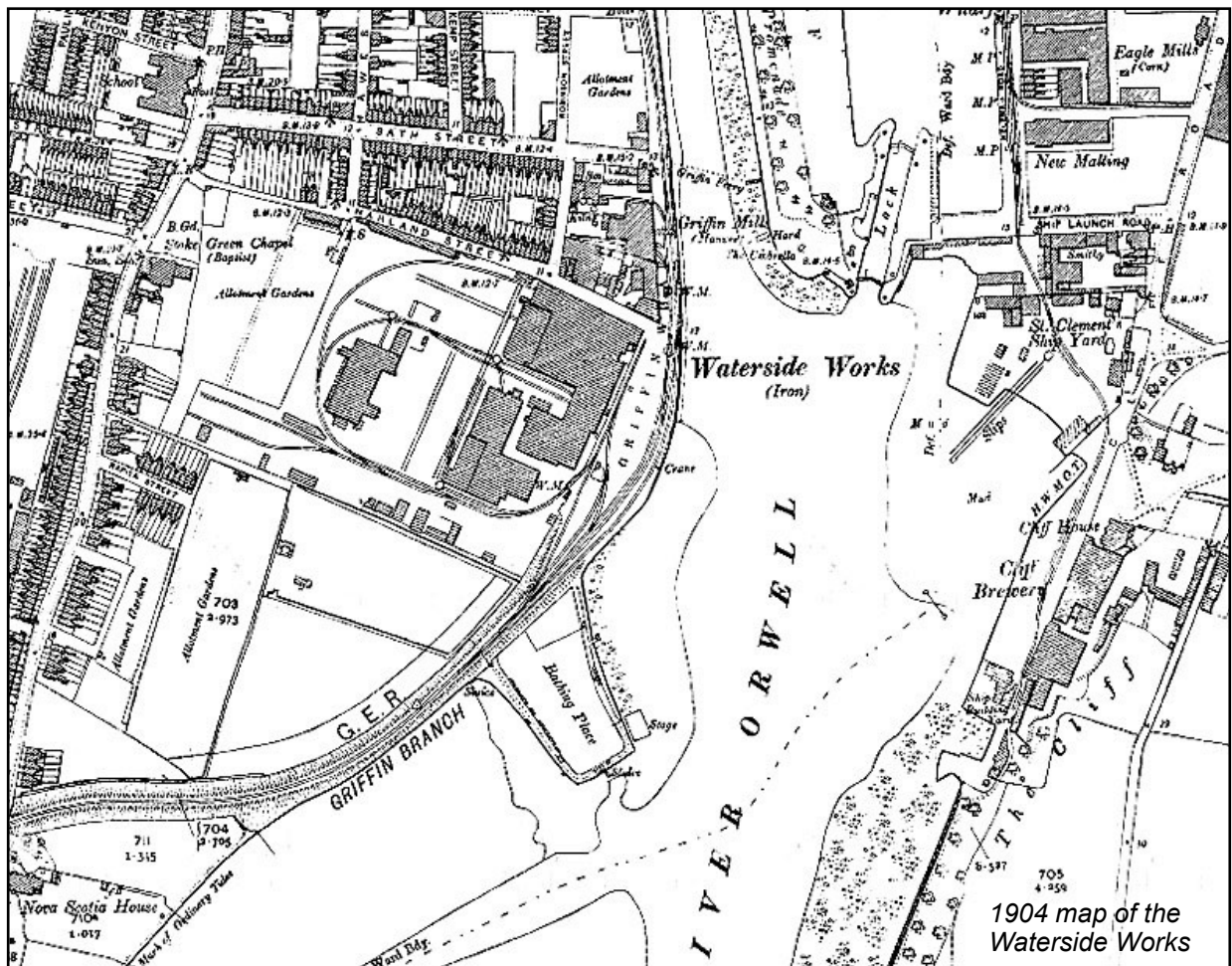
Travelling down to work on a training contract in Kent in the late 1990s, my route often took me down the M20 adjacent to the route being carved out of the Kentish Weald for the Channel Tunnel Railway. All along the route were excavators used in the route construction which were manufactured by Ransomes and Rapier.

