



**WALKING IN IPSWICH – PART 1
(11th JANUARY 2014)**



Personal view - with no Saturday morning football at home and with a good weather forecast, I had planned a morning out in Ipswich. I had the map and the route sorted out but elected to split my visit in half and not to try and do it all in one day. I was up a bit before 5am but there was suddenly a heavy shower outside. Had the weather men got it wrong? So thanks as usual to the various websites for their history and photos, with my pictures and comments added too.

However by the time I had done a quick Co-op shop and then awaited the very late arriving 736am bus. It was a rush but I managed to buy a ticket from the machine, but I was nearly caught out by the price rise, which was taking it over five pounds with my Senior Railcard, as I had only got a £5 note ready, so hastily I had to get a £10 note out of my wallet. I suppose the one benefit of getting old is the cheaper travel. As I arrived at Manningtree station the platform was wet and the sky was cloudy but my rush to get the train, would give me an extra twenty minutes for my visit in Ipswich as I wanted to return soon after 12 as Colchester United had a match at 3pm. I start my article with information about the two train stations.



Colchester railway station

Colchester or **Colchester North** is the main railway station for Colchester in Essex, England. It is on the Great Eastern Main Line from London Liverpool Street to Norwich and is a junction for the Sunshine Coast Line to Walton-on-the-Naze and Clacton-on-Sea, which diverges southwards from the main line to the east of the station. The junction is grade-separated so trains passing to and from the Clacton line do not cross the main line. Train services are provided by Greater Anglia.

The station was opened on 29 March 1843 by the Eastern Counties Railway, and was always named simply *Colchester*. Locally, the station is known as Colchester North, to distinguish it from Colchester Town. Buses use this unofficial name. The station is not conveniently sited for the town, but buses connect to the town centre. Colchester Town is closer to the town centre. The Eastern Counties Railway had planned to build a line from London to Norwich using a very similar route to that on which the Great Eastern Main Line operates today but funding became a problem and apart from surveying a section onwards to Ardleigh they were forced to abandon any further line construction. It was three years later when the onward link to Ipswich was eventually opened by the Eastern Union Railway following intervention by business interests in Ipswich. The town having felt isolated by development of the route to Norwich via Cambridge by the Eastern Counties Railway. As passenger numbers passing through the station increased, particularly with growth on the Sunshine Coast Line the lay-out of the station became inadequate.

This problem was heightened on summer weekends when large numbers of holiday trains destined for Clacton-on-Sea were added to the schedules. The station had also been built on a fairly sharp curve which imposed speed restrictions on any non-stop trains. These problems were all then resolved by a reconstruction of the station in 1961.

After the reconstruction the station has two main platforms. The up (London bound) comprises two platforms, numbers 3 and 4, which have an unusual layout: 3 is on the up main line and is served by Norwich expresses, while 4 is on the up Sunshine Coast line, which merges with the up main where the two platforms join end-to-end. The junction is protected by a trap leading to friction buffer stops. This combined platform is the allegedly the longest in the UK at 2034 ft (620 m). There are also bay platforms at both ends of the up main platform. The London-end bay (Platform 6) is used for a small number of trains to London, or those that terminate at Colchester from London: these are mostly morning or evening peak services. Previously this platform was used for frequent services to/from Sudbury.

However most services were shortened to terminate at Marks Tey in the mid-90s. Now only a few services a day to and from Sudbury terminate and start at Colchester. The other bay platform (Platform 5) is used for services to Colchester Town and the all-stations service to Walton-on-the-Naze. The down side platform is an island with two faces, one on the down main, and one on the down Sunshine Coast line. Platform 1 is mainly used for trains to Clacton-on-Sea but occasionally used for trains to Norwich. The main ticket office is a modern glass fronted design, sited on the north side of the station, and access to the platforms is by a subway. The original station building is on the south side, and provides access to the up platform for those with tickets or wanting to buy tickets from a machine. Both entrances to the station are protected by automatic ticket gates. Former train operating company Anglia Railways ran services known as London Crosslink from Norwich to Basingstoke via Stratford. This service started in 2000 and ended in 2002.



Ipswich railway station

Ipswich railway station is a railway station serving the town of Ipswich in Suffolk, England. The station is located on the Great Eastern Main Line 68³/₄ miles (110.6 km) east of London Liverpool Street towards Norwich. Ipswich station is to the southeast of the junction between the main line and the East Suffolk Line to Lowestoft (and to Felixstowe via the Felixstowe Branch Line).

The Eastern Union Railway (EUR) opened its first terminus in Ipswich in 1846 on Station Road at the other end of the present-day tunnel close to the old quay for the Steamboats and then the aptly named 'Steamboat Tavern'. The Ipswich Steam Navigation Company had been formed in 1824/1825 during a period of 'steamship mania' and briefly offered services from the quay between Ipswich and London calling at Walton-on-the-Naze.

The current station is just to the north of Stoke tunnel which was constructed as part of the Ipswich to Ely Line which opened as far as St Edmunds in late 1846.

The station moved to its present location in 1860 and the main building was thought to be principally the work of Peter Bruff and undoubtedly Bruff had started the structure. The actual design was in the Italianate style and submitted by architect Sancton Wood (1816-1886) as part of a competition. When the new station was opened, a new road (Princes Street) linking the station to the town was also opened.

The EUR amalgamated with other railways to form the Great Eastern Railway (GER) in 1862. The island platform was added by the GER in 1883.

Ipswich engine shed [shed code 32B] opened in 1846 and was at the south end of Stoke tunnel. It was the 3rd largest shed in the Great Eastern area during the steam era after Stratford and Cambridge.

In 1923 the GER amalgamated with other railways to form the London & North Eastern Railway. In 1948 following nationalisation of the railways Ipswich station became part of British Railways Eastern Region.

In the early 1980s the railway through Ipswich was electrified and in May 1985 electric services operated by class 86 locomotives started to operate to London Liverpool Street. At this point the line from Norwich had not been electrified and for a year diesel locomotives were detached and electric locomotives attached at Ipswich (in the up direction and the reverse in the down direction). During 1985/86 the line to Norwich was electrified and through electric working commenced. The station's original lifts were removed in 1993 when the line was electrified.

