

## THE BURY ST. EDMUNDS SOCIETY

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## BURY ST. EDMUNDS

### A TOWN TO CHERISH



### THE BURY SOCIETY'S NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1994

## THE BURY SOCIETY

Do you love Bury St. Edmunds? Would you like to help to preserve its historic character and, at the same time, encourage appropriate developments?

Then why not join us in The Bury Society. We have over 300 members at the moment and we always offer a warm welcome to newcomers.

We hold social gatherings. We have talks about the town. We visit other interesting areas. We advise the Borough or the County Council on planning matters. We publish a bi-monthly newsletter, keeping members informed of everything that is going on. In short, we play an active role in civic life.

Please join us by contacting our  
Membership Secretary, Ann Bird  
at 62 Garland Street (Tel: 754034).

### Subscriptions

Thank you very much to all the members who paid their subscriptions so promptly at or after the A.G.M. however, some members have not yet paid and I would be grateful if they could send their subscriptions as soon as possible to the Membership Secretary at Horndon House, 62 Garland Street, Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 1EZ, or to the Society's office at 86 Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 1NL, with cheques payable to The Bury Society. £5 Single, £8 for a couple.

## CREATING A SENSE OF IDENTITY

The summer has started well weather-wise and has been enhanced by the decision of St. Edmundsbury Borough Council not to proceed with the Chartwell scheme for the cattle market.

I am sure members will wish to put on record their thanks to Eric Graves and Mark Pawling for their tenacious and professional conduct of the Society's objections to the scheme.

Leading on from this, I am pleased to hear from our members who are unable to attend events that nevertheless they do support the Society in its role as watchdog on planning and other matters.

We would welcome their suggestions for future speakers, outings, debates and social events.

How would you respond to the Society's commissioning a work of art — a piece of sculpture for instance — possibly positioned on Angel Hill or in the Abbey Gardens (if allowed)?

### Making Grants

The Society has been very generous in making grants for improvements, notably the Unitarian chapel, paving and planting at St. John's Centre, and the seats in the Great Churchyard amongst other things.

It is now felt that members might wish for something tangible to commemorate, and at the same time express the Society's gratitude, to Dr. Rae for her most generous bequest.

The sculpture could be traditional or modern in concept, something that the residents of Bury St. Edmunds will be able to look at in fifty or a hundred years time and still enjoy (but no ideas for statues of present-day local dignitaries please!).

Your comments and views will be welcomed on this as on all other matters and, of course, no decision would be taken without members being consulted.

### **Strong Town Council**

We await yet another decision affecting the future of the town — that of the Local Government Commission. If Bury becomes part of West Suffolk, one of the great advantages accruing will be that of a strong Town Council.

Finally, we would seem to be losing our identity, gradually and insidiously, for instance we no longer have a Bury postmark as all stamped letters go to Ipswich where they are sorted and then they come back here for delivery. We are having eleven digit phone numbers foisted upon us, having long since lost any clue to the town in the number, and how long will it be before Bury St. Edmunds is left off the A45 cum A14 road signs (maybe a mixed blessing some will think)?

So you see, we do need both a piece of sculpture and a Town Council if only for identification.

*Barbara Hill*  
CHAIRMAN

## **A VICTORY FOR COMMON SENSE — AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT**

I am very pleased to advise our members that the proposed Cattle market retail development by Chartwell Land has now been put on ice until the Inspector's Report on the Local Plan has been received. This Report is expected in approximately 10 months' time. I would like to say that the proposal has been killed, but I consider that that would be expecting too much. I believe this decision by the Council to be a very good decision for the town and would like to thank all members for their support, as I am sure that the Society had a considerable influence on this decision.

However, I am anxious that we do not relax and it is most important that the Society consider the proper development of this site. It is not realistic to assume that no development will ever take place. We must continually press for the retention of the livestock and deadstock markets on this site, particularly as the Auctioneers have recently expressed their desire to continue to operate here. The character of this town will be lost if the market is removed to an out-of-town location. It is essential to keep the livestock market and the street market in their existing positions.

### **Expansion**

It is also essential that the commercial vitality is maintained by allowing existing businesses to expand and new businesses to

I understand that the Government is considering making peaceful protest unlawful. This is a ridiculous and extreme reaction to recent protests regarding major highway projects. Cannot we determine what is reasonable or unreasonable, or have the lawyers completely taken over? It is, in my opinion, unfortunate that they are the profession with the greatest representation within our Parliament. It is vital that apathy does not rule; remember that the price of true democracy is eternal vigilance (stated by a Frenchman). The unique and valuable urban environments of Europe were not created by lawyers, or the Department of Transport, or the Department of the Environment, but by people with artistic, architectural, social and planning sensitivity who had a deep knowledge and understanding of their locality. In order to maintain the unique urban environment of Bury St. Edmunds, it is essential that the decisions taken regarding its future are made at local level by local people and not by Central Government dictate.

