

Crossings,
Constable &
Conservation



Newsletter
Spring 2022



The Friends
of the Ipswich
Museums

We Look Forward to
Promote the Past

Chair's Message

by Richard Wilson

We warmly welcome Nicki Porter to the role of Newsletter editor, and already we are benefitting from her artistic eye and creative mind. We hope you like the new layout, which is now in full colour. At this time of year colour is also returning to Suffolk's fields and hedgerows, the landscape that John Constable and his contemporaries knew so well and celebrated in artworks now adorning the walls of the Mansion's

Wolsey Art Gallery (see page 4 for a report on curator Emma Roodhouse's wonderful recent talk to the Friends). Do be sure to catch the stunning loans from the V&A before they head away later this month.

Nicki's choice for 'My Favourite Thing' on page 10 is likewise full of colour, and perhaps also laden with meaning that we might find hard to appreciate today. The

Contents

Creating Constable book signing	4
Events	6
Ipswich Art Society Exhibition.....	8
My Favourite Thing	10
The Lampedusa Cross	12
Restoring a Lost Masterpiece	13
Ipswich Museums Report	14
Conservation Corner	16
Goodbox	20
Bridget Lapsley	21
New Members	22
How to Pay Us	23

Front Cover: The Lampedusa Cross. © The Trustees of the British Museum

meaning of the Lampedusa Cross on display at the Art Gallery in the exhibition *Crossings: Community and Refuge* until 12 June (page 12) is perhaps not so hard to decipher, but it challenges us in ways that probably won't be agreeable or reassuring. Banksy has written that "Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable" – this exhibition does that while remaining essential viewing.



Alongside the magnificent painting by Julia Heseltine featured in our last newsletter are two other works (also purchased by the Friends for the collection) in charcoal and wash. Featured here is *Evening at Looms*

Lockdowns and Covid restrictions have not prevented us from supporting the museums with a number of important acquisitions (see below for just one example), and we hope that we can discuss these with you in more detail at our AGM on 25 May (see page 6 for details). For those still perhaps a little reluctant to congregate indoors, our al fresco Summer Party in June should be just the thing. Cheers!



William Crotch *Landscape with Mill and Figures*, 1835, restored by Carrie Calver and Bob Entwistle. (see page 4)

Emma Roodhouse's *Creating Constable* book signing

Perhaps a better title for this hugely enjoyable evening might have been “Creating *Creating Constable*”! For Emma Roodhouse gave us a wonderful behind the scenes look at how she managed to produce not only an absorbing exhibition (do be sure to visit before the V&A loans leave us on 24 April), but also an absolutely brilliant book whilst simultaneously balancing the demands of two small boys and, oh yes, a global pandemic – the latter shutting access to most of the libraries and museums that in normal times would have been considered essential viewing. Quite how she carried this off was hinted at by the throwaway line about “getting up at 4.30am each

morning” to find some quiet time for writing...

We are blessed to have Emma as our Art Curator. She carries her deep knowledge lightly, has an obvious passion for her subject, and seemingly speaks extemporaneously and with great humour. We learned of the Dunthornes, father and son, who figured prominently in Constable's life, and of William Crotch, the Norwich musical prodigy, whose recommendations on how to draw a tree in his 400-page treatise *The Road to Learning* were taken up by Constable himself. We discovered the important influence of George Frost, many of whose more than 400 works in the CIMS collections can now be viewed online at artuk.org. Frost was a creator of art but also a collector of it, especially of the works of Gainsborough, so when Constable came to Ipswich in 1799 to stay with the Cobbolds there is little doubt that he would have had access to this treasure trove of learning materials that would fashion his later works. When asked what was the biggest surprise of her journey, Emma in fact picked out



Elizabeth Cobbold whose artistic skills (novels, poetry and intricate papercuts), knowledge of geology and charitable good works warrant a whole exhibition to herself.

It was wonderful to have artist and FoIM member Valerie Irwin present, to share with us her insights into what it feels like to have her work hanging alongside those of these titans of the past. This conversation helped to connect us with that past, to root us in our artistic lineage that continues with us and through us into the future.

Much more than an exhibition guide, *Creating Constable* is the very first book on the important Constable collections in Ipswich. We heard how its design was influenced by the colours of Constable's palette - and what a brilliant job Jane Wadman has done in creating something fresh, visually gorgeous and yet logically and thoughtfully laid out. Caleb Howgego's masterful chapter on Ipswich of the time is full of background details that help to put the artists' work in context, while the two "Conserving

Constable" appendices, case studies of *The Mill Stream* and *The Mason Scrapbook* (whose purchase of course, was part funded by the Friends), are fascinating glimpses into the world of fine art detection, preservation and conservation.

