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SocietyReview

Summer 2020

Fountain of Flowers is officially unveiled



Pictured at the official unveiling of the Fountain of Flowers at the West Suffolk Hospital are left to right: Paul Hopfensperger (West Suffolk Council sponsor), Robin Burnett (chairman of Bury in Bloom), Rosie Cawston (ward manager G4) and Gary Stannard (West Suffolk Hospital Estates manager). Picture Josephine Sweetman.

The Fountain of Flowers, set up outside the West Suffolk Hospital as a gift to staff for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic, has been officially unveiled. It took place at the hospital, in

Hardwick Lane, in front of the main public entrance on the steps to Car Park A. Hospital staff along with members of Bury in Bloom and the Bury Society plus representatives from the hospital and West Suffolk

Council attended the event. The two-metre high colourful floral fountain has been created thanks to donations from dozens of members

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Display is set to be replanted in the autumn



BURY IN BLOOM

rooted in the community

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH


GREENE KING
BURY ST EDMUNDS

Continued from Page 1

of the public following an appeal along with members of the Bury Society, the parent organisation of Bury in Bloom.

It was originally installed and planted in early June and weighs about 300kgs when full of water and plants and has a built-in capillary action system that moves water from four reservoirs to ensure the compost never dries out if the reservoirs are topped up.

Bury in Bloom co-ordinator David Irvine said: "With so many people wanting to express their gratitude to the West Suffolk Hospital staff, the Fountain of Flowers was an easy way for everyone to come together to say thank you. It was very touching to read the stories that came with the donations and some were made as a memorial and it was a privilege to be part of it."

Donations "in kind" were made by Woolpit Nurseries (for the plants)

Wildflower labyrinth to add beauty and biodiversity at the Abbey ruins

A wildflower labyrinth has been planted in the Abbey Gardens, in Bury St Edmunds to attract bees, butterflies and encourage greater biodiversity.

The 36m diameter design, created to celebrate 1000 years since the founding of the Abbey of St Edmund, has been planted on the site of the former tennis courts. It will mark the east end of the Abbey of St Edmund offering views of the Abbey Church and the rest of the Abbey Ruins all around.



and CCG Gardeners (planting the pyramid) and special praise was made to the West Suffolk Hospital Estates department, especially Gary Stannard, who helped at every stage of the project.

David added: "It will be on display until late summer and replanted in the autumn and it has a real 'wow' factor'. The fund raised

enough to ensure the pyramid can be maintained and replanted twice a year – autumn and spring - for the next two or three seasons. We hope it will carry on giving pleasure reminding the staff how grateful we are."

Sue Smith, head of fundraising for My WiSH, which supports the work of the hospital, said: "On behalf of all the staff at the hospital I would like to say a huge thank you to Bury in Bloom, members of the public and the Bury Society for donating this incredible floral fountain as a tribute to all the hard work that staff have undertaken over the last few months. This beautiful floral display will remind staff how much they are valued every time they see it."

The Fountain of Flowers will remain on permanent display all summer and be replanted in the autumn for a winter display.

Bury in Bloom will be entering the display in a regional online competition later this month in the category "Best Large Container Planting".

Website to be launched next month



The home page of the new combined website for the Bury Society and Bury in Bloom.

The new combined website will be completed with the launch of the Bury Society part at the start of August.

It will mean that the society can more clearly explain what it does and what it has achieved with the essential help of its members.

In the previous update I reported about the progress from Logic Design, at Tostock, on the Bury in Bloom element.

This was to be completed first and it went live, a little later than planned, in June.

We wanted more people to understand that Bury in Bloom was an important part of what we do. You can take a look at buryinbloom.org.uk Making any site live is just the start of another set of work - news, photos and other articles are added to keep

it up to date. These are echoed on the Facebook and Twitter pages.

We can now closely co-ordinate all our social media from Bury in Bloom and The Bury Society.

Each half of the new website promotes and links to the other.

The team from the Membership Communications and Events Committee (MCE) has carefully considered and updated what the website should do.

As people have been forced to use the internet much more, just to continue with their daily lives, it makes the website more important than ever. Many of the old topics are still included – about the society, events details (difficult at present), previous Reviews and photo galleries. The “Join Us” page reminds people of the different ways they can get involved and have a say.

A new feature explains much more about the work the society does behind the scenes in the planning process.

The membership page, highlighted on the home page, shows a new approach to explain much more about the good work we do. It details the different ways that we can help our members through the work we do – subscriptions are our income; the grants we make drive several projects and awards encourage best practice.

As before, this is just the beginning; videos, online payments and more will follow soon.

See the exciting changes and vibrant new look at burysociety.com And please let me know your views.

Alan Baxter

President of Sybil Andrews Heritage Society dies after short illness

Fern Seaboyer, who was the president for 15 years of the Sybil Andrews Heritage Society, in Campbell River, in Canada, sadly died in April of this year after a short illness.

She visited Bury St Edmunds in 2017 with her daughter Karen (*pictured right outside the Athenaeum*) and was very appreciative of the fact that an

academy had been named after her. She was born above Andrews & Plumpton's ironmongers shop in the town and it was here in 2012 that a Blue Plaque by the Bury Society was affixed to that building.

Fern was instrumental in giving a generous donation towards it as Sybil had emigrated to Campbell River in 1947.



Joining forces to object to appeal over plans for Cornhill Walk

It will come as no surprise to members that there have been very few significant new applications over the past four months or that schemes already in the system have been delayed.