Following the Privatisation of British Rail services from Ipswich Station were operated by Anglia Railways from 1997 until April 2004 after which the franchise was won by National Express East Anglia (operating under the 'one' brand until 2008).

In the five years between 2004/05 and 2008/09 patronage rose by 50% from 2 million per year to 3 million per year.

Ticket barriers were installed in the station building in May 2009 and the exit gate on Platform 2 closed permanently.

New lifts, which had been promised for many years since they were removed in about 1993 were opened on 6 June 2011. In October 2011 the Department for Transport awarded the new Greater Anglia franchise to Abellio, the services formerly operated by National Express East Anglia transferring to Greater Anglia on 5 February 2012. Abellio then became responsible for the operation of Ipswich station.

Personal view – I spent my train journey reading these notes and then awaited the bus driver to get ready his number 66 which would then take into town. My first stop off point as usual was to be to Subway of course, a short walk from the Old Cattle Market bus station.



Personal view – on the way into Ipswich, it was the glass building, that use to be occupied by the insurance firm Willis, Faber Dumas.



The **Willis building** in Ipswich, England (originally the **Willis Faber and Dumas Headquarters**) is one of the earliest buildings designed by Norman Foster after establishing Foster Associates. Constructed between 1970 and 1975 for the insurance firm now known as Willis Group Holdings, it is now seen as a landmark in the development of the 'high tech' architectural style. The building houses some 1,300 office staff in open plan offices spread over three floors.



Aerial view showing its roof garden

The bulbous floor plan of the office block reflects the layout of the available site in the centre of Ipswich, which is sandwiched between several road junctions and the Grade I listed Unitarian Meeting House, one of Ipswich's oldest surviving buildings. Thus two of the town's Grade I listed buildings stand side by side.

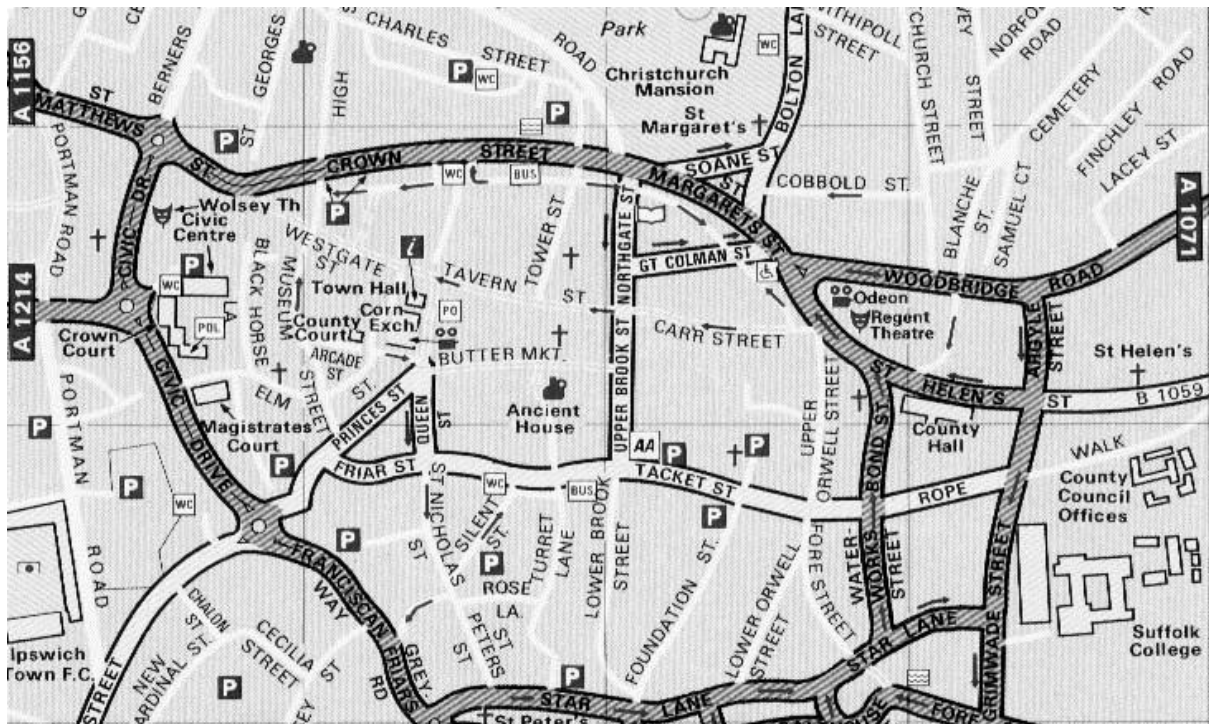
The centre of the building is constructed from a grid of concrete pillars, 14 m (46 ft) apart, supporting cantilevered concrete slab floors. The exterior is clad in a dark smoked glass curtain wall. The use of dark glass, a curtain wall and lack of right angle corners mirrors the art deco Express Building in Manchester - one of Norman Foster's favourite buildings. The central escalator well leads up to a rooftop staff restaurant surrounded by a rooftop garden (360 panorama).

Originally there was also a swimming pool for employees to enjoy during their lunch break. This has now been covered up (not filled in due to it being a listed building) and the space is used for more offices. The swimming pool can be seen underneath the false floor. In 1991 the Willis building became the youngest building to be given Grade I listed building status in Britain. At the time it was one of only two listed buildings under 30 years of age.



Carr Street Subway

Personal view - having eaten my sausage sub, I now waited for my coffee to cool a bit, before going outside again having already seen enroute a few possible churches to check out. After a quick nip into Yippee 99p shop, and then it was a cut through a car park for the first church spotted.





(Y) Christchurch URC, Tacket Street

They are an inter-denominational fellowship which comprises Tacket Street United Reformed Church (formerly Congregational) founded in 1686 and Turret Green Baptist Church founded in 1842. The first service of the two churches worshipping together as Christ Church took place in March 1978. In 1686 a few Christians united and hired a building which stood in Green Yard in the Parish of St Peter; these Independents who had previously worshipped with a group of Presbyterians broke away and they formed the nucleus of the church later to become Tacket Street Congregational Church. The first minister was Rev John Langston. His portrait hangs in the Langston Hall adjoining the present church.

