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SocietyReview

Summer 2021

Social calendar slowly returning back to normal

After a long 15 months in digital hibernation because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Bury Society social calendar is starting to spring back to life with a series of live events coming up.

The first two on this Summer's calendar - the Guildhall 50th birthday picnic, held on Sunday, July 25, and the visit to West Stow, on Thursday, July 29, were fully booked within days.

We have now released the booking form for a "Summer's morning at Clare" which takes place on Thursday, August 19, and would encourage early bookings. We are certainly blessed in this part of Suffolk to have so many wonderful attractions on our doorstep and for sure Clare rates as one of the most attractive and historically rich towns in the county.

Clare pre-dates the Norman conquest as an important settlement, but the remains of its impressive Norman castle underlines its significance in Suffolk's history for many hundreds of years – indeed, Clare Priory is the resting place of the sons and daughters of medieval kings. It also has close links with our own town of Bury St Edmunds in that two of the rebellious barons who put their seals for the demand to a bill of rights in the Great Abbey Church around October 1214, were a father and son from Clare.



The town of Clare which is the location of a tour in August.

Later in its history, several key players in the Tudor Court were either residents of Clare or left their mark on the town.

Clare was also one of Suffolk's richest wool towns and its links with continental Europe are hinted at in the names of some of its streets. Bury Society members who book for this exclusive event will not be disappointed, and will certainly go away having a greater understanding of this attractive town and what it

has to offer. The morning will start with coffee and breakfast snacks at the Old Goods Shed within the Clare Country Park.

There will be a short presentation on all the work that has been carried out to raise the profile of this town and what makes it so special to visit. We will then take the members, in manageable groups, on a guided walk around the Town Trail, including

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No resting on laurels for Bloom team



Bury St Edmunds is known as the Jewel in the Crown of Suffolk with good reason having won the Anglia in Bloom gold award no less than 10 times.

And this year it is not resting on its laurels as Bury in Bloom moves forwards to new heights as it looks to improve its environmental footprint and install new features and restore and improve its roundabouts that suffered in the 2020 lockdown. This year we are installing just under 500 hanging baskets which are a display in themselves and this is in addition to the street level planters

Forthcoming Lavenham walk

Continued from Page 1

the Augustinian Priory, bringing the story of the town to life. We will be returning to the Old Goods Shed by 12.30pm.

The afternoon will be free for members to explore more of the town and the wonderful and serene 36 acres of Clare Country Park.

As a comparison on September 23 Stephen Moody has offered to take Bury Society members on a guided walk of another Suffolk wool town – Lavenham.

Again, we will be making this a morning event and a booking form will be published sometime during late August.

We are so pleased to be able at last offer such events and the Bury Society will be working hard to offer a full social programme for 2022.

Terry O'Donoghue

and dozens of fence troughs. There are specially designed basket trees and this year 100% peat free compost is being used after two years of trials and before the government legislates to ban its use.



One of the colourful pyramid planters in the town centre.

Working on the 'River of Flowers'

The Tollgate Triangle roundabout, by the Tollgate pub, known as the "River of Flowers", has become the latest location to receive attention after the 2020 lockdown interrupted the vital maintenance to all the roundabouts.

With the help of West Suffolk Council, Bury in Bloom has started a concerted effort across the town to bring the roundabouts back to the best possible condition, however, it's going to take time and some of them may need additional work where the weeds enjoyed an uninterrupted

We have also installed a massive rainwater harvesting scheme to supply the 50,000 litres of water we use to keep the baskets watered each season.

The harvested rainwater is much kinder to the plants than the very alkaline hard water from the taps in this area and the plants will benefit because the hard water "locks up" the nutrients.

It takes us nine months of planning and preparation to get the baskets ready so it's quite exciting when lorry loads of them arrive at 6am to meet the small army of staff ready to put them up. It's a big logistics exercise that doesn't always go to plan, but it's great fun with everyone in a good mood and the town looks lovely at the end of it.

