

THE BURY ST. EDMUNDS SOCIETY

Officers and Executive Committee Members 94 – 95

Chairman	Mrs Barbara Hill Rose Cottage, The Street, Fornham St. Martin, Bury St. Eds. IP31 1SW.	Tel: 760130
Vice-Chairman	Canon Eric Graves 20 Saxon Rise, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 3LF.	Tel: 764497
Treasurer	Lawrie Lockey 74 Barons Road, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 2LW.	Tel: 755215
Secretary	Mrs Isobel Ashton 6 College Lane, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1NN.	Tel: 754993
Membership Secretary	Miss Ann Bird 62 Garland Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1EZ.	Tel: 754034
Planning Officer	Mark Pawling 71 Guildhall Street, Bury St. Eds. IP33 1QD.	Tel: 766713
Committee Members	Mike Ames 1 Chequer Square, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1QZ.	Tel: 701238
	Tony Garrett 22 Chantry Court, Cotton Lane, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1AY.	Tel: 767551
	Sir Reginald Harland 49 Crown Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1QX.	Tel: 763078
	Peter Hough 41 Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1NR.	Tel: ???????
	Harold Mellor 43 Whiting Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1NR.	Tel: 701853
	Max Milburn 6 Crown Street, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1QX.	Tel: 725425
	Dr Margaret Robinson 1 The Gateway, Sicklesmere Road, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 2BN.	Tel: 766724
	Sydney J. Rutland 18 Bridewell Lane, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 1RE.	Tel: 763068
	Mr R.T. Sharpe 49 Hospital Road, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 3JY.	Tel: 725706
	Ms Julia Wakelam 6 St. Mary's Square, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 2AJ.	Tel: 753066
	Tony Ware 1 Westgarth Gardens, Bury St. Edmunds IP33 3LB.	Tel: 754253

ANGEL HILL *The Most Fascinating Square in Europe?*

ANGEL HILL

For hundreds of years Angel Hill has witnessed numerous events of both ecclesiastical and secular importance, and to this day, the richness of its varied architecture provides a picturesque setting for many ceremonies throughout the year. It was the scene of the Bury Fair which by the end of the 15th century was attracting market traders from all over England, but its gradual deterioration into rowdiness and squalor caused it to be disbanded in 1871 to the relief of the townspeople.

Angel Hill



THE BURY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August – October 1995

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

14 September — Local Plan

An Open Discussion on the Inspector's Report. Cathedral Rooms. 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 start.

6 October — Visit to Thaxted, Finchingfield and Stansted Airport — guided tours

Coach will leave Ram Meadow at 9.45 a.m., returning for about 5.30 p.m. Cost: £10 per person including light lunch at The Swan Hotel in Thaxted. £6.50 if you prefer to bring a packed lunch. Ring Claire Heritage (764650) to confirm details and book. This should be a most fascinating day out: Thaxted and Finchingfield are two of the most beautiful small towns in the region whilst Stansted Airport has won many architectural awards.

16 November — The Oakes Diaries.

Mrs Jane Fiske on the personal lives of this influential 19th century Bury family. Cathedral Rooms 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 start.

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A More Open Society

Barbara Hill, Chairman

The 24th AGM has come and gone and we are looking ahead to another busy year.

You will have received the programme for the coming year with the names of the new committee members.

We look forward to meeting you at any of the events and, from time to time, at extra meetings called to discuss new or controversial developments in the town.

The planning meetings held in the United Reform Church in Whiting Street are now open for any members who may wish to attend.

The meetings start at 7.00 p.m. and are to be held on the following dates: August 7; Sept. 11; Oct. 9; Nov. 6; Dec. 11. All are on Monday evenings. This gives everyone an opportunity to listen to the discussions on important planning applications.

A further development is the opening of the Society's office at 86 Whiting Street. The committee is extremely pleased to be able to do this and the credit is due to our volunteers — Mr Tony Ware, Mr Haigh and Mr Peter Plumridge. The office is up a short flight of stairs (this will be clearly signposted) and the hours at the moment are from 10.00 a.m. until 12.00 noon on Wednesday mornings, to commence at the beginning of August.

This means that members can go to the office for information and help on any matter that the Bury Society covers. I do hope members will avail themselves of this service which we hope to develop further. If you are able to help by giving an hour or two, please contact Mr Tony Ware, Tel: 754253.

evidence of Peeping Tom activity be noted the operator concerned would be instantly dismissed and this is written into his contract.

Successes attributable to the cameras so far include a camera sighting that led to the arrest of two drug dealers. In Haverhill the local press announced that the cameras were operating. Unfortunately they published the news one month before the cameras were operating but the effect was to produce a dramatic drop in crime. I felt that the Council were to be congratulated on their choice of system and for allowing sufficient space for expansion.

Wide Horizons

Monica Place

First the visit to Sudbury was cancelled, then the outing to Market Harborough, both through lack of bookings.