Land for a new Meeting House was purchased in Tankard Street (now Tacket Street) in 1718. The new Meeting House opened in 1720 seating 800 people. Rev William Gordon (later Rev Dr Gordon) came in 1754 as assistant minister to Rev William Notcutt and later succeeded him as sole pastor. Later on he went to America espousing the cause of the Americans in the War of Independence and the British Government placed a price on his head. He was allowed to return to England after the signing of the peace and later resettled in Ipswich. He died in 1807 and is buried in the graveyard at Christ Church.

In 1801 the first Sunday School in Ipswich was established at the Tacket Street Meeting House. In 1795, the year that the London Missionary Society was founded, a member of Tacket Street, Daniel Bowell, went overseas; he was killed by natives in 1799. The LMS is now part of the Council for World Mission.

The last services were held in the Meeting House in April 1857. The pulpit was transferred to the present Christ Church building, which was completed in eight months and opened in January 1858. It was built in the grand Gothic Revival style and designed by Ipswich architect Frederick Barnes, and seats 1,150 people. It is built of Kentish Rag with Caen stone quoins.

Originally two spires topped the turrets flanking the main entrance, but they were removed in the 1960's when they were considered to be unsafe. A feature of the building is the large rose window over the main entrance, its delicate tracery filled with coloured glass. The large organ is one of the finest in the Ipswich area.

The later Turret Green Baptist Chapel building opened in 1893 (now demolished) in Silent Street, was a very large brick building consisting of nave, chancel and transepts resembling a building of the established church. This had in turn superseded the Chapel built in 1842; the latter was retained as the Church Hall until recently. It still stands today situated in Turret Lane.

Turret Green Court Sheltered Housing and Serenus Court, an Abbeyfield Residential Care House now occupy the site of the former Turret Green Church.



St Pancras Catholic, 1 Orwell Place, Near Falcon Street

Ancient Ipswich dates back to the Iron Age and has developed into an important industrial, commercial, shopping and tourist centre. It has a long history with twelve Churches mentioned in the Domesday Book. Later it had at least five Pories and became a place of Pilgrimage to the famous Shrine of Our Lady of Grace. This stood in what is still called Lady Lane.

The first Catholic Church in Ipswich was opened in 1827 on the outskirts of the town. It was soon recognised that there was a need for a central place of worship and the Church of St. Pancras was built in 1861. Somewhat plain on the outside, it had an interior that is an outstanding example of Victorian Gothic Architecture. The arches of the Nave and Sanctuary have alternate courses of red and white brick, in what is known as the Venetian Style. Behind the Altar and above the Reredos, five large statues depict Our Lord and the four Evangelists.

The statue of the Blessed Virgin, in the small Lady Chapel, is over an ornamental marble Altar. This has floral carving symbolic of the title of the Queen of Heaven: the rose, lily of the valley and the marguerite. The Tabernacle is rotary and available for both the High Altar and the Chapel. The Organ, which was built in 1891 and has two manuals, stands in the recently almost rebuilt Choir Gallery which, with the Organ, was badly damaged in a disastrous fire in 1985. Beneath the Gallery will be found the Caen stone Font, the round bowl of which is a sculptured band of water lilies and four bosses of crystal spar, and the parish War Memorial of marble.

The church also contains the Shrine of Our Lady of Poland, a souvenir of the stay in the town of the Polish Free Army during the second World War, which is cared for by the local Polish community. In the Parish garden is a statue of Our Lady of Grace. To mark the millennium, a new west window was commissioned.

Personal view – There was a nice looking Crucifixion that was in front at St Pancras and the shots below was a look back at the churches towards the Buttermarket, which was where I was next off to, and then it was a cut an alleyway and towards a church which was now doubling up as the Ipswich Tourist, which saw me managing to go into there.





St Stephen's Church, St Stephen's Lane

Like all medieval towns, Ipswich entered the last few decades of the 20th century with a surfeit of Anglican churches. This is partly the fault of the Victorians it must be said, who rather overstretched the Church of England with the building of massive new churches in the suburbs, and the enthusiastic restoration of the medieval ones. Unfortunately, their work began to wear out at pretty much the same time as the congregations began to melt away, and in any case Ipswich had been less successful than most towns at encouraging people to live in the town centre.

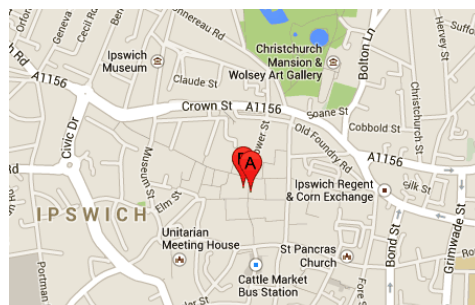
By the 1970s, the population of this parish was probably in single figures. When St Stephen's church was declared redundant in 1975, it was lost in a sea of rundown shops, overlooked by a redundant factory. It wasn't a pretty sight. The author of the article first visited it in 1987, when it was being used for performances of TS Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. It was ideal for this - high, dark, shabby. When the area became the location for the new Buttermarket Shopping Centre, various plans were made to include St Stephen in the complex.

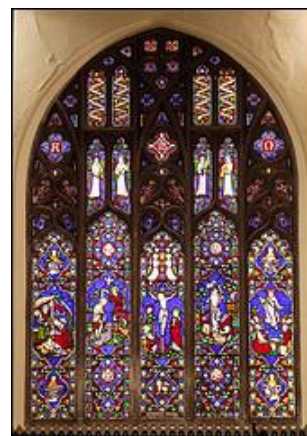
All the buildings around it were quickly demolished. And then, the recession set in, and St Stephen stood high and dry for several years, looking rather more prominent than it probably wished to be. The church suffered heavily from vandalism in the early nineties, and several of the great tomb chests in the churchyard were disrupted. But in 1994, St Stephen became the new Tourist Information Centre for Ipswich. It was thoroughly restored inside, its former shabbiness cloaked in brilliant white. All the fixtures and fittings were sensitively showcased, and you still enter the fine west doorway with its flanking niches and [stoup](#), past the [font](#).

