

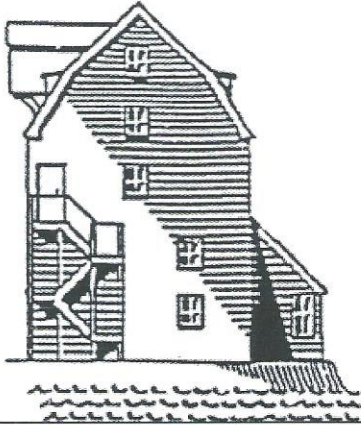
The Woodbridge Society

Newsletter

Spring 2011

Editor: Michael Rines

Production Editor: Carol Wiseman



Free to members £1.00 for non-members

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Peter Clay was born with sailing in his blood and is one of Woodbridge's leading activists, particularly where the riverside is concerned.

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Colin Richmond, Emeritus Professor of History at Keele University, now lives in Woodbridge. Some of his most notable work was on Mediaeval Suffolk and Norfolk, but he later became a leading authority on The Holocaust.

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Alexander menswear shop 83 years in Woodbridge 11

Alexander is the only remaining specialist independent menswear shop in the town. Founded 110 years ago as Alexander The Great in Ipswich, it is sponsor of this issue of the Newsletter.

History could point our way

In times of flux history offers a hand, says Bob Merrett

We are yet to learn how the measures outlined in the Localism Bill will be implemented, and Suffolk Coastal District Council's Core Strategy is still in limbo. Regardless of what happens, our Planning Group will continue to scrutinise all planning applications that have an impact on the town. The usefulness of what we do is comprehensively described in Neil Montgomery's planning report in this issue.

The great change and uncertainty that presently engulfs us has prompted me to write about how Woodbridge has evolved and to reflect on what we want it to become. My article on page 5 describes the transformation from a flourishing market, port and manufacturing centre to a town where the majority of its working population have to find employment elsewhere.

People aged 65 or older make up more than 28% of Woodbridge's population

At the same time there has been a steep rise in house prices, which has made it difficult for younger people to stay in the area where they were born. One consequence is that in 2001 people aged 65 or older accounted for 28% of the population. Within Suffolk Coastal as a whole the figure is 22% and for the UK as a whole only 16%.

According to a recent national survey, 43% of the over 50s in England want to move away when they retire, but this does not seem to apply to Woodbridge. Indeed, it is to places like our town that retiring people want to move, and this year's census is likely to reveal that significantly more than 28% of the population of the town is aged 65 or older. It can only be the high cost of houses here that stop Woodbridge appearing on the list of 'retirement havens'. If the town were to become one of these there could well be applications to demolish groups of houses and to build flats on the sites.

Becoming a retirement town would have damaging effects

The down side of becoming a retirement haven is that the town would become less diverse, and my view is that this would make life much less stimulating. There is also a danger that, in adapting to the new age profile, the retail trade would become more specialised and the town would cease to be the retail hub for the surrounding communities. The way to prevent this happening is to press for actions that will increase both employment and the number of low cost start up homes in the area.

Successive planning documents have made it clear that there is little scope for either in Woodbridge and that the nearest available land is in Melton. However, commercial and residential sites in town do come up for redevelopment and our Society could press to have them retained for commercial use and for low cost start up homes respectively.

The Society would welcome members' views on these matters?

New blood needed for Town Centre Management Company

The spring 2009 Newsletter carried an account of how effective the Town Centre Management company has been in promoting Woodbridge's businesses and in attracting both visitors and residents to the town centre. It has just been announced that Penny Austen-Brown will be stepping down as Chairman in March and that Marion Wells, the Town Centre Coordinator, will be leaving in July. We thank them both for their past efforts and hope they will be replaced by an equally strong team, which will have an important role to play in what will be challenging times for our town's businesses.

Alexander's menswear shop sponsors our Newsletter

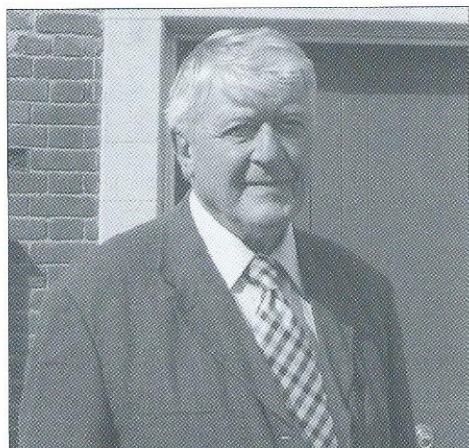
Alexander's menswear shop is the business featured in this issue on Page 11. It has been on the Thoroughfare since 1927 and their building, stock and staff are a credit to the town. The Society is grateful for its kind sponsorship this Newsletter.

Tribute to visits organiser Carol Wiseman

The summer visits last year were a great success thanks to their effective organisation by Carol Wiseman, strongly supported by her husband, Laurie. Details of the programme she has arranged for this summer are set out on Page 10 and a booking form is enclosed.

SCDC planners give weight to Society's views

Planning Group leader Neil Montgomery reports on the latest decisions



Neil Montgomery: comments taken seriously

Suffolk Coastal District Council has now made decisions on several important planning applications mentioned in the Autumn issue of the Newsletter. In a significant number of cases, reservations expressed by the Planning Group appear to have carried weight, which suggests that the Society's comments are being taken seriously

Revised Quay Street Church plan is approved in line with Society's views

A good example is the application to enlarge Quay Street Church, mentioned in my last report. The Planning Group objected to the scale and design of the original extension block, which would have spoiled the appearance of this historic church when seen from Quay Street. The Group was invited by members of the congregation to discuss their proposals and, as a result, their revised application was modified.

Gone is the glazed walkway along the side of the church, and subtle improvements have been made to the

windows on the Crown Place side. Nevertheless, the modified plan still involves, unfortunately but inevitably, the felling of the fine mature yew tree close to the church, but it now includes several welcome improvements to the historic churchyard. The revised scheme, crucial to the conservation area, has now been approved by SCDC.



Quay Street Church: the tree still has to go

Reduction in size for Crown Place house secures approval

Another example is the application to construct a new house in part of the garden of St. Anne's School House in Crown Place. The Planning Group objected to the first application for this site, because the height and scale of the proposed house would dominate the area. A revised application, which reduced the size of the building, was submitted and has now been approved by the Council.

Road safety concern ignored for Theatre Street development

Not all our submissions succeed, however. We objected to the proposal to cram a small house and a garage into the vacant site behind the Galley Restaurant next door to the public conveniences in

Theatre Street on the grounds that access to the associated garage would be awkward and dangerous.