I submit that Bury Society members **must** visit other towns and amenity societies, lest we become stale and inward looking. We need to exchange ideas, share problems and benefit from seeing the solutions achieved elsewhere.

Let's forget about trying to fill a bus, call ourselves a delegation and set off with those able and willing to go on the day. We could share cars or book a minibus. Our hosts won't mind a small group — it's easier to organise!

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Ideas for the Millenium — and the National Lottery

Charles Kenrick

Having talked with some friends on the subject, here are some random thoughts on the Millennium and how Bury might celebrate the event, whether benefiting from the National Lottery or not.

Essentially it would be to celebrate the existing Bury and its unique character and to treat it with the respect it deserves when considering any form of development. There would be a case for removing existing uncharacteristic and offensive features to get the stable clean; to restore something of its former importance to London which it enjoyed in the 18th and 19th centuries and to provide cultural and social amenities with easy access to London and beyond, by organising transport through to the Channel Tunnel, which would attract tourism. Hotel and private accommodation would need to be provided or extended. To require all new buildings in the heart of the town to be, at least externally, in traditional materials and not in relatively untried modern materials which either fail, do not weather well or need constant attention. A sound vernacular inspired (in scale) architecture should be possible without discouraging the production of imaginative buildings, whilst avoiding the culturally ignorant post-modern idiom.

Angel Hill

Clearly, Angel Hill has been deprived of its essential character, which can only be restored by the removal of car parking. It should be developed as a relaxation area with facilities for refreshment only, save for occasional musical performances. Trees to be planted along the road (to be retained) skirting the Abbey, supplemented by a piece of sculpture to remain on site for (say) three years and then moved to the Abbey Gardens or a similar setting, to be a continuing arrangement. A fountain perhaps, but these are usually the receptacle for rubbish or luck-seeking coins. The weather pattern by the year 2000

might very well be of a kinder variety. Car access to the Angel Hotel to be from the rear.

The Athenaeum to be developed as a concert hall incorporating the Masonic premises.

Abbeygate Street to be a permanent pedestrian precinct with strictly controlled access for commercial vehicles.

The Cattle Market to be retained on its present site at all costs; the present car park to be developed as a two-storey plus basement car park.

Heliport

Ram Meadow. Reduce parking here and install a heliport (see Ickworth).

Future working/living format might eliminate the need for cars to the same degree.

Taxi services to be by electrically driven vehicles to reduce noise and air pollution. Such vehicles to operate a regular service between Ickworth and the town centre.

Ickworth Park. The following idea could be a non-starter, but Ickworth would be a perfect setting for it and for visitors arriving there, to be immediately introduced to an English stately home, in part adapted for tourist accommodation as the Paradores in Spain. It is proposed to lease an area from the National Trust to construct a heliport connecting with Ram Meadow and the London City heliport through to the Channel Tunnel by rail link. To construct a two-storey plus basement complex incorporating lecture, study, indoor sport and contemplative areas (non-political, non-religious). The goal of the project to engender a sense of citizenship, mutual respect and responsibility, by the attraction of speakers of international calibre. This would obviously demand considerable effort to develop the idea, but the essential thought is that our most pressing need today is for a fundamental re-orientation of our corporate psyche, to create a sense of interdependence and respect for our fellows which would extend to respect for our environment locally and the world in general.

Angel Hill: A European Marvel

J.C. Wolton

Is there any other square in the whole of Europe which provides such a wonderful display of architecture, either abutting upon it or visible from it? I have set down below a few examples:

Norman — The wall flanking the Abbeygate and the Norman Tower.

Early English — The undercroft below the Angel Hotel.

Decorated — The Abbeygate.

Perpendicular — The nave of the Cathedral.

Sixteenth Century — Nos. 11–16 on the north side (behind later façades).

Seventeenth Century — Pamela's Shop (now Susi G).

Queen Anne — Angel Corner and (before later alterations) the Athenaeum.

Early Georgian — Dr Mole's house (now the Tourist Information Centre) and Abbey House (Peel and Gudgin).

Later Georgian — The Angel Hotel.

Regency — Leesons Chemists and Crescent House (Pevsner dates the former as late Georgian, but I am sure it is later).

Victorian — 1 Crown Street, the old Penny Bank built in 1846.

Edwardian — No. 10, rebuilt after a fire in 1903.

Between the Wars — Mitchell's Borough Offices.

Post-War — The splendid Cathedral Refectory.

Our members may be able to suggest further examples. In particular, is there a piece of Victorian architecture abutting upon Angel Hill?

The 'Work of Art' Proposal

Eric Graves

This proposal originated through a suggestion from 'Bury in Bloom' that the Society should fund a 'Floral Fountain' in the Traverse from the Dr Rae bequest. The details submitted to illustrate this suggestion did not find favour. This led to the proposal for the Society to donate a 'Work of Art' in memory of Dr Rae and the commemorate the Society.