Bury in Bloom has also installed 10 pyramid planters as part of the "Welcome Back to the High Street" campaign. When they are in full bloom they will have a real "wow" factor. We have chosen the sites to maximise line of sight as well as surprise and delight. I know it will be a big draw for visitors whom we hope to impress as they wander from the beautiful Abbey Gardens into the town. Our objective is to make residents proud, and visitors impressed – all 1.4 million of them.

David Irvine

Co-ordinator Bury in Bloom

season of growth and seeding.

In this instance we have combined forces with Abbey Gardens manager Martina Georgieva and her team with the Abbey Garden Volunteers, co-ordinated by Lynda Seldis, and over the two visits we have begun to make a big impact. Inspired by Bressingham Gardens Adrian Bloom in 2015 the eye-catching River of Flowers was created using hardy geranium Rozanne that produces a floral display for much of the year.

David Irvine

Collecting water in painted beer barrels

Bury in Bloom is making the town more environmentally-friendly as painted beer barrels will collect rainwater to feed plants in the Abbey Gardens, thanks to support from Greene King, the Crafty Foxes and local community groups.

Local brewer and headline Bury in Bloom sponsor, Greene King, donated used beer barrels as the floral charity looks to continue to improve its sustainability credentials.

Crafty Foxes then worked with schools and community groups who painted the barrels using the theme of water and recycling as the inspiration.

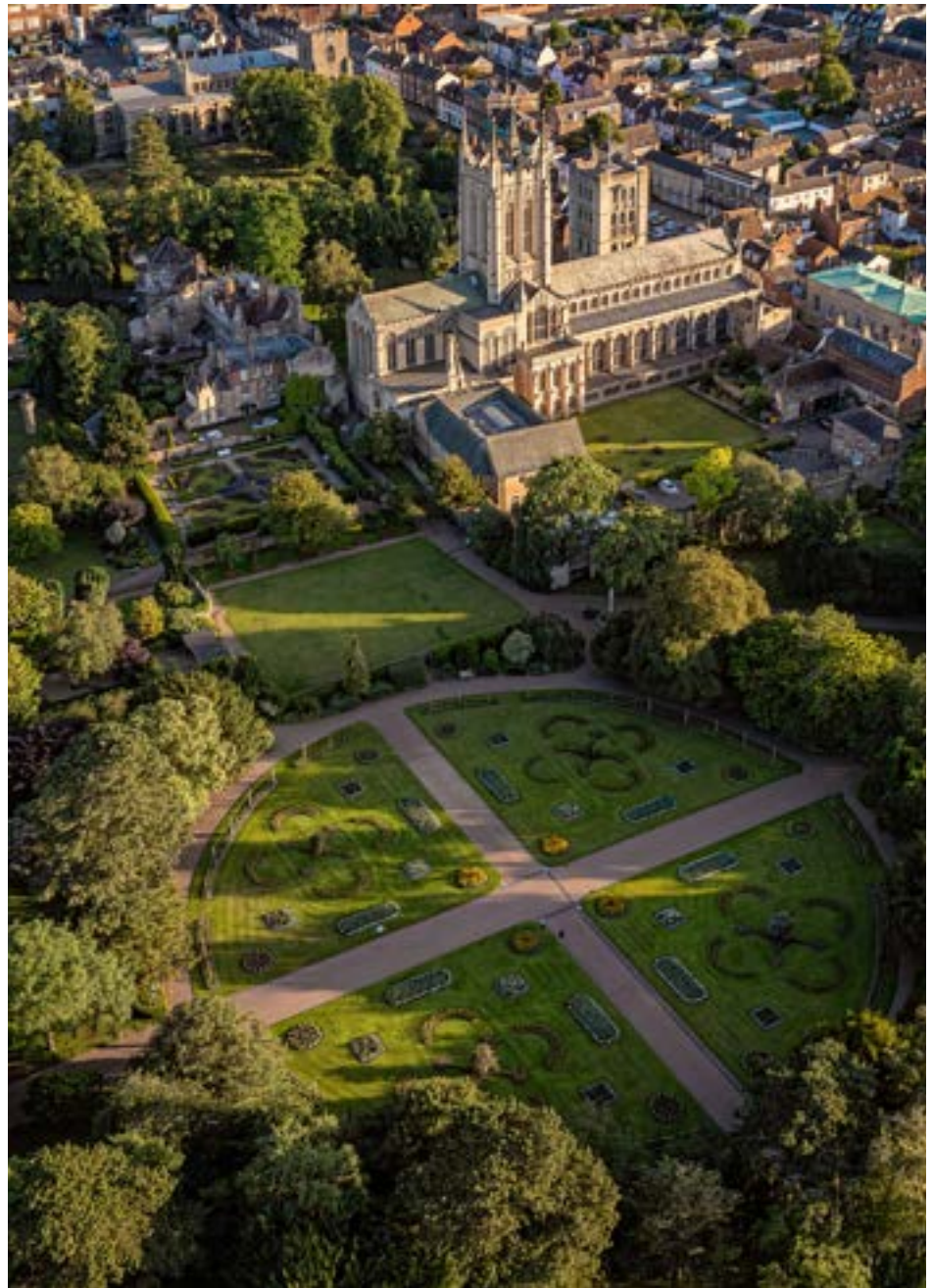
Michelle Freeman, from the Crafty Foxes, said: "Rainwater is kinder for plants than tap water and this will make a huge contribution towards a more sustainable future for the town.