*Mark A. Pawling*  
Bury Society's Planning Adviser

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## WE TEND TO FORGET HOW MUCH THE WORLD HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST SIXTY YEARS

### REMINISCENCES OF EARLIER TIMES

#### **The Milk Carts . . .**

used to be bowled along by girls. There was a little wheel at the front and a pair of larger ones at the back, rather in the form of a bath chair. There was always a large churn of milk on board as well as smaller ones. Some bottles were carried but, more often, you offered a jug to be filled from either a pint or a half pint ladle. Milk was supplied by the Co-op Dairy which was situated behind Marks and Spencer. Another supplier was Booty's, who still trade today down by Northgate roundabout.

There was no bus station in those days; the buses used to leave the town from the market place, just outside Woolworths. Next door to Woolworths there was the Maypole Stores. All change offered by customers used to be dropped into a metal tray so that the shopkeeper could keep a check on the passing of 'dud' coins — a fairly common problem in those times.

As today, the Feoffment School was in Bridewell Lane but, in those days, the children would all be locked into the school and grounds so that no bad boys would be able to truant.

There was a baker's shop very close to the school and the baker, setting out on his rounds with his horse and cart, would be entreated by the children to take messages to their mothers. He

was called Olly Childs and was very well known in the town. He kept his horse down on the meadows where Cullum Road now runs.

### **Bare Necessities**

One lady, Mrs Farrow, had her first baby in Alexander House in Hospital Road. She was helped by Mr Mobbs at the nearby St. Mary's Hospital when her family fell on hard times. Mr Mobbs was the equivalent of a welfare officer and the hospital was known all around as the 'Spike' (Workhouse). Mr Mobbs would apply severe means tests to assess one's needs. Girls would have to wear boys' boots and no biscuits or sweets were allowed for the poor on public assistance. The poor had to bring back a ticket for Mr Mobbs to see that they had had no luxuries in their purchases. Bare necessities only were permitted.

At the end of the first world war, and for some time after, the poor were able to buy a can of hot soup for a penny down at the bottom of College Street.

### **The Midnight Coalman**

He was a victim of his own extraordinary timetable! The trouble was that he always used to drink too much at lunch time, which meant that the poor chap slept all afternoon and thus started work late in the evening, stopping for still more refreshments on the way round his delivery route. At midnight the coalman could be heard singing away as he delivered his coal down the various chutes. The horse was the real hero of the piece because he knew exactly where to stop and which way to get home!

Other horses that come to mind were those driven by the huge Mr Gooch, the undertaker, on his hearse. They were fine black creatures with magnificent ostrich feathers sprouting out of their harness in all directions and all very black. No wonder children had a healthy respect for the red-faced undertaker of Southgate Street.

### **Any Old Bones**

Along Fornham Road, where Mann Egertons garage now stands, there used to be a large cemetery. Thirty years ago the site was cleared and skulls were lined up along the wall — a terrible sight. Children took some of the bones home.

Children also took sweets home, though not as many as today. The shop keeper would take a square of grease proof paper and wind it into a cone, so skilfully. A penny or twopence would see the cone filled and for twopence halfpenny it could be filled with sugar as well. Threepence would buy you a pile of broken biscuits, too — a great treat.

### **Toys Were Different**

The old faithful German, china-headed doll was as popular as it had been in Victorian times and there were quite a number of German tin toys that you could wind up. They were cheap but didn't last long. You could make a suitable doll's cot by using a shoe-box with the lid stuck on at right angles at one end. Lots of toys were do-it-yourself affairs as were lots of the games children liked to play.

Tops which you whipped, made of wood, were a long-lasting item, so were hoops made of metal and wooden yo-yos. The wooden acrobat who could be made to do somersaults by squeezing the two sticks together was also very popular. Toys used to come in crazes or fashions, just like the hula-hoops did in the early sixties. They could all be purchased at Townsends, behind Moyses Hall and Lindsey's, near the Suffolk Hotel.