However, we have been kept busy because the Society has joined forces with the Well Street Association to lodge a strong objection to an appeal by the developers of the vacant **Cornhill Walk** premises, on Brentgovel Street.

Members will recall that last year the Society lodged a strong objection to plans to replace the existing shopping mall with a four-storey building of 48 flats over three large shops.

The proposals went with the planning officer's recommendation to approve, but the planning committee turned down the application - and so the developer appealed.

The Society has submitted a Statement of Representation calling for this appeal to be dismissed because of the harmful impact of the development upon the conservation area and numerous listed buildings, as well as Moyse's Hall (Grade I listed) and on the amenity of the local community. We argued too that the proposals represent over-development of this important site in terms of overall scale, monolithic massing and detailed design.

This view now appears to be endorsed by the West Suffolk planning officer who has recently submitted a statement explaining why the planning committee refused the original application.

Our representation was supported by a Town Heritage Report prepared by the Society's chair, Martyn Taylor, a retail analysis by another one of our members, Stephen Moody, and a Locality Impact Study prepared by the Well Street Association (which included some very compelling drone photos). And thank goodness Society member and professional planner Richard Summers was able to edit the final submission by pulling everything together.



Pictured left to right are James Dagg, Bill Goodsall, John Dagg and Martyn Taylor outside the former Cornhill Walk Shopping Centre during a site inspection.

All the documentation was then sent off for final embellishment to a highly experienced planning barrister employed jointly by the Society and the Well Street Association.

The Society was fortunate that this specialist planner was a personal friend of one of our members and so we were able to obtain his services at a substantially reduced fee level. The planning barrister will represent us at the (virtual) Public Hearing, which should be heard in the Autumn.

Elsewhere, we lodged an objection to an application seeking to amend the detailed design for the **Post Office**.

However, following negotiations with objectors, in particular the Bury Town Trust, the council withdrew the proposed amendments.

The application to demolish a bungalow on the junction of **Vinery Road and Hardwick Lane** and build eight flats has also been withdrawn and the plans to subdivide **Palmers** into two shops has been approved.

Looking to the future, we believe the town will continue to see a contraction of larger retail chains.

We also believe independent retailers will have to offer something differ-

ent. "Events and experience" will be the key.

The Arc will remain the prime retail space and Abbeygate Street will continue to offer a "food and beverage" culture.

However, there will be pressure on secondary retail areas to revert to residential use and the Cornhill and Buttermarket may see a contraction unless innovative uses can be found.

Recent Government announcements seeking to simplify the rules for change of use of commercial premises can only accelerate this process.

And finally, the pandemic lockdown must surely make us all think more about the detailed design of new homes.

Members will recall the Society has often criticised new-build developments where no communal outdoor amenity space is being provided or where flats are built partially underground with no cross ventilation and a very limited perception of the outside world.

Roderick Rees

Unitarian Meeting House new publications

Martin Gienke, the secretary of the Friends of the Unitarian Meeting House, gives details of two new publications that celebrate the building in Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

Almost 30 years ago the Bury Society provided funds to complete the restoration of the Unitarian Meeting House and the building is still thriving.

The Friends of Bury Unitarian Meeting House are pleased to highlight two new publications available for purchase that celebrate a beautiful and remarkable place of worship in the town which has become a much-loved venue for concerts, theatre and other social gatherings.

“A Very Special Building” is a 16-page full colour monograph, packed with illustrations, and written by local conservation architect Peter Riddington.

The booklet is based on a well-attended talk given by Peter at this early 18th century gem back in March 2018.

The Friends felt Peter’s lecture was such an informative evening that they wanted to ensure the material was made available to everyone in an attractive book form.

In the booklet, Peter details what makes the building so distinctive. It has an important cultural history which reflects the history of the town and country and is an extremely rare survivor of an early non-conformist building and architecturally it is an extremely rare example of a very finely designed and built English baroque building, remarkably intact. Additionally, the Friends have produced a 2021 Meeting House calendar.

The A4 and A3 size productions feature a large colour picture each month - including some of the architectural detailing showing why the Meeting House is recognised as a building of national importance and Grade One listed. Secretary of the Friends, Martin



The front of the Unitarian Meeting House, in Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

Gienke, said: “We’re very pleased that even more people can enjoy this magnificent building through the beautiful calendar and informative monograph.”

The calendars and “A Very Special Building” are on sale for £9 each or £15 if you purchase both.

They are available from Martin Gienke (martin@gienke.net) or from Martin Lightfoot (lightfoot@freebie.net) Chantry House, 5 Hatter Street, Bury St Edmunds.

After the restoration of the Unitarian Meeting House was completed in 1991 the administration of the building, including lettings and maintenance, was put in the hands of a management company until 2016 when the Unitarian Trustees, who own the building, formed a House Committee to look after it.

A manager and caretaker were employed and at the same time the Friends of the Unitarian Meeting House was established to keep the building open for the public to enjoy and use. Keen people are encouraged to join the Friends - and get involved in activities to support the Meeting House - for an annual subscription of just £10.

In working parties they help with the maintenance of the building and garden and also fund raising.



Peter Riddington giving his talk back in March 2018.



Martin Gienke, the secretary of the Friends of the Unitarian Meeting House, with ‘A Very Special Building’, the 16-page booklet and the 2021 calendar.

Exciting programme to mark Abbey 1000 is now all set for next year

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has halted the plans for the Millennium Celebrations of the foundation of the Abbey of St Edmund. But all is not lost and new plans are afoot.