The fine 16th century roof has been cleaned, the monuments stand out splendidly from the whitewash, and the holy end has been sensitively preserved as an exhibition space, and was for a while still used by the parish of St Mary le Tower on St Stephen's Day each year.

From the outside, the extent to which the church was restored in 1866 and again in 1881 is clear, although it must be said that the brick makes it rather distinguished at this distance, echoing the red-brick tower of [St Mary Elms](#). Internally, this is the most interesting of the six town centre redundant medieval churches. It is one of only two of them to have found a new use, in this case the local council. Ironically, it was Ipswich Borough Council who took possession of the redundant churches from the diocese in the first place.

Personal view – one thing of interest for sale were fridge magnet, heraldic crests of people's surname, but neither of the ones I wanted.





St Lawrence Centre, Dial Lane



Dial Lane

On the ninth of September 2009, the bells of St Lawrence were returned to their tower for the first time in a quarter of a century. The bells rang out over the rooftops of Ipswich, and there were emotional scenes, because these five bells, all cast in the 1440s, are the oldest circle of five bells in the whole world.

Anyone visiting St Lawrence church today, particularly if they are a visitor to Ipswich, may not realise quite what an extraordinary journey this church has been on over the last 130 years, and particularly in the last couple of decades. For this, above all others, is the Ipswich church which was nearly lost to them, but which has come back from the dead.

In 1846, Thomas Dugdale's *County Views* series showed Dial Lane in Ipswich (*above*) lined with old shops, some of which survive today. Above them towers a fine 15th century tower, its windows outlined in brick, curious little 18th century urns topping the corners of what is otherwise a typical Suffolk church tower.

In 1882, the London firm of Barnes and Gaye were commissioned to rebuild the upper part of the tower of St Lawrence's church. They produced one of the most extraordinary confections to grace any Suffolk church, more noticeably so because of the rarity of Victorian towers in Ipswich in particular and Suffolk in general. Angels, flowers and mystical symbols interleave amongst geometric flint work designs.

Since the tower was cleaned in 1996, the variety of materials used has become apparent, from brilliant whites and soft pinks to the yellow of the stonework and iron grey of the flint. St Lawrence has a more enclosed site than any other Ipswich church, perhaps more so than any other church in Suffolk, and, as a consequence, this wonderful tower constantly disappears and reappears from behind buildings as you walk around Ipswich town centre. Each side of the tower is different; each view and each perspective have something new to offer.

This is not just an important part of the townscape, but has become a symbol of Ipswich itself. At the base of the tower, the west door opens into Dial Lane, an intimate access familiar from City of London churches. The base of the tower also contains north and south doorways, a processional archway beneath the tower exactly like that at the town church of Diss St Mary in Norfolk.

Through these arches the blessed sacrament would have been carried in state on its journey through the medieval town; you can see something similar in Suffolk at Combs and Stanton St John. To stand outside the west door of St Lawrence is to get the beginning of a sense of the meaning and role of churches such as this in times past. Uniquely, the Victorian restorers left the church with no central aisle, in an attempt to defeat the introduction of High Church practices.

However, beautiful towers and aisle less naves are then not enough to attract parishioners. By the early 1970s, there was no one left living in the parish, which was a severely small one, sandwiched between St Stephen and St Mary le Tower, and no more than 20m across in places. St Lawrence was closed, declared redundant, and, once the Diocese had washed their hands of it, entrusted by Ipswich Borough Council to the care of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, with no doubts that a new use could easily be found for such a central, beautiful and useful landmark building.

But his did not happen, and St Lawrence was soon in big trouble. By 1995, the floor had become so unsafe that it was not possible to walk across it. By the time the author of this article, visited it in 1998, the side floors had been removed, and the inside (apart from the sanctuary) was now little more than a shell. On a visit in 1999, the church floor was littered with rubble, and was being used to store furniture and garden ornaments. Parts of the bell frame and bell wheels, which had once supported a completely pre-Reformation ring of five bells, were stacked against the college-style pews along the walls. Above, the Victorian stenciling was still readable: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ... You can see the photographs he took on that occasion. Thereafter, it became much too dangerous for public access, and the building was closed permanently.

Many plans were put forward for the use of this building. But it had no electricity, no running water, and the costs involved for any non-commercial organisation would be prohibitive. IHCT hoped that a use could be found which would preserve the integrity of the building, as has happened at St Stephen 80m away. But by the time St Lawrence had been shut up for more than a quarter of a century, the effects of neglect and decay were overwhelming.

In the Spring of 2000, planning permission was obtained to convert this building into a pub and restaurant. This was about the time he first wrote an account of the church, and he observed then that, despite the long years of neglect, the liturgical integrity of this building would not be saved. I noted that it was not hard to judge that the Churches Conservation Trust might have been a better custodian. St Lawrence could have been kept permanently open, a place for private prayer and a refuge from the busy shopping streets. And at least it would still have a floor.

Shortly after this, in December 2001, he received a letter from John Blatchly, of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust. He wrote that *The developer interested in St Lawrence has withdrawn his original planning application prior to submitting another. They have agreed to extend the period during which we give him priority over other interested parties. The mural memorial there to James Thorndike, several times bailiff of the town in the early nineteenth century, fell from the wall and smashed into many fragments when its fixings perished. Its repair will be expensive, drawing their attention to the need to check the secure mounting of all the monuments in their churches. It will shortly be back in position, and he has found Thorndike's portrait which he shall offer with a press release. This is the real problem church. Town centre, but difficult to service and no parking very close at hand. If this developer, who would be prepared to spend a great deal on the fabric, does clinch a deal, the building will be infinitely improved in condition and given a useful future. The use must be carefully chosen, but it will have to be fully commercial.*

He wondered at the time how turning a church into a pub/restaurant constituted a change of use which was *carefully chosen*. And, as you may imagine, nothing eventually came of the application and the developer, the JD Wetherspoon chain, withdrew completely, not least because of the seven figure sum which would have been necessary to restore the interior to use. The *other interested parties* that John Blatchly mentioned also seemed to vanish into thin air, and the church continued to decay in the years after.

