



Celebrating Norwich
since 1923

ANNUAL REPORT

Of the Trustees for Summer 2022 – Spring 2023

PROMOTING HERITAGE; SHAPING TOMORROW

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

As I write this it is difficult to believe that my extended period as your Chair is coming to a close, the last three years seem to have flown by. After some challenging times since 2020, I do consider that I am lucky to be leaving on a high as last month we kicked off our Centenary year with a lively, colourful and well attended launch event at Bishop Bridge. We received plenty of publicity to mark the 100th anniversary of our formation and I hope we will be able to build on that, as we move through the year, to increase awareness of our work and strengthen our membership. The Norwich Society is in great heart and I hope you will all be able to join us at the events planned during 2023/34 to celebrate our Centenary year.

As I explained last year, adjusting to life during the pandemic greatly increased our social media presence. Our well supported Facebook page and our YouTube channel have enabled us to continue to keep in touch with you, the members, and the wider public, stimulating a deeper public understanding and appreciation of the history, character and beauty of this Fine City and for the work of the Society. However, it has been equally clear that the pandemic has had a damaging impact on the Society in other ways. Without the opportunity to meet with members in person we have not been able to encourage people to join our Sub- Committees. Without taking anything away from the sterling work of those Sub-Committees over the past year, the regular involvement of new people with fresh ideas is essential to keeping the Norwich Society relevant in an ever-changing world. So, if you think we have something to contribute please do get involved. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and you will be helping the Society too.

As part of our Centenary celebrations there are a whole new series of guided walks which will be running throughout the summer. From the fantastic uptake for our in-person events it is clear that the social side of the Society is important to many members. So, a big thank you for both your support and to the events team for their hard work putting the events programme together.



I would also like to thank the City Guides for devising and delivering these walks. In September, to mark Heritage Open Days, we will be taking over the Forum for a week with a photographic exhibition of 100 sites that have significance to the Society. Please come along to say hello. Thanks to The Forum Trust for providing us with the opportunity to showcase much of what we have achieved over the past 100 years. Also thank you to those members who have submitted nominations to our centenary plaque project, we will be moving this forward over the next few months.

The Society's Publications Working Group continued to turn out the high quality and much-admired *Aspects of Norwich* and work is working on a special publication to mark our Centenary which will hopefully act as a springboard for another round of publicity.

The day-to-day work of the Society has continued throughout the year with all of the Sub-Committees having plenty to do. Reviewing and commenting on the revised plans for the Anglia Square redevelopment have understandably taken centre stage. It is a testament to the Society team working on the project that having vigorously defended our position at the planning enquiry we have been able to enter into a reasoned and constructive dialogue with the developers and planners to try to influence them to propose a scheme which is more sympathetic to the area and the wider City. My ambition to improve our communication and collaboration with other organisations and the local authority is being fulfilled and I am confident we are entering a new era of engagement with both the City Council and other interested parties to help achieve our charitable aims and ensure Norwich remains the top place to live and work in the East not only in 2023 but beyond.

It is a testament to all this hard work that our membership has remained almost unchanged throughout this difficult period. Thank you all for your continued support. The Society is on a more secure financial footing but in these inflationary times anything we can do to boost our income and minimise our outgoings needs to be considered. We have relaunched our Business Membership and the Society continues to be well placed to continue the work it has successfully undertaken for the past 100 years.

A very special thank you to Rachel Kirk our current Coordinator, and Laura Davey the previous Coordinator, who have both worked tirelessly throughout the year to keep us all on the straight and narrow. Thanks are also due to my fellow members of the Executive, past and present, the Chairs of the various committees and their members, and to the volunteers who have supported our online events programme. Without all that expertise and time commitment the Society could not function. We are also indebted to many sponsors and financial supporters whose support enables us to undertake much more work and to a higher standard than would otherwise be possible.

It has been a real privilege to Chair the Society since 2020. Having been actively involved on the Society's Executive Committee almost continuously for 23 years, I am now off for a well-earned short rest, but hope to see many of you at the forthcoming events.