The evening opened with the Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Cook, thanking the Friends for their support of the museums, and praising the team at CIMS for producing, in house, this exceptional book. It is available at Waterstone's, or from the Mansion shop where you will receive a 10% discount on the £20 cover price if you mention that you are a member of the Friends. Highly recommended!



Events

What's happening this Summer!

Annual General Meeting of the Friends

Wednesday 25 May

6.30pm for 7.00pm

Venue - Christchurch Mansion

Members are encouraged to attend our first “in-person” AGM for three years to hear about our activities, discover how we've been supporting the museums over the past 12 months, and help us to shape our future. Minutes of last year's AGM will be available in advance on our website.

After the business part of the evening, we are delighted that the Director of Gainsborough's House, Mark Bills, will be joining us. As you will know, Gainsborough's House is about to reopen after a major refurbishment and rebuild, and it will be fascinating to hear of their Heritage Lottery project experiences just as our own High Street Museum embarks on its own make-over. As well as being Director in Sudbury for nine years, Mark is an expert in Victorian art, and is especially knowledgeable about George Frederick Watts (he was previously Director of the Watts Gallery in Surrey).

Refreshments (wine and soft drinks) will be available.

Free - no booking required.

Creating Constable

Christchurch Mansion

Closes 24 April

Crossings

Ipswich Museum

11 March - 12 June

Friends' Summer Party and Quiz

Wednesday 22 June

6.30pm for 7.00pm

Venue - Christchurch Mansion



Join us for our Friends' Summer Party and Quiz.

After so long stuck indoors or on zoom, we are hoping for fine midsummer weather so that we can be in the Mansion courtyard to enjoy some good conversation and tasty refreshments. This year we are delighted to be hosting another lighthearted and culturally focused quiz from Carole Jones our Portfolio Holder, who gave us such a fun evening when we were last able to hold the event in 2019. We will also be unveiling some of our latest acquisitions and conservation projects that you, our members, have so generously contributed to.

£12 for members and £15 for guests, to include strawberries & cream and a glass of wine, Pimm's or something softer.

Booking is encouraged for this event so that we can cater effectively. Please use the payment details on page 23 and ensure that you have confirmed your booking by emailing Jean at jattenborrow@hotmail.co.uk.

**For the latest information about all our events,
please visit our website:**

www.foim.org.uk

Ipswich Art Society Exhibition

by Stephen Cassidy - Chair of Ipswich Art Society

A set of exciting exhibitions at the Art Gallery – the last before its temporary closure

After a two-year drought, Ipswich Art Society is able to hold the 143rd Ipswich Annual Open Exhibition at the Ipswich Art Gallery (previously Ipswich Art School) on High Street. From its founding in 1874 (known back then as the Ipswich Art Cub), it has held this exhibition every year, interrupted only by the two World Wars and now by a pandemic. The purpose of the Society is to promote interest in the visual arts and to encourage public involvement in its creation. It brings together professionals, amateurs, students, and people who are

interested in, and wish to support, cultural activity. It has had, from its very origin, a close association with the Ipswich Art School and its precursors and successors. Many of our members have been staff members or students there, and so it is appropriate that this set of exhibitions is the last before the gallery goes into hibernation during the developments at the Museum. We look forward to being back in this marvellous exhibition space when it emerges refreshed.

Alongside the Open Exhibition will be a retrospective by two of the Society's most respected artists, Judith Foster and Claire Lambert. Both have long and distinguished careers, and produce vibrant work which is deservedly well known. Judith studied at Ipswich Art School before moving on to the Royal Academy and winning an Abbey Scholarship to travel through Europe. She subsequently taught at the Art School. Her work is held in public and private collections across the UK, USA and Europe. Claire worked for



Ipswich Art Society Open Private View

nearly two decades as a member of the Atelier de Ceramique du Jour in Belgium, taking evening classes at the Academy des Beaux Arts de Watermall in Brussels. Back in Suffolk from the late 70s, she is particularly known for her printmaking. She is one of the artists to be featured in a forthcoming book on contemporary ceramics.