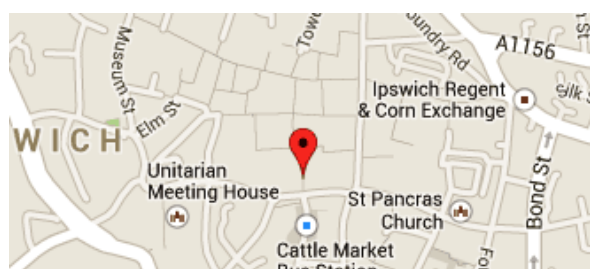
Without wishing to appear smug, and realising that hindsight has powerful eyes, he must recall that at the time of the 2004 entry for this church on the Suffolk Churches website, he mused that there was no reason why the use had to be *fully commercial*. Britain is a rich country, he wrote, much richer than it had been in the 1970s when St Lawrence was declared redundant. And Ipswich was a thriving town. This church's tower is a landmark, and it was hardly to the credit of the Borough of Ipswich, who took possession when the Diocese declared it redundant, to have a derelict landmark at its heart.

Light-heartedly, he suggested that perhaps they should take it back from the Historic Churches Trust, bang a few pennies on the council tax, and do something useful with it.

Rather extraordinarily, this is exactly what has happened. In 2006, it was announced that the Borough Council and Suffolk County Council were then to help develop St Lawrence as a community resource - not a *fully commercial* use after all. Involved parties included Age Concern, who had previously had a café in the Town Hall, and the project was co-ordinated by Whitehouse Enterprises, an Ipswich-based 'progressive social enterprise' which enables adults with disabilities to find work. Their two main activities are catering and furniture production, both of which have contributed to the reinvention of this church as the St Lawrence Centre, effectively a community restaurant and gallery. It was opened to the public in July 2008.

The fabulous cost of 1.2 million pounds for the restoration came entirely from the public purse. £400,000 was provided by the council tax payers of Ipswich, the rest coming from central government. In the end, it would not have been possible for a commercial organisation to justify these costs, and so it was that the Borough *did* do something useful on it, although the cost to council tax payers was more like £10 per household rather than the 'few pennies' I had suggested.

Whatever you think about that, there is no question that this is a very happy outcome for the building itself. Since there are no internal partitions, the liturgical integrity has been broadly retained, with kitchens and serving area in the chancel and the nave full of tables and chairs. All the memorials, glass and stenciling have been restored and are still in situ. As at St Stephen a few yards away, you still walk in through the west door past the font. The lights in great circles above and the light wooden floor below create the feel of a space that is at once modern, and yet mindful of its past. The overall effect is splendid. This means that, for the first time in the quarter of a century since most of them were declared redundant, all of Ipswich's six town centre churches are now being used again - although, of course, none of them is in any sense commercial. And what does that matter, as you stand and listen to those wonderful bells?



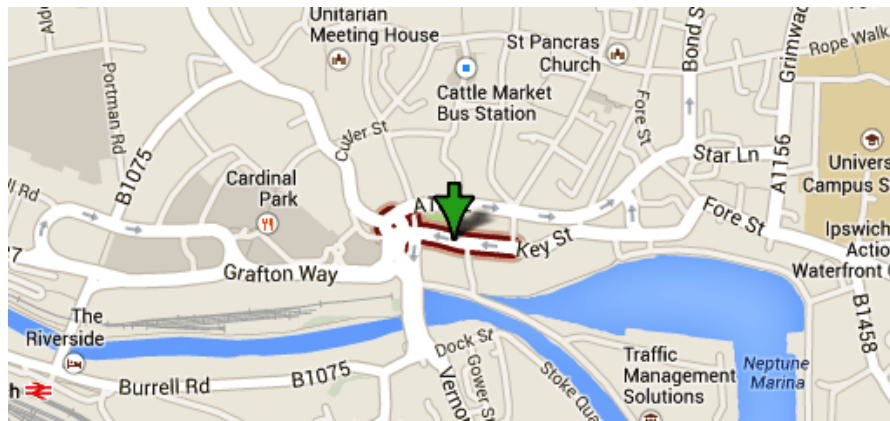


Buttermarket

Personal view - No history could be found about the Buttermarket, but it was an area that I can recall visiting when I use to go Christmas shopping to the town with my parents several years ago. As I looked for a missing building on my eventual list, I then found one that I was not too actually was there, an admin office for the Suffolk Diocese. .



Church of England in Suffolk, St Nicholas, Cutler Street





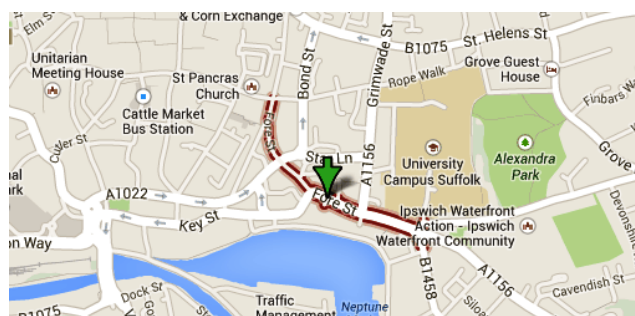
St Peter's by the Waterfront, College Street

A 12th Century Church, St Peter's by the Waterfront is a heritage centre featuring the history of Ipswich's past. Once the chapel of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey's proposed college the centre houses a number of artefacts, including a rare Tournai marble font and the more recent Ipswich Millennium Charter Hangings. The heritage centre is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 3.30pm between May and September, and Wednesdays only during the winter months.

St Peter's is also a venue for music and the arts, and regularly features performances from groups from Ipswich and beyond. The centre is home to the Ipswich Hospital Band, Suffolk School of Samba and Ipswich Youth Steel Band who rehearse weekly.

St Peter's also offers conferencing, meeting and exhibition facilities at very competitive rates so contact us to find out how we can cater for your needs.

