



## Suffolk Heritage Champion Award

We are honoured to have been granted a Suffolk Heritage Champion Award by the Suffolk Preservation Society for our work on the restoration project.

They are a self-funding charity that stands up for Suffolk communities that love their heritage and landscape. The Society supports community groups, individuals, parish councils and amenity societies, working together for the benefit of our county. They say they are passionate about sustaining the beauty and distinctive character of Suffolk, its landscape, historic buildings, towns and villages – for now and for future generations. Their professional planners work through the planning system to protect our existing built and natural heritage and to deliver new development which creates sustainable and well-designed communities. <https://www.suffolksociety.org/>

Caroline Markham, the Secretary of the Ipswich Society nominated us and we are grateful to her for this recognition.

## Contents –

1 – Suffolk Heritage Champion Award; Lighthouse  
2 – Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House Origins  
3 – Origins cont.; Remembrance Sunday  
4 – Events; Services; Annual Meeting Date;  
Trianon concert  
5 – Volunteering Matters; Extract from Odyssey  
6 – Odyssey cont.; Book Group; Poetry Group;  
Afghanistan Appeal; Contacts; Thought for the  
Month

## Lighthouse Women's Aid

This year we have been supporting the Lighthouse Women's Aid project, but because of all the restrictions, we have not done as much as we would have liked to and our fundraising has been restricted. We aim to do more from now on.

We have agreed that our Upper Hall may be used on a regular basis for individual meetings with a professional counsellor for women who need support and advice. Because of its secluded and yet central position in town, it is an ideal meeting place. Thanks go to Paulette Reed who will be our local support to open the room and be available during the sessions.

Many women have to leave their homes at short notice and to protect their own and their children's safety they often leave with no belongings at all. In co-operation with Lighthouse, we would like to start preparing some care packs to give to these women and children. Even basic items like soap, toothbrush, sanitary items, and small toys or drawing materials for the children would be a start. We will be funding some of this with the charity money we have been collecting for the project. If you would like to be involved in this, or if you would like to talk through possibilities, please contact Tessa – [tessa@tessajordan.co.uk](mailto:tessa@tessajordan.co.uk) / 01473 728498.

We also aim to organise some general awareness training about abuse and domestic violence in the new year and this will be open to everyone.

## THE IPSWICH UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE: ORIGINS

As a building, I could say that its origins date to 5<sup>th</sup> August 1699, when six members of the congregation signed a contract with Joseph Clark, “*house carpenter*”, to build a meeting-house on land purchased for £150 by Thomas Bantoft, an Ipswich mercer. One of the congregation’s signatories was “*beer brewer*” Thomas Catchpole, and perhaps he was to provide the “*four Barrells of good small Beere*” for the workmen that are mentioned in the contract. The price agreed for erecting the building was £256-14s-6d. The galleries were to cost a further £96. How much the other fittings, such as the clock, the chandelier and the magnificent pulpit, cost we don’t know.

But these few bare facts don’t really account for the origins of this Protestant Dissenting – now Unitarian - meeting-house. These lie in the religious and political turmoil of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when rival Christian sects and denominations vied for the control – and the soul – of the Church of England. Without going into all the complexities, let’s just say that the main parties were, firstly, the Episcopalians or Anglicans – who wanted a national Church, headed by the King and run by bishops and archbishops. Ousted during the Commonwealth these Anglicans were returned to power after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. Secondly, there were the Presbyterians, who favoured a national Church but one without bishops, organised instead into presbyteries and run by presbyters. Such a system prevailed in the Church of Scotland but the Presbyterians never achieved their goal of controlling the Church of England. Thirdly there were the Independents, also known as Congregationalists, who rejected the idea of a unitary Church of England and instead declared that every local congregation was fully a church in its own right. Both Presbyterians and

Congregationalists were rooted in Calvinist theology and in Puritanism, the desire to rid the Church of what they saw as the impurities derived from Roman Catholicism. There were other sects too, such as Baptists and Quakers, but they were more marginal and less influential at this time.