The Abbey 1000 co-ordinating group, including various organisations and companies across the town, had planned an exciting programme of events for 2020 and made good progress in raising both public sector and private sector funds.

Andrew Speed, chairman of the Abbey 1000 Group, has announced that the programme of events will be postponed into next year with an official launch in November 2020 around St Edmund's Day.

Work is now in progress to adapt the programme of events for 2021.

The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership and the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History are adapt-



The Abbey Gardens with the Cathedral in the background.



The entrance to the Abbey Gardens from Angel Hill.

ing their Millennium Conference, planned for October 2020, into a series of digital talks from November 2020 to March 2021 plus a touring exhibition about the Abbey.

Events planned for May 2020 are being rescheduled for May 2021 including the Cathedral-organised Pilgrimages from Norfolk and Ely, the gathering of Benedictine Monks and Nuns, and the Exhibition of Abbey Manuscripts.

In addition, the series of Abbey Crypt Sculptures will switch to next year, running from May to November.

The Suffolk Philharmonic Concert planned for October 2020 will now be staged in May 2021 as part of the Bury Festival.

West Suffolk Council now aims to mount the Moyse's Hall Exhibition to run on the Abbey Gardens Fun Day, planned for July 2020, in July

2021. There will be plenty going on next summer.

Various other events are being considered for summer 2021.

They include the Abbey Anniversary Tours, the Abbey 1000 Town Trail, the Aldeburgh Festival opening concert and the Kings and Queens weekend in Charter Square. The Cathedral is working on a 2021 date for the Noye's Fludde Opera by Benjamin Britten originally planned for October 2020. The St Edmund Lecture will be in 2021 too. The Spectacle of Light Finale has now been pencilled in around St Edmund's Day 2021.

The revised programme of events for the Abbey 1000+1 Millennium Celebrations will be announced as the new plans come together.

*Richard Summers
and Matthew Vernon*



St Edmundsbury
Cathedral



West Suffolk
Council



Frank Bright: man of the people

Calls have been made for a Blue Plaque to be created in Bury St Edmunds for Capt Frank Bright. He commanded the Royal Observer Corps in the Second World War having had a distinguished career and won the DFC in the First World War. He was also Alderman and town Mayor as well as being awarded the MBE in the King's Birthday Honours List of June 1943. Catherine Buchanan details his colourful life.

At the height of the First World War in France the Suffolk Regiment's Lieutenant Frank Bright suffered a shocking and painful awakening from a precious few hours sleep.

A piece of artillery shrapnel had become embedded in his cheek. It was the 18th of May 1916 and Lieutenant Bright and his men in the 9th Battalion had just been withdrawn from the Western Front.

Unfortunately, they were still within range of the German guns at Poperinghe.

That shattering experience eventually proved the launch of a life devoted to the service of his country and his hometown of Bury St Edmunds.

Firstly, he was not finished with the fight against the Germans. Recovered from his injury he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and became a pilot in the 100 (night bombing) squadron. Flying 22 missions, with a raid on Frescaty in March 1918, earning him the award of the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) for his outstanding action during the attack. Following the Armistice Frank returned home to his wife Dorothy in Bury St Edmunds and launched into a tireless campaign to improve life in the town.

Frank was born in 1888, at 24B Angel Hill, to Thomas and Edith (nee Snell) Bright and was the grandson of James Snell, owner of a mineral factory.

He was briefly a teacher before



24B Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, the birthplace of Capt Frank Bright.



managing the family business, a position which enabled him to join the town council in 1923.

He was appointed mayor in 1935 and was the driving force behind "Bright's Folly" the Priors Estate social housing project.

A long list of other achievements included preparing the town's schools for the 1944 rise in pupils' leaving age and arranging that councillors could not vote on the Highways Committee if they had any financial interest. He became chair of the local British Legion, the Farmers Club and Chamber of Commerce then vice-chair of the Allotment Association. He was also business manager for Bury Operatic Society, instigated and managed the Suffolk Music Festival and was a Guildhall Feoffee. In 1934 an observation post, designed and run by the Observer Corps, was established in the town to spot threatening enemy aircraft or Allied planes in distress.

Sightings were phoned through to a central operations room for plotting and tracking; intelligence was then passed to Fighter Command to in-

tercept the enemy or rescue downed aircrews.

By January 1939, Frank Bright was Chief Special Constable in Bury, an Alderman, and chair of the wartime Accommodation Committee. He arranged permission for the old council chamber in the Guildhall to be used as No 14 Group operations room which is now restored and available for public viewing.

Commanded by Frank throughout the war it covered a large area, from West of Newmarket to the coast between Lowestoft and Orford Ness. The Group's 39 observation posts were all connected directly to the Guildhall.

Eventually 5,000 volunteers were involved and trained for action. It became fully operational within two hours of receiving orders on August 24, 1939, and functioned 24/7 until being stood down on May 12, 1945. The Observer Corps' vital work ensured Britain overcame the great odds stacked against the Allies in the Battle of Britain and was accorded Royal status.

Frank Bright was awarded an MBE in 1943 for the Royal Observer Corps' critical work safeguarding the nation.

This man's dedication to civil and military service not just to Bury St Edmunds but in making a huge contribution to winning the Battle of Britain and the Allies ultimate victory in 1945 surely qualifies for permanent recognition in his hometown.

The amazing history of the

The Butts and Water Meadows are a significant part of the green lung of Bury St Edmunds and Martyn Taylor explains the history of the area.

