

Roundabouts
sponsors deal
Page 2

Future for
the meadows
Page 7

Ghost tours
are a success
Page 11



SocietyReview

Winter 2019

The delights of town put in the national spotlight



The Abbey Gardens with the Cathedral in the background, one of the many delights of Bury St Edmunds.

The delights and attractions of Bury St Edmunds have been hitting the headlines.

Renowned for its wonderful food outlets and history the town has been featured in national newspapers over the past few months.

The Times and Metro both ran articles on the joys and special draw of the town for visitors.

Tens of thousands of people were expected to flock to the annual Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre which each year attracts huge numbers.

The town also made international news as the place Channing Tatum and Jessie J are settling down. Claudia Schiffer and Matthew Vaughn are also fans, with a Tudor mansion in nearby Stanningfield, while celebrities including Angelina Jolie have stayed at The Angel Hotel. Some of the benefits of the town include the many food and drink outlets and The Nutshell which is famed for being the smallest pub in Britain, although the taxidermied animals on the wall may not be for everyone.

Bury's claims to fame include being home to the Pillar of Salt – the first internally illuminated road sign in the UK. The sign, which looks like a salt cellar and was built in 1935, stands between the Abbey Gate and the Angel Hotel.

The Abbey Gardens are an ideal place to wander on a sunny day – they contain many beautiful beds, individual walled gardens and the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund, consecrated in 1095.

Continued on Page 4

Plenty to cheer for the town at Anglia in Bloom awards event



After the judging of Bury St Edmunds in the Anglia in Bloom competition in July we waited with bated breath for the prize giving in September at Burgess Hall, in St Ives. We were in new territory because this year, instead of our entry being in the category of Large Town, for reasons that are not really clear but which were connected with population numbers, we were entered in the Cities category with Norwich and Kings Lynn.

We were delighted to be awarded a **Gold standard** by the judges.

This was a great achievement in a year of changes in the organisation. In addition, the town received the following awards:

Community Project Special Award: Michelle Freeman of Crafty Foxes entered a wonderful Cycle of Inspiration which won best in category.

Large Parks Award: Nowton Park won a gold standard and best in category.

Historic Parks and Gardens:

Abbey Gardens were awarded a silver gilt standard.

The best overall entry and winner of the Anglia in Bloom Trophy was Hunstanton.

At the end of a hectic year culminating in the Gold Award for Bury St Edmunds, our co-ordinator Stephen Moody resigned from the position. After a selection process which involved 65 applicants for the job, I am very pleased to report that David

Irvine, who lives at Moreton Hall, has been appointed and already has his feet firmly under the table.

I am sure that David's enthusiasm and personality will make him an excellent co-ordinator and we all wish him well.

Planning has already started for 2020 and I am very hopeful that the enthusiasm, interest and energy of the people of this beautiful town will bring us more good results.

Meanwhile, there are two of our roundabouts awaiting sponsorship. The Flight of Peace roundabout at the junction of Mount Road and Lady Miriam Way is available as a superb advertising opportunity, as is the "Grain" roundabout at the junction of Kings Road and Parkway.

If you are interested, please contact David Irvine on coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk

Robin Burnett

Sponsorship set for two roundabouts

At the beginning of October 2019 we had four roundabouts looking for sponsorship and I'm pleased to report we are hoping to have two of the four sponsored in the next few weeks.

Camp Tails, a dog day care centre, is taking the Orttewell Road/Symonds Road roundabout and we hope a water softening company from Haverhill will be taking "With The Grain" at Parkway/Kings Road as soon as they finalise their logo.

Finding sponsors for the balance as well as some triangle areas that are free is very high on my "To-Do list". The income from our roundabouts is very important and helps cover the organisational costs of Bury in Bloom and we remain very grateful for their generous support.

Also, for 2019-2020, sponsors will be receiving a Bury in Bloom Certificate, the graphic design for which has just been completed.



The certificate recognises their support and our gratitude and we hope it will be framed and mounted in sponsor's offices.

I am preparing the certificates for signature by the chairmen of both Bury in Bloom and the Bury Society and will be visiting the sponsors over the next month.

The new marking system introduced

by Anglia in Bloom this autumn for the 2020 competition means we need to change our perspective a little as the Environmental and Community scores become bigger elements of the overall score.

We're looking at a couple of new Community projects: "Grow a Recipe" that we hope will be picked up by the schools and another called "Roots in the Community", (pictured left) but this will need some more planning before it goes ahead.

On the environmental front I would love to be able to claim we are watering some of the baskets for part of the year using harvested rainwater. There are practical problems though, given both the number of baskets and Bury St Edmunds annual rainfall.

At a rough estimate we would need 1,000 litres of water per week – no easy feat – but it's an aspiration.

David Irvine

New co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom talks of his hopes for group's future

David Irvine has been appointed as the new co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom and talks about his appointment and his hopes and aspirations for the town.

I originate from North Yorkshire and come from an agricultural business and commercial background having begun my career working for Unilever as a fieldsman growing vining peas for freezing and later buying onions for the product that became "Cup-a-soup".

I later joined the company that became Agrii working as an agronomist (often referred to as a crop doctor because everything is done by prescription) where I looked after around 8,500 hectares across 20 arable farms and latterly heading up a team of agronomists with a £10 million budget.

Having recently retired (I am now 69-years-old) I remain energetic and was looking for a new project when the Bury in Bloom co-ordinator role came up.

My whole career has involved work-



David Irvine.

ing with people in a goal-orientated organisation and I see parallels with Bury in Bloom. We want to continue winning prizes at the highest level.

Picking up the Bury in Bloom gauntlet is a daunting task because of the massive record of success in the past, due to the hard work of Melanie Lesser and latterly of Stephen Moody and of course it's

very high profile because everybody will see the results.