It was good to talk to many older former employees, who had an interesting fund of stories about life at the works, including the open days I had attended as a child where I can recall placing a penny on a giant press which promptly flattened it and increased its size tenfold. I also recall seeing Rapier sluice gates on fenland watercourses at Spalding when visiting the Flower Parade over several years, and also seeing a Rapier engine turntable at Didcot Railway Centre in Oxfordshire.

A central part of the activities at the event was a presentation on the 'walk' by a dragline machine from Exton near Stamford, to Haringworth near Corby, a distance of some 13 miles. This dragline excavator, christened 'Sundew' after the winner of the 1957 Grand National (all draglines were named after winners of major races), and weighing 1675 tons, with a jib taller than Nelsons Column, 'feet' the height of several humans, with a 'bucket' that a double deck



[*presumably with The Ram Jam Band, hipsters, flipsters and finger-poppin' daddies! Or is the Editor showing his age?]



bus could fit comfortably into, ‘walked’ the 13 miles backwards at a speed of one tenth of a mile per hour. A gigantic lumbering leviathan, which however was incredibly efficient at excavating iron ore, used in steel-making at home and abroad. The journey was not without incident, particularly as 10 roads, 5 rivers had to be crossed by laying down hardcore to provide a solid surface, 13 power lines had to be repositioned, and a railway crossed. Not unnaturally, the journey took several weeks.

Amongst the memorabilia on display was a cut away diagram of a dragline from a comic, and also a large poster which boldly proclaimed ‘Maker of large cranes and excavators. Ransomes & Rapier Ltd’. A proud company not afraid to trumpet its worth. Sadly, once Corby steelworks closed down and iron ore could be imported cheaply, work came to an end for Sundew in 1980, with final scrapping in 1987.

A memorable and totally enjoyable afternoon incorporating a real learning experience. Although Ipswich tends to forget and ‘airbrushes out’ its once proud industrial history, the flame of memory still burns bright.

My thanks are due to the organiser Derek Clarke, to the surviving grand-daughter of the late Managing Director, Dick Stokes, and to the wonderful former employees and relatives I met along the way. There is an excellent engineering exhibition at the Ipswich Transport Museum on Ipswich engineering, but it was good to talk to former workers and hear their stories.

An afternoon well spent.
Graham Day



The story of *Ipswich: a town to be proud of*

A sub-group of your Executive Committee came up with the idea (the seed planted by the Chair) of producing a special publication, based loosely on the regular *Newsletter* format, to promote Ipswich in a positive, civic society sort of way. The intention was to counteract the media coverage of Ipswich, much of it negative. As ideas were thrown around and contributors approached, we aimed for published copies to be given out to attendees of the 2019 Annual General Meeting.

The background to this decision goes back to a project in 2017 to rewrite a new edition of the 1982 *Ipswich maritime trail*, followed the next year by *A guide to the Church of St Clement* (with encouragement from the Cobbold Family History Trust, Ipswich Arts Centre and the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust). Before this, your Executive erred on the side of 'we aren't publishers'. The question to be addressed in the new book: 'What is it like living in Suffolk's county town and what is its historical, cultural and economic significance?' A tall order in so few pages.

We kicked off in fine style with *Foundations* by Caroline Markham of GeoSuffolk. The topography of the location meant that the Anglo-Saxons in the 7th century couldn't really have found a better location for their first town. The Gipping/Orwell River is at the heart of the town's story, providing a highway to and from the sea. The geology of Ipswich is surprising and beneficial: plentiful, clear spring-water flowing from the surrounding hills to the river, clay beds which played such a key part in early industry with the making of 'Ipswich ware'; meanwhile, many people are still taken aback to find that Ipswich is built on chalk.

