

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

THIS IS A FITTING TRIBUTE....

January 2017

'This is a fitting tribute to a great man' wrote Ben Gummer, Ipswich's MP following the unveiling of an Armillary Sphere Sundial restored in memory of Dr John Blatchly. We have written about John before but Ben Gummer's words describe our feelings so completely that we reproduce them here.

"John was a true universal man. A scientist, teacher, headmaster and historian, there were few intellectual avenues to which he could not turn his remarkable and capacious mind. Not that you were made aware of it; he wore his learning very lightly, which in turn meant his wisdom shone through.

His study was the physical manifestation of his mind: books piled everywhere, a wide view over Ipswich from the window, and a desk with neat piles of paper on the many matters that he was writing about at that moment. This was an intelligence that was wide-ranging, open-minded but never chaotic.

That was not why we all miss him, however: the reason we miss John is because of his kindness, his generosity and his energy. I have learned more in this job than in anything else I have ever done, the greatest lesson being that one enthusiastic person gets more done than a thousand clever or well-meaning people. You can do nothing with intelligent thoughts or good intentions, not without the energy to make them happen. And that is why we all prized John so greatly.

He gave of his energy freely, even helping me every year with a local idea for the front of my Christmas card and a suitable description within. It was John who made Ipswich appreciate its great and admirable history once again. He was a local historian of the first rank – a man who understood our town and our county better than anyone and was able, crucially, to put that in the context of what was happening in the rest of the country, and the rest of the world, at the time.



John Blatchly with 'his' statue of Thomas Wolsey.



Ben Gummer MP

He did it because he cared about Ipswich. He recognised history as important because it made us value not just our buildings and our collective past. That is why his regular articles for the East Anglian Daily Times mattered so much to him: they helped the people of Suffolk understand themselves a bit better, and the treasures that are inheritance.

More importantly still, it showed the people of Ipswich and of Suffolk what treasures there are in our county town and what a special history we enjoy – something we are prone to forget and some in the county are prone to ignore. This passion lived not just on the page but in stone. The formerly redundant churches of St. Lawrence, St. Nicholas, St. Peter and – soon St. Clement, owe their restoration and refurbishment to John’s skilled and impassioned chairmanship of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust.

The lovely sculpture of Thomas Wolsey, our most famous kinsman, is on Curzon Plain only because John made it so. John’s energy made things happen and it was an energy that was infectious. Five minutes in his company was always five minutes well spent, and you always left feeling better than when you started.

All of which means that his loss is a grievous one for Ipswich. We miss him immensely. How lovely to commemorate this universal man with an armillary sphere – a globe sundial – in Christchurch Park. A man of learning, of wisdom, of energy and of light”.