After six weeks in the job I've discovered I'm straight in at the deep end. In fact I'm not sure there is a shallow end.

For 2020 the Anglia in Bloom Judges have changed the points system reducing the horticultural element (from 50% of the points to 40%) and increased the Environmental and Community elements (from 25% to 30%).

In other words Environment and Community make up 60% of the points system for the judging and that means a shift of focus - but visitors to Bury St Edmunds are still interested in colour and vibrancy and our hanging baskets are very much appreciated. One of the two projects we plan to introduce for 2020 is called "Roots in The Community" which I hope everyone with a tree outside their house will get involved with, and the other is "Grow a Recipe" for schools to take part in. I'm still sorting out the detail on both so for now watch this space.

£5,000 donation to astronomy association

The night skies over Bury St Edmunds during October 1858 were dominated by Donati's Comet. By any standard this was a spectacular display. No doubt it caused excitement, perhaps even alarm, in the town.

This phenomenon coincided with the Rev Lord Arthur Hervey of Ickworth inviting the Astronomer Royal, George Biddell Airy, to Bury to give a lecture on astronomical instruments. Such was the impact of the comet and interest in the lecture that it was decided to build an observatory on the roof of the Athenaeum. With the help of Lord Hervey, funds were raised and the building commenced in 1859. The 4 inch refracting telescope was operational in the domed observatory by 1860, and

has been a feature of the roof line above the entrance of the Athenaeum ever since.

The facility was well used for, perhaps, half a century, but its use declined with the advent of improved technology to view the night sky. Certainly, for the last half century, it has lain largely unused and, importantly, unmodified with the result that we have a Victorian gem that is part of the history of Bury St Edmunds and very worthy of restoration.

Dr Richard Young formed the Athenaeum Astronomy Association with the aim of restoring the telescope and observatory. The AAA has become a thriving club for those interested in astronomy and holds regular meetings and lectures.

Much research has been completed and information gathered, so that we are now in a position to commence the restoration. When completed, the observatory will be of great historical and educational value.

It will be accessible to the public as well as specialist societies. There will also be a live link between the telescope and screens in the Athenaeum Reading Room.

The AAA has begun to engage specialists to specify the work required and to ensure work conforms to necessary regulations. It is also in the process of raising funds for the project and is very grateful for the £5,000 committed by the Bury St Edmunds Society.

Roy Proctor

Cullum Collection documents successfully secured by FOSRO

The Friends of Suffolk Record Office (FOSRO) is delighted to announce that it was successful in bidding at auction for a collection of documents relating to the Cullum family of Hardwick House.

The Cullums lived there for almost three centuries and members of the family were experts in Suffolk county history.

The collection FOSRO has bought includes a three-volume set of diaries kept by Lady Ann Cullum, the wife of Sir Thomas Cullum, covering the period 1854 to 1865.

The leather-bound volumes are packed full of delightful insights into high-society life in the mid-nineteenth century.

The eight travel journals written by Lady Cullum, also acquired by FOSRO, span the period 1830 to 1865 and include many fascinating details of her grand tours around Europe.

As with many other larger collections it has purchased over the years, FOSRO sought and received financial contributions from a number of other interested organisations.



Pictured are members of the Friends of Suffolk Record Office committee handing over the Cullum diaries and journals to the Suffolk Archives. From left to right Gwyn Thomas, Stephen Dart, Betty Milburn, Robert Houlton-Hart, Robin Sampson (archivist) and Margaret Statham.

These are the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, the Suffolk Records Society and the Bury Society.

Several individuals also gave money towards the cost of the documents.

We are grateful to all those who pledged money, without whom FOSRO would not be able to buy so many fascinating items of interest to Suffolk local and family historians.

The collection of diaries and travel journals is now in the Bury St Edmunds branch of the Suffolk Archives.

FOSRO was formed in 1983, when they played a key role in raising £250,000 to buy the Elveden manuscripts, now held at the Ipswich branch of Suffolk Archives. Since its formation, FOSRO has purchased many other fine collections for the Suffolk Archives.

In many cases these might have been lost to the county without their action.

For instance they saved the Walton Burrell collection of First World War military photographs, the manorial records of Waldringfield, as well as the Shrubland Hall photographic collection.

It has also purchased single items, such as a Victorian account book of a Lowestoft ship's chandler and a list of subscribers for rebuilding the church tower at Long Melford dating from 1711.

FOSRO has a small, loyal membership who pay a minimum of £12 a year. Further details on membership and on all of its activities can be found at www.fosro.org.uk

Sarah Doig
Chair of FOSRO

Market is historic part of the town

Continued from Page 1

From the gardens you get beautiful views of St Edmundsbury Cathedral and its striking Millennium Tower, made of limestone from Barnack, lime mortar flint and bricks and completed in 2005.

The Cathedral is hailed as a place to visit for its gorgeous stained glass windows, ornate vaulted ceiling and a brilliant Lego installation – the building recreated in brick form. Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides provide an extensive history of the town, from its Anglo-Saxon beginnings and the role of martyred King Edmund to the part it played in the Magna Carta and how it became a popular Georgian resort, later hosting everyone from Dickens to Wilde.

The Apex hosts an array of talent both local and international and there's a free art gallery upstairs and a welcoming café downstairs. The Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds is another unmissable location whether going to a show or taking a tour. Built in 1819 it is the last Regency Theatre in Britain and amazingly has many of its original features intact.

And an historic part of Bury's fabric is the market which dates back to before the time of William the Conqueror and is held in the Buttermarket and Cornhill every Wednesday and Saturday. Nowton Park is hailed as a pleasant place to stroll, with its woodlands, and the manicured gardens of Ickworth House are also worth exploring.