The Group pointed out that Theatre Street is very narrow at this point and close to the blind exit at the top of Angel Lane. We suggested that this was an ideal site for a small town house right in the town centre for someone prepared to do without a car in the interests of reducing pollution, congestion and environmental damage.

Despite our suggestions, no objection was raised by the Highways Authority and, to our disappointment, the application was granted for both house and garage.

Adastral New Town on hold

Plans to build 2,000 new houses and 60,000 square metres of office/workshop space at the Martlesham Adastral site have been halted to allow for more consideration of objections raised by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT). SCDC, having taken legal advice, cancelled the meeting scheduled for 9 March to consider the Reviewed Core Strategy, in order to take account of the objections raised by SWT.

The SWT objections to the application are based on the impact that the expected increase in visitors to the Suffolk Sandlings Special Protection Area and the adjoining Deben valley. SCDC expects that an independent appraisal of the regulations contained in the European Habitats Directive and the submissions made by the SWT will take several weeks, delaying a final decision on the Core Strategy until later this year.

A new residential home for Melton

A proposal to redevelop the former GAH factory on the eastern side of Melton Road has been submitted. The building, which is next to the railway line, has been derelict for several years. The plan is to demolish the industrial building and replace it with a care home. It will have 58 single bedrooms and ten single assisted living suites together with associated communal day and ancillary care facilities.

The developer, Cavendish Health Group, has designed the building so as to provide appropriate facilities for various types of residents, including the elderly frail, those requiring assisted living and people suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

We were impressed by the imaginative conception of the proposed home, particularly the provision of two parallel accommodation blocks with a covered 'internal street' designed to give residents the freedom to walk around in a secure area.

The plans also include solar water heating panels on the internal roof slope, landscaped grounds and, because the site is in the Deben flood risk zone, well thought-out provision for evacuation in an emergency.

When we supported this proposal, which will help to cater for the needs of an ageing population, we pointed out that there is a need to ensure that the local medical services will be able to cope with the additional demand for care.

Approval given for two Melton plans



Horse and Groom site will be three dwellings

The conversion of the former Horse and Groom pub in Melton into a residential complex has started. We had raised no objection to the plan to create three dwellings here.

Also in Melton, but closer to Woodbridge, the application to convert



Shop on John Grose site will be a Spar outlet

the former John Grose garage in Melton Road to a convenience store was withdrawn after my last report. A slightly revised application has been submitted and has been approved. The rumour that it will become a Tesco convenience store is unfounded; it will be a Spar outlet. The repair facilities and the sale of fuel will continue on the adjoining site

Campaign to protect trees succeeds

Close to Lanyard Place, (the site of the former Woodbridge Primary School in New Street), an application to demolish Gault House, hidden behind Barclays Bank, has been approved. A new and larger house is to be built on the same plot on condition that the trees in the garden, including a magnificent beech, are protected. The Planning Group, having expressed serious concerns about the loss of this important tree in the town centre on behalf of nearby residents, is pleased with this outcome.

New plan for Small Ships site



Small Ships building: no hint of future use

A revised plan has been lodged for the former Small Ships Delivery building on the corner of Quay Street and Quayside. Two previous applications to convert the premises into a wine bar and restaurant were both rejected.

The latest planning application from the same company, Poplar Holdings, contains no reference to a change of use, merely asking for permission to erect an extension to the first floor and

"associated alterations to the existing shop premises". The previous applications were rejected by SCDC because the extension of the original shop was "unneighbourly, by virtue of its scale, presence and dominance".

One has to wonder what the developer intends to use the converted building for if permission is granted.

The height of the extension alongside Quay Street will alter the street scene and may limit the views of the Sutton shore as one walks down towards the river. Neighbours on Quayside may be overlooked and lose some sunlight in their back gardens. On balance, however, the Planning Group decided that the proposal would improve the street scene by creating a greater sense of enclosure and by removing a sub-standard flat-roofed structure.

Café Nero opening caused concern among residents and shopkeepers



Café Nero opened without planning permit

Members will be aware that the former Victoria Wine shop on the corner of Brook Street and The Thoroughfare, more recently a Sue Ryder charity shop, has been converted to a Café Nero coffee shop. This change of use from a shop to a café without any application for planning permission has created public concern from many residents and local shopkeepers.

The authorised use of these premises is as a shop, (Class A1 of the Use Classes Order). Nero Holdings claims that it is trading partly as a café and partly as a shop, arguing that a high proportion of sales are in the form of take-aways, as in a standard Class A1 shop. The company also points out that the business is open only during normal shopping hours.

The legal position is further complicated by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) Order 2010, which redefined the 1987 Use Classes Order and by the pending SCDC Core

Strategy document, which places greater emphasis on “maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of existing retail centres” in cases such as this.

Café Nero has now, belatedly, submitted a planning application for a change of use from an A1 Shop to a combined shop and café (A1 combined with A3). The SCDC Planning Department will have the difficult task of resolving the application in the light of these changes in law and planning guidance.

New window for Barretts Shop



Side window will reflect style of shop front

Across Brook Street from Café Nero a blank brick wall forms part of Barretts of Woodbridge. The store is a listed building with a handsome frontage on The Thoroughfare, but the plain brick side elevation in Brook Street is rather featureless. Permission to insert a shop window in this wall has been given. We believe it will enliven a rather dark and unattractive alleyway leading to the charming cottages further down Brook Street.

Barretts has also asked for permission to paint the brand name of the store on the remainder of the wall in a style reflecting its shop front in the Thoroughfare. This second application, which the Planning Group also supports, is now being considered by the SCDC conservation officers and a decision is expected shortly.

Redevelopment of former library site

The old library having been demolished, work has recently started on a new building for which planning approval was granted in 2004. The planning consent was for medical and related services on the ground floor facing the Oak Lane car park, with duplex flats above. The south east elevation incorporates open steps leading to the patio area at the first floor level.

The style of the building matches that of

the large block of flats at the entrance to Lanyard Place, with Velux type roof windows facing Little St. John's Street. The medical practice in that street has decided not to move into the new building, and any proposal for change of use would require a new planning application.

Contemporary house near completion



Visibility from main road causes dismay

The new contemporary-style house alongside Lime Kiln Quay is now nearing completion and is visible, to the dismay of some, from the nearby main road. The Planning Group did not object to the modern design of the building, believing that each period should be allowed to make its own contribution to the traditionally heterogeneous mixture of architectural styles in the town.