The article on Ipswich history by your Editor once again faced the challenge of distilling such a rich story into a few paragraphs. The colonisation of post-Roman scattered inhabitants by the Anglo-Saxons led to the forming of the nucleus of England's oldest, continuously-settled town around the ford across the river. A roller-coaster of boom and near-bust over the centuries threw up remarkable characters including the rich merchants, who often went on to political roles. The person from perhaps the humblest of Ipswich origins who rose to the highest position in the state was, of course, the son of a dodgy butcher, Thomas Wolsey. In June 2020 we celebrate 500 years since the legendary Field of the Cloth of Gold, a summit meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I of France in a grand tournament near Calais (then part of England) masterminded by the Cardinal which nearly bankrupted both countries.

Ipswich and immigration by Dr Chris Wiltshire lifted the lid on a knotty subject: the cosmopolitan nature of our town. Migration and immigration has characterised this port town since invaders and settlers came. A constant flow of foreign seamen and travellers, some of whom settled here, was joined by the many dispossessed rural workers during the Industrial Revolution. Ipswich is a place of change – as much as any town – and it continues to morph and adapt to new communities. The strength and variety which this adds to our culture cannot be underestimated, albeit that such transitions aren't always easy.

(continues)

Tony Marsden's *Waterfront walk 2015* captures a snapshot of the Wet Dock and environs following the massive changes which started with the building of the Bellway Homes apartments on Neptune Quay in 1999 and culminating in the establishment of the university in its new home in 2008 and the sudden curtailment of development shortly after with the global financial crash. Things are now moving again and we hope for new projects and completion of existing buildings, particularly at the St Peters Dock end. Two charcoal drawings by Valerie Irwin show that dock before the Waterfront Regeneration and the nearby St Mary-At-Quay Church during the changes.

Two related articles follow: *The Ipswich Society: planning and the built environment* by Mike Cook and *The hidden architecture of Ipswich* by John Norman. The Society engages with the existing, the proposed and the new developments via the Ipswich Borough Council planning process and by being part of the Ipswich Conservation & Design Panel. We also recognise and celebrate the rich legacy of the architectural past and its care and use today and in the future. With over 700 listed buildings in the town, we have a valuable, useful resource.

Anthony Palmer and John Norman each contribute an article on the way in which Ipswich has survived major shifts in administration and trade over the decades and celebrate the town's major contribution as a commercial centre. In these troubled times, the writers remind us of all that people contribute to the town and vice versa.

Neil Salmon, a very long-serving Editor of this *Newsletter*, revives and revises a 2004 article about the town as a cultural centre which is a revelation to those who say the 'nothing ever happens in Ipswich'. Another great supporter of The Ipswich Society, Bob Allen, rounds off the textual content of the book with a personal recollection of the organisation from his earliest recruitment by Peter Underwood, a fellow teacher at Northgate High School. This article in particular is gold dust for this Editor and the reader alike. If only we could get them youngsters out there to access it on their mobile telephones, I'm sure that they'd enjoy it.

Finally, there is a fine selection of photographs used throughout the book with the luxury of full colour on the inside and outside covers on quality stock. Your Editor is blessed with excellent contributors (not to mention the many other writers who send articles and letters in to the quarterly *Newsletter*), so this publication has proved to be very popular. Chairman John Norman did much of the 'by hand' distribution on his bicycle; he also manfully stored spare boxes of the book in his garage. Despite, or because of, his recent move of address, the remaining boxes have recently come to light. So, if you would like a free copy of *Ipswich: a town to be proud of* for yourself, a relative or friend, do get in touch with the Hon. Secretary (details on page 23) before they finally disappear.

A footnote for the pedants (sorry, grammarians and linguists): let's own up, it really should be *Ipswich: a town of which to be proud* as pointed out more than once by our Vice Chairman – well, he does have an English degree and a career as a teacher... But we decided to stick with the vernacular title in English as wot it's spoke.