Campaigners and Bury Society join forces as Cornhill Walk plans are axed

The Society spoke at a recent council planning meeting to voice its very real concern about the four-storey development of shops and 48 flats planned for the empty **Cornhill Walk** premises.

We were especially worried about the scale of development and suggested the plans demonstrated little respect for neighbouring Well Street - which is probably one of the most delightful streets in the town.

Some 30 highly vocal campaigners, plus a 300-signature petition, all helped the objectors' case and after lengthy debate the committee refused the application.

The Society gave its general support to an application for redeveloping the vacant **Lloyds Bank premises on the corner of Risbygate Street and Parkway** with 49 flats for "retirement living".

The plans propose a three/four storey building with a concierge office and residents' lounge and we felt that this was a sustainable location within walking distance of town facilities.

The appearance is traditional and demonstrates a local context and a huge improvement upon that proposed two years ago for a much taller building - though we did acknowledge the concerns of nearby residents.

We also commented upon the design for the redevelopment of part of the former gas holder site at the junction of **Springfield Road and Tayfen Road** with 215 dwellings including 157 apartments.

The Society is unhappy about replica Victorian warehouses and apartment blocks looking more like a military garrison and we asked why the town could not be offered a more innovative approach to designing new homes or eco-houses to inspire the next generation.

The Society also suggested a "green lung" tree belt alongside Tayfen Road to reduce the impact



of CO2 emissions on one of the town's busiest inner link roads. Some good news for the **Railway Station**.

We wrote in support of an application for major repair works to the Station Master's House and so we were pleased when the plans were approved.

Also, a Lawful Development Certificate has now been issued for a new 74 space car park on the north side, but we suggested that Greater Anglia re-opens an existing under-rail passageway to the Cambridge platform to avoid a long walk down to Fornham Road.

The Society objected to plans to revise an existing approval for the redevelopment of the vacant **Record Office car park on Raingate Street**.

We suggested the applicant looks to provide a greener solution with proper garden space.

We were also very critical of the revised frontage onto Raingate Street and its impact upon neighbours.

The Society also objected to

nearby plans to fell nine mature sycamore trees behind **The Aviary on Raingate Street** facing onto The Crankles.

Finally, we wrote in support of the application to demolish the rear of the **Post Office on the Cornhill** and replace it with a four-storey building including 12 flats and two shops.

The front facade will be retained and, importantly, the pedestrian link through to the Arc Shopping Centre will be widened (at last).

The application has just been approved.

Looking to the future, the Society attended a pre-application presentation of outline plans to redevelop the former Ashtons solicitors' offices, on Guildhall Street.

The plans show the Grade I listed front building designed by Sir John Soane divided into two large houses with rear outbuildings providing four additional smaller properties. A formal application is expected soon.

Roderick Rees

Is it Beodericsworth or Bedericsworth?

After his martyrdom in 869 King Edmund's body spent time at a chapel at nearby Sutton.

He was eventually transferred to a wooden church in the monastery founded by King Sigeberht in AD 635 at Bedericsworth between 924-39.

Now this is where the etymology of the name Beodericsworth varies as there are different spellings used by several people at separate times so nobody can say there is a right or wrong way for the spelling.

Bedericsworth was superseded by Bury St Edmunds or St Edmundsbury in the first half of the 11th century.

The earliest use of the new name occurs in a will of Thurketel of Palgrave made very probably before 1038. Some late uses of the old name are to be found in Aethelric's will of 995. The Oxford dictionary of place names mentions Baederices wirde in 945. Strangely this was the same year King Edmund of the West Saxons granted to the monastery here the Banleuca, a grant of land a mile in diameter from Edmund's shrine. To confuse things even further, distinguished academic M R James, a foremost authority on the abbey, used



The Abbey of St Edmund.

Beaduricesworth and Robert Eaglen used Bedericesworth on pages 9 and 10 of his book "The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds" and Lord Francis Hervey, in "The History of King Eadmund" (note spelling) the Martyr uses Baedericswythe.

With the ousting of secular monks in 1020 by King Cnut to be replaced

by Benedictine monks from St Benet's at Holme and Ely a large rotunda church was built to house the blessed cadaver.

Soon after this event the town became known as St Edmunds Burh or Byrig, versions of burgh meaning a fortified town.

The Latin name of the town was Seynt Edmundes Biri the abbey itself becoming the Abbey of St Edmundsbury. Confusing isn't it? With the Norman invasion of 1066 the Normans subdued many areas with castles but here in Bury St Edmunds there was no need to have one as the town was already under the control of a French abbot, Baldwin.

It was he who laid out the grid of the town still evident today making it most probably the oldest purposefully laid out town in the country. In fact, the Domesday book of 1086 records that there were 342 houses built on land that was previously under the plough.

Many other notable authors and academics have used the two most popular variations of the name so it would seem whatever takes your fancy at the time wins.

If you google Bedericsworth and Beodericsworth you get both referred to as Bury St Edmunds.

Membership of the Society is currently a 'healthy' 616

Thank you for your continued support of The Bury Society. There are currently a healthy 616 members with a steady stream of new applications each month. There is no limit on numbers so please encourage friends and neighbours to join, especially anyone new to Bury St Edmunds. The social events are a good way to get to know others and encourage a sense of community. The Bury Society and Bury in Bloom combination has a great deal of influence over keeping the town beautiful and fending off unsightly planning applications. The Society Review newsletter has, on the back page, a list of the social events for 2020. Please make a note

of these for your diary. Further details will be circulated nearer the dates and on the website www.theburysociety.org.uk Your copy of Society Review is likely to have been delivered by one of the dedicated team of 17 distributors who venture out in all weathers to drop copies through letterboxes in the town.