During the Commonwealth period Presbyterian and Independent ministers often occupied the pulpits of parish churches, but this wasn’t to last. In 1662 the so-called Act of Uniformity re-established the old Anglican order and those non-Anglican clergy who refused to conform, who dissented, were ejected, that is to say, expelled, from their pulpits and became known as Protestant Dissenters or Nonconformists. If they continued to preach they faced imprisonment, which is what happened to a number of these approximately two thousand ‘ejected’ clergy. Under threat of persecution, many of them continued to preach in secret and in hiding, gathering together congregations of fellow-Dissenters, often comprising both Presbyterians and Independents. This is what happened in Ipswich, although we don’t know exactly when.

However, in 1672 a relaxation of the law allowed these congregations and their ministers to apply for a ‘licence to preach’, and this is when the Ipswich Dissenting congregation emerges from the shadows with their appointment of the Rev. Owen Stockton. The legal status of the Dissenters remained uncertain for some years, but they were never again fully suppressed. In 1680 the Ipswich congregation, still comprised of Presbyterians and Independents – and worshipping in hired premises – called a new minister to succeed Owen Stockton. This was the Rev. John Fairfax, former vicar of Barking, near Needham Market. In 1686 the congregation divided, the Presbyterians and Independents going their separate ways. The Independents later became the Tacket Street Congregational Church, what is now Christ Church.

John Fairfax, though, continued with the Presbyterians. In 1689 the so-called Act of

Toleration opened the way for Dissenting congregations to build their own places of worship. The Ipswich Presbyterians, for whatever reason, waited ten years before they did *so, still worshipping in hired premises. In 1699, though, the decision to build this Meeting House* was made and construction began. The congregation still identified as Presbyterian and it was perhaps nearly a hundred years before it had evolved theologically to become Unitarian, which was technically illegal anyway until 1813, However we have in our possession a copy of the sermon that John Fairfax preached at the opening of this Meeting House on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1700. The sermon is a justification for building this *“tabernacle of meeting”*, as he called it. And that particular copy of it belonged to someone who was probably present to hear it as a member of the congregation. His name was John Notcutt, who we know held Socinian, which is to say Unitarian, beliefs. And that briefly is the story of how this building and the congregation which worships here originated.

Rev. Cliff Reed

Minister, 1976-2012

Minister Emeritus, 2013 to date

Sources:

Phillip A. Hewett, *‘The Story of an Old Meeting House’* (1956)

S.A. Notcutt, Keith G. Pert and Barbara Cotgrove, *‘Reflections on an old Meeting House’* (1976)

Cliff Reed, *‘A Suffolk Tabernacle: The Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House’* (1997)



## Remembrance Sunday

This year we acknowledge Remembrance Day on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November and remember all those who fought and those who suffered during the world wars and other conflicts.

Rosemary Hamilton contributed this poem, written by Joshua Dyer (aged 14) who was tasked at school to write a poem for Remembrance Day. An hour later (without any help) he produced this...

### ONE THOUSAND MEN ARE WALKING

One thousand men are walking  
Walking side by side  
Singing songs from home  
The spirit as their guide  
they walk toward the light milord  
they walk towards the sun  
they smoke and laugh and smile together  
no foes to outrun  
these men live on forever  
in the hearts of those they saved  
a nation truly grateful  
for the path of peace they paved  
they march as friends and comrades  
but they do not march for war  
step closer to salvation  
a tranquil steady corps  
the meadows lit with golden beams  
a beacon for the brave  
the emerald grass untrampled  
a reward for what they gave  
they dream of those they left behind  
and know they dream of them  
forever in those poppy fields  
there walks one thousand men  
Joshua Dyer 2019 (aged 14)



## Events –

Our recently formed Friends group are organising a variety of events in aid of our Meeting House.

### Anglia Baroque Concert – Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30pm.

This group specialises in playing mainly 16th, 17th and 18th century string music by composers from across Europe. Our repertoire includes pieces from well-known composers such as Purcell and Corelli, but we also enjoy presenting interesting and beautiful music from some of the lesser-known composers whose works are seldom heard.

