

THE BURY ST. EDMUNDS SOCIETY

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BURY ST. EDMUNDS

PEOPLE, CARS AND PRESSURE



THE BURY SOCIETY'S NEWSLETTER

November 1994

THE BURY SOCIETY

With over 500 members, the Bury St. Edmunds Society is an active force in the town, helping to preserve its ancient character and at the same time welcoming appropriate developments.

If you share our interest in and love for this princely town, one of the undoubted jewels of Europe, then please join us. We are always looking for new members, new ideas, new ways of furthering our aims.

We hold regular meetings — the next on 16 November is especially important (see inside back cover). We visit other areas. We advise the District and County Council on planning matters. And we publish a bi-monthly newsletter. In short, we play an active role in civic life.

To receive a warm welcome to the Society, please contact Ann Bird, our Membership Secretary, at Horndon House, 62 Garland Street, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1EZ (Tel: 754034).

Membership subscriptions are £5 for a single and £8 for a couple. Cheques should be made payable to The Bury Society and sent to Ann Bird at her address.

Front Cover

The Market Cross, Bury St. Edmunds by Oliver Thomas.

People, Cars and Pressures

David Dougan, Editor

Town centres, especially those of an historic nature, face greater problems today than at any other time in their history. Those problems derive essentially from the pressure of numbers: the numbers of residents accommodated in out-of-town developments has increased dramatically over the years whilst the historic cores remain, and must remain, as they have always been; two-thirds of the population own cars; in itself that sheer volume precipitates problems of management and pollution whilst adversely affecting public transport.

Another important influence has also adversely affected them: the drive towards commercialisation. So many town centres are now simply retail areas devoid of any non-commercial activity. As a result, they die at night.

Favourite Buildings

These are some of the central issues which are evoked in this issue of the newsletter. Our Planning Officer, Mark Pawling, and the Borough Council's Director of Technical Services, David Albon, provide detailed analysis and pointers to future action whilst former Chairman, Peter Plumridge, writes of the joys and drawbacks of living in the historic core. Trisha Mellor looks at her favourite buildings and identifies her overall favourite. Do you agree with her? If you have other candidates for the most beautiful building in Bury, please let me know. It would be stimulating to have a range of opinions.

Also in this issue we give a preview to an important exhibition which is to be held in the Cathedral cloisters in May. For the past 30 years, one of our former chairmen and one of the best-known figures around the town, John Clibbon, has been going to Venice to paint and draw this unique city. As a result, he has built up an impressive portfolio of sketches, water colours and oils of the Serenissima. We are privileged to provide a taster of the exhibition to come.

Shops are important. I would like to pick out one for appreciation — the jeweller Thurlow Champness in Abbeygate Street. It is small and appears to glow with a richness, not of the jewels but of the frontage of dark gold stained wood. Above there is a run of window box kept to a neat and uniform planting of geraniums and, further up still, we can all see a good public clock keeping accurate time. Why are there so few public clocks these days? And why has a tree been allowed to grow so that it now obliterates the clock face on Moyses Hall?

Naturally, the remains of the Abbey should feature in one's choice, but how about moving away from them a little to consider the modest stone dovecote nearby? Probably the monks appointed to tend the birds would have thought they had cornered a cushy number, better even than hoeing in the vineyard.

Desert Island Discs

I seem to have chosen eight favourite buildings or groups of buildings — as in Desert Island Discs — and if this analogy is to be taken further I ought to choose just one to be transported across the oceans to keep me company. Should it be a nice house in which to shelter? A chapel in which to pray for rescue? A museum or a special reading room for further education? A corn exchange to symbolise survival? A cupola to glitter above the coconut palms? A stone dovecote to adapt for local wildlife? From a castaway's point of view it should be the dovecote for its practicality. From the point of view of a continuing resident of Bury St. Edmunds, it has to be The Athenaeum.

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Ageing

A new awareness of the world,
A new self-consciousness of self,
Awakens in life's Spring
When April nurtures Nature.
New thoughts, new powers, new visions,
Replace lost childhood's fantasies
As probing minds explore fields yet unknown,
As fresh emotions strike, disturb, confuse,
As body's surging growth and quickening pulse
Endow new strength
To mount with wings as eagles.

Life's Spring slips swiftly past.
Reality soon clips
Youth's soaring eagle's wings.
Yet power enough remains to stride life's middle years
As minds still seek new knowledge to digest,
As deep emotions still disturb, confuse,
As body still has strength
To run and not be weary.

Then, after ruthless passing of the years
 Life's Autumn falls.
 To mount with wings as eagles,
 To run and not be weary
 Exist in memory only by recall.
 As Autumn falls and Winter's days draw near,
 As body's ageing powers grow weak and frail,
 Only the strength remains
 To walk and not to faint.

Thus body's strength declines
 From Spring's green youth
 To Autumn's yellow age
 When Nature withdraws nurture.

But there is more to life than body's strength.
 The inner self, the personality,
 The mystic essence no one can define
 Which makes each person single and unique
 Does not decline, but grows and learns
 Through life's continuing years
 What most to value, and what matters most.

Eric A. Graves

Traffic and the Town Centre Dweller

Peter Plumridge

Going into the Athenaeum recently I noticed two people consulting the Society's 'Walk around' guide, clearly visitors to the town; we passed the time of day, we chatted and I was reminded of Trisha Mellor's article in the last Newsletter as one said "What a lot you have to be proud of", then came the qualification as we looked across to Angel Corner and to the Abbey Gate, "but what a pity about the cars".

That unsolicited remark expressed a sentiment for me also, not only in the context of Angel Hill and other parts of Bury, but for many of our historic towns. Clearly the motor vehicle is part of present day life and we cannot ban it (although some come near to that in their ideology), but if we are to retain the qualities that bring visitors to the town and others to live in its historic environment we must use our transport sensibly and that may well mean some measures of control because education and persuasion do not necessarily suffice.

Historic Environment

My wife and I sought to live in town because we enjoy the historic environment and the hustle and bustle of urban life with its proximity of theatre, library, pubs, churches and a good spread of shops, all within walking distance.

We recognise that others prefer to live out of town and come in for their shopping, business and leisure but how do they get here? Buses for some, cars for many and our shops need deliveries. Add the steadily increasing volumes of these different uses together and there are times when cars and trucks fast approach gridlock in the town centre streets. Then out of shopping and business hours we see another category of driver, the rat-runner, who prefers to whiz through residential streets rather than go around the centre.

Town centre dwelling is fine but there are occasions when the volumes of traffic and the manner of driving can detract from the environment which visitors and residents alike relish. One has to ask the question, "Need all these vehicles be here?"