This article would probably never have been written if it wasn't for the good idea of publishing an extra issue of the *Newsletter* to keep members in touch and, we hope, cheered up during the stringencies of the coronavirus crisis. Chin up, everyone. **R.G.**

Ipswich County Geodiversity sites

As Secretary of GeoSuffolk, I am responsible for Suffolk's County Geodiversity Sites and recently checked the Ipswich Local Plan for its inclusion of the three CGS within the Borough. Although not immediately obvious, Ipswich has two distinctive geological features – its sarsen stones and its springs – and GeoSuffolk has designated the best examples of these in publicly accessible spots.

Stoke Pocket Park CGS

The big stones or sarsens, found beneath our covering of sands, gravel and clay, are extremely hard sandstones of Tertiary origin (about 55 million years old). They have been much prized for their durability in this area of soft rocks. Thus, they are often found in church towers as for example St Nicholas Church and Wherstead Church. A large number were dredged from the Gipping near Stoke Bridge during work on the flood protection scheme in 1975 and soon thereafter the Pocket Park was created by the Ipswich Society*, with standing sarsens arranged by sculptor Bernard Reynolds. These are in three groups, one on Stoke Bridge and two along the river path, with a particularly fine large stone in the furthest group defaced by graffiti.



Sarsen stones; photograph from the Image Archive

Christchurch Park CGS

The rockery in the Lower Arboretum of Christchurch Park is also made from sarsen stones believed to be from the 19th century dock basin excavations. The distinctive mamillated (rounded) surfaces of many of these stones shows well here. Further areas of the Christchurch Park CGS showcase Ipswich's natural springs, so important in its early history. In the area immediately to the north of the Wilderness Pond a crag spring gives rise to a small stream, running into the pond and creating an area of water meadow. Seepages in the area between the Wilderness Pond and the Round Pond create wet footpaths and soggy grass in winter and havens for wildlife in summer. It is the unique (to the South Suffolk/North Essex coastal area) juxtaposition of permeable Red Crag on top of impermeable London Clay which gives rise to these springs with water seeping (or in wet weather pouring) out at the junction.

Holywells Park CGS

Crag springs are much in evidence in Holywells Park and play an important part in its history and natural history. The feeder spring for the landscaped ponds gushes out of Red Crag at the Nacton Road end of the park and also provides a water supply for the canal along the west border which channelled water to the Cobbold brewery nearby. On the south side of the park there are many springs and seepage areas, still mostly natural, which help to support the abundant and varied wildlife which thrives here.

Caroline Markham

(*P. Underwood (1999) The Sarsen Stones, *Ipswich Society Newsletter*, Issue 137 October 1999.)

The Main Hall (or Great Hall) at Christchurch Mansion, 1907-1908



The black and white ‘marble’ (actually limestone) pavement is said to have been brought from Italy by the Fonnereaus, former owners of Christchurch. Felix Cobbold gave the house to the town on the condition that the marble pavement and the wainscoting of the Hall be retained as far as practicable.

The old Ipswich Corporation Ducking Chair, the Town Stocks and the Globe were removed from the High Street Museum to the Mansion in about 1905. The two Glass Cases contain a loan collection from the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. They were removed from the Museum to the Mansion as space was needed at High Street with the arrival of the Rhinoceros.

In the centre of the floor, between the two showcases, is a table presented by Mr R.C. Steward, which had once stood in the hall of Thurleston Lodge. The top was made from the octagonal sounding board taken from above the pulpit of St Mary-le-Tower when the building was being restored in the eighteen-sixties. The sounding board was handed back to this, the municipal church, in 1923, where the Town Council could continue to keep an eye on it when they worshipped.