Work is expected to start shortly on the refurbishment of the cottage on the other side of the dock. The old wooden barn, which was so ruinous as to be dangerous, has already been demolished and a revised scheme for a replacement building to form one with the cottage as a live-work unit has been submitted. The project includes plans to provide a new garden and to landscape the surrounding area. We thought the latest version of the design for the new building was imaginative and visually interesting, so we commended it.

Draft Conservation Appraisal is now released for public consultation

The Conservation Officers at SCDC have recently released for public consultation a draft version of the Woodbridge Conservation Area Appraisal. This is a detailed description of every noteworthy building in the Conservation area, accompanied with historical notes and many beautiful photographs.

The Planning Group has been invited to give its comments on the draft document and our members are now preparing to

pool our suggestions later this month.

The Appraisal document may be inspected at the Planning Information Desk at SCDC or on line at d.c.admin@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk.

Other signs of the times

In The Thoroughfare, permission has been given to clean the stonework on the front of Lloyds Bank and to make some other minor changes to the exterior. Not far away from Lloyds, the Halifax Agency is to have its signs changed to Santander Agency.

Members may have noticed that several CCTV cameras have recently been placed in the Thoroughfare and on the Bull Hotel. The cameras themselves are small and unobtrusive, and the Police are convinced that they will help to reduce anti-social behaviour in the town centre.

Change of name for Seal pub

Outside the centre, the Seal public house on Ipswich Road has decided to change its name to the Duke of York, that of the inn that stood on the same site when the Napoleonic barracks was across the road.

The previous inn and the barracks were pulled down soon after the troops left the town in 1814.

Membership News

By Sue Leslie

The Society extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Beryl Blake
Geraldine Brown
Dorin Elvin
Graham Ford
Kathleen Kazer
Mary Liley
Jean Millbank
Kate Pearce
Michael Pearce
Diana Sheldon
David and Jean Smith
Stephen and Angela Theunissen
Richard Tyson
Liz Wright

These new members bring our total up to 385.

We do appreciate it when you inform us of any changes of address

How Woodbridge has grown and evolved

Bob Merrett tracks the development of the town to inform its future development

The growth of Woodbridge from a small Anglo-Saxon village to the fourth largest town in Suffolk by 1801 is charted in subsidy rolls, tax returns and censuses. The town had grown because, as a market centre and inland port, it was the ideal conduit through which to send agricultural products from the surrounding area to other parts of England.

Woodbridge was also home to numerous craftsmen who fashioned goods for the townspeople and for the country people who brought their produce to market. Others were busy making things which were traded nationally. At various times twill and linen weavers, shipbuilders, rope makers, leather workers and glovers were active here. As demand for one of the products declined another took its place.

The railway coming hit river trade

When the railway cut through the riverfront in 1859 it had an immediate detrimental impact on the maritime trade of Woodbridge. The town became less prosperous and the population fell by 12%. Soon things got worse, because of the 'great agricultural depression' that lasted well into the 20th century and hit corn-producing areas like Suffolk particularly badly.

Some Suffolk towns attracted new industries during this depression and thereby continued to prosper and grow. Garretts of Leiston, Smythes of Peasenhall and Sweffling, and Ransomes of Ipswich produced first-class agricultural machinery. Silk mills were installed in several places, but succeeded only at Sudbury and Glemsford, while at Beccles and Bungay printing works were established and they became of national importance.

Failure to attract major employers

Woodbridge, however, failed to attract any major employers and its population remained static until after the Second World War. Consequently, the town fell from being fourth largest town in Suffolk in 1801 to seventh in 1901 and eleventh in 1971.

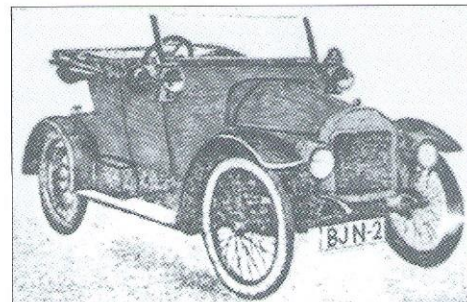
In the early part of the 20th century two companies started to make cars in



Coal barge being unloaded in Woodbridge dock before the railway hit maritime trade

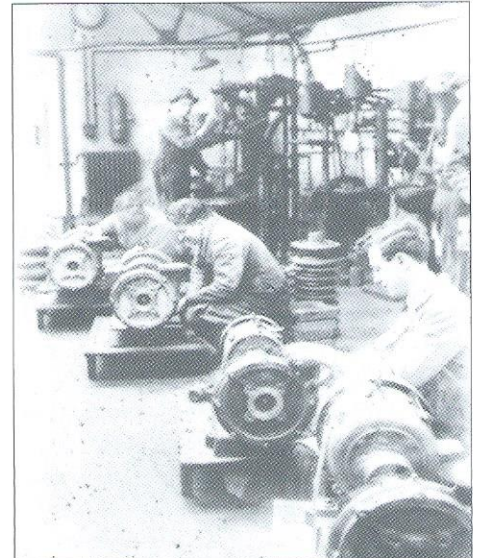


Market Hill in 1910, when Woodbridge had fallen to being the seventh largest town in Suffolk



The Ridley, briefly produced in Woodbridge

Woodbridge, but they soon failed. Then in 1933 three local businessmen established a canning company adjacent to Elhmurst Park. This moved to Martlesham Heath soon after the Quayside relief road was built, in 1975. During the Second World War two



Pump assembly at the Girdlestone factory

London companies, Girdlestone and Culmak, relocated to Woodbridge. Girdlestone's electric motor and pump business eventually moved to a large factory near Melton Station, but this closed in the 1990s. Culmak, which made shaving brushes of the highest quality, initially set up production in the Crown Maltings, but in 1949 moved to a custom built factory in Turn Lane. It ceased trading in 1975.

Little manufacturing activity

By 1951 nearly half of the working population of Woodbridge was employed in agriculture and forestry in the rural areas outside Woodbridge or in the market gardens and nurseries in the town. Manufacturing industries in Woodbridge and district supported only 8.7% of the workforce.

