Newsletter No.84 Spring 2026

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Newsletter 2025

ARRAS SQUARE

The following statement was provided by Cllr. Neil MacDonald, leader of Ipswich Borough Council. The images, I have selected from those available. (Ed)

Ipswich Borough Council is moving forward with an exciting transformation of several key public realm areas, with Arras Square at the heart of the improvements, to create a more vibrant, welcoming and better-connected town centre. With an architect now developing the technical design, the project aims to celebrate the area's historic character—especially the Grade II* listed St Stephen's Church—while enhancing visibility, safety and pedestrian priority.



Image: Newsquest

This will include retaining as well as planting new trees, thoughtful landscaping, sensitive lighting, brand new CCTV, high-quality seating, improved pathways and upgraded cycle facilities.

The refreshed design will be cleaner, greener and safer, to enhance Arras Square as both an attractive destination to stop and enjoy and a pleasant thoroughfare. On top of this, a new information panel will incorporate an original French post box in its design. * A new public art mural will add further energy and identity to the space as part of the creative vision.



Image: Shikhar Talwar



Image: Erect Architecture

Altogether, the scheme represents a confident step towards a more attractive, modern and enjoyable space in Ipswich for residents, workers and visitors alike. **Cllr. Neil MacDonald**

(The town of Arras gifted an original yellow French post box to the town and was installed in Arras Square. I have not been able to ascertain if that same post box will be part of the re designed Square. Ed.)*

Chair's Report

I can think of few things pertaining to Ipswich and our Association that could give me greater pleasure than the news contained on our front page. We have been reporting on the up-grading of Arras Square since it was first announced that money was to be made available, seven years ago. **Finally,** we have it confirmed that work is to begin on the project in June. It can only be hoped that the result, scheduled for November, will prove worthy of the square's name and honour the town's association with Arras. And who knows, this might occasion a visit from the Mayor of Arras, surely long overdue.



It will be very gratifying to see the re-instalment of the post box that was gifted to the town by Arras, which is matched in the Place d'Ipswich in Arras, by our town's gift of the iconic red telephone kiosk, and which still stands proudly as a feature of the square there.

On the following pages, you will see details of some of the forthcoming events that are planned and in preparation for the coming months. The pub quiz, which was postponed last year due to the scheduling of our anniversary celebration, returns in March; be sure to let me know if you plan to join us, as Karen the landlord needs an idea of numbers when preparing the interval refreshments.

With the new committee in place in our sister Association in Arras, there have been changes in organised visits to Ipswich which has decided the committee here in Ipswich to move the Garden Party, which traditionally we held here as close to Bastille Day as possible – it seemed to make sense to accommodate our friends' visit by combining our welcome to them with our traditional event.

Again, responding to changing interests in our visits to Arras, we have decided that our return visit to the town this year take place in December, enabling us to enjoy the amazing event that is ***Arras, Ville de Noël*** – Christmas market, a truly wonderful experience. Not to be missed.

We hope that as many members as possible will be able to join us for some or indeed all of the events.

I conclude my report by printing the message from Mayor Cllr. Stefan Long read at our AGM. Coming from the first citizen of Ipswich, it is gratifying to hear such expressions of encouragement and support.

Brian Theodore Ralph
Chair.

I'm very sorry that council business prevents me from joining you tonight. I had been looking forward to being with you, to thank you personally for everything you do to keep the friendship between Ipswich and Arras alive and thriving.

As many of you know, I had the pleasure of visiting Arras — and what a visit it was. The warmth of the welcome, the beauty of the town, and the generosity of our hosts made a lasting impression on me. I must also say, with complete honesty, that the food and wine were exceptional! Sharing meals together reminded me that our twinning is built not just on official ties, but on genuine friendship, hospitality, and the simple joy of spending time together.

Our link with Arras is one of the most enduring and heartfelt partnerships in our town's civic life. It is built not just on charters and formal visits, but on decades of people opening their homes, sharing their cultures, and building bonds that last.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the committee and to every member who gives their time, energy, and enthusiasm to this association.

During my year as Mayor, I am proud to have represented Ipswich in Arras and I remain fully committed to supporting the association in the year ahead. I hope to join you at future events, and I look forward to welcoming our friends from Arras back to Ipswich soon.

Thank you again for your dedication, your hospitality, and I wish you a successful AGM and a wonderful year to come. Merci beaucoup!