The Abbey-owned Almoners Farm Barns was one of their many manors and granges that provided not only income but produce as well.

The Butts area is indelibly linked to the many water meadows that are part of it, from the Grindle, a ditch on the southern side of the town, via York Bridge to today's Spread Eagle junction with a bridge known in medieval times as Stanwerpbrigg which spanned the River Linnet.

In days gone by longbow practice was compulsory and part of this wetlands area of the town near the Westgate was also known as The Butts. This refers to the mound with a target at which archers aimed: once a national sport. The use of archery is attributed to winning the battle of Agincourt. The nearby Westgate had a Lady Chapel conjoined with a Hermitage, pulled down in July 1765.

Where this stood an ambiguous double mini roundabout was situated in recent years. Thankfully, a far more sensible single roundabout is there now.

Also here were the dubiously named, Hellfire Cottages along with Butts Place. An apocryphal story why Hell-



Sheep grazing on The Butts, in Bury St Edmunds.

fire Corner came to be so dubbed, was that the Rev Charles Phipps Eyre, the future vicar of St Peter's Church, before it was consecrated in 1858, used to hold open air services in the nearby water meadows, preaching "hellfire and damnation" to those who didn't repent.

In creating the Parkway inner relief road, at the rear of St Peter's Church in 1977, where once chalk workings were, a Victorian rubbish dump was uncovered and bottle and pot lid collectors descended in their droves. The water meadows in this area were reached via a small lane called

Cullum Road which finished at what is today Corsbie Close, built on the former Atlas Engineering Works site. The main employer on that site was Precision Engineering Products, (PEP) founded by Frank Woodall in 1947.

The close is named after John Corsbie a wool merchant who attended the Independent Chapel in Whiting Street in the 18th century along with people such as William Buck, whilst the trade itself was still buoyant. Both lived at one time in Turret Close in today's Westgate Street, which looked over the Butts. At the end of the First World War some of the water meadows were planted with flax to make linen for aeroplane wings.

The war ended before full production to manufacture the linen got underway but the factory would become a hand laundry and eventually Hardwick Industrial Estate, now defunct.

Housing has been built there waiting to be completed as the developers went into liquidation.

A relief road linking southern Bury was created in 1972, with Cullum Road no longer a small lane.

Because of the wet areas the road had to be built up, with a culvert



The pill box on The Butts, in Bury St Edmunds.

Continued on next page

Butts and Water Meadows

Continued from previous page

going under the road taking the River Linnet.

Years later Cullum Road controversially hit the headlines when Greene King wanted to build an access road off it.

A character called “Swampy” and his ecological warriors were very much against it even to the extent of roping themselves in the trees there, to no avail though, the road opening in 2002.

The terrace houses on the east side of Cullum Road are also now gone, in their place a residential care home called 11, Cullum Road, run by Orbit Housing Association.

An archaeological dig here in 2000, in preparation for its construction, uncovered shards of Roman pottery from the 3rd and 4th centuries along with animal bones that showed signs of butchering, the first clear evidence of some Roman occupation in the town.

Criss-crossed by small track ways and footpaths, drainage ditches and rivulets, the main artery of the water meadows is the River Linnet which rises in Ickworth Park. Close to the Linnet are Holywater Meadows.

Hidden amongst the undergrowth is a Second World War pill box, which surprisingly is still intact, and nearby is Holywell Close, nothing to do with religion but a spring once called The Holewell.

The diverse ecology of the whole area supports grazing sheep, egrets, herons, kingfishers, water voles,



An egret on The Butts, in Bury St Edmunds.



Flood waters on The Butts, in Bury St Edmunds.

crested newts, and deer though otters are not seen these days.

When Watsons timber yard, off Southgate Street, closed a large development called Saxon Gate was built by Redrow Homes.

Due to the instability of some of the site because of its closeness to the adjacent water meadows piling had to be carried out.

Known in antiquity as Great Sextons Meadows there is a “Dew Pond” here, part of the Saxon Gate Nature Reserve, the pond evidentially recorded in the past.

As it was outside of the town a Pest House was just off the meadows called Hockwell Went (virtually Barons Road today) where those afflicted by malaise, plague or unknown diseases could be isolated from the rest of the town.

This Pest House is shown on Warrens map of 1791 as is nearby Market Path that leads to Cullum Road and the unsavoury named Cut-throat Lane.

2019 saw a large part of the Water Meadows, on the western side of Cullum Road, one which is called Harp Meadow as it looked exactly what it infers, purchased by the owners of The Crystal Palace in Friars Lane: Stephen and Sarah Gull. This was to prevent any development thus allowing enjoyment for future generations, a magnanimous and generous act.

Just a few minutes away from the town centre, the Butts has a countryside feel to it, a green lung of the town.

Events put on hold as virus and lockdown scupper plans

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions, with much sadness we have been unable to proceed with any of our published events programme for 2020.

However, as these restrictions are gradually being eased, the Events Committee is looking at what may be possible as a revised social programme in the last four months leading up to Christmas.

We have a duty of care, and the health of our members must be the top priority. Any event we feel confident to stage later this year will reflect that duty of care and comply with any government guidelines ruling at the time. Please look out for publicity on any revised programme, with full details also being published on our updated website.

Terry O'Donoghue

‘Robinson Crusoe’ author’s plaque

There was a plaque put up in 1907 on the Cupola House which recorded the visit to the town by celebrated novelist Daniel Defoe, author of “Robinson Crusoe”.