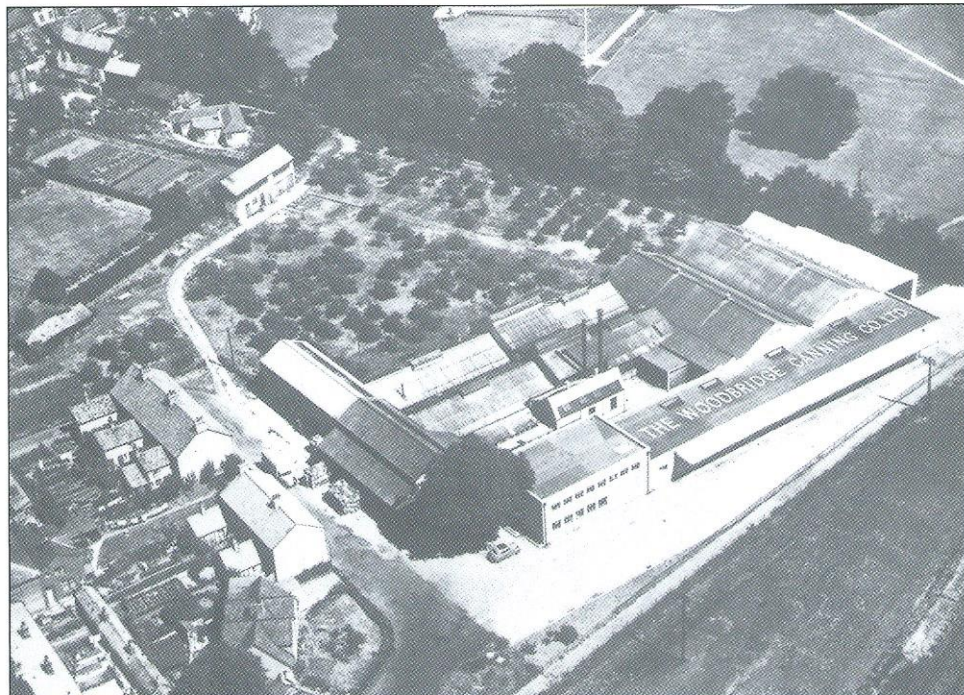
Most of the remainder were employed in service industries operating in Woodbridge or nearby locations. These included Woodbridge Urban District Council and the Deben Rural District Council, which had their headquarters in Woodbridge, and nearby there was the headquarters of the East Suffolk Agricultural Executive, the Borstal at Hollesley and the large mental hospital at Melton.

During the 1960s employment opportunities in the town were decreasing. By the end of the decade the market gardens in Woodbridge had all closed, as had the farms at Drybridge Hill and Kingston, which were part of Suffolk Seeds. However, by then the rise in car ownership made it possible for people to live here, but work many miles away.

Woodbridge a dormitory town

In 1967 it became clear that Woodbridge was about to become a dormitory town for some of the employees of London companies which were about to relocate to the Ipswich area.

These companies included major insurers and BT Laboratories, so a Town Plan was drawn up to guide the provision of more houses in Woodbridge, while at the same time protecting its historic core. The Plan also specified where new housing could be built in Melton and recognised that, for planning purposes, Woodbridge and Melton should be considered together.



In 1933 three local businessmen started a canning factory near Elmhurst Park

Between 1961 and 1981 the population of Woodbridge grew from 5951 to 7432 and most of the suitable building land to the east of the A12 had been used up.

For later arrivals housing was built on land in Melton. Between 1961 and 2001 the population of Woodbridge and Melton increased by 30%, from 8508 to 11086 and all the house building envisaged in the 1967 Town Plan had been completed.

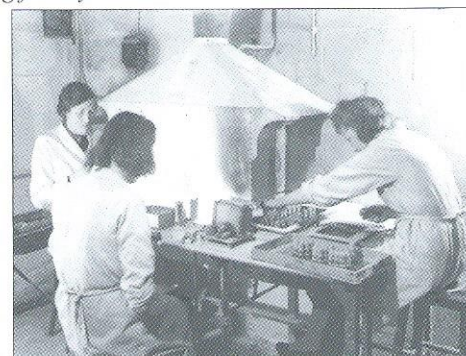
Tourism and retail come to the fore

Many of the surrounding communities also increased in size during the same period, and the retail and restaurant trade of the town has benefited from their custom and from an increase in tourism.

What was left of Woodbridge's manufacturing heritage in 1971 has, however, now almost disappeared and only Brafé Engineering, Suffolk Sails, Gerald Weir Antiques (reproduction furniture) and Gibbins' leather works remain.

There are three publishers in the town, but their books are printed elsewhere. In addition there are a number of design and consultancy companies selling services rather than goods. In Melton there is a cluster of small manufacturing companies, including Cogent Technology, Arkray and Deben Industries.

The bulk of employment for Woodbridge residents is now outside the town, the largest employers being the



Culmak shaving brush works closed in 1975



Gerald Weir: one of our few manufacturers

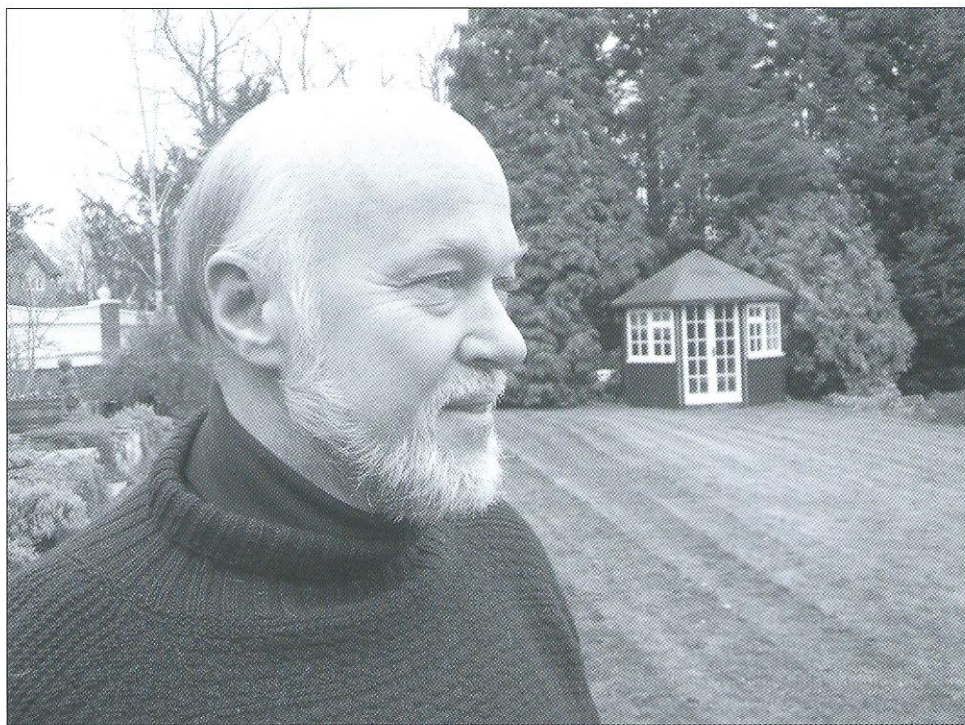
insurance companies in Ipswich, BT at Adastral Park and Felixstowe Docks with its associated transport services.