### 'My Life as a Hi de Hi Yellowcoat' - an illustrated, musical, talk by David Webb.



David had a long and successful career in show business with his twin brother Tony. They will be best remembered as the twin Yellowcoats in the long-running BBC comedy series, 'Hi de Hi'. Before that they appeared in theatres across the country with some of our best loved performers, including Dame Vera Lynn, Sir Harry Secombe, Bruce Forsyth and Roy Castle.

More recently David worked as a presenter on BBC Radio Suffolk and is now a filmmaker.

In his illustrated talk David tells of his career, and how he and Tony ended up at Maplins Holiday Camp.

A fascinating tale of show business behind-the-scenes stories, David is donating his performance fee to The Friends of Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House.

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December – 7.30pm

Tickets for each of these events cost £12pp (or if pre-booked and a Friend of the Unitarian Meeting House - £10). Contact Robert - [bob.waller2255@gmail.com](mailto:bob.waller2255@gmail.com) or 07732 700082

Please do support these events – and tell your friends about them! More different entertainment is planned for 2022.

## Services in November

7<sup>th</sup> - Lizzie Kingston - Framlingham Unitarians.

14<sup>th</sup> - Rev Cliff Reed, Minister Emeritus -

### Remembrance Sunday

21<sup>st</sup> - Lynne Davies - Octagon Unitarian Chapel, Norwich

28<sup>th</sup> - Rev Cliff Reed, Minister Emeritus.

### Advent Sunday/1st Advent Candle

A communion service will follow the morning service.

We need a volunteer to co-ordinate the service on Boxing Day and on 2<sup>nd</sup> January – please speak to Linda King – 01473 712366 for more details.

## ANNUAL MEETINGS 2022 - SAVE THE DATE!

We are delighted to announce that the 2022 Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches will be held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole, with the provisional date for your diaries of 19-21 April 2021.

## Trianon Concert

Our concert on 2<sup>nd</sup> October when we were entertained by the Trianon Music Group raised £482.53 for our Meeting House. Thanks to all involved and all who came to listen – especially on a night of heavy rain!

## Volunteering Matters

At Volunteering Matters we bring people together to overcome some of society's most complex issues through the power of volunteering. We partner with communities to overcome adversity, tackling social isolation and loneliness, improving health, developing skills and opportunity and making sure young people can lead change. And because we're a national charity, we do this at scale, sharing our expertise and building partnerships to make an even bigger impact. We are currently looking for volunteer mentors in Suffolk supporting young people aged 16-25.

A mentor would be supporting a young person who is a careleaver or asylum seeker on our Grandmentors programme or a young person not in education, employment and training on our Equip programme. To apply to be a grandmentor applicants need to be aged 50+ and Equip applicants need to be aged 18+. Over the course of 6- 12 months mentors will empower their mentee within the support programme of: Health & Wellbeing; Housing & Finance and Accessing and Sustaining Employment, Education and Training. Mentors will meet their mentee once a week and may do an activity such as go for a walk or a coffee and will help set up goals to work towards.

We ask that our volunteers align themselves to Volunteering Matters Values: we are compassionate; we are empowering; we are straightforward, and we are inclusive. The role can give volunteers the opportunity to make a difference and give something back to the community. Being a mentor is a great way to gain experience helping further develop soft skills and being a positive role model to a young person who has had an absence of this influence in their lives. All you need is willingness to help someone in need.

If you are interested in being a volunteer, please contact:

[Angela.Bitca@volunteeringmatters.org.uk](mailto:Angela.Bitca@volunteeringmatters.org.uk) – 07710 395646

[Bernadette.Manners@volunteeringmatters.org.uk](mailto:Bernadette.Manners@volunteeringmatters.org.uk) – 07984 745534

[Morgan.Scott-Chantry@volunteeringmatters.org.uk](mailto:Morgan.Scott-Chantry@volunteeringmatters.org.uk) – 07950 920759