The plaque was one of 12 stone plaques in the town to help celebrate the wonderful pageant of that year, reenforcing the town’s history and heritage.

After the disastrous fire of June 2012, the Strada restaurant, then occupying the Cupola, was to all intents and purposes gutted, the plaque now painted blue with gold lettering was not put back up, languishing somewhere inside the building in The Traverse.

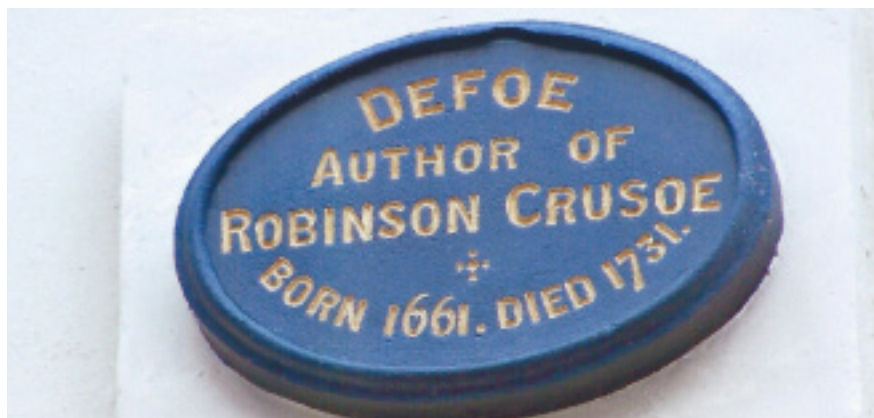
Cupola House was built in 1693 by wealthy apothecary Thomas Macro and his wife Susan, the weather vane up high recorded this.

However, there is no evidence to support Defoe’s visit to see them.

On the contrary Defoe was a dissenter whilst the Macros were not.

The confusion with names seems to have led to this ambiguity when Defoe visited Bury St Edmunds soon after his release from Newgate prison in 1704.

He had published a satirical pamphlet “The shortest way with dissenters”.



The Daniel Defoe Plaque.

It was a back-swipe at extreme reactionaries who advocated tougher measures against dissenters, in particular refusing to allow them to take public office.

These people were known as “high fliers” due to their unbending and rigid approach to dissenters but the tract was accepted by some as being true. The dissenters such as Presbyterians were horrified to think that a wave of hatred could break out followed by violence.

Defoe went into hiding after Parliament issued a libel writ against him but eventually, he had to face the music.

After a short spell in the pillory he was incarcerated in Newgate for a year.

He published his first newspaper in prison, and you could say the notoriety gained from the pamphlet made him.

Perhaps Macro could be confused with Defoe, but it would seem that Defoe’s visit to Bury was more to do with seeing a T or J Morley who was a grocer in the Cook Row (now Abbeygate Street) and was a local Presbyterian. Hence the letters T or J M in Defoe’s narratives.

Martyn Taylor

Support continues for Society in difficult times

We can consider ourselves very lucky for the continued support of the majority of our members in these difficult times, and I’m pleased to say that well over 500 of you have now paid your subscription for this year.

For the past couple of years we have had a membership body of around 620 and this has given us a strong voice, so we hope we can maintain our numbers at that sort of level. Although the social events programme has not been able to go ahead this Summer we are still busy maintaining the beauty of the town and fending off any unattractive planning applications.

The front gardens judging scheme has gone ahead as normal and a lovely Fountain of Flowers has been

installed at the West Suffolk Hospital to thank NHS staff from the people of the town for their dedicated work.

Many of you generously contributed towards this delightful feature.

The events sub-committee regularly considers the “social distancing” situation and whether any events could be put on before the end of the year. At the time of writing this looks a bit unlikely but we live in hope.

The simplest way to pay your annual subscription is by standing order on June 1, so that you don’t have to remember every year when it’s due, and more importantly from my perspective, I don’t have to ring you up to remind you that it’s late!

If you know that your subscription is currently outstanding could you please either send me a cheque for £15 (individuals) or £20 (two people at the same address) payable to The Bury St Edmunds Society, to 19 Sicklesmere Road, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2BP or, if you have internet banking, a BACS transfer can be done to Barclays Bank, Cornhill, sort code 20 16 12, account no 30225134. The account is in the name of Bury St Edmunds Society. It would be helpful if you could email me on members@bursociety.com if you do make a transfer, so that I can identify the payment on the bank statement.

Sue Savage
Membership Secretary
Telephone 01284 719243

Abbey tennis courts serve up an ace

The new public tennis courts have opened in the Abbey Gardens, marking the completion of the first physical project by the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. West Suffolk Council, which is part of the partnership, has completed work after gaining Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England. Two new courts will be available from August, replacing the old ones which have been removed from near the Abbey crypt.

Titan Tennis will be offering coaching sessions on Saturday mornings. Players are asked to ensure they follow social distancing guidelines. John Griffiths, the leader of West Suffolk Council, said: "It has long been our ambition to replace the old courts and move them to a more suitable setting within the gardens.

"The gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for people to relax and unwind, as well as to enjoy and participate in certain sports including tennis and mini golf. It is perhaps particularly important at this time, when many of us may have been struggling to get enough exercise, that there are these opportunities to enjoy sport for our physical as well as mental health.