Cllr. Stefan Long
Mayor of Ipswich



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 24th MARCH **Dove St Inn Pub Quiz**
Sunday 10th MAY **Garden Party with AAI**
Sunday 11th JULY **Boules Tournament**

Later in the Year
Autumn Soirée
Visit to Arras Ville de Noël
More information in the next newsletter

RECENT EVENTS

AGM and Association Dinner

At the A.G.M. held on Wednesday 14th January in Suffolk New College a respectable number of members assembled in Reception area of Chefs' Whites for the Association's 23rd Annual General Meeting. The proceedings spoke of another very successful year of members' events, of Educational support, a healthy membership count and an equally healthy budget, with accounts gratefully audited by Neville Woolnough, whose services are much appreciated.
It was announced that the Committee had decided to increase Membership Subscriptions to £15 for a single member and £25 for a couple or family membership – which still compares very favourably with comparable associations.
Elections were held for all the officers and committee members, with resulting unanimous re-election.

The Management Committee
Honorary President John Field
Chair Brian Theodore Ralph
Vice-Chair John Redhead Secretary Beverley Pearce Treasurer Margaret Redhead
Membership Secretary Elaine Everitt Newsletter Editor Brian Theodore Ralph

Committee Members
Peter Brooks Julian Kowalski Jane Riley (Cllr IBC) Adam Rae (Cllr IBC)

The Chair was at pains to recognise the good work done by all members of the committee.

Unfortunately, due to a re-scheduling of Borough Council business, The Mayor, Cllr. Stefan Long, and several ex-mayors and councillors were unable to attend the meeting, but the Chair was pleased to read a very supportive message from the Mayor. (See my report)

The Association Dinner

The A.G.M. was followed by the Association dinner held in the College's Chefs' Whites Restaurant which has become the favoured venue for the event. The following article is contributed by Rita Smith

Association Dinner Wed 14th Jan 2025

At the Association's AGM, held immediately before the Annual Association Dinner at Chef's Whites in Suffolk New College, Brian was very complimentary about my review of last year's Christmas Dinner that I'd written for the Newsletter; so much so that I felt duty bound to write another one for this year, but what to say a second time around is proving a problem.

Well, I'll begin by saying that the students were great. They treated us with more attention than we might have received at some professional restaurants. We were welcomed at the door by a lady who took our coats and hung them up together, and immediately served us with drinks, and directed us to comfy seats for the AGM.

The dinner was served on rectangular tables, with 8 to a table. I found this to be preferable to the circular tables we've had before, as we were nearer each other and it was easier to hear and be heard by those in our group. I don't know whether the student cooks had referred to last year's menu, but they must be congratulated - every plate was different from last year's, whilst still retaining a strong French influence.









On our table, **each of the plates for the starters was sampled**. The Steak Tartare with salt baked beetroot and pickled mustard seeds looked delightful – a tartlet with a fluted crust and the dominant colour of beetroot inside, but regrettably, those who had this, felt there wasn't sufficient steak to be worthy of the name, and they would have liked a bigger portion.

I had the Sole Véronique with sea vegetables and grapes which was attractively presented and very tasty. The sea vegetables were samphire – an excellent local product to have with fish, and when one member of our group mistook the grapes for brussels sprouts we all had a good laugh.

Dick had chosen compressed leek terrine with black olive tapenade, and thoroughly enjoyed it. In fact he pronounced it one of the tastiest starters he'd ever had.



Sole Véronique



For the main meal, the people on our table chose two of the three possibilities.

Those who had the Coq au Vin with fondant potato and bacon wrapped beans were somewhat disappointed, finding the chicken rather dry, but high marks were given to the Bouillabaisse. This consisted of seared salmon, red mullet and prawns served with a lobster bisque, parmesan croquette, chervil and rouille. It wasn't very clever of me to have chosen fish for my starter as well as the main, but I did enjoy it. No-one on our table had the third choice of the main course – ratatouille with pommes Anna chips, but it was obviously perfect for Vegans and Vegetarians.

Coq au Vin

The desserts were all sights to behold. I had the Blackberry souffle with apple crumble ice cream, which was an excellent pairing, and the souffle remained 'puffed up' all the time I was eating it. I'm told this is quite an art. Of course, being a chocoholic.