This can be a time-consuming and taxing exercise and our grateful thanks go to these women and men, some of whom are not 100% fit, who give up their time to save the Bury Society hundred of pounds in postage every year.

Happy Christmas to everyone.

Sue Savage

Martyn Taylor

Future plans for Holywater Meadow unveiled by the site's new owners

Bury St Edmunds couple Sarah and Stephen Gull have purchased Holywater Meadow in order to preserve its green space. Here Sarah speaks of the couple's delight at securing its future and their long-term plans.

Where do you begin if you are lucky enough to take possession of nearly 15 acres of Watermeadows?

The place is wild, having been left to its own devices for many years, yet this has made it a unique area in Bury St Edmunds, with a variety of habitats.

There are watermeadows, grazing meadows, woodland, and several old railway carriages. Brambles and nettles have outstripped many other plants, but each time I go there there is more to see and the geography of the place is slowly revealing itself along old hedge tracks still visible from the time of Warren's map in 1791.

This is not a project to take on alone. There is plenty of experience and help available and lots of suggestions have been made, but it somehow needs to be kept in order; we bought the land with two main objectives in mind: to preserve it from further housing development, and to promote biodiversity. There is so much to learn and so



One of the old railway carriages at Holywater Meadow.

much one could do as stewards of such a precious space within a town. One option would be to do nothing and leave the natural world to itself, but this could miss opportunities for learning, teaching and research being missed. And whilst brambles and nettles have their uses other plants get overwhelmed.

A balance somehow needs to be developed.

We have already involved local groups, including the Bury Watermeadows Group, the Bury Society, Suffolk Organic Society and Suffolk Wildlife Trust for advice. I have also approached the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme to get young people involved.

So how are things going?

Over the past few weeks it has rained fairly constantly and I was hoping to see the drains start to fill with water.

Only three winters ago much of the

land and part of the footpath was submerged, but after two dry summers so far it has stayed dry enough to walk on.

By the end of the winter we hope to have dealt with "emergency" matters: a low hanging willow branch, access to gates, and making good some fencing.

And you might start to notice some changes in the plant life.

As a member of the Guild of Dyers, Spinners and Weavers I am keen on dye plants. And then? We are wondering about a few sheep or goats, and the suggestion of a couple of pigs has come up more than once.

I have started a blog: <https://wild-meadowsonline.wordpress.com/> to try to make sense of it all.

If any of you have any suggestions I would be most happy to hear them.

You can email me at Seg30@cam.ac.uk



The changing face of business

As the festive season gets into full swing, I thought it would be interesting to see how the town centre has changed over the last year, and how the town is faring against local competitors.

Not a day goes by without another famous High Street retailer seemingly struggling against the tide of sluggish consumer demand, higher rentals and business rates and the almighty internet.

The UK is not alone in meeting these challenges, the US has christened their current retail malaise as the “retail apocalypse” - thousands of stores have closed and job losses have been huge.

However, to put things into context, the High Street has always evolved and changed as have consumers – gone are the days of the greengrocer, baker, and ironmonger alongside the more national names, and think for a minute how many shoe shop chains have disappeared over the years... names such as Dolcis, Saxone, FHW, Manfield, Bata, K Shoes, Lilley and Skinner and Stead and Simpson had hundreds of branches across the country but not a single shop remains today.

In Bury itself, we have a huge strength that we must try to maintain – a healthy balance of national names and a thriving independent sector that gives us a point of difference from local towns.

Our market is also a huge draw as is the range of eating and drinking venues. Bury can provide an “experience” rather than just a standard range of shops which could be anywhere in the country.

It goes without saying that the streets of Bury provide a magnificent backdrop for visitors and locals to enjoy all that the town offers, within minutes of the shops you can be enjoying the Abbey Gardens, museums, cultural events and historic buildings. Other towns look enviously to Bury for the amazing range of events that Bury puts on, practically every week there is something to bring in the crowds.

Organisations like Our Bury St



Shoppers in Abbeygate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

Edmunds, Bury St Edmunds and Beyond and the West Suffolk Council provide an outstanding programme of events which are always well supported by locals and visitors alike and add hugely to the attractiveness of the town.

Retail has certainly changed over the last few years, the mighty internet has had an effect on the High Street due to its 24/7 accessibility and huge range... indeed the retailers themselves have had to adapt and embrace the net, stores are increasingly being seen as more showroom than shop and rising costs mean that less stock is physically kept in stockrooms on the shop premises – hence the rise of next day delivery and click and collect. Bury is faring better than most in the low level of shop vacancies, the town is judged by national retailers and retail analysts against the likes of Ipswich rather than Stowmarket or Sudbury and in this regard Bury is doing well.

With my BBC Radio Suffolk retail analyst's hat on, I am often heard discussing the issues of the High Street and presenter and broadcaster Mark Murphy loves nothing better than a Bury versus Ipswich discussion.

We are not immune to the issues but usually the national problems of retailers are just that: a national issue rather than a Bury one. Indeed, the Bury branches usually survive any cull or mass closure, but Ipswich isn't always so lucky.

We have some high-profile vacancies. The former Palmers Buttermarket store is looking a sorry sight and is a very visible reminder of the problems.

The Palmers company itself has gone - the stores in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft bought by Beales and all others closed.

The Bury site isn't ideal for modern retailers, larger shops are often the first casualties as the costs of operating are high: look at the problems of House of Fraser, Debenhams and even the once mighty John Lewis. Palmers old store is also wide and shallow and the first floor a bit of a warren and although a prominent building, the available retail space is very limited.