"It's just been wonderful to be able to visit all these worthwhile community groups finally and have some fun after such a difficult time.

Jo Kreckler, head of external communications at Greene King, said: "We're really pleased to have donated some of our used beer barrels for such a resourceful idea. It's lovely to see all the creative designs that the local community groups have come up with and it's also great to see the barrels being used to harvest rainwater just a short walk from our brewery."

Community groups and schools which took part include Cornwallis Court Care Home, Guildhall Feoffment Pre-School and Nursery, Abbeygate Sixth Form College, Priory School, Wedgwood House, West Suffolk Sands, Beavers and Brownies. All the barrels will return to their community groups after the summer to continue to provide rainwater for gardening back at their various locations around Bury St Edmunds.

David Irvine



10,000 visitors see drone photo

As part of the Bury in Bloom entry into the Anglia in Bloom virtual competition we asked our resident photographer Jo Sweetman to assist with pictures.

One category, "Public Space" is being entered as The Abbey Gardens and we had some special pictures taken by drone photographer Paul Smith.

The spectacular results included the

centre beds as well as the new wild-flower maze on what was the old tennis court. The results were spectacular, and we put them onto the Bury in Bloom Facebook. We had over 10,000 visits in 48 hours. That's big for us.

Bury in Bloom are submitting 13 entries in nine different categories of the Anglia in Bloom 2021 virtual competition.

David Irvine

The origins of the Society in 1971



From the front page of the *Bury Free Press*, November 26, 1971.

A lot of emotional heat was generated in 1971 by the proposed £3 million St John's Street area redevelopment scheme in Bury St Edmunds.

The street was to be demolished and a new shopping centre built in its place. The "Save St John's Street" campaigners were the original group that became the Bury St Edmunds Society.

Back in 1964, Bury Town Council had first discussed the idea of a central area redevelopment.

The Minister of Housing approved the St John's Street area for comprehensive changes in 1968, after a public enquiry in the previous year. Consultant architect Sir Frederick Gibberd was involved along with another London consultant Hillier Parker.

Council treasurer L G Lockey thought the scheme was financially viable and bids should be invited. The plan was to re-develop six and a half acres with 55 new shops, two big supermarkets, a pub, offices, new roads and a bus station. The area was seen as a pedestrian extension of the Cornhill and a logical way to expand the town's shopping centre.

Lady Kate Playfair led a campaign to stop the re-development of St John's Street and got into several confrontations with the then town clerk, Rex Hiles.

Lady Playfair had been refused permission to have a large banner across St John's Street and posters in the library. The mayor at the time, alderman Arthur Shearing, gave some support to her group.