A great favourite with boys, and a nuisance to everybody else, was the two-part metal 'bomb'. Put a cap between the two halves, tie it together and throw it as high as you can . . . then take cover . . . ! Water pistols were popular, as were potato guns but quieter children were happy to play with five-stones or at Snakes and Ladders. Happy Families and Old Maid . . . don't be the one left holding the Old Maid card. Very sexist!

### **Fair**

Swings were just as popular as today and so were fairs. The people from the fair used to work in the sugar beet factory during the winter months. They would be offended if it was suggested that they were anything to do with the Gypsies!

There were a good many clothes shops in Bury and there was always old world courtesy to go with them. Amongst these, and well remembered by our senior citizens, was Fields.

Swimming pools were nothing new to Bury. There was heated one in Risbygate Street. The heating came from burning garbage and the same source provided electricity. There were also individual baths which you could hire (with a towel) for one shilling.

## **CHANGE IS PART OF HISTORY**

One of our members said recently of Bury St. Edmunds, "we are not a museum".

How right he is; we are a living, bustling town with historic roots for all to see; we do not wish to be packed away in mothballs to be brought out of storage for viewing on high days and holidays.

That very philosophy brings with it some fundamental problems: if we do not preserve we lose the very qualities we enjoy; if we change too drastically we destroy our character, but can we stand still? Our dilemma is that of all centres of history and the countryside around us.

### **Landscape is Always Changing**

Landscape from the earliest times has been influenced by man's activities, be it the grazing of sheep on downland or the digging of peat in the Broads, change is all about us.

So it is with towns. Our historic centres have grown up in response to the needs of the day and to fashion. Bath is a place which saw dramatic change, urged on by the attractions of a spa. Happily, good design prevailed to give us a beautiful city. Other centres moved ahead more cautiously; even London, where after the Great Fire, Wren was not allowed to proceed with his grand plan.

### **Gentle Change**

Bury is a classic example of gentle change. There have certainly been concessions to fashion. Some would claim the Market Cross, now the Art Gallery, as a prime example, but overall we are a mirror reflecting the subtle changes which have taken place over the centuries.

Here we come to the nub of the problem for many, in liking what they see about them, are nervous of change: rightly we thought the Cattle Market scheme was out of character by its very size, but we must not rebel against progress provided that it enhances, respects and does not destroy the special quality of the town we enjoy.

Building materials can be a very sensitive issue. Let's not shy away from materials which are not truly local; that's an attitude too purist. If our forebears had taken that line our Cathedral, our churches would not have arisen, the stones having come from far afield. Slate roofs, now part of our roofscape, would have been banned, granite kerbs and setts, etc., etc. The list is endless.

### **Unnatural Materials**

A real problem arises with the introduction of unnatural materials produced en masse and applied liberally across the country with no respect for the locale; stone cladding is an extreme example and plastic windows with their flat sections and all too often ill proportioned panes follow close behind.

Even natural materials can raise the passions and let me now be controversial by mentioning York stone paving. Much of that introduced to our town recently has been of a particularly rough quality, holding water and being uncomfortable for wheelchair occupants and, some complain, 'not a local material'. I welcome York stone paving, but I wish we could see some of the quality that prevails in many of our northern towns, smooth but with enough gentle undulation, not ridges, to give that wonderful quality of colour glistening after a shower or rain.

I certainly don't want to see out pavements blanketed in York stone so that we end up like a tourists' town culled from, say, page 27 of a heritage catalogue, but used with discretion. Here is a good functional material which can, I believe, set off other materials about it.

### **Be Bold**

To continue with controversy, but now on buildings: the buildings we admire reflect the construction methods and tastes of their era. let us see that our current buildings do likewise by continuing to build in the manner of the day, but let us not rely on pastiche; instead let us be bold and build with flair.

I do not much like Cornhill Walk, but I am sure that had a Michael Hopkins or a Sir Norman Foster been commissioned for the scheme we would have had a building of today which would have recognised our past and have been a foil to show off Moyses Hall and, no doubt, been acclaimed in its own right.



An opportunity is presenting itself: we are to have a new bus station. Let's ensure that it is truly a structure of the mid 1990s, in the manner of today for the transport of today.

Modern buildings are being listed. We have a listed nineteenth century railway station; why not such an accolade in the twenty first century for our bus station?

*Peter Plumridge*

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### Old Churchyards

I hate to see in old churchyards  
Tombstones stacked around like playing cards  
Along the wall which then encloses  
A trim lawn and standard roses  
Bird baths and objects such as fill a  
Garden in some suburban villa

*Sir John Betjeman*

## STROLLERBURY

"What shall we do with the Bowens next week?" When friends come to stay we like to have some flexible plans so that we can keep them entertained. After all, there does come the moment when gossip and reminiscence run out and a stroll in the town seems like a good idea.