These exhibitions will be followed by an exhibition *Borders*, a collaboration between the Ipswich and Colchester Art Societies. The inspiration is the river Stour, which separates our two counties, but which also unites us. The

artists have examined their place in the landscape as they look across the river and consider what borders are really for, and what they mean to people politically and psychologically. This seems particularly poignant at this point in history, as it did for other reasons when we held the Colchester exhibition at Firstsite, in the summer gap between the first and second lock-down of 2020.

As Ipswich Art Society nears its 150th Anniversary in 2024, we look forward to an exciting series of special exhibitions and events, and building deeper links with The Friends of The Ipswich Museums.



Felixstowe Cranes by David King, winner of the Mayor's Award at the last Annual Open

**Ipswich Annual Open
+ Judith Foster
+ Claire Lambert**

9 April - 5 May

Borders

14 May - 19 June

Art Gallery Opening Times

Tues - Sat 10.00 - 4.30
Sunday 11.00 - 4.30

My Favourite Thing

by Nicki Porter

Our incoming Newsletter editor chooses the Hawstead Panels

As incoming Newsletter editor I agreed to contribute to the 'My Favourite Thing' feature for this, my first edition.

I have fond childhood memories of both the High Street Museum and Christchurch Mansion. Indeed I even remember attending evening art classes at the old Art School back in the late 1970s.

So what to choose? In the end I decided on the Hawstead Panels, otherwise known as Lady Drury's

Painted Closet, in Christchurch Mansion. This little room tucked away on the first floor of the Mansion always seemed like a magical portal to another dimension when I was a child. And now, as a Graphic Designer and would be artist, it's still fascinating.

Much has been written about the Hawstead Panels, but for those unfamiliar with them, a very brief history. The panels were painted in the 17th century by Lady Anne



Bacon Drury (1572-1624) for the closet in her home, Hawstead Place near Bury St Edmunds, where she lived with her husband Sir Robert Bacon. It's all the more incredible to think that Lady Drury painted them at a time in Jacobean England when the main occupations expected of a wealthy English woman were prayer, reading and piety. She was lucky to be brought up in a family who believed in educating their daughters.

The 61 painted panels were purchased by Ipswich Borough Council in 1924 and built into the small room in the Mansion. Previously they had been moved from Hawstead Place to Hardwick House where they lined a corridor.

Most of the panels comprise an image and Latin motto (although one is in Italian), designed to prompt Protestant contemplation, reflection and meditation. It is likely that inspiration for the panels came from the popular 'Emblem' books of the period and feature many symbolic devices and mottos linked to heraldry.

Unfortunately, as I write the room is currently closed for renovation following damage from a water leak. Luckily though, I was allowed to have a quick look to remind myself of its magic and to choose a favourite image.



My favourite panel features a greyhound type dog, and as I have had greyhounds for many years I was of course drawn to this one straight away! The dog is licking a hand extending from the tree - quite surreal really! The motto reads 'Non fugitiva fides', which translated literally means 'Not fleeting faith' or a freer translation is 'The trust which does not run away' or 'Mine is not cupboard love', which perfectly describes the relationship I have with my dogs. I was also interested to note that the title of the set of panels happens to translate as 'As a woman I enjoy my own company' (with said greyhound of course!). Also appropriate!

Maybe everyone can find a panel that resonates with them. Have a look and see when it re-opens!

The Lampedusa Cross

by Richard Wilson

If a museum is a repository of the past, then immigrants might be considered bearers of the future, infused with hope but carrying the luggage of grief and loss. *Crossings: Community and Refuge*, on display at the Art Gallery until 12 June, is a powerful new exhibition that explores questions of identity and belonging. These considerations are sadly in the forefront of our minds now more than ever with the unfolding tragedy of Ukraine, the daily influx

of small boats carrying terrified children and their parents across the Channel, and the aftershocks of Brexit that raise questions about our own freedom of movement for the first time in a generation.

This British Museum Spotlight Loan features the Lampedusa Cross (pictured on the front cover). On the night of 11 October 2013 a boat crammed with over 500 refugees caught fire, capsized and sank near the island of



Dark Water, Burning World, Issam Kourbaj (b. 1963)

© Issam Kourbaj

Lampedusa off the Tunisian coast. 311 lost their lives. Despite this horror and the indifference faced by countless refugees across the globe, the Cross carries messages of kindness and community, and yes of hope.

Also in the exhibition is a display of 12 tiny boats from Syrian-born

Issam Kourbaj's series *Dark Water, Burning World*. This artwork, made from repurposed bicycle mudguards tightly packed with burnt matches, represents the numerous fragile vessels used by refugees to flee the ongoing Syrian civil war.