"That is why we are so delighted that our £263,000 investment in the extension of the public gardens into the former Eastgate nursery, which includes these new public tennis courts, is now complete. We anticipate that these courts will be very popular



Pictured at the new tennis courts in the Abbey Gardens are Rev Canon Matthew Vernon, chairman of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership; Paul Hope, director of Titan Tennis Academy; and Jo Rayner, West Suffolk Council Cabinet Member for Leisure.

and I'd like to thank all the partner organisations and the neighbouring residents and clubs, both for their support as well as their tolerance during the works."

The new tennis courts, which meet Lawn Tennis Association standards, have been built on the site of the former Eastgate Nurseries, a site which had in more recent years been used for storage.

Community archaeological investigations were carried out on the site ahead of the new courts being laid. As well as new courts, the work has also seen pedestrian improvements

from Eastgate Street to the River Lark path and provided a new riverside picnic area while

English Heritage funded repairs to sections of the boundary walls.

Rev Canon Matthew Vernon, chairman of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership said: "Part of the Abbey area has, in modern times, been used for recreation and leisure, and these new courts will ensure that that continues. It also presents further opportunities.

"The partnership's aim is to find out more about its archaeology and history so we can understand and share more of the story of St Edmund and the Abbey with local people and visitors. We still hope to have a scan of a wide area of the site to further the research and discover more about what links to the Abbey's medieval past may lie beneath and we will announce more on this when we are able."

The new tennis courts can be booked via the Lawn Tennis Association court app – simply go into the app and search for Abbey Gardens (Bury St Edmunds). Alternatively visit <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/AbbeyGardens/Booking>



The Abbots Bridge, just off Eastgate Street, and in front of the new tennis courts in the Abbey Gardens, in Bury St Edmunds.

Mark Beaumont

Bury's past battles with its series of

For centuries, like most towns in England, Bury St Edmunds has experienced periods of disease, plague and pandemic; each presenting unique challenges and prompting differing responses to minimise damage done to the economic and social structure of the town.

In medieval times, the plague was a constant threat striking the town with regular monotony for over 300 years. Our reminder is in the form of what is known as "The Plague Stone" situated on Out Risbygate.

Whilst Bury's stone may have started life as a boundary cross, Plague Stones are believed to be where payment was left, often in a bowl of vinegar, for goods and supplies left at the edge of town.

The original bubonic plague, or Black Death, first struck Bury in the spring of 1349, having by now mutated into the deadlier pneumonic plague.

Decimating the town's population, close to 50% succumbed. The abbey, our "town within a town", suffered as badly although the Abbot remained unscathed having headed for the safety of his estates at Elmswell. In 1361/2 the officiating monks were not so lucky and in one year, two abbots, the prior and around 50 per cent of the monks died in the outbreak.

Within seven years it returned yet again, and indeed continued to do so until the mid 1600s.

The incubation period of the disease could be as long as 30 days, but once symptoms manifested themselves death was inevitable.

This living hell was summed up by a John Clynn as "Waiting among the dead for death to come."

The stark consequences of the plague are highlighted by Bury's population figures.

In the early 1300s the town's population exceeded 7,000, but by the early 1500s it only records a population of just over 4,000.

It might be reasonable to surmise that medieval society was not sufficiently knowledgeable or organised to combat such a disease.

Medical help was indeed rudimentary



Bury St Edmund's Plague Stone before being re-sited in Out Risbygate.

but those that ran the town, particularly the Feoffees of the Guildhall Feoffment, acting in the absence of a formal corporation, tried to enforce measures to prevent spread of infection.

Infected households, as far as possible, were subject to a mandatory quarantine of 40 days and prevented from leaving their houses - with such extreme measures as the boarding up of doors and windows to ensure compliance.

The rich tended to head for the safety of the countryside, which probably spread infection to surrounding rural communities that otherwise may have escaped unscathed.

As they gained more experience, the Feoffees ensured the town gates were sealed and travellers from hot spots, particularly London, were refused entry to the town.

They also converted buildings they owned into "Pesthouses", including constructing a bespoke building on Sexton's Meadow.

The outbreak of 1589 saw tents also being erected in the town to house victims.

By-laws to improve sanitation were introduced, particularly regarding the disposal of human and animal waste. Such organisation and control of the town meant that when the plague struck again in 1637, the death toll declined to 10 per cent.

During this period St Peter's Hospital, in Out Risbygate, was used as a quarantine hospital and a nearby pit as a mass grave.

By 1665 the town avoided the latest devastating outbreak originating in London, partially through control

measures honed over centuries.

As the impact of the plague subsided, deadly twins smallpox and cholera became a constant threat; the worst smallpox epidemic being 1732/3.

Once more the pest houses were utilised to provide quarantine points. Attempting to control cholera, further measures were taken to control human waste.

The waste from the normal population of the town would have been considerable at the best of times, but during the prolonged Great Fair in October, the town's ditches ran high with all forms of human and animal waste making Bury less than fragrant!

By 1826 the town had a functioning general hospital, but despite a real fear in 1832 that London's cholera epidemic would strike Bury the managing committee of the hospital ruled that no cholera patients would be treated in their hospital, forcing the Guildhall Feoffees to convert cottages on Risbygate Street for potential victims. Luckily the feared epidemic never materialised.

At the outbreak of smallpox in 1835 the hospital management had a change of heart, agreeing to provide free inoculations for the townspeople.

In the 1850s they also made the baths at the hospital available to the townspeople, in an attempt to lift general hygiene amongst the poor.

There is a bitter comment in the hospital minutes concerning the lamentable take up of these facilities.

Smallpox, itself, remained a real threat to the town into the early 20th century.