A meeting was arranged at Bury Corn Exchange on a Tuesday in June 1971 to galvanise public support and she told a reporter that support for

her cause was surprising with 600 attending. They raised awareness of local people and questioned many of the new proposals put forward.

One objection was that existing traders would not be able to afford rents in the new shops. A key argument was how this development would change the character of the town. Brigadier H E Collett-White, of Sicklesmere, a member of the campaign committee to stop re-development of St John's Street, hit out at the "rectangle" conception of Bury's future saying: "They say Bury was designed in rectangles and must be bulldozed into more rectangles. Fancy coming out of the Nutshell or Cupola House, Everard's, or the Griffin and seeing nothing but rectangles."

He suggested that "if supermarkets are necessary in the future they could be put on the fringes of the town where the population is living. But leave St John's Street to posterity and humanity".

Sir Eldon Griffiths MP met members of the Suffolk Preservation Society in Bury St Edmunds to discuss establishing a conservation area after the recent work by Norman Scarfe as editor of a new town centre study. At the start of September, Barbara Rampling and others organised a meeting in the Athenaeum to launch the idea of an "amenity protection society."

The "Save St John's Street" campaigners had adopted the name of the Bury St Edmunds Society by their inaugural meeting on Friday, October 1, 1971.

David Dymond was elected their chairman and he said: "We are fully aware that a certain amount of re-development must take place in the town centre but feel most strongly

that St John's Street is an essential feature of Bury and must be preserved." The issue was not about authority versus protest but how local people wanted to have more say in what the council did.

The Bury Society won their fight to stop Bury St Edmunds Town Council going ahead with the central area redevelopment scheme.

The town council decided to scrap the scheme by 16 votes to eight at a special meeting on November 22, 1971. As councillors went into the meeting, they were met by a group of opponents to the scheme led by Lady Playfair.

Town clerk Mr Hiles told a packed public gallery that £14,000 had been spent on consultants' fees for the scheme and West Suffolk County Council had also spent several thousand pounds. He said 33 development companies had asked to be considered for the scheme and a shortlist of nine had been approved. Town planning committee chairman Harry Marsh, who sent in the petition calling for the scheme to be dropped, said it had never been the wish of the townsfolk. He said a petition signed by 3,000 people objecting to the scheme had been sent to the Department of the Environment.

The Bury Society began in a time of great change and with the support of the local people.

The local council, after some initial doubts, began to see the Bury Society as a conduit for the views of ratepayers and a way to avoid this kind of emotional protest happening again.

Now, 50 years later, it seems appropriate to look back at how it all started.

Alan Baxter

Hardwick Manor site for the new hospital as Westley is ruled out

The Society commented upon preliminary proposals to locate the **new hospital at Hardwick Manor** behind the existing building on Hardwick Lane.

The existing hospital was built in 1974, but now has only a 10 year life expectancy.

The proposed hospital is one of those allocated by the government for “seed-funding” as part of a nationwide new hospital building programme.

Members may recall that Westley had previously been proposed for the new hospital, but this option has now been ruled out because of problems with site acquisition. Also, the existing hospital site contains many ancillary buildings, such as nurses’ accommodation, which would be retained alongside the new proposals.

The Society therefore accepted the case for building the new hospital at Hardwick Manor with caveats about access, parking and making maximum use of the existing site. We also sought assurances that the current level of health care would not be diminished.