More information on this important and thought-provoking free exhibition can be found at ipswich.cimuseums.org.uk/events/

Restoring a lost masterpiece

Our winter online talk (something that we hope will become a fixture in the FoM calendar) was a brilliant foray into the work of Nicola Evans of KSH Conservation who is transforming our latest Angels artwork, the magnificent four-hundred-year-old painting by the important Dutch painter Jan Porcellis. Taking place on the night of a dramatic storm when power outages threatened to darken our screens, somehow the painting's subject matter couldn't have been more appropriate!

Nicola took us through some of the processes she is using to restore and preserve this beautiful

and dramatic seascape, removing layers of degraded yellow varnish and discoloured over-paint to reveal the fine brushwork beneath. Videos and detailed descriptions brought her work to life, and one of the highlights was a discussion of the curious construction of the painting's panel.

We can't wait to see the finished work, which we hope to be unveiling to our members (who have so generously supported its restoration through our Angels campaign) in the summer. Our thanks to Nicola for preparing such an engaging and entertaining talk.

Ipswich Museums Report

by James Steward - Ipswich Museums Manager

As we approach the financial year end it's a good time to reflect on the past twelve months. We are still some way from comparing to the record numbers seen prior to the pandemic, however since re-opening the museums back in May 2021 we have welcomed over 85,000 visitors to our venues. This includes over 35,000 visits to Christchurch Mansion and, since the end of November 2021, around 13,000 have enjoyed the current *Creating Constable* exhibition (ends 24 April 2022).

Since the last newsletter we have received the much-anticipated outcome of our National Lottery Heritage Fund application and many of you will already be aware that we have now been



Power of Stories exhibition

awarded a £4.3m grant that, in addition to significant support from Ipswich Borough Council, will help us realise the positive and lasting change for Ipswich Museum. In addition to the generous support of The Friends of the Ipswich Museums we have also now secured funding from The Garfield Weston Foundation (£150k) and The Wolfson Trust (£110k), and, with your support, we will continue to fundraise with further applications to trusts and charitable foundations in the coming months.

Anne Jenkins, then Director of England, Midlands & East at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said "We are delighted to support Ipswich Museum with its ambitious project to redevelop its museum and reinterpret its collections. With thanks to National Lottery players, this project will enable the museum to bring their amazing collections to life in new ways and be much more engaging for local people and visitors alike. It will showcase Ipswich's rich history in a way that everyone can enjoy and be proud of."

Despite the ongoing Covid related concerns we are pleased that

business as usual has returned gradually. There is no more positive indication of this than seeing volunteers and guides returning to the museums. I'd like to take the opportunity thank all of you for your forbearance as we navigated through the necessary restrictions and for your ongoing commitment to the service. In so much of the work we do volunteers are vital, and the contribution you make is greatly appreciated by all at Ipswich Museums.

Finally, we are delighted to be shortlisted at the National Museums and Heritage Awards (the 'museum sector's Oscars') for our *Power of Stories* exhibition, a wonderful acknowledgement of the creativity of the CIMS design team and our

fabulous community curators' group. This follows Ipswich Museums' win of the 'Community Impact Award' in 2021 for the 'Museum from Home' project for local families. The initiative was also Highly Commended in the 'Going the Extra Mile category' at the National Kids in Museums awards. The Museum & Heritage Awards announcement will be made on 11 May this year.



Artist impressions of two of the proposed new galleries (Mather & Co.)

Conservation Corner

by Robert Entwistle

How do you like your eggs in the morning? (Dean Martin and Helen O’Connell)

Stephanie the trainee, has finished her eggs in time for Easter.

The two carved emu eggs had been jammed into a small wooden box and were cracked and broken into many small pieces. The eggs had carvings of emus and kangaroos, and had been stuffed with cotton wool and old paper.

She cleaned all the pieces with a smoke sponge and detergent in water. She then set about consolidating all broken and cracked areas with Paraloid and Eltoline tissue. The broken pieces were supported on the tissue and carefully manoeuvred into the broken areas.



Unfortunately, some areas had been so broken that “eggy shell” dust was all that remained.

These areas, lacunae, were filled with Paraloid and glass micro balloons and retouched to match the original colour. A nice new box lined with Plastazote foam was made for the eggs. Both are now back in store.