Personal view – From there, I could see a church in the distance, but have not at present worked out where it was, it is featured below. Then it was to a very desolate area of old ruined buildings.





Derelict quayside area





St Mary's at the Quay, Foundation Street

This Medieval church lies next to Ipswich's regenerated quayside. It was built, or perhaps rebuilt, between 1450 and 1550. Elegant Perpendicular windows bathe the interior – and its handsome arcades – with light. The wonderful Medieval double hammer beam roof in the nave (one of the earliest of its type) has carved figures of apostles, other worthies and less formal images in the spandrels. There is also a handsome octagonal 15th-century font. They are fundraising to create a Wellbeing Heritage Centre at the church.

St Mary's was built between about 1450 and 1550, possibly on the site of an earlier church, in the dockland area of the town, the centre of the merchant community. It was one of twelve medieval churches in Ipswich, and one of three mariners' churches. At this time it was probably known as Stella Maris (Our Lady, Star of the Sea). During the 18th century the focus of economic activity moved away from the dockland area, and the size of the congregation declined.

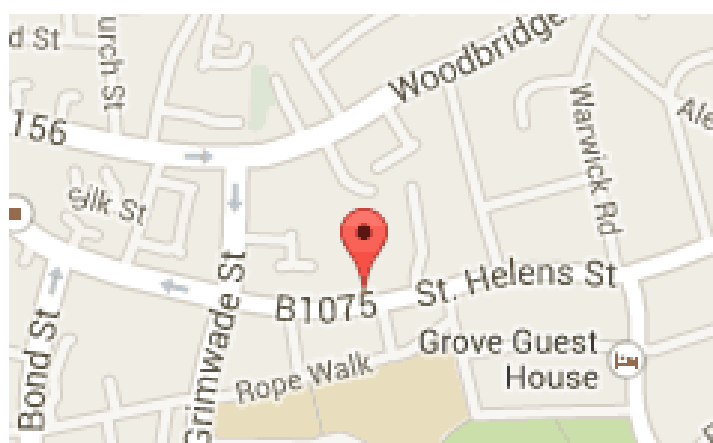
Over the years, flooding of the church has caused structural problems and, in an attempt to prevent this, the vaults were filled with concrete during the 19th century. In 1940–42 during the Second World War, the church was damaged by bombs, and most of the stained glass was lost.

After the war the church closed for worship. In the 1990s repairs to it were organised by the Friends of Friendless Churches, and it was then used as the headquarters of Ipswich's Boys' Brigade. When they left the church, it closed again, and was vested in the Churches Conservation Trust in 1973. By this time most of the furnishings and contents had been removed.

The Trust has organised structural repairs to the church, in particular to deal with the flooding, as the salt water was causing decay of the columns of the arcades. During the 2000s the church was a venue for conceptual art exhibitions and performances. For a time it was home to an arts organisation known as Key Arts. As of 2010 there are plans for the church to be converted into a mental health wellbeing centre, run by Suffolk Mind, assisted by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Personal view – after seeing the building above which may be the ruins of the original St Helen's, on the corner of Bond Street and St Helen's Street, there was an interesting building of note, but not too sure what it was. As I walked down the road, the newer version of St Helen's came into view.





St Helen's, St Helens Street

St. Helen's was to be one of the ancient churches of Ipswich to be built outside the mediaeval town walls, and so it was situated in what was one of the suburbs, serving the people who lived around the road to Woodbridge. Very little remains of the mediaeval church, but from what few pictures and documentary evidence exist, it is possible to get some idea of what the building was like before it was altered so drastically in the 1800"s. It was a small and humble structure, which had few of the airs and graces of the more magnificent Ipswich churches, but yet was a building of considerable interest, character and antiquity.



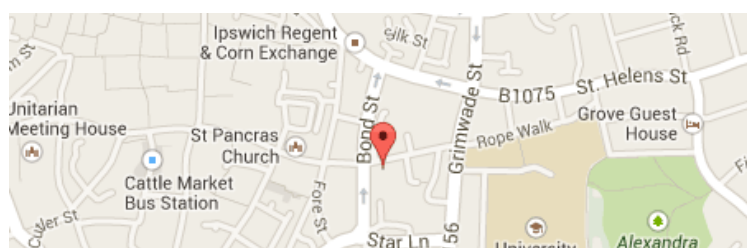
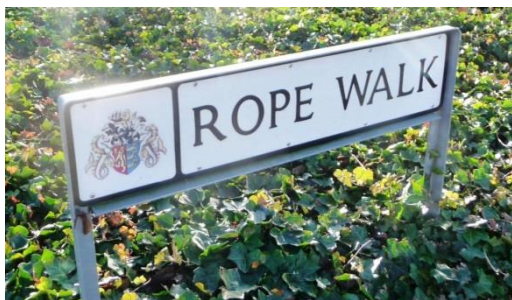
(G) Zoar Baptist, St Helen's Street

The first Zoar Chapel, Ipswich opened for worship in David Street (now demolished) on the 7th January 1842. The present chapel situated in St. Helen's Street was opened for worship on Wednesday 18th March 1925. The first minister of Zoar Chapel was Pastor J. B. Bateman who was called to the pastorate on June 19th 1842.

He was followed by Pastors W. Felton (1855-59), J Wilkins (1862-66), S. Willis (1867-70), J Morling (1872-79), S Cozens (1882 - 1887), R C Bardens (1891-1907), P Reynolds (1912-34), J S Smith (1941-58), R G Martin (1960-65), E D Eldridge (1968-82), R J Howells (1984-89) and P F Hughes (1991-2005). Church officers include Dr Graham Eldridge (Elder and Church Treasurer) and Mr John Woodcock (Elder and Church & Mission Secretary) and Mr Peter Cornish, as Deacon. We are thankful to God for our Pastor, James Paton, formerly Elder at Surrey Chapel, Botolph Street, Norwich and who was inducted as our Pastor on 11th September 2010.