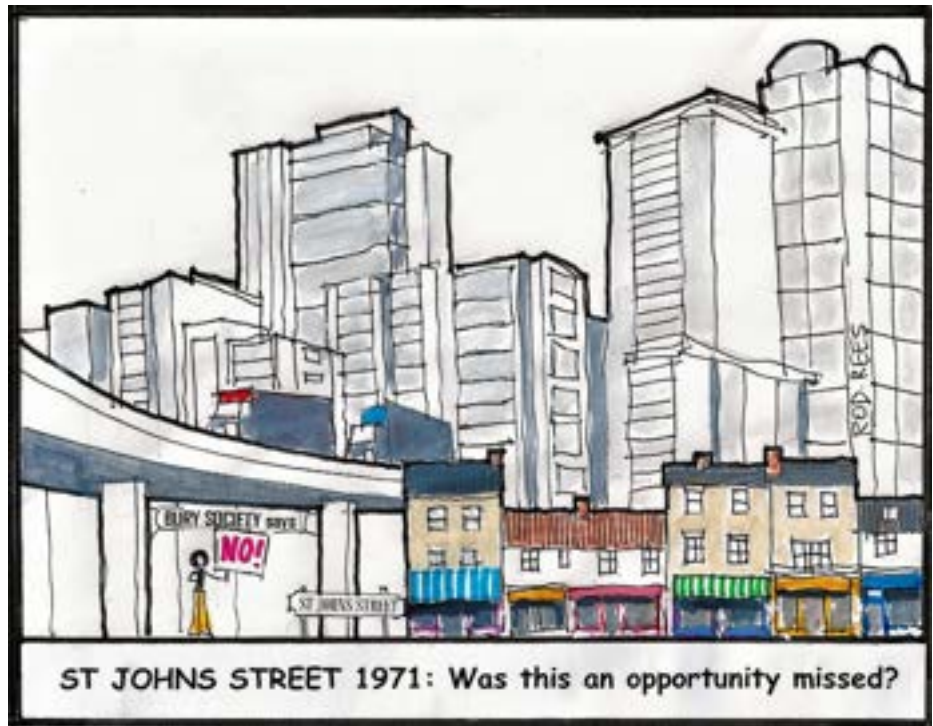
We do not wish to see our new facility reduced to the status of a satellite for Addenbrooke’s or Ipswich hospitals.

The Society also expressed concern about the long-term maintenance of the **town’s railway station**.

The government has published a new white paper proposing that the responsibilities of Network Rail and the franchisees are placed under one umbrella organisation - to be known as Great British Railways.

The Station Group has therefore written to Secretary of State Grant Shapps seeking assurances regarding this important heritage asset as well as the proposed new north entrance and booking hall.

The government has also confirmed that commercial premises (class E) can be converted to



residential use (class C3) under new Permitted Development Rights - subject to a limited prior approval process.

The premises must have been in commercial use for two years, empty for three months and less than 1,500 square metres.

The Society called for conservation areas to be exempt, but this was over-ruled.

We also sought assurances regarding internal cross-ventilation to both converted and new-built apartments - which has concerned the Society with several recent developments in the town (especially if north facing).

The changes are due to come into force this Summer.

Still no news about the **Cornhill Walk shopping mall**, following dismissal of the appeal in February but site clearance works have begun on the new houses planned for the empty **Record Office car park on Raingate Street**.

Also, work is now well underway with the construction of probably the largest single warehouse in the county at 870,000 square feet - for a Belgian logistics company on the edge of town Suffolk Business Park.

Roderick Rees



The giant warehouse under construction at the Suffolk Business Park.

Aftermath of loss of the Abbey

It is well known that Bury St Edmunds was owned, taxed and controlled by the great Benedictine Abbey of St Edmundsbury for over 500 years.

However, with the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1539 what happened to the abbey and its chattels?

The last Abbot John Reve, or Reeve aka De Melford, was given an enormous pension and along with about 40 monks, fled out of the abbey on November 4.

Reeve, a capable abbot, died within a year it is said of a broken heart in his house in Crown Street. He never collected his pension.

Henry's commissioners despoiled Edmund's magnificent shrine and in their own words said: "It was exceedingly cumbrous to deface."

Edmund was not within, what happened to his body is a mystery, the latest theory is being that he could be under the old tennis courts.

Some of the monks would go on to find employment as teachers and others took on the new Anglican church orders, though probably reluctantly. The Court of Augmentation set up by Henry VIII to dissolve the monastic houses was overseen by Suffolk man Nicholas Bacon but much of the abbey's wealth had already been confiscated before 1539.