Left: Egg during restoration

Above: Egg after restoration

Turtle (no eggs, no songs, no fun)

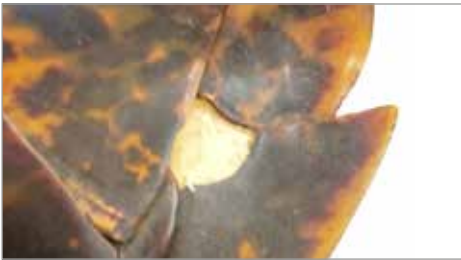
We have a new turtle, its big, its bad and it's a bit knackered. It was donated to the Museum and has been getting a bit of tlc from Stella the volunteer.

The chap/chapette has been vacuumed and washed. I then addressed the missing and loose areas. There were a number of old repairs on the turtle where pieces of turtle shell had been pinned into the shell to cover gaps. Unfortunately, this is not how we do things today. To fill these areas, I used a mixture of Paraloid and filler. I carefully rubbed the area smooth, treated it with shellac, and then retouched the areas with

pigment in shellac.

The skin and head were treated with Neatsfoot Oil (turtle equivalent of Oil of Olay). It has been suffering from dry skin for many years and needs a bit of moisturising. This will ensure the skin remains supple and won't crack or tear in a change of environment. The turtle shell and skin were then coated with microcrystalline wax and buffed.

We then made a nice, padded box for it and away it swam to the stores. Where most of my work ends up!



Top left: Missing area
Top right: Missing area filled
Left: Restored Turtle

Love is like a Butterfly (Dolly Parton)

A collection of butterflies arrived last year. Unfortunately, though very beautiful they had been subjects to bad insect infestation. The butterflies had been collected abroad in the 1950's and 60's, and may have suffered from their years of travel.

Many had lost their wings; their pins had corroded, expanded and damaged the bodies.

We removed all the insects, vacuumed the boxes and re-lined the boxes with acid free paper.

I then reattached as many wings as possible back onto the bodies using light weight tissue and consolidant and replaced them in the cleaned boxes.



Insect attack



Sticking wings

Snakes in the grass are absolutely free (Go Wild in the Country by Bow Wow Wow)

The female grass snake made another appearance. She had already been repaired once and liked it so much, she came back again.

The snake has been mounted with her head projecting over her stand. This makes her very prone to being knocked and crunched. Fortunately the skin had broken in exactly the same spot as last time. Easier to repair. However the skin was getting very thin and fragile and the sawdust stuffing was spilling out of some other areas.

Polyester wadding was substituted for the lost sawdust and tears closed with fibreglass tissue and light weight Eltoline tissue. The repair tissue were inserted beneath the skin and adhered with a water based acid free adhesive. The repairs were then retouched with watercolour paint.

I made a better mount from Correx. I lengthened the mount and a volunteer made a cradle to cover the head and protect it from future damage.



Restored snake

The worthy but rather boring bits

The rest of the time I have been talking racking with a racking supplier; measuring rooms with a racking supplier and drawing up scale plans to see how much “stuff” we can fit in. This includes getting rid of “stuff” we no longer need and storing other supplies and equipment in a more logical way.

Also I've been doing condition reports for paintings and natural history specimens going on loan. All this has been very time consuming and necessary but its also boring, so I won't bother you with it.

Sorry about the musical allusions, but a bit of light hearted amusement helps me through the racking.



**University
of Suffolk**

The School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Suffolk are actively engaged in celebrating the rich cultural opportunities in our region. We are delighted to be supporting The Friends of the Ipswich Museums. Our academic staff and students are committed to building our vision of a Creative Suffolk. This extends to finding new and important ways of creatively connecting students and academics with our regional museums and the wider community. New connections offer platforms for new ideas, for advancing research and for worthwhile knowledge exchange which can benefit us all in diverse, innovative and surprising ways.

We look forward to future collaborations!

01473 338000

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Goodbox

The new contactless donation terminal

You may have seen this recent addition in the Mansion's Great Hall, a Goodbox contactless donation terminal. The Mansion and the Museum have many generous visitors who enjoy the free displays and wish to give something back, but since Covid and with the seemingly relentless march of the "cashless society" we have been working to source a card terminal for those who might want to give without putting money into the Mansion's rather splendid and historic coffer.



The machine can take any amount from £1 up to £100 and we have this terminal on an extended lease. Should the trial prove successful (both in ease of use and revenue generated), we will look to fund another terminal for the Museum. We would be very pleased to hear your feedback, so do try it next time you visit the Mansion and let us know what you think.