Age profile of residents gets older

There have been two other very significant changes in the town. These are the steep rise in house prices, which has made it very difficult for local young people to stay in the area, and a change in the age profile of the residents. In 2001 people aged 65 or older accounted for 28% of the population of Woodbridge. Within Suffolk Coastal as a whole the figure is 22% and for the UK 16%.

Pete Clay: guardian of Woodbridge's riverside

Born with sailing in his blood and passionate about our riverside. By Michael Rines



Pete in his garden. He still keeps a violin workshop in his house on Ipswich Road

Pete Clay is one Woodbridge's leading activists, particularly where anything to do with the riverside is concerned. He is a trustee of The Woodbridge Town Trust, Chairman of the Woodbridge and Melton Riverside Acton Group (WAMRAG) and one of founding members of the Maritime Woodbridge working party. He is also a Trustee of The Woodbridge Riverside Trust, which is aiming to buy and develop the Whisstocks site as the hub of an ambitious maritime heritage development for the riverside.

Plans to build new Thames barge

He is now also a trustee of Sea-Change, an organisation set up to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to learn and develop in a sailing environment. They are currently raising funds to build the first new Thames Sailing Barge since the war.

Away from the river, Pete sings bass with the Woodbridge Choral Society, but almost wherever he is, and whether in committee room or at sea, he is accompanied by a golden shadow, his Labrador, Jake, well-known, well-liked and well-behaved.

Pete was born in Welwyn Garden City in 1947 with sailing in his blood. His

grandfather sailed with Arthur Ransome, and the famous author's greatest book, *We Didn't Mean To Go To Sea*, is dedicated to his grandmother, who suggested to Ransome the idea of the Walker children's sailing across the North Sea. What's more, his father was the inspiration for Jim Brading, one of the characters in the book.

Sailed from an early age

Not surprisingly, Pete sailed from as early as he can remember, notably in a 1922 wooden boat, the yawl-rigged Firefly. She had been designed by Albert Strange, an artist and classic boat designer.

The family moved to Essex when he was ten, and at 13 Pete went to Felsted, the public school. There, he says he was "a bit rebellious, and not fond of team sports", so whenever he could he cleared off either to sail the Firefly on the Blackwater or to tinker with his ancient car, a Standard Flying 9. As a result, he failed a number of O levels at the first attempt, but took them again later that year, passing in eight subjects and then getting A levels in Spanish and French, establishing a life long love of languages.

From there he went to Trinity College, Dublin, and continued with Spanish and

French. He joined the College chamber choir, performing regularly in recitals and concerts, and toured to Graz, Austria. He learned a lot about pre-classical music, and in vacations played the violin with a small group, having achieved Grade Five while at school. One member of the group built a viola da gamba, and this sparked an interest in stringed instrument making.

After graduating, he got a job with an import/export agency on the strength of his Spanish speaking skills, but was put into the Nigerian department! During this time he sang with the New Philharmonia Chorus and later with the Bach Choir.

Becomes professional violin maker

After three years he left London to follow up his instrument making interest by enrolling on a three-year full-time course at the Newark School of Violin Making. As part of the course, he spent time working for W E Hills and Sons, the renowned maker, restorer and dealer in violins and other stringed instruments. When he completed the course, he worked for Hills for five years.

Pete explains his fascination with working on stringed instruments. "It lies in the fact that violins, violas and cellos are 'living' objects and their character is determined not only by their particular component parts, especially the spruce belly (the sounding board), but also by the way each piece is treated during construction. There is an infinite number of pieces of wood to choose from (every piece is different) and an infinite number of ways to craft them.

Challenging the greatest makers

"Then there is the supreme challenge of producing today an instrument that begins to equal the instruments of the golden age of instrument-making in the early 1700s, the greatest names being Antonio Stradivarius and Guarneri del Jesu. (The famous Vieuxtemps Guarneri del Jesu of 1741 was in the Bein and Fushi saleroom in Chicago last year with an asking price of \$18million).

While Pete was learning to make violins he met his future wife, Nancy, getting engaged within a very short time and marrying in 1976 with still a year to go

on his course. She was an American who had taken a degree in history. As part of her undergraduate course she had spent time in England, and had enjoyed her time here so much that she had returned after graduating. She eventually got a job with Shell in Supply and Trading, completed her masters degree in International Relations, and in 1982 moved to Hamburg to work for Shell there. Clay left Hills to join her in Hamburg, where he made and repaired instruments on a freelance basis.

Buys the classic Nirvana

They moved back to England in 1985, Nancy still working for Shell, and it was at this time that Pete went to a meeting of the Albert Strange Association in Ireland, and saw and fell in love with the classic 1925-built 36ft yawl *Nirvana of Arklow*. He bought her in 1989 and started on an extensive restoration.

"I get great pleasure from working on her, and there's much still to do," he says, "but the sailing is always the prime pleasure. It's the satisfaction of integrating with the forces around you. It tests your skill, judgment, experience and wisdom to the limit, at the same time enhancing your surroundings by adding a pretty sight."

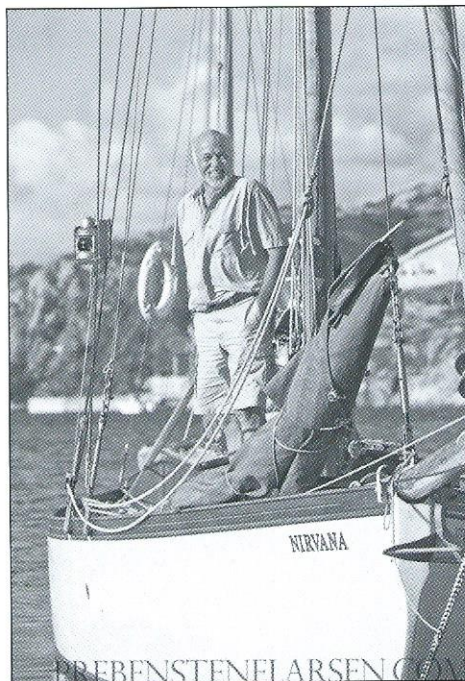
Sailing is like violin playing

"That may sound immodest, but *Nirvana* was designed by an artist, Albert Strange, and I feel an obligation to keep her looking her best. (Pete has served as Chairman of the Albert Strange Association) Setting sail in *Nirvana* for the first time after her restoration, feeling the wind filling her sails and gently bringing her to life had much in common with drawing a bow for the very first time across the strings of a new instrument and hearing it respond."