Barry Howell, Chair



THE SOCIETY AND CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

As the city's civic society, The Norwich Society is an independent community-based charity, supporting the preservation, development and improvement of features of historic interest in the city. It also uses the expertise of architects, town planners, surveyors and other industry professionals within its committees to comment on significant planning decisions in the area on behalf of the public. And it encourages exploration and enjoyment of Norwich's history through a range of talks, walks and other events, as well as regular publications.

From saving the historic Elm Hill area from demolition in the 1920s, to recent advocating for better development of the Anglia Square site, the Society has been championing the built environment and public spaces in Norwich and celebrating the city's unique character and beauty for nearly a century. The Society was founded in 1923 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated organisation (CIO) in May 2020 (registration number 1189593). It is primarily a voluntary organisation, but it also engages a contractor to provide administrative and support services.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

The Society has three key areas of work:

To encourage public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of Norwich and its surroundings.

To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest in Norwich and its surroundings.
To encourage high standards of Architecture and Town Planning in Norwich and its surroundings.

GOVERNANCE

The last AGM was held in-person on 28th June, 2022.

As the event itself was socially distanced with a limited capacity, a postal vote system was implemented to ensure everyone could take part. Members received a voting ballot paper as well as other documentation in the post. The Officers and all those re-standing were elected, while Peter Threadkell, John Howkins and Michael Jordan joined as Trustees.

The Society's governing constitution provides for the management of the Society to be in the hands of an Executive Committee, who are also the Trustees. The Executive Committee consists of four Officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary – and up to eight other members, to a maximum of twelve in total.

Current Officers

Chair - Barry Howell (*standing down*)

Vice Chair - Jon Boon

Honorary Secretary - David Taylor

Honorary Treasurer - Neil Sturgeon

Current Executive Members

Michael Jordan

Simeon Jackson

John Howkins

Alan Theabold

Under the CIO Constitution all offices and Executive Committee member roles are open for election at the AGM 2023.

The Society's Patron is Sir Richard Jewson and the President is the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Norwich. These are both Honorary positions bestowed by the Executive Committee.

ENCOURAGING THE PRESERVATION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF FEATURES OF GENERAL PUBLIC AMENITY OR HISTORIC INTEREST IN NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

PARTNERSHIPS PAGE

The Norwich Society collaborates with a number of groups and has representatives in organisations with similar goals to effect positive change and champion the historic character of the city.

The Society's website provides more information and highlights the connections with organisations including Civic Voice, Norwich Preservation Trust, Norwich Heritage Alliance, River Wensum Strategy Partnership and Mousehold Heath Conservators amongst others. This page can be found at www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk/about-us/partnerships

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES REPORT

The Society's atlas and directory of parks and open spaces was used as the basis for a Norwich Society Historians talk by John Trevelyan in January 2023 on the historical development of parks and open spaces in the city. A version of this talk is available on the Society's YouTube channel.



RIVERSIDE ACCESS

The Committee is exploring a possible future project looking at the riversides of the Rivers

Wensum and Yare and public access to them. The City Council's Local Plan maps show lengths of 'existing' and 'proposed' riverside walks and the project is planned to examine the present condition of these and likely prospects for change as well as considering wider access areas adjacent to the rivers.

The Committee is also working on a presentation for the Society's Centenary exhibition covering its projects on clocks, sundials and weathervanes; seats in the city centre; parks and open spaces, and views from river bridges and the strategic viewpoints.

WEATHERVANES, CLOCKS & SUNDIALS

The Committee has continued its preparation of a report on weathervanes in the city. It has also embarked on a second edition of its



report on clocks and sundials, first published as 'Telling the Time in Norwich' in 2018. Both reports, in the Society's standard report format, are due to be published in summer 2023.

PRESERVATION AND HERITAGE AT RISK

The Trustees are currently reviewing the remit and name of the Conservation Development Committee, and are looking to recruit new members.

The Society has continued its representation on the Norwich Preservation Trust (NPT). This charity was formed in the 1960s as a joint venture between Norwich City Council and The Norwich Society with the primary purpose to preserve and restore historic buildings in the city. It regards itself as a 'restorer of last resort' and often takes on

commercially non-viable projects with properties owned by the City Council.