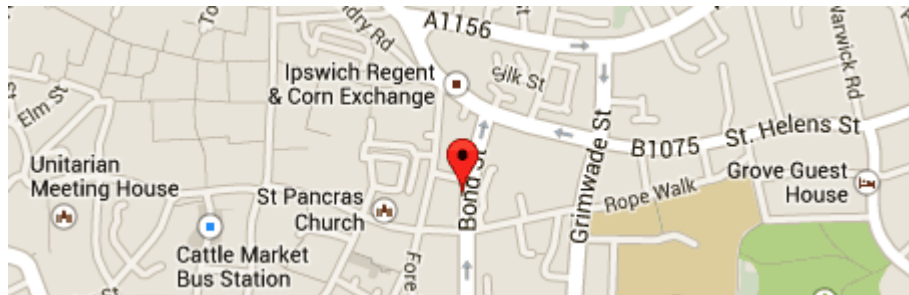
There were delighted that the Lord brought along a soul mate for our Pastor James who married Joanna Fisher in July 2013.

Personal view – as I went down Rope Walk, it was more viewings of St Helens above the skyline and at the end of one road.





Seventh Day Adventist, Rope Walk



Mosque, Bond Street

The growth of the Muslim community during the 1970's and 1980's resulted in the urgent need for a permanent place of worship. So in 1984, the local Muslim community raised the funds to purchase this property from Ipswich Borough Council.

This building, which once served as a Victorian Fire Station, could only accommodate 70 people. Hence, in 1994, they purchased a Portacabin to increase capacity, but before long it began to overflow on Fridays and during Ramadan and Eid.

Ipswich Mosque ran a long fundraising successful campaign to acquire adjoining Building in 2006. The new Ipswich Mosque opened in 13th May 2009, adding over 45

Their vision is to provide a range of holistic, culturally sensitive services for the communities of Ipswich and Suffolk, drawing on their Islamic values and heritage, with a view to improving quality of life.



St Clements, Fore Street (above and below)



St Clement, Fore Street

St Clement has the finest setting of all the dockland churches, despite the inner ring road that passes within ten metres of its north side. It was built over the part of the graveyard that adjoined the ironworks, which still survives across the road. Seen from this road, the handsome church is stately among its great trees. The clutter of small buildings that have surrounded it for hundreds of years have been cleared away, opening up a fine view from the west.

Until the 1960s, the graveyard was almost completely enclosed, accessible only by the footpath that still survives from Grimwade Street beside the former parish hall. Approached along this path, the unfolding pastoral vista curiously belies the urban context. The church itself is a fine example of fairly early perpendicular church-building, with a grand tower and as magnificent a clerestory as any Ipswich church. Even the Victorian chancel fits well, and all in all this is a church worth seeing.

For a long time, the view from the outside was all you were able to see. The church was declared redundant in the early 1970s, and has been closed ever since. In the 1980s, it was the victim of a great deal of vandalism because of its position, relatively isolated from mainstream town life.

The sheltered south side of the churchyard in particular became littered with the kind of things that you wouldn't want your children to pick up. The church itself became a prop-store for the Wolsey Theatre, and it was surreal indeed to walk among the fibre-glass cannons, cardboard grandfather clocks and Scottish warrior outfits that were stacked high in the nave and aisles. The church was left pretty much as it was on the day it closed, as if the churchwardens had put away the hymn books and slipped out after that final Evensong. However, in 1996 a disastrous fire swept through St Clement, completely destroying the 1880s roof. This has been rebuilt since; and, combined with a clear-up for the churchyard came landscaping and a memorial to the famous mariner son of the parish, the explorer Thomas Eldred.

Suffolk College took on the lease on the building, but gave notice in 2001 that they would not be renewing it. John Blatchly, of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, told me at the time that there was a potential community user interested in taking it on in the future, but I thought it unlikely that this would happen; visiting at the time I found this big church disarmingly bare, with a slight air of dereliction.

In fact, the former congregation here kept a weather eye on it, still opening it up on Historic Churches bike ride day, which was more than can be said for the other redundant Ipswich churches. The redecoration and rebuilding of the roof after the fire had made it sound, and it was obvious that it wouldn't be too difficult to convert the building for an appropriate use - as a concert space, perhaps, or even for one of the new evangelical churches. The author wondered if even the Catholic Church might take a look, since they don't possess a large worship space among their five Ipswich churches, which are often overcrowded.

Coming back here in 2005, he was pleased to discover that the interior has been really spruced up. The royal arms, which fortunately survived the fire, are probably the best example of Ipswich's familiar Charles II sets - these are different to the others in that they are carved and gilded rather than being painted on boards or canvas. The font, reset by the Victorians in the westward extension of the south aisle, is a typical East Anglian rural 15th century font, with angels on the bowl and lions and wild men around the stem, giving a rustic air to this corner.

There is some good modern glass; the post-war east window, credited by Roy Tricker to Abbott & co, shows the risen Christ, while elsewhere there is an exceptionally good Presentation of Christ in the Temple. I wonder who it is by?

All this was threatened while the church was vulnerable, but today it is cared for again. How has this happened?



All too easily, this church could have been lost to dereliction and vandalism. As it was, St Clement stood still while Ipswich changed around it. The 1960s demolition of virtually all of the housing in the parish that had led to its redundancy is now being redressed by the massive Waterfront regeneration, the almost complete rebuilding of Ipswich's wet dock area. St Clement now has many new neighbours, and most of them are residential.

Similarly, the Diocese has moved away from its 1970 policy of redundancy, and has gone into the business of creating benefices, groupings of parishes that share ministers and resources. Back in the 1830s, Holy Trinity a few hundred metres to the east had been built as a chapel of ease to St Clement. This, in turn, had seeded St Luke. Like St Clement, Holy Trinity had lost almost all of its parish population, but instead of being declared redundant it was grouped into a benefice with St Luke. St Helen has recently joined them, and, wonderfully, the benefice appears to have taken St Clement under its wing again.

The church remains redundant, and it is not used for regular worship, but the benefice has used it for events, and the nave is now full of seating, which any Ipswich resident will recognise as the chairs formerly in the Corn Exchange. It is clear that this fine, sound building has a role to play. Perhaps it will not be a religious one, but St Clement is perfectly suited to the kind of performance and arts events that its new neighbours might attract. This would, perhaps, be a community function in keeping with the proclaimed mission of the Diocese. Whatever, it would be a great shame if this church was reused for wholly commercial purposes. Until then, St Clement sits and waits, as patiently as it has done for the last thirty years, but with more hope.