Cornhill Walk remains stuck in the planning system – plans for apartments, shops and a gym are currently in discussion and the former Job Centre on Cornhill is another highly visible vacant building.

Retail rents are comparatively high

in the centre of the town

in Bury and have largely escaped the huge reductions seen across the country.

The former Laura Ashley store has a rent of £140,000 per year, and that's before you engage staff, buy stock, pay the business rates and open the doors.

There has also been a churn in the casual dining sector; we recently lost Patisserie Valerie and Giraffe, again national company problems rather than a Bury one, the sector overall expanded hugely during the boom years and now finds itself with restaurant leases to pay, increasing staff costs against lower customer expenditure and an expectation of continued offers and discounts.

Bury was one of those towns nationally that attracted the chains in abundance due to disposable income and a burgeoning evening economy. The Cupola House thankfully found new tenants and the independent dining offer in Bury goes from strength to strength. We are being recognised nationally as a foodie town which again brings in customers who then discover the other delights on offer.

The rise of the betting shop in prime retail areas has been stopped in its tracks by consolidation in the industry and the new government controls on in-store betting machines; hundreds of betting shops are closing in town centres across the UK.

Newmarket will be hard hit as the High Street is full of multiple branches of Bet Fred, Ladbrokes and William Hill, all of whom are closing shops down.

We have seen the trends of the 1990's of the mobile phone shop explosion, followed more recently by vaping shops and coffee shops, the latest trend nationally seems to be Turkish-style barbers of which we now have a good selection.

Look to see at least a couple "CBD" shops opening soon, these sell legalised cannabis resin products and are popping up across the nation.

The former Argos and Goldsmiths Jewellers shops are having work done to reduce the size of retail space



The former Post Office in the centre of Bury St Edmunds which is set to be redeveloped into shops and flats.

available to lease with Argos having residential apartments as part of the mix. Goldsmiths are installing a new shop front as the current "jewellery"-style display windows are not suitable for other types of retailer and the hope is that a more flexible shop front will encourage new tenants to come forward.

The former RBS bank building remains empty a year after closing; again, the big banks are moving to a more internet offer and have closed hundreds of branches across the country, indeed, some towns now only have one working bank branch. Bury fortunately has only lost the RBS and Lloyds, in Risbygate Street, hopefully the remaining bank branches will be safe for now.

Looking forward, the former Post Office building has received planning permission for rebuilding and alteration which will improve the link between the Arc Shopping Centre and Cornhill. It was the financial crash of 2009 onwards that scuppered the original plans to link the two areas so although late, it will finally be good to open up an inviting walkway with shops/café's.

Residential will be the next big trend in the town centre with more and more people wanting to live centrally with facilities on hand.

Retail landlords will need to offset reduced retail income and adapt the upper floors of shops to residential,

not an easy job as any residential conversions will need street access, waste storage and nearby car parking.

There will also be more focus on entertainment, experiences and events – everything that the internet cannot compete with.

On the whole, we are well placed to weather these challenging times but with the understanding that Bury will not be immune. We have a diverse demographic and excellent tourist offer and people will always want to go out for the day; look at the success of the Christmas Fayre. St Johns Street, Risbygate Street, Hatter Street and Whiting Street and other areas of the town offer a fantastic array of goods and services and provide that real experience and customer service that the internet cannot.

Langton Place has developed a niche offer complete with tea room and artisan baker and our monthly farmers market attracts customers from across the region.

Since the autumn, we have seen a number of new independent businesses open and there are more to come which proves that Bury is seen as a vibrant and viable location to open.

Who 20 years ago or so would have foreseen M&S closing 100 shops or John Lewis wanting to be an 80% internet/20% shop business within the next five years? Who would have thought that Boots would be closing 200 shops, or that Debenhams and House of Fraser would be fighting for survival? We have lost Littlewoods, BHS, Allders, C&A, CO OP Living, Woolworths plus a whole host of huge names that no one would ever think would disappear.

The old saying stands true - "use it or lose it". We must try and support the local shops, market and food and beverage offer, or they too will succumb to the rash of "To Let" signs.

Bury has a very special offer which has developed over the years. Our rush to the internet could upset that balance so take a minute to think when you Google your next purchase.

Stephen Moody

A triumph for the Crypt Kickers

What is it that attracts people to a quiz?

It's a mixture of competing (and hoping to do well) learning and having a good time.

This was evident amongst the 18 teams who turned up for the 2019 quiz on November 7, in the Crypt of St Edmund's Catholic Church, for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Planning such an event takes time and participants need to be encouraged to co-operate. Answer papers and notices have to be printed, the venue's layout designed, computers programmed, food orders placed, waste disposal considered. The resulting slick process meant that people arrived and knew where to sit, their pre-ordered drinks were ready, supper appeared as intended (and the choc ices as an additional treat were welcomed), waste bags were filled.

The quiz itself was the product of the research of John Saunders and Martyn Taylor and the pace was set by those who were intent on winning; others jogged along merrily, uttering phrases such as: "I never knew that," "I've never noticed that," "I've walked past that nearly every day and not seen it."

Many of the answers repeated facts that Bury Society members would have picked up at our coffee mornings or talks; a few more sneaky ones are often revealed during the guided tours of the town.

We are indebted to the volunteers who made the evening such a success: Sue Savage who kept the scores updated, Sandie Taylor, Marion O'Donoghue and Betty Saunders who administered the rounds and of course John, Martyn and Terry who projected the quiz onto the screens. They all pitched in to distribute the food in record time. Sometimes we forget that they volunteer their time for the benefit of other members and are worthy of our gratitude.

The aptly named Crypt Kickers comprised Caroline Holt, Adrian Tindall and Tom Ogden and they achieved the remarkably high score of 78 from a possible 90.