ENCOURAGING HIGH STANDARDS OF ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING IN NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP AWARDS

The biennial Design and Craftsmanship Awards return this year; the Steering Group is currently planning the Awards Ceremony due to be held in November, and refreshing the website in preparation for inviting nominations for the many excellent schemes which reached completion over the last 2 years. We are delighted that the Norwich University of the Arts has joined us and RIBA Norfolk as co-sponsors of the event.

ANGLIA SQUARE

The Anglia Square development debate has continued throughout the last year and Norwich City Council's final decision on the planning application is now imminent.



You will recall that the Norwich Society welcomed the opportunity for a fresh start after the abandonment of the horrendous “Tower Block” scheme and we participated fully in a Community Planning Panel which met last year.

Sadly, although the scheme has been revised twice, the developer Weston Homes has not responded positively to the concerns which we and others

have consistently raised about the scale of the development, its heritage impact and the poor residential environment that is being created, for example the proliferation of single aspect units with their associated problems of overheating through lack of cross-ventilation.

Along with Historic England and SAVE Britain's Heritage, we have now formally objected to the scheme and will be speaking at the Council's Planning Applications Committee on 27th April.

The Society's formal submission can be viewed on the website at:

<https://www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk/future-norwich/anglia-square>

STRATEGIC PLANS FOR GREATER NORWICH

The Society's Strategic Planning and Transport Committee (SP&T) has continued to contribute to the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan which will determine the scale and location of all new development over the next two decades. Progress on the Plan has been considerably delayed over the last year by the emerging “nutrient neutrality issue” which has also been causing a suspension of new house-building permissions. SP&T will continue to monitor the plan's progress until the Plan's final adoption.



East Norwich masterplan key sites:
1. Carrow Works
2. Deal Ground
3. May Gurney
4. Utilities

SP&T has also been continuing to track the ongoing work in preparing a new masterplan for East Norwich.

This masterplan will be used to integrate the future development of three major development sites at Carrow Works, the Deal Ground and the Utilities Site. Discussions are now underway with the Society on the detailed proposals for the Deal Ground.

SP&T has also been considering the potential strategic implications for Norwich that arise from two Government proposals. There are proposed reforms of national planning policy which have been set out in the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. Meanwhile, the Government has been seeking to agree a new devolution deal with Norfolk County Council that would entail a directly elected mayor for Norfolk. Both are causing Society concerns.

TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Society's SP&T Committee continues to lead on our response to a number of emerging highways and transport schemes promoted by the County Council's 'Transport for Norwich' arm. These have included controversial measures on Dereham Road, Newmarket Road and at the Heartsease roundabout.

Our responses have always stressed the need to ensure that green travel initiatives do indeed attract take up by pedestrians and cyclists and do not compromise on their safety. We were particularly critical of the Heartsease proposals and are looking to see the scheme reviewed in its entirety.

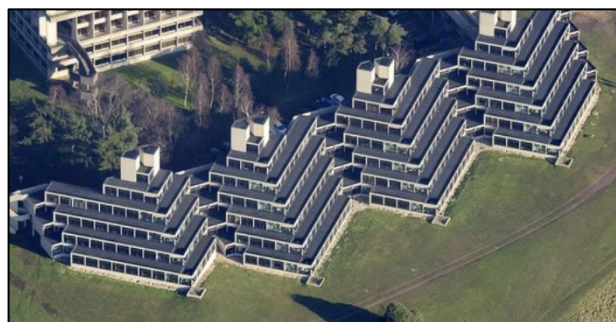
The Society has long advocated the introduction of electric buses to Norwich's streets and we are therefore delighted with the recent news that there is soon to be a new fleet of electric vehicles.



PLANNING RESPONSES

The Planning Appraisal Committee (PAC) has continued its work of commenting on planning applications on a weekly basis, focusing on significant developments and those affecting the historic streetscape of Norwich.

Once again we have looked at a wide range of projects over the last year, ranging from alterations to 4 Guildhall Hill for the Jane Austen College, renovation of the Grade-II listed Castle Public House on Spitalfields, and right up to the refurbishment of the ziggurats at UEA.