On the further wall, the large painting (64 by 84 inches) is ‘Corfe Castle’ by local artist Frederick G Cotman, presented by the artist in 1897. By the 1950s Christchurch Mansion was crammed with furniture, paintings and carvings. Pressure on accommodation was partly overcome by, in 1956, disposing of certain material, under the Ipswich Corporation Act of 1948. It included this painting, sold for £3, ‘to cut up and make into smaller pictures’.

Bob Markham

The Poplars, Henley Road



Greetings from New York City.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Diane Brown, and my grandparents, Frederick G. Laws and Evelyn Barker Laws, lived in Ipswich in a large Victorian mansion on Henley Road near Christchurch Park, probably from the 1930s to 1960s. My sister and I stayed with our grandparents there in the summers of 1954 and '55. Because the memory of that time is so vivid, I returned last year to see the house, which is now Bethesda Eventide, a nursing home.



On our visit, we were shown something I didn't know existed. In the basement of the house was an old door, and on it a large paper with a record written during World War II, when my grandfather had converted the basement into a bomb shelter for the family. My mother was 14



Frederick G. Laws



and Evelyn Laws in the gardens of The Poplars

years old at the time and her sister was 10. Each time they went to the shelter during an air raid, they wrote a line on the door with the date and any observations. For me it really brought to life the experience they had as children during the war – for example, my mother wrote that she had to miss hockey because of an air raid, and forgot her gas mask. They also noted where unexploded bombs were found, and which nearby houses had been damaged during recent raids.

The record has been partially damaged by water, but enough of it is still readable to make it very interesting. If anyone from the Ipswich Historic Society would like to go and see it, I would be very happy to donate it to the Society. My grandfather was a Director at Cocksedge and Company Ltd. I believe he helped design a ramp for landing craft at the Normandy invasion.

The house is at 59a Henley Road in Ipswich. It was called ‘The Poplars’ when my grandparents lived there. Here are some photos. Please let me know if you have any interest in the document.

Diane Brown

Chairman John Norman writes:

What an interesting story: a day-by-day, blow-by-blow account of the war, as experienced by a small child and her sister in a relatively quiet* provincial town. This type of document really belongs in Suffolk Record Office and I have written to Diane on this subject.

(*relatively quiet in comparison with other manufacturing towns. Ipswich wasn't, thank goodness, blitzed by blanket bombing – surprising, given that the engineering companies had turned a considerable proportion of their production over to the war effort.)

Letter to the Editor

Affordable homes from Colin Kreidewolf, *Chairman, Ipswich Borough Assets Ltd;*
Councillor, Westgate Ward, Ipswich Borough Council

I read with interest the article by John Norman on affordable homes [Issue 219] and have a lot of sympathy with what was being said about how permitted development rights are used in the conversion of disused office facilities without the requirement for planning permission. Where this permission is used without regard to standards is concerning.

This has been highlighted in Harlow for example where 12 office blocks have been converted into flats of a poor standard, where neighbouring Councils have sent their hard to place families because of the relatively low cost accommodation. The local MP observed that these converted office blocks used to house homeless people are ‘ghettos’ that should be ‘closed down once and for all’.

However, where I take exception is the reference to the purchase of the former BT office complex in Bibb Way by Ipswich Borough Assets where John indicates that ‘there will be no requirement for affordable homes’ as if we are trying to avoid creating affordable homes.

The purchase of the BT office centre was announced in the *Ipswich Star* on January 23 this year where it was made quite clear that the complex would be converted into 79 affordable homes and that these would be sold onto the Council’s Housing revenue account and made available to people on our Council House waiting list.

These flats and maisonettes will be converted to a high standard like the rest of the Council’s housing stock because we do not have the aim of making a profit but rather of delivering homes for the people of Ipswich. A private developer had put in an application to Building Control to convert the office complex into over 100 units whereas we are providing much more space and are only creating 79 units.

The rest of the site provides us with the opportunity to build up to an additional 60 units and we will endeavour to deliver as many of these as possible also for the Council’s housing revenue account subject to the requirements of the planning department.