Winning team the Crypt Kickers, consisting of Caroline Holt, Tom Ogden and Adrian Tindall, receiving their prize from Martyn Taylor (second left).

As town guides we might have expected them to do well but their performance showed their depth of knowledge.

Celebrating winning £80, Caroline said: "And thanks from me for such a well organised, challenging and enjoyable evening. It was an excellent night, a super venue and I look forward to the next one."

Tom added: "It was a fantastic evening. Thank you for your efforts."

The Lightbirds used their knowledge of many years in the town, scoring 70 as runners-up and sharing £40.

Even those who did not know the answers were able to guess because the quiz had three options for each question and two of the team names were drawn at the end of the evening to each share £20.

The lively buzz that filled the Crypt clearly showed how much enjoyment was had and how much fun there is in being a member of the Bury Society.

If you are coming to the next quiz then now is the time to think about swotting up at our events or getting ready for next year's guided tours.

John Saunders



Bury Society members attending the quiz in the Crypt of St Edmund's Catholic Church.

Ghost tours attracting more people as they mark ninth anniversary

If you've ventured out after dark in the town recently you may have encountered gaggles of suspicious-looking souls being guided around the darker streets of Bury by an even more suspicious-looking leader in unusual garb.

You've probably guessed already – the Ghostly and Macabre tours have returned to grace the darker season. The tours always take place, no matter what the elements have on offer to test the living.

These tours, run by a small team from the Bury Town Guides, may not be to everyone's taste nor nerve, but they have grown to become highly successful since their inception in the autumn of 2010.

Indeed, they are now drawing an audience from much further afield than Bury itself, for both individuals and groups.

The regular tours take place on a Friday evening but bespoke tours can be mounted for groups at almost any time, although the standing advice is to wait until after the sun has been laid to rest to gain maximum ambience.

The team are proud to confirm that no-one has gone missing on any of the tours, to date anyway.

All the material used on the tours has been sourced from books, newspaper articles and first hand witness accounts, so these "facts" are real, although their interpretation is necessarily personal, whether it be of "Grey Lady", the "Brown Monk" or moving furniture.

It is quite astonishing how many new tales have been gleaned from clients on the tours and how open they are to recounting their experiences in front of the whole group.

In addition to this more spiritual side, there is a fair sprinkling of historical reality with reference to some of the more grisly episodes of our past and how they impacted on the local community.

The tours terminate in an area of the town that is especially dark and eerie, which thus provides the backdrop for



Four of the Ghostly and Macabre tour guides.

a suitably atmospheric finale.

You might perhaps fancy taking your chances on one of the tours this winter and if you do you will understand, for an example, why so many walled-up mummified cats are discovered in East Anglia.

It certainly wasn't an early form of

house insulation.

Should you be tempted, just visit www.burystedmundstourguides.org and all will be revealed.

*Mike Dean
Chair of the Association of Bury
Tour Guides*

Bizarre episode from history

For a long time Bury St Edmunds was allowed to return two Members of Parliament to Westminster and in the 1700s the winners were often those who were related to or supported by the local gentry.

In 1730 an election was due to be held in Bury on May 16.

Jack Hervey, (pictured right) the son of the 1st Earl of Bristol, and his friend Colonel Thomas Norton travelled up to Bury from London, assured of being returned to Parliament as they were both being nominated by the earl. The band had been organised to parade these two successful candidates around the town, as was the custom at elections. The election, however, did not follow the pre-ordained plan. A Captain Draper who felt minded to oppose the two Hervey candidates, could not gather sufficient support and in an act of total madness captured the band of musicians and locked them in a room forcing them to play for him instead of



parading around the town. Matters took a turn for the worse when a town Alderman was stabbed in the shoulder and arm whilst trying to negotiate the band's release. Needless to say, Captain Draper was arrested. Unsurprisingly Jack Hervey and Thomas Norton were duly elected and Captain Draper evaporated from history.

Hopefully history will not repeat itself during the December 2019 vote.

Terry O'Donoghue

Full list of events lined up for the year ahead as we say our goodbyes to 2019

As 2019 rushes to a close we can reflect upon another full calendar of Bury Society events and excursions over the past 11 months.

The usual mix of social gatherings and trips farther afield were, as usual, enthusiastically supported, reflecting the current good health of the Bury Society.

Whilst the tone of the year was set with a very illuminating talk by Adrian Tindall on "Bury at War", the winter's cold was broken up in February with the society lunch at the Southgate Community Centre.

Over 80 individuals enjoyed a three-course meal and entertainment courtesy of Marco the Magician.

With the arrival of spring also came the first of the year's excursions which took a full coach to Woodbridge followed by an afternoon cruise on the river Deben towards Old Felixstowe.

An unscripted part of the day (other than a brief stop in the local hostelry) was a long detour on the return coach journey around the villages of East Suffolk due to the closure of the A14 on the Orwell Bridge.

Everyone on board was in awe of the driver who navigated us confidently around some very narrow roads and successfully negotiated the various hazards and obstructions along the way.



People eyeing up the 'goodies' on offer at the Autumn Get Together, held at the United Reformed Church, in October.



People attending the Autumn Get Together, held at the United Reformed Church, in October.

The second outing of the year, in July, was over the border into Norfolk where the King's Lynn guides provided a brief overview on Lynn's colourful history and hidden corners, before spending an afternoon at the royal house and gardens at Sandringham, where I am glad to report the weather gods were looking kindly upon our group of 53.

In between these fun days out were a sprinkling of coffee mornings, Martyn Taylor's heritage open day talk, a walking tour of the old Brakeland area, courtesy of John Saunders, and the Annual General Meeting where the guest speaker Dr Richard Hoggett immersed us in the rich history of the Abbey and more recent discoveries as we head towards the 2020 celebrations of the founding of the Abbey.