Various parcels of abbey land were obtained by John Eyer, the Receiver General of Suffolk (tax collector), who enjoyed the patronage of Bacon. Some of the monastic manors were purchased by Sir William Drury and Sir Thomas Jermyn, the latter's family to figure in the abbey site story via the Davers and Hervey connection who were the former owners of the abbey site.

Sir Thomas Wingfield purchased the abbey site in 1550 and in 1560 John Eyre, by then an upwardly mobile Feoffee, purchased it for £412 19s 4d during the reign of Elizabeth I. He could also collect Hadgovel rents, the town rents.

In 1579 another Feoffee Thomas Badby purchased the site, though controversially it would seem he was



A painting depicting the expulsion of the monks from Bury St Edmunds.

feathering his nest.

Badby had a bill of complaint in the court of chancery brought against him by the trustees of the Grammar School for misuse of the Great Churchyard. He was dismissed as a magistrate and died in 1583. The Guildhall Feoffees were running the town by then.

As the abbot was mitred and represented the town in Parliament the town was effectively disenfranchised from 1539 until 1614 when the third charter in 1614 of James I/VI finally allowed two MPs voted by the town's corporation of 37 to attend Parliament.

Unforeseen circumstances of the demise of the abbey were that the poor of the town were no longer looked after via alms and charity, there was also a shortage of employment. All of this would have to be addressed by the Feoffees. Another consequence was that the townspeople took apart the abbey, brick by brick, stone by stone. If ever Bury residents wanted their revenge on the all-powerful rule of the abbey now was the time to do it. By 1767 most of the ashlar lime-

stone blocks had been removed leaving just a flint core, evident today.

It is said you will find abbey stone all over the town particularly in walls and cellars but not much further than six miles from the town, the distance covered by a cart in a day.

Even the renovated abbot's palace had been demolished by its owner, Major Richardson Pack.

By the end of the 17th century houses started to be built into the West Front, they are still with us today and the abbey site would be transformed when in the ownership of the second Marquess of Bristol into horticultural gardens by their creator and curator, Nathaniel Hodson.

Initially, it was chargeable to enter but in 1912 to celebrate George V's coronation a year before, the corporation obtained a lease on the gardens, finally purchasing the freehold in 1953. Now they are a wonderful award-winning gardens and a fantastic amenity appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

Martyn Taylor

‘Lego bricks’ and trusses help to keep former Post Office in place

The redevelopment of the former Post Office site in the town centre, in Bury St Edmunds, has seen one of its aims already achieved.

West Suffolk Council acquired the building at 17-18 Cornhill after the Post Office relocated its business to W H Smith.

In line with the 8,000 public comments that shaped the town centre masterplan, it has been working to create a new commercial frontage to St Andrews Street South, a wider walkway in Market Thoroughfare and to keep and protect the Victorian Cornhill frontage while improving access. Barnes Construction, working with its structural engineers Superstructures had the tricky task of keeping the frontage, which is in a conservation area, in place while demolishing the building behind, most of which had been added on at a much later date.

For the past nine months, a façade retention system made up of clamp steel beams fixed onto triangular trusses and a mass of concrete blocks previously described as being, “a bit like Lego bricks,” has kept the historic Cornhill front in place. Behind it a steel frame for the new building has been constructed, and is being connected to the front via ties and concrete anchors, to allow the façade retention system to be removed.

While visitors will be able to admire the frontage, it won’t be for long. New scaffolding is going up to allow restoration work to take place alongside the installation of new windows to aid the energy efficiency of the building which will include solar panels for electricity and be heated by an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) using the reversal of a process used to keep food and drink cool in a fridge. Once completed next year, the building will include two ground floor commercial units with 12 flats above.

John Griffiths, leader of West Suffolk Council, said: “This phase of



The front of the former Post Office in Cornhill with trusses and steel beams removed prior to scaffolding being erected to allow for conservation work.

the development has undoubtedly been challenging and involved some complex structural engineering to achieve these ambitions. We are delighted to see this phase of the redevelopment nearing completion and I would like to particularly thank neighbouring residents and businesses including the market traders, for their continuing patience while this work takes place.”