Holy Trinity, Black Hamlet

Holy Trinity Church in Ipswich (by the Waterfront/Docks in Ipswich), is a traditional evangelical church which is very welcoming and friendly Ipswich Waterfront Church and has a traditional feel to it. A range of services is offered within a manageable sized congregation where you can get to know people and be known. They aim to be a congregation that practice faith that is relevant today, based on the Bible, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

This historic Ipswich Church is located near the Ipswich Waterfront and is open each week day for visitors and quiet prayer between 10am-2pm and many residents, people who work on the Ipswich Quayside / Waterfront/ Docks and visitors to the area come along and visit. The East Window (tribute to the Great War) - really needs to be seen in person!





Hope, Fore Hamlet

At Hope Church Ipswich they're a group of ordinary people of various ages and from many different backgrounds, whose lives have been changed by meeting Jesus Christ. Their relationship with Jesus leads them to get together to spend time with God and with each other, and to reach out to people around us. They meet together on Sunday mornings and in Small Groups during the week. They also run a wide range of activities for the church and the local community; Toddler groups, children and youth clubs, 18–30s groups, over 60s club and training courses. They work with Newfrontiers (a family of churches around the world). They work with other churches in Ipswich under Heart 4 Ipswich.

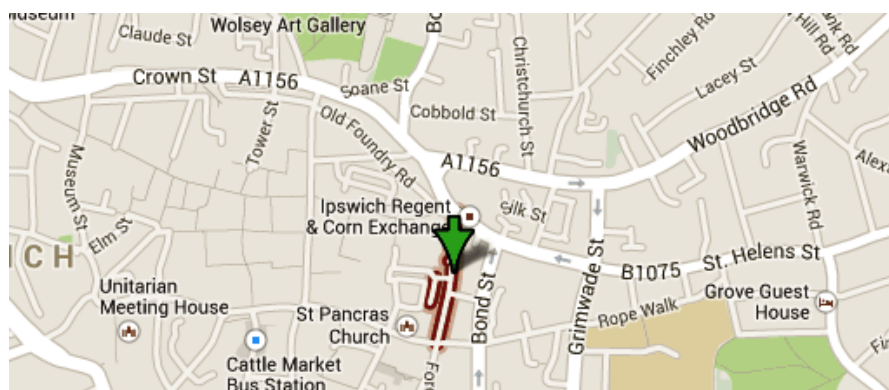


Buildings at the Black Hamlet Road junction





Neptune Marina





St Michael's, Upper Orwell Street

For more than 120 years, St Michael's church has been an Ipswich landmark after being built in the Victoria era. It was constructed in the 1880's, the red-brick church feature a vast east facing window and Regency-style windows throughout. It has large wooden doors which open almost directly on to Upper Orwell Street. It was built for an expanding congregation but in the post second War years attendances declined. The church was closed more than a decade ago and had since fallen into disrepair but was then bought by the local branch of Muslim organisation JIMAS. The charity bought the church and its hall last year and was planning a conversion and restoration costing hundreds of thousands and pounds. It was proposed to convert the building and make it into a community centre, not a mosque, that would serve and be open to the whole town.

However in March 2011 there were fears last night that an historic Ipswich town centre church hit by a devastating fire might collapse. it was badly hit by the blaze at St Michael's Church in Upper Orwell Street was reported at just before 9.50pm and due to the severity of the flames ten fire crews were soon on the scene. A safety cordon was put in place around the building as the roof was consumed by fire and neighbouring properties were evacuated. At its height, the blaze was being fought by 70 firefighters. The worst of the flames were out by 11.30pm but smoke continued to billow through the church windows well into the night. Upper Orwell Street is near the Regent Theatre, which hosted an evening showing of Spamalot last night. The audience came out of the show shortly before 10pm to be greeted by the dramatic scene but their journey home was not hampered by the firefighting operation.

Staff from fast food shops including Fresh Kebabs, in Upper Orwell Street, were ordered to close the shop by the police as part of the safety cordon and evacuation process. Police closed Upper Orwell Street from its Tacket Street junction to where it joins St Helen's Street. Fire crews from Princes Street and Colchester Road stations in Ipswich, Woodbridge, Holbrook, Felixstowe, Needham Market, Colchester and Hadleigh Fire Stations were all sent to the scene. A turntable unit, aerial ladder platform and a command support vehicle were also involved.

Mark Sanderson, assistant chief fire officer, said the fire quickly spread throughout the entire structure. “Parts of the roof have been collapsing and there was debris coming off the roof including tiles which fell inside the building,” he said. The church is a listed building and was built in the 1880s but has stood empty for more than a decade. It was bought last year by a Muslim charity which had plans to turn it into a community centre. Last night the head of JIMAS Ipswich was at the scene but was unavailable for comment.



Unitarians, Friars Street

The congregational was founded some time after the 1662 Act of Uniformity had excluded from the Church of England those clergy who would not conform, hence the name “Non conformists” – to its provisions. In 1672 this Non conformist or Dissenting congregation of combined Presbyterians and Independents.



Princes Street river bridge



Manningtree bay and rail station



Personal view – as I concluded my tale, It was 1215 and I am now on train back to Colchester as they say *tempus fugit* or translated time flies. After three hours walking my legs need a rest but there is a match to go to at the stadium. Much of what I planned was achieved but probably not in the correct order. Some were missed as I went off route at the end but maybe next time, with no rush to get back.

I will fill the missing ones in which were the Ark Gospel somewhere near the bus station, St Mary.le.Tower, Proclaimers and the one at Stoke but some added the one opposite the Tourist Board, St Clemens and The Unitarian on walk to the station.

Finally I was back where it all started and I was off to the football at the Western Homes Community Stadium to see the U's beat Gillingham 3-0 with goals by Sanchez Watt, Clinton Morrison and Marcus Bean