A further bonus is that we are intending to build specialist accommodation for disabled people the type of which is often never delivered by private developers. Ipswich Borough Council is committed to maintaining good quality housing stock in its portfolio.

Correction

For the April issue I had merged two articles into one, and in doing so I may have created a misimpression. Ipswich Borough Assets are developing the former BT offices in Bibb Way and, in doing so, will create 79 affordable homes. These homes will be sold onto the Council’s Housing revenue account and made available to people on the Council’s housing waiting list.

Before the Bibb Way complex was purchased by IBA, a private developer had shown an interest and had developed plans to convert the building into over 100 units. The IBA conversion will create homes, each of which will be, on average, 30% bigger internally, some adapted for use by disabled residents.

I am happy to make clear that this particular development will exceed the requirements for Affordable Homes.

John Norman



—An oak table, 26ft long, made for Worksop College Nottingham

From mighty oaks . . . came Gordon Goodwin's dream

In this 21st century we are inclined to look upon reproduction furniture as very dated and certainly not *on-trend*. However, during much of the 20th century, Ipswich was one of the world's leading manufacturers of period styles. Two firms dominated; Tibbenhams and Titchmarsh & Goodwin, the former being inspiration for the latter which has endured to reach its centenary on the 20 May 2020.

In 1904 young Frederick Tibbenham began working in Tudor Place off Woodbridge Road. By 1912 he had moved to Turret Lane and Lower Brook St. He built up a strong workforce of superb craftsmen, at one point employing around six hundred. In 1941 the firm was sold to the Lipert brothers, of Easterns retail chain who later sold to others before the name finally died out.

One wonders if Frederick had been aware of the school leaver, young Gordon Owen Goodwin, employed in his drawing office. We know that in his brief time at Tibbenhams, Gordon was observant, noting the firm's construction processes and the importance of finishing and distressing. Born 7 January 1897, Gordon was the youngest of seven children living in Tacket Street; their father was an accomplished carpenter who could turn his hand to many skills. When he died in 1915 the family moved to 64 Christchurch Street. It was perhaps fortuitous for Gordon that World War I began before his career at Tibbenhams became intrinsically ingrained. Like many young men of his era, he was keen to defend his country and very soon he was in trenches on the front-line in France. He spoke later of infernal lice particularly around his collar which in quiet spells he attempted to burn off with match flames. Again, probably a lucky event – although at the time it must have been devastating – mustard gas brought him for convalescence to the Isle of Wight. He had lost sight in an eye, but still had his life.

Whilst working at Tibbenhams he had attended the Art School on a part-time basis where Rushton was head and the well-known Suffolk artist Leonard Squirrel was a fellow student. Gordon dreamt of his own furniture company but had no financial resources, however, his brother-in-law Frederick Titchmarsh, an accountant who had married one of Gordon's sisters, lived just a few doors from his home at number 72 Christchurch Street (now the Beverley Court flats). The two collaborated and on 20 May 1920 their equal partnership to be known as Titchmarsh & Goodwin was in operation in premises at the back of Roundwood (once briefly owned by Lord Nelson). The pair had taken over an existing company of joiners, Lomax and Childs retaining many of the men, then gradually some of Tibbenhams employees became attracted to the new venture.

In March 1924 Titchmarsh purchased a builder's yard almost at the top of Back Hamlet for £665 which was probably a very reasonable price as it was close to the 'Potteries' and prior to the 1935 slum clearance act was not deemed to be a very salubrious area. Now Gordon was ready for action. Initially Gordon was drawing all the designs, but as the business developed it became increasingly necessary to employ a team in the drawing office (pre-WWII there were seven).

Solely English oak was used in those early years, much of it being pit-sawn. Gordon's keen eye saw that carvings were true to period, polishing was a nutty brown and the distressing well considered. Although not making much money Gordon was employing about sixty people who were producing the period pieces he adored; he had found his niche. He married Winifred Edwards of the J.J. Edwards (outfitters) family in 1929 and they had three sons: Jeremy, Guy and Roger but sadly in 1935 just a few months after Roger's birth, Winifred died.