PAC are pleased to have received several presentations over the year, including one at every meeting this year so far - in January Bidwells presented their Duke Street development for student accommodation; in February we heard from the Co-housing Group about their scheme at Angel Yard, and in March GNL-Strategic described the latest outline planning work at the Deal Ground.

We now have regular quarterly meetings with the Head of Norwich Planning and other officers, which are helpful for establishing a better understanding between us and discuss ongoing co-operation.

A shared major concern at present is the Nutrient Neutrality order from Natural England; due to excessive levels of phosphates and nitrates in the Broads and River Wensum drainage catchment areas, all housing consents in Norwich, and in much of Norfolk, have been stopped for over a year while mitigation strategies are developed. This is of course having a major impact on house-builders and developers, and in turn on the struggling house-building programme. It is also delaying the adoption of the Greater Norwich Development Plan, which PAC and other committees are following carefully and will guide all new development in the area until 2038.

So another lively and interesting year for the Committee, and my thanks as usual to all the hard-working Committee members who give up their valuable time to help guide the future of our City.

ENCOURAGING PUBLIC INTEREST IN AND CARE FOR THE BEAUTY, HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF NORWICH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

TALKS AND EVENTS

With the relaxation of lockdown measures the Norwich Society resumed its in-person events programme starting with a guided walk of Bracondale and the Colman housing estate in July.



It had been intended that this popular walk would be repeated, but the heat wave

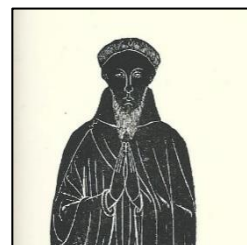
in July and August meant that we felt it was sensible to suspend strenuous activities. The guided walk on Norwich, City of Culture in September went ahead as planned and was well attended.

A regular highlight of the Society's annual events programme is a visit to an interesting house or garden outside Norwich. This year we visited



Mannington Hall, a Grade I listed moated medieval country house surrounded by formal lawns, rose and sensory gardens. It is the seat of the Walpole family and we were guided round expertly by Lady Walpole.

During lockdown we migrated our popular Historians talks to Zoom, which were very well received. However, many members had asked when we were going to return to in-person events and we felt that Autumn 2022 was the right time to test the waters. We returned to the Auditorium at The Forum, which provides a safe and well managed space for talks, with an eclectic range of topics:

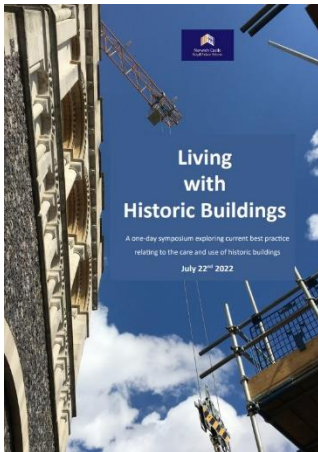


- Researching the Strangers
- The historic background to Jeni Neal's new novel, *The Devil's Dye*, which focuses on the textile industry

- Historical insights into Norwich’s parks and open spaces
- The story of Dragon Hall
- Norwich’s French Borough

Where possible the speakers recorded their talks so that we could continue to post these popular events on our YouTube channel where they can be watched by everybody.

The Norwich Society collaborated with Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery on a one-day symposium in July - Living With Historic Buildings. This was part of the activity programme linked to Royal Palace Reborn, the redevelopment of Norwich Castle keep. The symposium brought together an expert panel of those working with a



broad range of heritage sites, resulting in a wide-ranging and stimulating discussion on strategic approaches to the care and use of historic buildings.

In September the Norwich Society contributed a talk to The Forum’s Heritage Open Days programme. The national theme for HODs was Astounding Inventions, and our talk featured the Norwich textiles trade and the “astounding invention” of the Jacquard loom, which revolutionised weaving but, ultimately, led to the decline of the artisan weaver. The Norwich Society had previously published a downloadable trail to encourage people to explore the many sites in Norwich associated with the textiles trade.

