

John Gambart Webb, M.A., F.R.Hist.S., 1925-2017

Towards the end of last year the Suffolk Records Society received a large legacy. John Webb who died in 2017 left approximately £30,000 to the Society to be spent as it sees fit. His name will be known to few people now but our *Suffolk Bibliography* (SRS volume XX, 1979) lists eight works by him dating from 1955, including articles for the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology's *Proceedings* and articles for the *Suffolk Review*.

For much of his career he was senior lecturer in history at Portsmouth College of Education but he will be remembered as an historian of Ipswich and particularly of maritime Ipswich in the later medieval period. He published his first article in the *Mariner's Mirror*, 'William Sabyn of Ipswich: an early Tudor sea officer and merchant', followed by 'Apprenticeships in the maritime occupations at Ipswich, 1590-1651' in the same journal and 'Elizabethan piracy: the evidence of the Ipswich Deposition books' in the *Suffolk Review*. His latest article which was in volume 38 of the Suffolk *Proceedings* for 1993 had the lively title, 'Peter Moone of Ipswich (d. 1601) a Tudor tailor, poet and gospeller and his circle'.

He will be remembered chiefly for three works which the Suffolk Records Society published for him in 1962, 1966 and 1995, *Great Tooley of Ipswich* (SRS Extra volume and the subject of his MA thesis at London University), *Poor Relief in Elizabethan Ipswich* (SRS volume IX) and *The Town Finances of Elizabethan Ipswich* (SRS volume XXXVIII).

In *Great Tooley* Webb examined how an early Tudor merchant lived and worked, asking how he organised his overseas trade and distributed the goods he imported, what part he played in the civic life of Ipswich, and having achieved success, how he used the wealth he had accumulated. Tooley's magnificent memorial brass is now in Christchurch Mansion and the almshouses which he founded and bear his name survive in Foundation Street.

In *Poor Relief* Webb edited records to make one of the most illuminating social studies of an Elizabethan town then undertaken, showing how Ipswich tackled the problems of poverty in the half-century after the dissolution of the monasteries, beginning with the work of the Tooley Foundation, set up after his death in 1551, and ending with the census of the poor in 1597, which describes the resources and needs of each distressed family in the town.

The treasurers' and chamberlains' accounts which are transcribed in *Town Finances* illuminate the administration of one of the ten richest provincial towns, providing further insight into its social and economic life.

John Webb's name will forever be linked with the history of sixteenth-century Ipswich and the Suffolk Records Society is now considering how best to commemorate him in spending his generous legacy.