## Extract from *Odyssey* by Phillip Hewett – contributed by Peter Hewis

Those of my colleagues who were familiar with the situation at Ipswich thought I was out of my mind, and I must admit that by conventional standards they had some grounds for so thinking. To be sure, Ipswich's old meeting-house was one of the finest of its kind in the country, and had just been one of very few nonconformist buildings to receive a grant for external renovations from the Historic Churches Preservation Trust. But on the negative side the list was long. The neglected graveyard in front of the building was so overgrown that it was impossible to read the notice-board from the street. The meeting-house itself was not being used for services. It was very dirty and reeked of coal- gas leaking from the pipes that served its lighting; its hot-water heating system had been allowed to freeze up in a cold spell and the pipes had burst. The adjacent hall was being used for services, but it too was in poor condition. The ancient slow-combustion stove had rusted almost through and consequently disgorged fumes; an external tap on the wall had leaked water, leading to rot in the floor, which had gone unnoticed until the piano fell through. The congregation was tiny and elderly; the average Sunday attendance for the previous year had been seven.

Why then did I go there? Quite simply, because the congregation was honest about its predicament. They knew they were hovering on the brink of extinction and were prepared to support any desperate remedies I might propose, irrespective of what had been done before, whereas other congregations which had not sunk so low simply wanted to perpetuate patterns they had inherited from the more prosperous Victorian era while they waited, in the usual metaphor of the times, for the tide to turn – an interesting phrase, for the tide, of course, is

### **Odyssey – cont.**

completely independent of any human effort. There would be no opposition in Ipswich to my trying to build upon the experience Margaret had gained at the Fellowships Office in Boston and I had applied in my work to get the Lakeshore congregation on its feet in Montreal.

So we moved to Ipswich and went to work. Funds were limited, but the hall floor was repaired and new heating installed. We had work parties to cut down the tangled elderberry growth around the approaches. We began more striking and unconventional advertising in the press, and I cultivated the newspaper's editors and columnists, who were quite sympathetic if we could provide material that was newsworthy. One significant opportunity came up before long. In January the London Philharmonic Orchestra was booked for a concert in Ipswich, under its conductor Sir Adrian Boult. Knowing that Sir Adrian was a Unitarian, I wrote to ask him if he would be prepared to speak at a Saturday night meeting under our auspices, and he graciously agreed. We now had a deadline to complete the work renovating the hall with a new coat of paint and colourful drapes. We borrowed extra chairs to use its full capacity, and in the event this turned out to have been necessary. The place was packed, and in its report the East Anglian newspaper had a front-page photograph of Sir Adrian with myself. It had been so successful that the following year we invited the former Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, to come for a similar meeting, with similar results.

A trickle of newcomers began to appear at our services: one or two on most Sundays. Some came back a second time; a few became part of the congregation. By the end of the first church year we had taken in a handful of new members, and were at work on restoring the meeting-house. A party of UYPL members came up from London for a work-party to clean it, and we were fortunate in having that work taken up by a new caretaker, Sandy, an enormous woman from a neighbouring cottage, who took a great pride in her work and made the place shine. The old gas-lamps were

taken out and electricity installed, with heating under some of the individual box-pews that made the place usable except under the most extreme weather conditions. By the end of the second year average attendance had quadrupled – from 7 to 28.

Phillip Hewett

**Book Group** – we next meet on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm via Zoom to discuss 'The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks' a non-fiction book by Rebecca Skloot.

**Poetry Group** - will next meet on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November in the afternoon – contact Riena Jackson for details.

### **AFGHANISTAN APPEAL**

18 million people in Afghanistan are in urgent need of humanitarian help owing to decades of conflict, years of extreme drought and weeks of heavy fighting. [Find out more about the Red Cross Memorial Peace Appeal for the people of Afghanistan here](#), organised by Rev. Feargus O'Connor, Golders Green Unitarians.

### **Disclaimer**

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community

**Contacts** Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November by email to [ipswichunitarian@gmail.com](mailto:ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS  
To contact our Secretary ring 01473 728498 email [tessa@tessajordan.co.uk](mailto:tessa@tessajordan.co.uk)  
Website – [www.unitarianipswich.com](http://www.unitarianipswich.com)

### **Thought for the month**

If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you, that would suffice. — Meister Eckhart