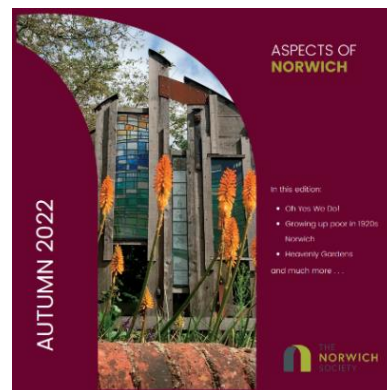
A full programme of events is planned for the Norwich Society’s centenary year, which kicked off

with a ceremony on Bishop Bridge on 23rd March, the day in 1923 when the Norwich Society was formed. Guests included the Lord Mayor, the Sheriff of Norwich and our Patron, Sir Richard Jewson.

PUBLICATIONS

The Society’s Publications Working Group (PWG) has continued to publish its twice-annual *Aspects of Norwich* book which includes illustrated articles across a variety of topics about Norwich’s history and the influences making today’s city.

Aspects of Norwich, Autumn 2022 included an



eclectic mix of articles from Growing up Poor in 1920s Norwich, the city’s Jewish Community, and The Heavenly Gardens.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Society’s social media presence continues to grow. As of April 2023, the Norwich Society Facebook page (@TheNorwichSociety) had 7,200 followers, and the Twitter account (@NorwichSociety), had over 1,300 followers. Social media is now an established tool in communicating the Society’s events and updates as well as providing a channel to inspire the public with our passion for Norwich.

YouTube

The Norwich Society’s YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/TheNorwichSociety) hosts videos about the city’s history. This year three of the speakers who gave live talks in The Forum recorded their talks to so could upload them to YouTube, and ensure that those who were unable to attend In

person won't miss out. As of April 2023, the Society's YouTube channel had over 490 subscribers and over 21,000 views.

MEMBERSHIP

Member subscriptions are the predominant source of revenue for the Society. On 1/4/2023 there were 724 individual members. The figure has remained relatively steady over the last few years (741 in 2022, 732 in 2021 and 745 in 2020).

Online membership continues to be the predominant administration type, however due to changes to the way on-line payments are verified, the payment functions on our web-site are having to be updated. This has resulted in temporary administration methods for new members and existing members whose personal details have changed..

The Society is currently supported by 14 businesses. In 2022 the Society introduced Business Patronage as a new level of membership designed to demonstrate a significant further commitment to the work of the Society. IDS systems was the first Business Patron and have extended their most welcome patronage for a second year.

SPONSORSHIP AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Society would like to thank its business members for their ongoing support.

The Trustees are delighted that IDSystems have decided to be our Business Patron for a 2nd year.



The Trustees would also like to extend a special thank you to Larking Gowen for their generosity in providing the Society with Postage administration and costs for our membership mailings.

FINANCE

Year ended 31 December 2022

The Society's total income for the year ended 31 December 2022 was £26,304 compared to £21,387 in 2021, an increase of £4,917. This increase was mainly as a result of a generous legacy as well as higher donations than in 2021.

The majority of the Society's income continued to be in the form of membership fees - total membership income for the year, including income from the relaunched Business Membership scheme, was £15,745 compared to £16,173 in 2021.

Costs for 2022 totalled £26,031 compared to £34,233 in 2021 - a decrease of approximately £8,200. This decrease was mainly due to no depreciation and amortisation charges in 2022, as the related assets were fully written off in 2021's accounts. Other costs in 2022 were very much in line with 2021.

Gift Aid reclaims continue to be an important source of income for the Society. The refunds owing for the four years up to and including 31 December 2021 were finally paid by HMRC during 2022, resulting in a total of £7,616 being received. The Gift Aid claim for 2022 amounted to £2,075, and this has been received from HMRC in 2023.

Overall, the Society achieved a surplus of £273 compared to a deficit of £12,846 in 2021, a pleasing improvement of £13,119.

At 31 December 2022, the Society's total reserves amounted to £56,789. This included cash at bank of £56,071 compared to £49,829 at 31 December 2021.

ADMINISTRATION

The Society has an office in St Martin at Palace Church, the administration centre for the Norwich Historic Churches Trust.

In August 2022 Rachel Kirk returned as the Society's Coordinator, managing the day-to-day operations and providing administrative support to the Trustees and committees. Rachel works from home and from the office.

CONTACT US

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The Norwich Society is a Charitable Incorporated
organisation (CIO), registration number 1189593



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since 1923