The Clays move to Switzerland

Nancy's next post with Shell took them to Switzerland in 1992, where Pete again made violins, violas and a cello, but also got a qualification for teaching English as a foreign language. Then back to England in 1997 to Woodbridge, where his parents lived. He already knew and loved the town, having sailed here every holiday since the late 1950s. Then, when his father died in 1999, they bought and moved into his house on Ipswich Road.

Nancy was still with Shell, but with the benefit of modern technology was able to do much of her work from home. However, having risen to become the



Pete aboard his classic Albert Strange yacht

Change Manager of Shell Europe Oil Products, she left in 2003 to work as a partner in a small business consultancy specialising in the management of change and in leadership training.

Pete still has a violin workshop in the house and has a few violins to finish, plus a viola and a cello to sell, but has more or less withdrawn from instrument making and become increasingly involved in voluntary work for the town.

His work with the Woodbridge Town Trust has reduced since its responsibility for management of the Tesco Action Plan was transferred to the Town Centre Management company. Tesco had provided the funds for the plan as part of the planning agreement for the extension of the Martlesham store.

However, the Trust is still able to receive bequests and can own funds, land and property for the benefit of the town. Again, there is less to do this year for Maritime Woodbridge, because it will now be held in alternate years, with no event in 2011.

Involved in planning for the Deben

WAMRAG, where Pete is Chairman, was set up to protect and enhance the Deben riverside from Kyson Point to Wilford Bridge, and he is involved in working with the River Deben Association and the Deben Estuary Partnership in the development of policy for the long term future of the river.

Because there are no immediate threats

from inappropriate development in the area to concern the Group, things are quiet at WAMRAG, but that could change if an attempt were made by a developer to get permission for an unacceptable project on the former Whisstocks site.

Need to stop unwanted development

It is the need to forestall such a possibility that is most exercising Pete, hence his involvement alongside John Gibbins as a Trustee of The Riverside Trust, which has an ambitious and exciting vision for the riverside area. This envisages the re-establishment of the Whisstocks site as a facility for classic boat building and repair. Equally exciting, it could become a centre for training in the traditional skills, with the possible establishment of a boat-building college.

Also on the site, there would be an interactive visitor centre, where visitors would learn about the vessels being built and restored, and linking with the Tide Mill to offer facilities for visitors to learn about tidal power, as well as wind, wave, solar power and other forms of alternative energy.

Another part of the vision would be the restoration of the ferry between Ferry Quay and the east bank of the Deben to establish circular walks, and to link the site with the National Trust at Sutton Hoo and possibly with the Suffolk Punch Trust at Hollesley, all making the most of the proximity of the railway station to the Whisstocks site.

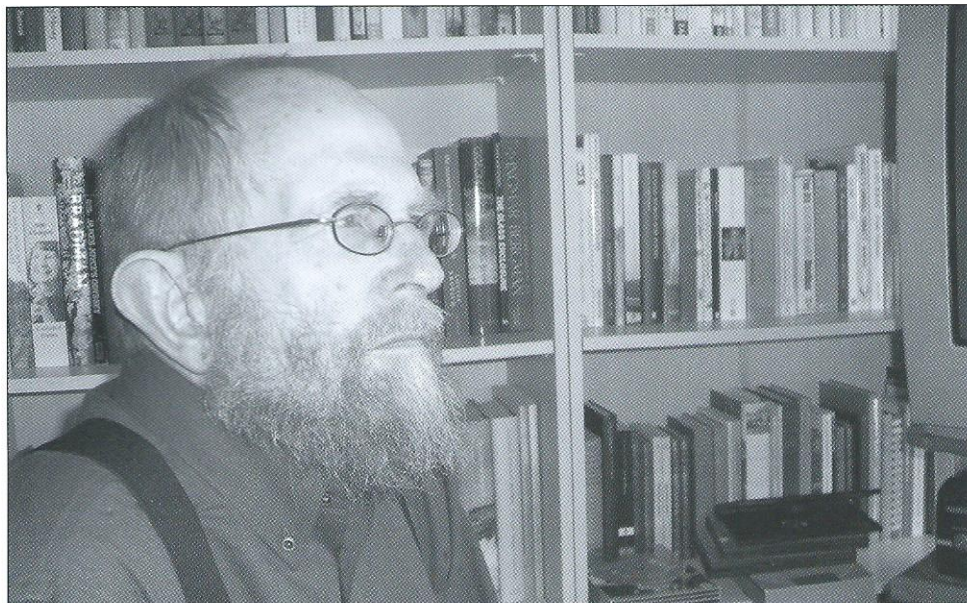
Last chance for riverside development

Pete is keen to get ahead with the project because, as he says, "The site deserves a marine use, historically and for the future. This seems to be the last chance, and it would be entirely fitting to have an exciting maritime project there for the community."

Sailing is not his only leisure activity. When not supporting Nancy or involved in voluntary work, he skis and enjoys paragliding, having made more than 200 flights. But sailing remains his greatest interest, and he is fortunate that Nancy loves sailing with him. She particularly enjoys getting away for a couple of weeks on the east coast, though she prefers sun and warmth if it's available. Their only source of disagreement, says Pete, is over the point at which, when the wind drops, they start the engine and dropping the sails.

A Mediaeval historian and Holocaust authority

Professor Richmond combines rage against injustice with pity for victims. By Michael Rines



Colin Richmond, Emeritus Professor of History at Keele University, now lives in Woodbridge

Woodbridge resident Colin Richmond taught at Keele University for more than 30 years, first as lecturer and later as Professor of History, and has many claims to academic distinction; a bibliography of his published work stretches to nine pages. He was a mediaevalist whose most important publications are about people in 15th century Suffolk and Norfolk, but later became an authority on the Holocaust.

However, what stands out as much as his academic record is his capacity for making and sustaining friendships and for the affection and respect he inspired in his students and colleagues.

Taught by Norman Scarfe

Norman Scarfe, another eminent Woodbridge resident, was a lecturer in History at Leicester University and taught the undergraduate Colin and his future wife, Myrna. "I remember them sitting together under my nose at all my lectures. He got a very good degree, and went on to become a distinguished historian. After more than 50 years, he and Myrna are still my good friends."

One of Colin's students at Keele was Donald Bloxham, now History Professor at Edinburgh. He says "I didn't particularly want to go to Keele. I had visited a friend there and thought it was a strange, rather secluded place." But he now acknowledges it was the best thing that could have happened to him. Colin's charisma got the new student fascinated by history.