A more recent pandemic, almost within living memory, was the outbreak of Spanish flu at the end of the Great War in 1918.

Bearing some similarities with the current covid pandemic, the spread of the disease was made worse by the huge movement of people and servicemen immediately after the conflict.

It is called Spanish flu but, curiously, research points at it originating at

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epidemics and pandemics

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an army training base in the USA, spreading to Europe with their troops in 1917.

The cheek by jowl living conditions of the great armies was a virulent breeding ground for the virus. Bury was not immune to a visit by what was named “The Spanish Lady” and at the much expanded hospital 74 flu victims were admitted, occupying three out of the four wards. Sadly 18 died, including one nurse. These victims are just the tip of the iceberg with many dying in their own homes. Unlike the current Covid-19 pandemic all mitigating measures were localised and, in the absence of any central government intervention, unco-ordinated.

Little was known about the spread of the virus until 1933 when research confirmed that the flu virus was spread by airborne droplets.

The great flu pandemic and the toll from the Great War were the catalysts



Injured servicemen at the old hospital with no hint of the epidemic to come. Photo courtesy of Spanton Jarman collection.

to start considering a national health service. Despite several fruitless Royal Commissions between 1919 and 1939, it took an ever widening social divide and another war to focus minds and finally bring about

the National Health Service in 1948; a health service which has proved itself so vital and resilient in coping with our 21st century pandemic.

Terry O'Donoghue

444 hanging baskets now on display

Getting the hanging baskets up and organising the Certificates of Merit was a close-run thing this year as the Covid-19 regulations and sponsorship became major issues to be considered.

Thankfully, things began to ease on both fronts, and we were able to see a way forward.

Seeing all the hanging baskets going up in June was a massive relief. And more so as it happened just as shops and businesses were beginning to open.

Everyone really wanted the town to look its best after such a depressing time and we wanted to send out a message “Come and visit the Jewel in the Crown, we’re open for business” and “dressed to impress”. The West Suffolk Council team who physically hang the baskets, were extremely helpful and I am very grateful to them.

After lots of discussions the Bury in Bloom basket numbers were finalised



at 166 following support from Our Bury St Edmunds.

When added to the Town Council, West Suffolk Council and residential baskets, a total of 444 baskets were put in place around the town as well as planters. This compares with 520 baskets in 2019 (15% less).

The bigger challenge was organising the Certificates of Merit; maintaining social distancing and judges safety were the issues, given that so many of the judges fell into the “At Risk” (over 70 years) category and in early

April it looked as though there was no way out. Thankfully, the situation eased following the government’s June 1 announcement, so with new judges protocol and risk assessment in place the committee were happy to go ahead.

Unfortunately, the delays meant we were unable to develop the plan of including the Marham Park estate in this year’s judging. We will include them next year.

Jane Hamblin, the Certificates of Merit co-ordinator said nearly 100 judges and team leaders visited every part of the town in a co-ordinated plan to ensure that every residential and non-residential property was given a look to get a chance to win a Certificate of Merit. Judges can also award the “Highly Commended” certificate where they see outstanding effort.

David Irvine
Bury in Bloom co-ordinator

Bury to remain as the Jewel in the

How we all long for “normality” and, in whatever context you take that, the world has dramatically changed over the last few months.

The month of March now seems light years away and we all need to adapt to the new normal affecting our daily lives.

Our hearts go out to those affected directly and of course, our huge thanks to all of the “heroes” who ensured that our essential services kept going.

One of the strangest sights over the last few months for me personally was to see the eerily quiet and deserted town centre streets, bereft of cars, people and the normal bustle.

Shop windows displaying Easter goods into June was a surreal experience, it felt as if mankind had departed for good.

Panic buying ensued in the supermarkets and some of the worst human traits surfaced, but also a sense of neighbourliness, support and kindness which was heartening to see. As an NHS volunteer, I have been able to do my tiny bit to ensure prescriptions have been delivered, shopping bags left on doorsteps (especially the pet food!) and patient transport.

As we slowly emerge back into the light and lockdown regulations are being relaxed, I thought about how Bury town centre might operate in the immediate future and the challenges and changes it might face going forward.

As businesses have started to reopen, perception is all important on how people feel about returning to a busy town centre - to bars, pubs, restaurants and leisure activities. In the lead up to reopening Mark Cordell and his team at Our Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk Council and Sue Warren, at Bury St Edmunds and Beyond, put in a huge amount of work to understand and put into place the regulations on social distancing, restart marketing and promoting the town and communicating with local businesses to ensure that we all can feel safe in returning to town.

We owe a huge debt of thanks for



St John's Street, in Bury St Edmunds, which hosts a range of independent traders which helps to maintain the lifeblood of the town.

all of the work going on behind the scenes.

Over the last few weeks, the town centre has started to get back some of the hustle and bustle that we are used to and we must all work together to ensure that the public enjoys the experience and businesses can start to rebuild.

It will feel different of course, and many people are making the decision to remain at home.

For now, the virus is still with us, and we must not start to think yet that it is back to normal ... the last thing anyone wants is another spike.

As BBC Radio Suffolk's retail analyst, I am asked to discuss current retail and hospitality trends, changes and challenges and the outlook for our local town centres - we have certainly had a lot to talk about over the last six months.

Bury continues to adapt and change along with other large towns across the UK but 2020 has seen a dramatic change to the retail landscape.

Well known companies in the retail and hospitality sectors have fallen into administration and closed, more and more vacant shops are appearing in the prime streets and thousands of jobs are being cut.