The minutes of an Executive Committee in August 1994 state: "It was agreed that this artwork reflect the Bury Society and possibly the preferences of Dr Rae herself." A small working group was set up and Dr David Dougan kindly undertook to arrange for the Committee to be shown slides illustrating various examples of artwork. The working group subsequently considered further illustrations of artwork and the Committee approved the group's suggestion to invite two artists of national standing to the town to discuss the possibility of commissioning one of them.

The carrying out of this suggestion proved to be a useful exercise. It could not, however, have been pursued further, even if the Society had wished to do so, because of the commitment of the artists approached.

The present position therefore is, as the Society's Chairman made clear at the AGM, that the proposal has now to be examined anew. The relevance of the discussions which have taken place is now only a background for the further discussions and decisions which will take place.

In the September 1994 Newsletter the Chairman invited members to send in suggestions and comments about the proposed commemorative 'Work of Art' and a number did so.

I responded to this invitation by sending some 'off the cuff' personal views to Barbara. As we began anew further consideration of the proposal, I decided to develop what I had written to Barbara to stimulate debate.

I do so under the headings of funding, location, concept and design.

Funding

In regard to funding, the view which I expressed to Barbara was that any proposal chosen should be funded solely by the Society from Dr Rae's bequest and in her memory.

From this it followed, I suggested, that whatever was done should be in keeping with what she would have been likely to approve and what was known about her interests and concerns. She was the Deputy Medical Officer of the old West Suffolk County Council and therefore anything which drew attention to the importance of the care of people would be something which she would have been likely to approve. The fact that her main beneficiaries were the Bury Society, the Town Trust and St Mary's Church is a clear indication of her concerns.

I add that since writing I have gathered that the Town Trust is also considering doing something tangible to commemorate Dr Rae. If this is decided it would clearly be appropriate for the two beneficiaries to co-operate.

Location

In regard to location it is known that, as indicated in her will, Dr Rae had a particular attachment to the Great Churchyard. Some work located in this area would, therefore, seem to be particularly appropriate. Such a work would become a feature in the 'heritage' area to which attention could be drawn in the relevant literature. It would also obviate the fear that a work in the bustle of the town could be ignored and disregarded. The lack of respect for War Memorials in town centres, except on special occasions, indicates my apprehension.

Concept

In regard to a concept from which the design of a 'Work of Art' has to emerge, it would clearly have to be in harmony with the environment of the suggested location and reflect the concerns and interests of the Bury Society and Dr Rae.

In my thinking, however, I would like to see these requirements embodied in a wide perspective which both looked to the past history of Bury St. Edmunds and faced the challenges of the future.

The example and rule of the King who was a Saint after whom Bury St. Edmunds is named, The Abbey and all that it stood for, and the association of the town with Magna Carta, all reflected the concept of community as the only sure foundation for people's life together and illustrated what is required. Magna Carta illustrated and still illustrates the requirement of Justice and Democracy. The life and rule of King Edmund and the structured life of the monks in community within the Abbey, illustrated and still illustrates that community life requires a basis of spiritual and moral values as well as the provision of material needs.

As people look to the future with the past in mind, I suggest that the most important single requirement is for people to learn to live together in communities in which the needs and welfare of all are met through mutual service.

A concept for a 'Work of Art' which challenges those to see it about the building of community life through mutual service is the concept which I should like to see pursued.

In regard to design I would only say that I have some thoughts about how the concept which I have tried to express might be implemented. It would not be appropriate to attempt to develop this except to say that in the location of the Great Churchyard I visualise a design as monumental and architectural with the emphasis on craft and which would probably include some lettering.

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THE BURY ST. EDMUNDS SOCIETY

Foundation: The Bury St. Edmunds Society is a registered charity (No. 263230). It was founded on 1 October 1971.

Objects: The Society is established for the public benefit for the following purposes in the area of Bury St. Edmunds.

- a) To stimulate public interest in that area.
- b) To promote high standards of planning and architecture in that area.
- c) To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area.

In furtherance of those objects it has the powers of promoting research; co-operating with the Local and other Authorities; promoting or assisting in charitable activities; publishing papers, reports and other literature; making surveys, maps and plans and collecting information on places and buildings of beauty or historic interest; holding meetings, lectures and exhibitions; educating public opinion and giving advice and information and raising funds, contributions and subscriptions for those purposes.

Subscription Rates as at 1 June 1995

Members: Single, £5.00. Couples £8.00.

Most members have now paid their subscriptions but if you have not done so, please will you send a cheque made out to the Bury Society (or cash) to Ann Bird (see address on back cover). If you pay by banker's order, please ensure that this is for the correct amount.

The Newsletter is now to be published four times a year in the first week of August, November, February and May. Articles and other contributions are always wanted and should be sent to the Editor, David Dougan, 'Grovelands', 1 Grove Road, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3BE (Tel: 752588) by the deadline dates of 1st July, October, January and April.