I wished I'd chosen the Chocolate Parfait when that appeared with its rich chocolate gooiness, but it was served with orange and Chantilly cream, and although my companions loved it, I'm not fond of the flavour of orange with chocolate.



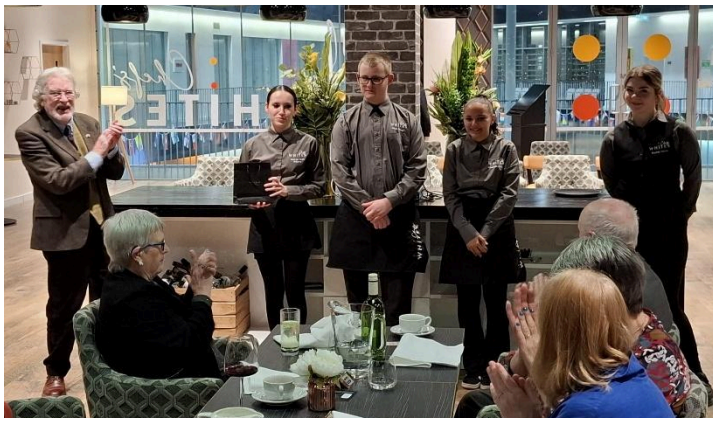
Blackberry Soufflé



Chocolate Parfait

The final choice here was Apple tart fine with vegan vanilla ice cream, which was pronounced an absolute delight by those who partook.

I'd like to say that we discussed French culture and our latest French holidays – in French – whilst we enjoyed our meal, but that wouldn't be true. The three ladies at my end of the table discussed the Woollover catalogue where you can buy pure cotton or woollen clothes, and how the colourful bubbles that are now made to go in washing machines seem to shrink everything. The men at the other end, chatted about life in retirement, and the ennui of having to cook meals so regularly. One lady in our party won one of the excellent raffle prizes.



The very enjoyable evening terminated with a big thank you to the students. Brian asked them to come out of the kitchen, and the talented future chefs and servers shyly greeted us and received their very well-earned applause.

I wonder where they'll be in 10 years' time?

Rita Smith

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

??? +  +  + 

= PUB QUIZ!

TUESDAY 24TH MARCH at THE DOVE STREET INN

6.30 FOR 7.00 START

£10 ENTRY, includes interval Ploughman's.

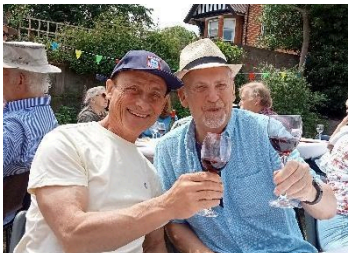
and

Prize of £25 to winning team to donate to a charity of their choosing.

Form a team of 4 – or come and be allocated!

(This is strictly a fun evening…. however some people get quite competitive!)

Please let Brian know if you are coming - essential to help Karen with catering.



GARDEN PARTY

SUNDAY 10th MAY

At 40

Westerfield Rd.



In the beautiful gardens of Lois and Peter Brooks

Earlier than usual to coincide with the visit of our friends from ARRAS



Details are still being drawn up and will follow in due course.

BOULES TOURNAMENT

Sunday 11th JULY Christchurch Park



This very popular event returns in the summer – and is played out on the battlegrounds, sorry pétanque pitch in beautiful Christchurch Park. It's great fun whether you take part or spectate to witness the



battle, sorry, competition to be awarded the coveted Janet and Gavin Hodge Trophy.

But be warned – Peter has an Olympian pétanque player in his granddaughter, Mary. Will this year mark her third triumph in a row?

Details will be posted in the next newsletter – but **make a note of the date**.

I will make only brief reference to plans for the second half of the year as they are still very much in the planning stage.

AUTUMN SOIRĒE

For our Autumn soirée we are thinking of an event, probably in St Clement's Church – that might include music and dance entertainment.
Don't worry, we're not contemplating some kind of *Ipswich's Got Talent* or *Strictly Come Can Can*
But who knows?

Whatever, we hope to plan some cockle-warming diversion. With refreshments of course!

THE VISIT TO ARRAS



We have decided this year – for something completely different to make our visit a strictly warm -up -to -Christmas -affair.

And Fair is the appropriate word, as the Grand Place is transformed into a Christmas Fair. The plan is to spend three nights 4th, 5th 6th December to take full advantage of the festive atmosphere.