The trend to online shopping has hastened due to their being no alternative in the early lockdown and this will undoubtedly continue.

Big names such as John Lewis, Debenhams, Laura Ashley, Carluccio's and Carphone Warehouse are currently evaluating stores and are either closing their physical retail stores completely or adapting their offer to an online focus.

A huge 70% of John Lewis sales are now through their online shop rather than their department stores – online doesn't have the huge overheads of rent, business rates, staffing, store fixtures and can trade 24 hours a day, something that the businesses large and small have picked up on whilst their high street stores have been closed.

Also, most young people today wouldn't even think of going shopping in a town centre.

The tight balance of time and ease means that for many, shopping is via their telephone or tablet.

Bury, along with all other towns and cities, will need to adapt to these changes in terms of offer, accessibility, parking and leisure going forward.

We will see more companies fail over the coming months as the reality of no income for three months and the end of the furlough scheme start to bite. Some retailers were in precarious states financially before the lockdown.

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Crown of Suffolk

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The end of June is traditionally a “quarter day” when rents are due to landlords. However, this year, only a shocking 15% of retail rents were actually collected nationally on the quarter day which has led to large companies such as Intu (formerly Capital Shopping Centres) going into administration.

Other retail and hospitality companies are using voluntary CVA's (company voluntary arrangements) to offload under-performing or high rented branches which is seen by many as an easy way to get rid of unwanted shops with expensive leases. The CVA's were not designed to do this as the burden then falls on the landlord or owner of the premises and many large pension schemes have traditionally bought into retail property as a sure fire “win-win” as for many years, rents were only ever expected to rise. Many pension providers have currently suspended trading in commercial premises due to the volatility of the market and being unable to accurately value their premises. Looking forward, we may have to accept that our town centres will look and feel very different going forward, there will be more retail/hospitality casualties which mean more empty premises.

Town centres may need to contract their physical retail areas and current secondary areas may need to

change to residential/convenience. I personally am in favour of residential accommodation above existing commercial premises as this will provide the remaining businesses with custom on their doorstep and re use the shocking amount of empty space that is no longer wanted by retailers. Gone are the days when shops kept stock upstairs.

Bury can and will adapt and change, we have a huge strength in independent businesses in the town, the wonderful markets, festivals and a loyal catchment area.

People still want to get out and about, socialise, go to the cinema, theatre or restaurant/pub, these things will carry on.

The next few months will be difficult for trade and the lack of the Christmas Fayre will hit businesses “like for like” sales hard. Some more named stores will close and landlords and councils will have to realise that they also need to change ... we need to give people reasons to choose Bury over competing towns when thinking about their leisure time. I visit hundreds of towns every year to see what they offer in terms of retail/leisure/culture and believe me when I say that Bury is so fortunate to have everything it does. Ease and cost of parking, range of facilities, townscape, community, and good will all be key to ensure that Bury retains its place as “THE Jewel in the Crown of Suffolk”.

Stephen Moody



Debenhams currently evaluating their stores nationwide in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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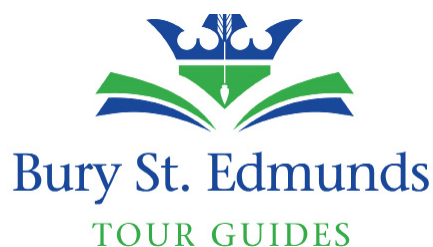
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Tour guides awarded top honour by Visit England during pandemic



Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides have been awarded a “We’re Good to Go” certificate by Visit England, one of the first tour guiding organisations in the country to be awarded this Covid-19 Industry Standard.

It assures customers that we fully conform to the guidance on Covid-19 safety set out both by government and by the Institute of Tourist Guiding. It has been achieved through a lot of hard work behind the scenes during lockdown, including preparing a Covid-19 risk assessment and producing detailed guidance both for our guides and our customers.

We have even prepared guidance on the safe use of our new base, the former Rangers Hut in the Abbey Gardens.

Our daily 2pm tours restarted on July 4, and we have had to introduce some changes to ensure that they are fully Covid-19 safe.

Tours must now be booked in advance (up to one hour before the tour) online at www.burystedmunds-tourguides.org

To ensure that we meet social distancing requirements, group numbers are for the time being restricted to six. Our customers will be given a safety briefing both online when they book and at the start of each tour, and the guides themselves will be instantly recognisable in their smart new green gilets.

Rather than meeting inside the

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The copy deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, November 16. Email copy to the editor Russell Cook at russellcook@sky.com



Bury St Edmunds tour guides pictured in the Abbey Gardens, in Bury St Edmunds, left to right, Melanie Mills, Adrian Tindall, John Saunders and Terry O'Donoghue. Picture courtesy Bury Free Press.

Tourist Information Point, tours will commence on Angel Hill, next to the Pillar of Salt. And no tours will take place within buildings or in restricted areas of the town, where social distancing cannot be ensured. We are also required by law to retain customers' contact details for 21 days for the purposes of the government's track and trace system.

Lockdown has been a frustrating period for us all, and our members

have filled the time with research, quizzes and the inevitable Zoom meetings.

Now, however, we're “Good to Go” and we can't wait to welcome back both residents and visitors to rediscover our beautiful town.

Adrian Tindall
Chairman

**Bury St Edmunds Association of
Registered Tour Guides**

Don't miss the opportunity to add your weight to the Bury Society team. Apply for membership now.

Either use the website: burysociety.com 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.