The finale to the 2019 calendar was the quiz night in November, of which more has been written by John Saunders in this edition of the Review.

Such a full and well supported programme has set the bar high for 2020, but hopefully we will not disappoint and the 2020 adventures commence with the Winter Lunch on February 8 where two locally based-professional actors (Lynn Whitehead and Tim Welton) will be providing

seasonal entertainment. Also this coming year we will be kicking off our travels by visiting Diss and Bressingham in May.

Diss is a much under-rated historical jewel just over the border into Norfolk and both the museum and stunning gardens at Bressingham are renowned.

July will see us again over the county line, this time stopping off at the Time & Tide museum, in Great Yarmouth (with maybe a chance to sniff the sea air), followed by a visit and tour around Somerleyton Hall, a stately home steeped in history set within magnificent parkland and gardens. We will also be adding a third excursion this coming year. Breaking with tradition this will be an evening trip to the little known but absolutely fascinating Police Museum at Martlesham.

As the 2020 programme is put to bed your MCE committee is already working on 2021 which is rather a special year as it will mark 50 years since the founding of the Bury Society and it is our intention to celebrate the past and highlight the continuing vital work the society does directly and indirectly to enhance the town.

Terry O'Donoghue
Events Secretary

Town guides prepare tours to mark millennium of Abbey of St Edmund



The Bury St Edmunds Town Guides.

Abbey 1000 – John Saunders reports on how the town guides are preparing.

“What’s with this Millennium thing that some people are talking about, I thought we put that to bed in the year 2000?” was what one Burian asked me.

Well, yes, but we in Bury are privileged to be celebrating another Millennium – in 2020 it will be 1,000 years since the Abbey of St Edmund was founded.

It was one of the most important places spiritually, politically and economically in this country and internationally.

Although Edmund died around 869, claimed miracles led to him becoming a Saint and his body being moved to Bedericsworth (now Bury St Edmunds) into a wooden church and then in 1020 into a stone rotunda church, guarded by a small community of Benedictine monks. The Abbey Church, housing the Shrine to St Edmund was constructed under the guidance of different Abbots over the next 300 years, eventually being reduced to ruins

at the behest of King Henry VIII.

It was one of the largest Abbey Churches in the world; its floor size would have been only exceeded by St Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

You would imagine that the town tour guides would relish explaining to visitors the significance of St Edmund and the Abbey but there is so much to tell that it is impossible to do justice to the history within a normal tour.

Four of the guides (Adrian Tindall, John Saunders, Martyn Taylor and Terry O’Donoghue, all Bury Society members) have designed eight new tours for 2020 which will separately take you through different topics; for example the life and martyrdom of the Saint and links to the town’s Catholic Church. Other tours will feature the lives of the abbots and monks, the rise and fall of the Abbey Church, Jewish connections, interaction between the town and the Abbey, times of turbulence and uprising, and health, wealth and education.

Extensive research has been undertaken and giving the guides confidence that the tours will reveal new facts and entertain.

The involvement of the Bury guides fits well with the programme of events designed by a co-ordinating group to ensure a balance between monastic and secular activities.

Their plans include a gathering of Benedictine monks, a community weekend and closing celebrations in November to coincide with the feast of St Edmund.

Many other events will occur and attract visitors from far beyond Bury, putting the town firmly on the pages of history, culture and entertainment. One of the key parts of 2020 is to create a legacy for younger people. The tour guides will be contributing with guided events for children, the scripts for these being written by Lynn Whitehead.

Those who have experienced Lynn’s previous children’s tours “Hysterical Bury St Edmunds” will know how hilarious and enjoyable these are, bringing history in a fun way to kids and grown-ups.

So it’s over to you to find out when tours are happening via www.burystedmundstourguides.org or by enquiring at the tourist information points.

Why is Bury St Edmunds not a city?

As a local tour guide this is a question asked of me many times, after all we have a cathedral. To give it its full title: The Cathedral Church of St James and St Edmund of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, that's a mouthful. People wrongly assume that Bury St Edmunds having a cathedral means it is a city, wrong, it is a cathedral town being one of 26 in the UK, if you count the Presbyterian Cathedral in Brechin, Scotland.

The parish church of St James had cathedral status conferred on it in January 1914, Parliament having agreed to it in December 1913. However, this would never have happened if Henry VIII had decided to spare the magnificent Abbey Church of St Edmund, a perennial bone of contention. With its ignominious destruction at the Dissolution this enormous church would have become a minster such as York and Westminster, minster referring to its origins when part of a monastery or abbey. Strangely Southwell which also has a cathedral cum minster is not a city. Think on this, if the Abbey Church of St Edmund was still intact rather than having the wrath of over 500 years of



The inscription on the aluminium bench in the Appleby Rose Garden.

Abbey rule vented on it by residents of the town, Bury St Edmunds would not be the delightful town it is today. We would be an urban sprawl, a metropolis equivalent to Durham, Lincoln or York. So, what does it take to become a city? Well, a fine religious building obviously helps but you do not have to be over-populous. St Davids, in Wales, is the UK's smallest with an estimated 2,000 number of inhabitants.

Ely, just down the road from Bury is not that large either with 14,000 people. Perhaps the most important element of a town becoming a city is that you must have had a royal charter bestowed on it by the sovereign. In the USA the minimum population number must be around 1,500 to become a city, powers including local laws are then delegated by the state and county to which it belongs. Why then has the aluminium bench in the Appleby Rose Garden, in Bury St Edmunds, an inscription that reads "1945, presented to the city of Bury St Edmunds by the US Army Air Forces". Maybe it was thought all those years ago Bury deserved it. After all being a city does carry some form of status, or does it? Rochester in Kent which had held city status from 1211 saw it lost because of a monumental oversight thanks to the new Rochester-upon-Medway City Council in 1998. This new corporation neglected to appoint ceremonial Charter Trustees when it became a unitary authority, this lapse of procedure saw Rochester removed from the Lord Chancellor's official list of UK cities something that does not look like ever being re-instated. Should we be a city: now there's a question?