In 1931 the partnership between Gordon and Frederick was amicably dissolved and it was agreed that the firm should continue trading under the same name. During the economic depression of the 1930s lots of architectural woodwork was undertaken: panelled rooms, staircases, etc. Sites included Worksop College in Nottingham, Ripley Grange in Essex, Little Aston in Warwickshire and more including various public houses for Cobbold Breweries: the Margaret Catchpole, Royal George, Gainsborough, Railway and Station Hotels.

Gordon's second marriage to Gweneth Alderton in 1939 just preceded WWII then a fourth son, Peter, was born in 1942. An extensive showroom in London's Dean Street was destroyed by German bombs less than two years after its opening, but despite wartime restrictions most employees were kept busy at Back Hamlet. Veneered work was introduced to the range with walnut bedroom and dining suites. Later Brazilian and Cuban mahogany, English yew-tree and other timbers were used. Firstly Jeremy and then Peter became directors, each bringing their individual strengths. Jeremy had good business sense and was keen to put the work through in quantities – fives, tens and more of popular designs. He also found an agent in Germany and located an outlet in New York. Peter, meanwhile, found Dutch, Belgian and Canadian retailers. T&G furniture was going global with presidents, princes, celebs and many more seemingly preferring a T&G reproduction to the antique.

In 1963 a fire destroyed the workshops but fortunately most of the drawings were saved. Gordon was despondent but Jeremy insisted new premises should be built and immediately engaged architects Basil and David Hatcher. For a while the craftsmen worked in an aircraft hangar at Martlesham until completion of the new workshops and office in the autumn of 1964. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes orders flew in with delivery dates extending from weeks to months.

Later in life Gordon had a partial detachment of his good eye but he remained as observant as ever, running his hands over turning details to ensure their shape was right, getting close-up to drawings with his 'spy-glass' and often declaring them, 'Delicious!'. His love for good craftsmanship was with him to the end.

For many years T&G managed Winesham Sawmills and Peter became responsible for locating most of the standing timbers within various East Anglian estates, he also initiated a replanting scheme. In the 1990s he co-founded 'Woodland Heritage' a truly great legacy.

Prior to their deaths, Jeremy and Peter sold their father's beloved firm which since 2016 has traded under Titchmarsh & Goodwin (Ipswich) Ltd. Brown furniture and reproductions are no longer fashionable but all the old designs from Gordon's early days are still available for production, awaiting the cycle to come round again.

Heather Ling

[Due to the coronavirus the Centenary Celebration arranged for May 2020 has now been postponed until 22 May 2021 – For details contact heatherlingstaff@yahoo.co.uk]



Gordon Goodwin

Snippets



The perspicacious amongst you might have spotted, at the foot of the Society's website homepage, an Instagram link. This adds to the Society's social media profile and both platforms tend to reach out beyond the 'normal' Ipswich Society demographic. Neil Thompson who runs the Instagram account for us, writes: 'We now have over 300 followers and growing. I can't say for certain but I doubt many, if any, are Society members so, a whole new audience.'

The other positive feature is that Instagram is a very visual means of communicating and, with our extraordinary Image Archive and focus on visual material in the *Newsletter*, this clearly pays dividends when it would be easy for an organisation such as ours to rely only on its core audience, much as we love them.

Quote of the year

'Remember that viruses don't move; people move.'

Is grey the new Suffolk Pink when painting the outside of your house?

The Ipswich Society Blue Plaque scheme

I thought it might be interesting for the many new members of the Society to learn something about the workings of our Blue Plaque scheme.

The scheme was started as a Millennium project to recognise the significant contribution to Ipswich of people, from all walks of life, who were either born in the town, had moved to the town or had been regular visitors. One of our members, the late Brian Jepson, had designed and erected a blue plaque to commemorate the Dutch artist Cor Visser who had previously lived in his house in Fore Street. Using his plaque design and adopting elements of the English Heritage blue plaque scheme for London the Ipswich Society scheme was born.