"It's amazing how much I owe to Colin and his guidance, because Colin is now one of my best friends. He managed to get the balance right between being a friend and a superb tutor."

In 2005, eight years after Colin had retired, a book of essays on Mediaeval history entitled *Much heaving and shoving*, was published in celebration of his work and friendship. Its preface was written by fellow Mediaevalist, the late Sir Rees Davies, Chichele Professor of Medieval History at Oxford University.

Different from other historians

He had been a fellow research graduate with Colin at Oxford in 1959, and he makes it clear that Colin was different from other historians. "He wears his heart on his sleeve in a way which other historians – at least in their public utterances -- find even embarrassing ... His history comes deep from the soul ... 'rage at injustice and pity for the victims of it' is his motto."

Sir Rees went on to say of Colin that fellow historians "might differ from him in temperament, intellectual outlook and, most certainly, in the way we write history, but we value his friendship for its utter integrity and revivifying honesty."

Colin says he only ever wanted to study history from the time he learned to read, and he was fortunate in having an inspirational history teacher at the highly rated Sidcup Grammar School, from which he got a scholarship to Leicester

University to read history. He was there from 1956 to 1959, but admits to having become rebellious and disenchanted with academia by his final year, even walking out of one finals exam, as a result failing to get the first he might have done. He had nonetheless fallen in love with the 15th century.

From Leicester, Colin went to Magdalen College, Oxford, working as a research student on the history of the Navy in the 15th century under the guidance of Bruce McFarlane. This brought him a doctorate. However, he did not enjoy Oxford, finding that research students were not well catered for and that it was "too posh". He followed this by two years work in London on the history of Parliament, 1376 to 1422.

By now married to Myrna, who had become a teacher of mentally and physically handicapped children, he moved on in 1964 to a lectureship at the relatively new university of Keele. There, gradually working his way through the ranks to a professorship, he taught English and European Mediaeval history, a recurring theme of his teaching being the oppression of minorities, including Jews and heretics, especially the English Lollards. He moved on to teaching modern European history, in particular The Holocaust, which he was the first to teach in the UK as a special subject.

Throughout this period, he continued to pursue his fascination with Mediaeval English history, which had been the main subject of his research and publications. He regards his biographical study, *John Hopton: a fifteenth-century Suffolk gentleman*, as his best work.

Researched at Suffolk Record Office

During one of the most turbulent periods of English history, the Yorkshire born Hopton had rather unexpectedly inherited rich estates in Yorkshire itself and in Suffolk, notably the manors of Blythburgh, Walberswick, and Yoxford. Unusually, sufficient documentation survived at The Suffolk Record Office in Ipswich to enable Colin to throw remarkable new light on the way gentlemen, and Hopton in particular, lived, managed their estates and ran their lives. One of the gentlemen Hopton knew was John Paston, a Norfolk landowner whose family is the subject of Colin's *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Cen-*

ture. This is a three-volume work based on a collection of more than 1,500 letters and papers, one of the earliest, and certainly the best, collections of private correspondence to survive in Britain.

The family went from husbandry to gentility in just two generations, and this is the story of how they did it, a unique glimpse into the concerns and fears of an upwardly mobile family at a time of great social dislocation.

Interest in Holocaust started as a boy

Colin's interest in The Holocaust had started as long ago as his primary schooldays when he remembers seeing newsreels of the liberation of Belsen, and though he makes it clear that he has not done original research on the subject, he has visited the sites of all the extermination centres in Poland, notably Auschwitz, which he says he knows like the back of his hand. He has written numerous papers on aspects of the Final Solution, and was involved in the publication of the collective book *Belsen in History and Memory*.

In the introduction he expresses the 'rage at injustice and pity for the victims of it' referred to by Sir Rees Davies.

Treatment of prisoners not adequate

He and other contributors were particularly angered by the fact that, too often, the liberation of Belsen was celebrated as a British triumph ahead of recognition of the sufferings of the inmates. Colin reminds us also that, after it was liberated, the treatment of the Jewish prisoners was inadequate and that there were lengthy delays in repatriating them.

Not all Colin's writing has been in such serious vein. As Sir Rees Davies said, "His moral outrage is mercifully balanced by a puckish sense of humour," referring particularly to his book, *The Penket Papers*, a delightful collection of spoof tales.

Research done in Suffolk and Norfolk

Much of the research for Colin's work on Hopton and the Paston family was done in Suffolk and Norfolk, and he and Myrna had visited Norman Scarfe at his

home in Shingle Street, so it is not surprising that when, in 1966, they sought somewhere away from the Keele campus to wind down they bought a cottage in Saxmundham.

Woodbridge proves ideal

They moved to Quay Street in Woodbridge in 2000, because, he explains, "We have a good library and good book shops, and the town is the right size for us, not having a car. Also, it's close to the railway station, and one of the joys of retirement has been our rediscovery of London."

Colin is still writing and would like to do more lecturing. He is an Elder of St. Mary's Church, still follows an early interest in cricket, having achieved success as a player at both school and university, and has perceptive views on modern rugby.

This year, he and Myrna celebrate their golden wedding, and he says he owes more than can be measured to her support over all that time.

Summer Visits

Arranged by Carol Wiseman

The response by members to our questionnaire has greatly helped with arranging this year's visits. It seems that most of you enjoy visiting an unusual period house and the two chosen this year should prove popular.

As numbers are limited it is important that you return your booking form together with your payment as soon as possible. Please try to share cars. Directions will be shown on the confirmation form that will be sent to you before each visit.

Wingfield College: interior surprises

I have had two enjoyable visits to Wingfield College. Its interior is very different from the exterior, and there are

many surprises within the property that will amaze you. The gardens and grounds are equally astonishing, and the visit to the church ties the history of the college together. Delicious cakes and refreshments will conclude this visit. Because it will be so popular, I have booked two dates: Thursday 26 May and Friday 24 June. Please make sure you indicate which you prefer.

Crows Hall was restored by owner

Crows Hall is a Grade II listed 16th century moated manor house, which has been restored and renovated. Its owner has also landscaped the inner moat. Its design has been influenced by traditional gardens and includes a kitchen, formal garden with dipping pool, and a courtyard following early foundations of the former hall and south wing. The 16th century barn will probably be the venue for our refreshments at the end of the

guided tour. Only one visit has so far been arranged for Thursday 9 June.

Nuclear weapons site secrets revealed

Orford Ness should be a very interesting morning out. We go by boat to the island, then by trailer, and Paddy Heazell will unravel some of the military secrets from when the site was used for testing nuclear weapons.

There will be no refreshments on this visit so you might wish to take a flask, and please wear appropriate clothing as the island is very exposed. The date for this visit is Friday 17 June.

