

1849 - 2023

Freehold Land Society to Suffolk Building Society.

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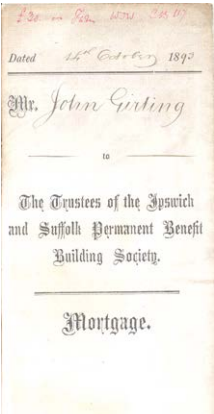
Suffolk

Building

Society

Under its original name, the Ipswich and Suffolk Freehold Land Society, the Society developed and built many parts of Ipswich and Suffolk from 1850 to the 1930s.

The Ipswich & Suffolk Freehold Land Society (FLS) was part of a national movement to create what were known as ‘forty shilling freeholders’ - giving the ordinary person the chance to buy enough land to give them the right to vote.



Mortgage Deed, 1893.

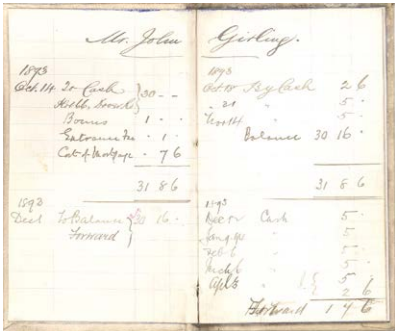
At the first meeting on 4 December 1849 at the Ipswich Temperance Hall (demolished 1964), the Society enrolled 140 members with 150 shares taken. Within a week this had increased to 400 shares.

In the early days, the Society purchased large parcels of land, built roads across the land and divided it into allotments that were offered to senior members of the Society.

A balloting system was introduced in 1858. This gave all members a chance to purchase,

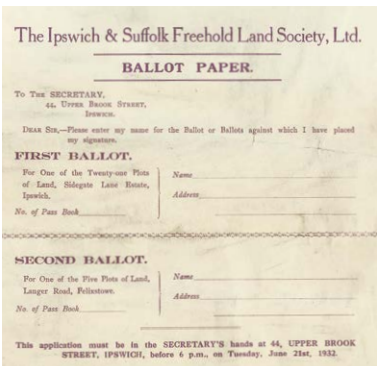


Original ballot box.



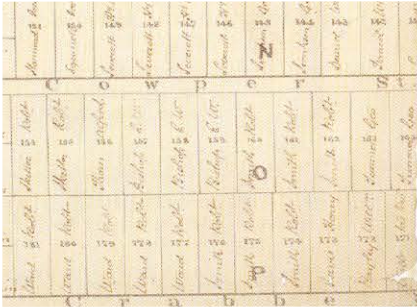
Passbook, 1893.

regardless of seniority, and continued until the early 1930s. Any member interested in entering the ballot, completed a ‘Ballot Paper’ with their name, address and passbook number and returned it to the Secretary a few days before the Ballot. The original polished mahogany ballot box and numbered balls are still in the Society’s possession.



Ballot paper, 1932.

The first stretch of land purchased by the FLS was just over 98 acres of the Cauldwell Hall estate, eastwards between the Woodbridge Road and Foxhall Road. This became known as 'The California Estate', and was allocated to members as land only.



Excerpt of California Estate plan, 1850.

The Society was interested in spreading its influence to other parts of the county. Land was purchased in Beccles, Hadleigh, Diss, Stowmarket, Wickham Market, Woodbridge, Framlingham and Lowestoft. The FLS divided these areas of land into plots, and allocated them to members.

By 1865 the Society had already ballotted 1,000 plots of land across 22 estates.



Somersetshire Terrace
Philip Rd, Ipswich 1899.

In 1866 land was bought, again on the eastern side of Ipswich but nearer to the town centre,

in St Helen's parish. The Society's

directors thought the demand for plots would be high, so, for the first time, the Society began to build houses. Two roads, Palmerston Road and Lancaster Road, were laid out and twenty-eight houses built and sold by ballot for £145. Each property was a substantial six-room cottage with a sizeable garden.

The houses built by the Society were well constructed, of good size and proportions, had an identifiable style and showed attention to detail. Many bore, and still bear, the initials F.L.S. on the stone nameplate at first floor level.



Upper Brook Street, 1960s.

In 1884 the Society began to take a part in Felixstowe's growth. Not only would the rich be able to buy a seaside house, but people of more modest means too. The Society bought land next to the Bath Hotel, a site enjoying "on the land side, scenes of considerable beauty, and marine views unsurpassed".

The houses built on this land were designed to be suitable both as homes and lodging houses.

1904 saw the introduction of a scheme which made home ownership even cheaper. Houses were offered for sale on mortgage repayment terms, which were so low, the Society claimed it would be cheaper than the rent people were paying in many parts of town. Houses built in the Broom Hill Road area of Ipswich were offered for fortnightly repayments as little as 5 shillings and sixpence.

In 1915 the Society's Head Office moved to Upper Brook Street, where it would remain until 2004. The

Society opened its first branch in Hadleigh in 1979.

In 2016 the Society purchased the Grade II listed 'Parr's Bank' building in Princes Street, Ipswich. After a much acclaimed refurbishment the building opened in January 2018 as 'Mutual House', to reflect the origins and values of the Society.



1933 illustration.



Shafto Road, Ipswich.

With 174 years of history we have a wealth of fascinating documents. Our large archive is on permanent loan to Suffolk Archives, ensuring it remains accessible to the public.

The Society today.

In 2021 we became Suffolk Building Society, to reflect the broad community we serve. Founded to help people buy enough land to secure the vote, today our mission is to be a safe home for savers and to provide safe homes for our communities.

Our Saving Suffolk campaign works to help protect natural habitats and wildlife, which are increasingly under threat. We also work to tackle the housing crisis, through our Safe Homes for Suffolk campaign. By supporting three Suffolk-based homelessness and domestic violence charities we're helping to reduce inequality and promote safe homes.

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