Martyn Taylor

Millennium celebrations launched

Next year will mark the 1,000th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey of St Edmund and preparations are already under way to make sure it's one to remember.

The Abbey of St Edmund 1,000 Years project was officially launched with councillors and community figures gathering in St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

A packed programme of events will run throughout next year, including art and sculpture installations, anniversary tours and lectures, musical events and a community party in the Abbey Gardens.

The celebrations will culminate in a special light projection show in November.

Sue Warren, brand and marketing manager for Bury St Edmunds and

Beyond, said: "We've been working very hard on this and it's really great that people can now see what's planned, get excited about it and enjoy it. We hope this will bring more visitors to Bury St Edmunds and see all of the things the town has to offer."

Sponsors are being sought to help fund the celebrations while both organisations and individuals are being encouraged to raise £1,000 which will go to St Nicholas Hospice Care, St Elizabeth Hospice and East Anglia's Children's Hospices. CLAAS, Treatt Plc and Greene King have already signed up as supporters, with the latter planning to release a special anniversary beer for the occasion.

Looking after the Guildhall

We are busy at the Guildhall. The Theatre Royal are currently rehearsing their pantomime "Peter Pan" in the Court Room, the Homecoming Hearts are on display in the Banqueting Room and the Tudor Kitchen has mothers, prams and children at "Didi Dance".

Bury Society members may not be aware that the porch doors on to Guildhall Street were dated through dendrochronology to 1460-1480, confirming the traditional dating of the porch.

Previously, one of the principal conditions of the Heritage Lottery Grant of £750,000 towards the restoration, repair and updating of the Guildhall was that the Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust would take on the full responsibility for managing the building, on completion of the Trust's building works.

The Guildhall had previously, starting with an agreement signed in 1896 with the Guildhall Feoffees, been in the care of Bury Town Council, which was succeeded by St Edmundsbury Borough Council in 1974. The latest transfer of responsibility took place in September.

This does mean now that the Trust has to bear the full cost of insuring and securing the Guildhall, some £6,000 a year, together with all the heating and lighting costs.

The important pictures in the Court and Banqueting Rooms, including the wonderful full length portrait of King James I, remain in the care of West Suffolk Council who will continue to insure them.

So what is it like to manage and care for a Grade 1 listed, 12th Century Guildhall, which was at the time of its build, the largest in England. Well, it is a big responsibility for the Trustees, but one which we fully accepted and understood when we commenced the restoration. It has not been an easy learning curve for any of us.

We have wonderful volunteers and trustees, without whose devotion we would not be able to open, backed up by a small, highly dedicated, staff.



The gardens are beautiful and we have an historic building which belongs to everyone in Bury St Edmunds and we need everyone to use and enjoy it.

And we mean everybody. We do not want it in any way to be seen as exclusive.

During the refurbishment we were pleased to be able, with some careful thought, to build in fully disabled access to every part of the building. But, as we have no Local Authority Grants or other funding, we need, and will continue to need, every bit of income we can generate to pay our costs.

The Bury Town Council are due to use the Guildhall from January 2020. They will be based in the office at 79 Whiting Street adding income to the Guildhall but more significantly and importantly will mean that the council is back in its proper home, the affairs of this town having been managed from the Guildhall for at least until recently, the last 500 years. And, speaking personally, I am really pleased to see our Bury Town Council taking a more significant role in the care of this town.

So please, use our Guildhall, come and help with the myriad tasks entailed in running our Guildhall, and support us in any way you can. For myself, and all those involved in the restoration, to see our beautiful Guildhall now back in regular use has really been a dream come true.

Martin Lightfoot
Chairman

Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust

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Members programme for the coming year



Somerleyton Hall which is scheduled to be visited next July.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Winter Lunch at Southgate Community Centre with a Dickensian entertainment theme, 11.45am start with lunch at 12.45pm. £22.50 per head and includes a glass of wine. Booking form in this edition of the Review.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Coffee Morning at the Unitarian Meeting House, 10.30am to 12.30pm. Admission free.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

Visit to Diss and Bressingham. Morning in Diss with coffee and cake at the historic Corn Exchange then on to Bressingham for the afternoon



Bressingham Gardens which are to be visited next May.

which includes entrance to the gardens (at Bressingham) and museum. £22.50 per head.

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

Annual General Meeting at the United Reformed Church, in Whiting Street, 6.30pm for 7pm.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

Visit to Great Yarmouth and Somerleyton Hall. To Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth with coffee and cake on arrival in the morning. In the afternoon on to Somerleyton Hall including a guided tour of the house. £35 per head.

SEPTEMBER

Heritage Weekend events taking place. Details to follow in next edition of the Review.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

Suffolk Police Museum, Martlesham. An evening event with a donation to the museum. £17 per head.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Coffee Morning at the United Reformed Church in Whiting Street, 10.30am to 12.30pm



Suffolk Police Museum which is to be visited next October.

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The copy deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, March 30. Email copy to the editor Russell Cook at russellcook@sky.com

Don't miss the opportunity to add your weight to the Bury Society team. Apply for membership now. Either use the website: theburysociety.org.uk to download a membership form from the Home Page by clicking the "Join Us" panel or telephone the membership secretary Sue Savage on 01284 719243.

Contributions to the Review do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bury Society.