Visit to cricket bat factory

Our final visit on Tuesday 21 June is very different. The son of one of our members produces cricket bats for sale all over the world. He has invited us to G R Green Saw Yard in Bromeswell to see how the willow is grown and turned into cricket bats. He has stressed that his talk and demonstration will last about an hour and because no seating is provided we should be prepared to stand. No toilet facilities or refreshments are available. The fee for this talk and demonstration will be given to a charity which is yet to be decided upon.

If you have any queries please give me a call on 01394 383666



Wingfield's astonishing gardens and interior



The Inner moat at Crows Hall

Alexander menswear: 83 years in Woodbridge

The business has been owned by the Alexander family for 110 years. By Michael Rines



Founder Henry Alexander (left) in the Ipswich shop in the 19th century. Hamish Alexander with Michael Kester in today's Woodbridge shop

HC Alexander Limited, the only remaining specialist menswear shop in Woodbridge, celebrated 80 years of trading in the town in 2007, the business having been founded in Ipswich 110 years ago. Master Clothier Henry Chamberlain Alexander, great grandfather of the present manager Hamish Alexander, had opened a menswear shop under the name Alexander The Great, at 51 Upper Brook, Street in Ipswich.

Henry died in 1911 when his two children Dora and (Henry) Cecil were still very young, so the business was managed by Jack Pye.

Cecil left school in 1914 and began an apprenticeship with Ipswich tailors Smith and Harvey, before joining the Royal Flying Corps as a Pilot Officer in 1917.

Woodbridge shop set up in 1927

On being demobbed in 1919, Cecil returned to the Ipswich shop with Jack Pye, now his stepfather, and completed his apprenticeship. Unfortunately, Cecil did not get on with Pye, so in December 1927, with £100 borrowed from his mother and two lines of credit arranged with suppliers, he set up his own business at 51 Thoroughfare.

Wife ran the shop in WWII

During WWII, Cecil's wife ran the shop, because Cecil was appointed Adjutant with the Home Guard based at Wickham Market and was given the rank of Captain. In 1945 he moved the business

to 10 Thoroughfare. With clothing coupons still virtually impossible to come by, he made a special plea to the Board of Trade to be awarded more coupons. This plea was accepted.

In 1958 he was joined in the business by his younger son, John K Alexander – his elder son, Harold, having died of meningitis some years earlier.

Shop was expanded in 1976

In 1976 the adjacent premises, formally occupied by Dewhurst the butchers, were acquired and incorporated into the existing shop, so that there were two sales floors. Further notable improvements were made in 1980. Meanwhile, a year later and after celebrating 50 years of trading in Woodbridge, the Ipswich shop was closed and the premises sold.

Cecil died in 1994, the same year that the youngest grandson, Hamish C Alexander who now manages the shop, joined his father John K Alexander in the business at the age of 29. With a laugh he says he had not chosen previously to go into the family business, because "my father and I working under the same roof could have been trying, and my father wisely did not feel he should press me into it".

Hamish follows the family tradition

What finally persuaded him to join was a "conspiracy" between his wife and his late mother to get father and son together to discuss the matter.

Clearly, he has no regrets, taking pride

in the fact that Alexander's has outlived all the other specialist menswear shops in Woodbridge. He puts its survival down partly to the quality of the clothing he stocks, but also to the high standards of professional service the staff at Alexander's have always offered. Their knowledge of the products, together with their helpful and considerate manner, mean that they now have many longstanding, loyal customers.

Most staff are long serving

Most members of the staff have worked in Alexander's for many years and this means that they get to know their customers well. The experience of Professor Colin Richmond (profiled in this issue of the Newsletter) is typical.

He had been into the shop occasionally when he had a holiday home in Saxmundham, but had not been in for ten years when he went in to buy a shirt. He was therefore very impressed when greeted by name by Michael Kester, who has been with Alexander's for more than 45 years.

Most men hate buying clothes

As Hamish says, "Most men hate buying clothes and will only do so when they really have to or when their partners tell them to! Making the experience as comfortable and pain free as possible is our aim, and providing familiar surroundings and familiar faces goes a long way to achieving this. The look and feel of the shop has changed little over the years".

"We serve the higher end of the

market”, Hamish says, “and this has traditionally meant the more mature customer, but in recent years we find more and more customers are from an affluent younger age group.

“I think part of the appeal of the shop is that we offer a full range of formal tailored clothing, both off-the-peg as well as bespoke, together with more casual and informal clothing for everyday wear. On top of this, we have an in-house formal hire wear service for morning and eveningwear, and a tailoring service for both men’s and ladies clothing.”

Word of mouth is most powerful

Word of mouth is one of Alexander’s most powerful weapons and brings in business from counties south of London and as far west as Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, though most of the shop’s

customers are closer to the Woodbridge area.

The attractive frontage and window displays of the shop, which are noted by visitors to the town, constitute another marketing weapon, particularly because, as Hamish points out, few other small towns have specialist independent menswear shops. For these reasons, Hamish finds advertising not necessary, but the shop does have a website (www.alexandersofwoodbridge.co.uk).

Another independent would be good

He would welcome another independent specialist menswear shop in the town, because it would increase the attraction of Woodbridge not only as a place to buy men’s clothes but as a shopping destination in general, and he is pleased to see that there are now two shops on the Market Hill with men’s departments

added to their range of women’s clothes. He points out that Ipswich is able to support three independent menswear shops, as well as several multiple retailers, and Bury St Edmunds has four.

Economic downturn has little impact

The recent economic downturn has had less impact on Alexander’s than perhaps it would have done had it been involved in the lower end of the market or located in a town other than Woodbridge. “The town itself is now looking busier than it was and the lack of empty shops would suggest that Woodbridge is thriving,” says Hamish.

So Alexander’s will survive for the next generation of the family, though Hamish admits that, at present, he is not sure that his 11-year-old son has entirely given up his ambition to be a professional footballer.

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	Julian Royle Norfolk House, 71 The Thoroughfare, Woodbridge IP12 1AH 01394 384858

The Woodbridge Society

The Society brings together those interested in the well-being of Woodbridge and the preservation of its historic character, for this and future generations. The Society

- **Monitors planning applications.**
- **Promotes high standards of planning and architecture, making expert representations to the local authorities to this end.**
- **Stimulates interest in the history and traditions of the town, through articles in its newsletter, its winter lectures and its summer visits programme.**

Our winter lectures are, like the newsletter, free to members, and are presented at the Abbey School.

In the summer, the Society arranges visits to local places of interest, some not normally open to the public