Living in the centre of town, in Whiting Street, it is easy to work something out. What is showing at the Theatre Royal? We could go to the Manor House Museum for one of their lectures, make the water clock work, get caught unawares by the boom of the great clock in the Time Machine Gallery. How about testing their squeamishness by showing them the William Corder book in Moyses Hall, bound in his skin?

### A Stunner

The Art Gallery is a stunner for those on a first visit, with its noble windows and fine chandeliers, to say nothing of exhibits on show. It is also a good spot in which to leave guests to browse in the shop section while one escapes on essential errands.

There must be visits to the Cathedral and St. Mary's Church to have another shot at recalling the romantic story of Mary Tudor. Surely it would be better to send our friends on an official guided walk during which they will get all the accurate information about the town. But we shall take them into the Abbey Gardens, if



only to hear their gasps of admiration for the impressive planting (for which we recently had fears), and we shall point out the piece of ruin that resembles a giant goose and the hole that I got in one on the putting green. And, of course, we shall stop before the Magna Carta plaque to put them right about Runnymede. From now on we shall certainly let what is on offer in the new Visitors' Centre in Samson's Tower become a useful focus.

### **Bags of Nectarines**

On market days all we have to do is let our friends loose among the stalls and try to cope with the bags of nectarines they bring home.

Sometimes we go further afield by car to prove how quickly the town scene can change to country views of pink-washed farm houses, the varied golds of cornfields, the rude yellow of acres of rape, the ugly heaps of sugar beet whose end product is difficult to visualise. But chiefly it is the wealth of history and architecture on our doorstep that keeps people coming back to us. As we wave them off when they leave we realise that we have not toured or spoken about the Cattle Market, not entered a particular shop, not shown off a special hidden garden or another church, or one more pub. "Do come again", we urge, "there's lots more we want to show you." And we mean it.

It is wonderful to have a town of one's own to show off.

*Trisha Mellor*

## **IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU MEAN BY . . . ?**

One of the most popular radio programmes just after the war was The Brains Trust and one of the most popular figures on that programme was Professor Joad. His name became a household word and so did a phrase which he constantly used. "It all depends on what you mean by . . ."

I thought it would be interesting to apply the Joad test to certain words which are in constant use today, such as 'politics'. The word is derived from the Greek 'polis' meaning 'city' and describes the way by which citizens developed a system of government for the benefit of all. Cities were, of course, much smaller then.

### **Devalued**

Sadly, the word 'politics' has become thoroughly devalued. It is always assumed to mean 'party politics'. The consequence of polarised party politics is that government is exercised not by a co-operative endeavour to reach consensus but by confrontational debate and the rigidity of the voting system.

If all voting could be independent of party control, in accordance with the judgement and consciences of all concerned, then more pragmatic and fewer dogmatic decisions would be reached.

## Market

In the field of 'economics' there has equally been a debasing of language and concept. Take the word 'market'. For most of us it is a small-scale and delightful activity such as takes place in Bury St. Edmunds every Wednesday and Saturday. But 'market' has also become a mighty economic slogan which has generated problems and antagonisms which defy understanding. They seem impossible to control and simply feed the materialism which is de-personalising people and taking away the human scale of so many of their activities and spoiling their environment.

To return to 'politics' and 'polis' and the 'city', Bury St. Edmunds is not a city although it is larger than most of those that were so called in classical times. There is little that the people of Bury can do to make a significant impact on the world scale.

But regarding Bury St. Edmunds as a microcosm of the world, it is of a scale within which the views and activities of its citizens can make an impact. members of the Bury Society can do so, for example, by making their views felt on planning matters.

In the local plan, there is a chapter on General Strategy which contains the following statement: 'The successful implementation of this strategy should ensure that the quality of life of the residents of the Borough is maintained and improved.'

provided, as Professor Joad would have said, that the right meaning is given to 'quality of life', then beneficial progress should be made as the decade moves towards the 21st century.

It is essential that the right meaning should be interpreted as resistance to materialistic pressures, the preservation of the scale and character of an historic town and the continuation of community life on a human scale. Above all, people should be able to live, work, shop and enjoy their recreation in a closely related way.

*Eric Graves*

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### A Graveyard Epitaph

Here lies Matthew Mud  
Death did him no hurt  
When alive he was Mud  
And now, dead, he's dirt