

OBITUARY
IVAN CRESSWELL, F.S.A. (1911–2000)

President 1987–1990

Vice President 1984–1987, 1990–2000

Hon. General Secretary 1959–1987

Ivan Cresswell served the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society for 28 years, under a total of twelve successive Presidents, before becoming President himself in 1987.

Born in Colchester on 24 September 1911, Ivan attended Colchester Grammar School where he became head boy. From an early age, and until he moved to Norwich, Ivan was a staunch member of the choir of St. Mary's church Colchester, first as a treble and later as a tenor. This laid the foundations of his love of Church music and his passionate belief in traditional forms of worship. Between services on Sunday afternoons, initially with the help of the choirmaster, Ivan would solve — and eventually create — crossword puzzles, thus nurturing his nascent analytical approach to problems.

Leaving school and starting out in the world during the Depression was not easy. Further education was an impossible option so Ivan joined the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society in the Investment Department. Over his forty-one years with the Norwich Union he made steady progress, ending a successful career as Chief Investment Manager, a post he occupied for many years.

In 1939 Ivan married. His wife, Olive, having given up her nursing career, devoted the early part of their marriage to running the household, a large home in the Norwich Cathedral Close, and to bringing up their two sons. When Ivan took over as Secretary of the Archaeological Society in 1959, the timing was perfect. With their boys at boarding school, Olive was able to add her own special talents to Ivan's organisational abilities, becoming his indispensable lieutenant in archaeological matters. Her legendary map-reading skill coupled with an outstanding memory contributed in no small way to Ivan's efficient running of the Society.

With retirement in view, Olive and Ivan had bought Shelton Old Rectory where he spent the last 34 years of his life. Initially he hated the idea of leaving the Cathedral Close where he had, amongst other activities, been sequestrator of the inexistent parish church of St. Mary in the Marsh. But in a very short space of time he became a total convert to country life and the Old Rectory, with its extensive grounds and neighbouring 16th-century church (yet another St. Mary's) became his pride and joy. Over the years many visitors enjoyed the Cresswells' splendid hospitality.

During the Second World War Ivan's Norwich Union career was interrupted by service in the Royal Navy. Duty on the Russian convoys was followed by stints in Canada and West Africa, meaning that he was hardly at home for most of the war years. All his activities and movements were secret and at first Olive, relying on skimpy official news and censored letters, was often distraught with worry. His risky solution was to write home in code. Although simple it was obviously uncrackable as Ivan escaped detection.

In 1959 Ivan was persuaded by Basil Cozens-Hardy to take over the honorary office of General Secretary of the Archaeological Society and it was in this position that the 600 or so members of the Society knew him best. He organised events, including the winter lecture

programme, wrote to new members, distributed *Norfolk Archaeology*, attended meetings on behalf of the Society and for many years examined, on behalf of the Council for British Archaeology, listed building applications. This latter task took him to every corner of the county and led him to speak at numerous public enquiries to ensure that alterations to and demolitions of ancient structures and other buildings of historical interest were always in the best interests of the Society and the country. Ivan attended many meetings of the Council in London and was a regular contributor to debates.

His contributions to *Norfolk Archaeology* were largely ones of record: he published a summary of the activities of the Society in 1941—1976 in Volume XXXVI, followed by the regular triennial or quadrennial report, which appeared in the Index of each volume from 1980 to 1986.

In 1966 Ivan was elected a member of the Society of Antiquaries. In addition to his service to the Archaeological Society, he was an active member of many other associations, notably the Norfolk Record Society, where he was a member of the Council until 1995, and of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, being Secretary from 1981 to 1993. He was appointed Hon. Vice-President of the Trust in 2000 in recognition of his contribution over 34 years.

Archaeology and archives were additional interests to music. Ivan regarded music as his first love and sang in the Norwich Philharmonic Society for many years. He was also no mean pianist until arthritis stopped him playing to the high standard that he considered acceptable. He loved theatre and opera and he and Olive were regularly spotted at Aldeburgh and other local Music Festivals. In his earlier life Ivan was a keen sportsman, playing cricket, football and badminton: he was apparently once seen keeping goal for Colchester Town Football Club.

Ivan was a meticulous and highly capable organiser and administrator who planned each meeting of the Archaeological Society as if it were a military operation. When it came to the written word he was a hard taskmaster, and woe betide any helper who misspelt or erred grammatically. As a proofreader he was superb and no error would be missed. However, his sense of fun and sometimes schoolboy humour made up for any occasional austerity in this able, sincere and principled man.

Even after his long service as Secretary of the Archaeological Society, followed by his Presidency, Ivan continued to attend and contribute actively at meetings of the Council until early 1999, when ill health forced him to curtail his involvement.

Ivan Cresswell died on 24 May 2000 and was buried in Shelton churchyard under the shade of one of his own trees. He will be greatly missed by the Society and by all who knew him.

S.C. and R.B., December 2000