Probably travelling in a convoy of cars – if you think you might want to come along – it might be an idea to reserve your hotel in advance as this is a very popular Christmas venue.

Once again – more information to follow.

Crédit : Wm' / Ville d'Arras



MAVIS HAMMOND We are deeply sorry to report that Mavis Hammond, who, with her late husband Bright was a member for many years, has died. It was wonderful that thanks to her daughter Elizabeth, Mavis was able to join us for our Garden Party last year and for our 25th Anniversary Celebrations. We send our sincere condolences to Elizabeth.

The cremation is at Seven Hills Crematorium at 3.00p.m. on Thursday 26th March.



COOK'S CORNER

Soupe au Pistou

I was recently watching one of the episodes of Simply Provence with Marcus Waring, a chef who I admire (except that for someone who has spent so much time in France – his accent is surprisingly bad - for example he would speak of 'mools fritt' (moules frîtes) but because of his passions, it is forgivable. In this episode he visited a primary school where the school's cook was preparing the children's three course lunch (!) in which ***soupe au pistou*** featured.

I am aware that this dish is more commonly served as a summer or autumn dish, but I am not a slave to such details. I believe I might have published in an earlier newsletter a Tuscan Bean Soup, to which this bears some similarities – if so, I apologise. But I was inspired to prepare the soup even though it was the last week in February. I was not sorry.

Ingredients

celery
carrot
onion
green beans
courgettes
leek
garlic
tin of haricot beans
potatoes, waxy variety
tomatoes (see my notes on method)
cabbage (if using)
grated parmesan
basil pesto
veg. or chicken stock cube
dried herbs
fresh basil
oil (I use extra virgin)



I have not given precise quantities, which some of you might find frustrating, but with this kind of dish I tend to go with my instinct, personal taste and what I have to hand. I chop all of the vegetable ingredients into very small chunks, except the potatoes which I keep as small bite size. You can of course use dried haricot beans soaked overnight, I used the tinned variety which are absolutely fine and far less work. I also use ready made pesto!

Method

I find the preparation of the vegetables very therapeutic. I prepare everything in advance; the cooking is then very simple.

Celery one stalk; medium onion; one carrot; one medium leek (but not the very green end); green beans, small handful; courgettes I use three baby, but otherwise one medium size; garlic , two cloves, or, personal taste chopped finely; tomatoes, I used a small tin of chopped (and take out any nasty bits), but some would say that's too much, you could skin and de-seed a couple of fresh tomatoes and chop the flesh; traditionally water and not stock, but I like the added flavour.

In a pan, add a few tbs of oil, add the chopped onion, celery and carrot and sweat for about 8 mins on a medium heat.

Add the leeks , garlic and potatoes – make sure everything is coated in oil and sweat for a further 5 minutes.

Add the stock, I used about a pint, but you can add more later if you feel it's needed, bring to the boil, then turn down to a simmer.

Add the green beans, courgettes and tomatoes. After ten minutes add the haricot beans with sone of the water if you wish.

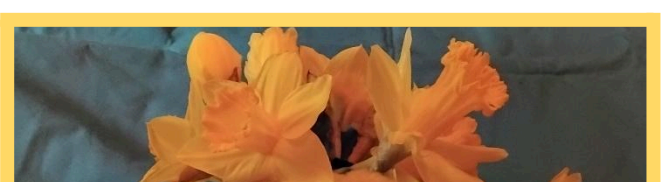
Add some dried herbs – I use oregano and additional herbes de provence. Stir well, taste and add seasoning.

Cook on a low heat for around 20 minutes or so – check that the potatoes are cooked. Before serving I added a couple of savoy cabbage leaves , stalk removed and chopped very small. Cook for a further 5 minutes

Put a teaspoon of pesto in each soup bowl, ladle in the soup – sprinkle grated parmesan cheese, and a few torn basil leaves. Enjoy with warm baguette or a chunk of healthy wholemeal bread and a glass of your choosing.

(*p.s. the image is not mine, I was so eager to eat I forgot to photograph! But mine looked very like this – honest.)*

Théo dit



Dimanche le 1er mars, la fête de saint David

Suis pas gallois, tout simplement j'adore les jonquilles.

Editor : Brian Theodore Ralph for comments or suggestions contact at **brian.ralph@btopenworld.com**