Although the machine's default amount is £3 it will accept any donation up to £100

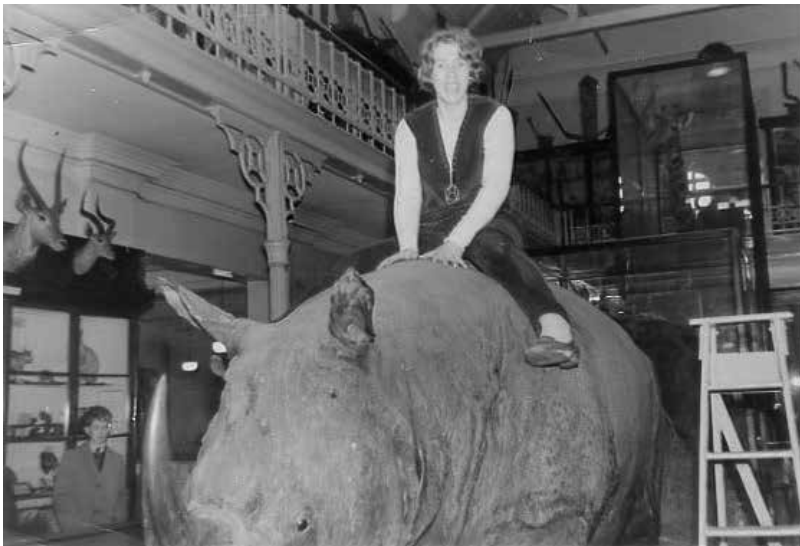
Bridget Lapsley

A much missed friend of Ipswich Museums

We were very sad to hear of the death of Bridget Lapsley, who had a long connection with the Ipswich museums. She was at the Art School in the 1960's and one day the students had a practical exercise in the Museum. As her husband John (Richard's predecessor as Chair of FoIM) writes: "One of the staff had left the ladder there when they took a break, hence the photo opportunity. She was there at the same time as Maggi Hambling and Paul Bruce - pity that Paul is not in the photo as well." He adds that the photo "does show

a blatant disregard for accepted museum rules, so I am not sure that the museum managers would approve!"

Though subsequently not a member of staff here, Bridget was one of Tom Hodgson's team in Colchester and spent quite a lot of time at Ipswich during and after the merger of the two museum services. Latterly she provided the glorious illustrations for Paul Bruce's book on the furniture of Christchurch Mansion. We send our condolences to John and all of Bridget's family and friends.



New Members & Angels

We warmly welcome our new members

Wil Currie	Elaine Nunn
Thomas & Leonora Faggionato	Moira Pinkney
Liz Farrow	Maureen Thorn
Peter & Sarah Forster	Jane Wilson
Rose Gant	

We are very grateful to all our new Angels

Gillian Barnett	- for her late husband Alick - special Friends
Rowell Bell	- Angel for the Porcellis to celebrate Jane Corbett's 90th birthday, and repeat Angel in memory of Dr Werner Besier 1944-2022
Mary Fisk	- for the Porcellis
Shirley Girling	- repeat Archangel
Sue Kimber	- repeat Angel
John Lapsley	- repeat Archangel in memory of Bridget Lapsley (see p.21)
Giles Richardson	- two Angels for the Porcellis restoration
David Routh	- a special friend of Ipswich
John Speight	- repeat Angel
Alan Swerdlow	- Seraphim
David Wild	- repeat Archangel and Angel
Michael Andrews	- Angel

And a very big thank you to everyone who renewed their membership for 2022

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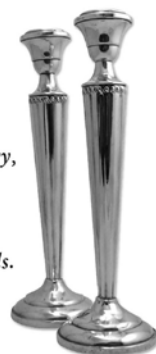
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New Samuel Read Acquisition

Your generous support has enabled yet another important acquisition to take place just this month. We will be telling you all about this important memento of Victorian Ipswich in our next edition, but here is a taster – one of the over 80

portraits made by Samuel Read (1815-1883) between May 1837 and December 1838 and now purchased, with our help, for the museum's collection.



Read, later a well-known artist and illustrator, was office boy to John Eddowes Sparrowe, attorney of the Ancient House, when he drew these masterly pencil portraits of his fellow townfolk - the great and the good, the lowly and the otherwise ignored. In an age before photography, here is a repository of faces to attach to names familiar to us as some of the architects of modern Ipswich.



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