Three new plaques were installed last year, bringing the total to 26. Our aim is to install two plaques per year. This is dependent on suitable candidates being put forward by Society members and the general public and any suggestions are most welcome.



To protect the integrity of the scheme our first condition is that all candidates must have passed away more than twenty years ago. It is hoped that this period will be long enough to ensure that any flaws in a candidate's character will have come to light. Proposers will then be sent a list of the information required to support their application. This includes a brief justification for the nomination; the proposed location of the plaque; confirmation that the owner and occupier of the location are prepared to have a plaque installed on their property; confirmation that any required planning permission is in place; an image of the subject and finally a suggestion on the wording of the plaque. The proposal will then receive a thorough examination and further information or clarification may be requested. Once it is in order, the proposal will be put to the Society's Executive Committee for approval.

Tony Robson

In praise of The Ipswich Institute and photography

When I finished paid employment a couple of years back I no longer had any excuse for not joining the Ipswich Institute. A good neighbour of mine had mentioned the organisation's benefits to me for a few years. Well, she was right, and I should have joined years ago! Many readers will be members of this local institution which, like the Society, is a registered charity. It was founded in 1824 with the aim of 'making knowledge available to the "artisans" of Ipswich and encouraging their general and vocational education'. It continues as an educational charity to this day and is open to all who choose to join. It has a well-stocked library, café and restaurant and provides a variety of courses covering many subjects including music, art, languages, leisure learning and organises education trips and lectures. Its two buildings are each an oasis of calm in our, usually, busy town centre.

Having joined, I met a former colleague and friend who recommended the photography courses to me. My first course was titled 'Get to know your camera'. The course tutor, Keith Locke, takes you through all the basic principles of digital photography and gets you to move away from the 'auto' function on your camera dial. Indeed, by week two you realise the word 'auto' is a forbidden word!

Course students can then move on to 'out and about' courses. These again meet weekly over the duration of a 'school term' spending alternative sessions out on location with the following week back in the classroom where the students critique each other's best photos using a screen and projector. Much is learned during these feedback sessions from the course tutor and each other. For myself, it has taught me to look at everyday views available in this great town and county of ours and try to capture something of interest. I have always owned a camera but previously used one for holiday and family snaps. I will never make a true photographer but I now have a hobby to pursue and a new group of friends with whom I enjoy that hobby. Your editor has been generous in publishing a few of my photographs. You can be the judge of my success or otherwise, I just enjoy being out in the fresh air taking them. Let's hope we can all get out in our town and county again soon.

Graham Smith



Photograph by Graham Smith

The Ipswich Society

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you would like to receive your quarterly *Newsletter* by email, please let the Hon. Secretary know. Emailing saves the Society money and cuts down on paper, printing and postage. It also reduces the risk of coronavirus spread arising from handling, transfers and posting.

Diary dates

As you will all have surmised, the roster of events planned to celebrate the Ipswich Society's 60th birthday slightly ran into the buffers during the successful 'Cornhill Cubes' exhibition. We managed to get the anniversary *Newsletter* published after the 'Stay at home' policy was introduced. However, plans were well advanced for the Field of the Cloth of Gold exhibition (which will miss its 500 years this June, but will appear later), the Annual General Meeting has been postponed, the Tutankhamun Exhibition and Finchingfield/Hadleigh outings have been cancelled and we'll hope that things have improved by the planned Garden Party in July.

Newsletter deadlines & publication dates (the latter may vary by a few days)

Deadline for material: 1 December;	Publication date: 22 January;
1 March;	2 April;
1 June;	17 July;
1 September;	9 October.



The Ipswich Society
at

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Photographs of Christchurch and Holywells Parks in springtime by Graham Smith