Susan Glossop, cabinet member for Growth at West Suffolk Council, said: “Once this redevelopment is complete, it will help connect and integrate the Arc and the historic town centre. I am thrilled to see the progress of this project which was shaped not just by the council, but through public engagement and work with representatives of town centre trade and other key stakeholders.”

Mark Beaumont

Annual general meeting held online

On May 27 the trustees welcomed members to the 50th annual general meeting of the Society held online; coming so soon after the delayed 2020 AGM held on January 21.

Anne-Marie Howell, of the West Suffolk planning policy team, kicked off proceedings by presenting an illustrated talk on “A long-term plan for our town” about the new West Suffolk Local Plan and answered questions. Martyn Taylor’s chairman’s report looked forward to the resumption of face-to-face activities and reviewed the Society activities.

He reported steady membership numbers and an improved web site. Roderick Rees reported that the Society has consulted on the new West Suffolk Local Plan, Government plans to make it easier to convert commercial premises to residential use.

The Society also commented on many planning applications such as the Edinburgh Woollen Mill, flats on Thingoe Hill and Tayfen Road and the new hospital at Hardwick Manor.

The Society was represented by a barrister at the Cornhill Walk appeal in February. Doug Beardon, the treasurer, presented his report highlighting the accounting procedures used and indicated the risks the Society had faced during 2020-21 particularly in maintaining subscriptions and sponsorship income. He outlined the achievements of Bury in Bloom and their hopes for the future and thanked members and sponsors for their help and support. The members present approved the minutes of the January 2021 AGM and re-elected the following trustees: Martyn Taylor, (Chair), Tim Page (Vice Chair and Secretary), Doug Beardon (Treasurer), Roderick Rees (Planning Officer), Sue Savage (Membership Secretary), Terry O’Donoghue (Events Secretary), Russell Cook (Review Editor), Robin Burnett (BIB Chair), Sarah Nunn, Patrick Chung and Kerr Clement.

Tim Page

Where to get ‘tea and a wadge’

The Spring publication of the Society’s Review contained an article about the Athenaeum, on Angel Hill, offering sustenance to wartime Bury St Edmunds.

It was, however, one of at least 19 different establishments serving food and refreshment during the war in the town, where both locals and foreign service persons could get “tea and a wadge”.

Indeed, most of the religious institutions that were against alcohol opened their doors and served non-alcoholic drinks and refreshments, with some providing entertainment, too.

But how could the town sustain so many and was rationing not a problem?

In 1939 there were only 20 operational or satellite military airfields in East Anglia and by May 1945 this had grown to 107.

There were 3,000 USAF personnel at Rougham and it’s thought that up to 350,000 passed through on their way to the European operational theatre. When you add soldiers being trained at Gibraltar Barracks on the Newmarket Road and the Land Army girls, there were a significant number of mouths to feed and money to spare. The numbers of people who made use of these facilities are staggering. The Brentgovell Street Methodist Church served over a million hot drinks and nearly as many snacks; it only closed twice during the war and



The Church Army canteen in St Botolph’s Lane now the Suffolk Housing Association.



The site of the former Bury St Edmunds British Restaurant now the Greene King brewery yard.

a Bury Free Press article noted that “some of the helpers are over 80.”

The Salvation Army had first worked with the forces in 1896 by providing a quiet place to read and pray.

The Sally Army “Red Shield Club”, on Abbeygate Street, had six rooms for recreation, reading and the obligatory tea and sandwiches (if any readers know where please let me know).

The YMCA at 6 Westgate registered 33,000 stays for travelling service personnel but also had a second club at 16 Crown Street.

In February 1940 the YMCA set up their headquarters in the West Front and the Free Press printed a weekly schedule.

The September 27, 1941, edition advertised drama on Wednesdays and tap dancing and keep fit on Fridays.

The NAAFI set up its area headquarters at 38 Churchgate Street where people could apply for jobs “Serving the Services.”

The Americans opened their own club on arrival in Westgate Street which was forbidden to other nationalities unless accompanying an American.

The leaflet issued to US personnel about the town listed places to relax and included the Athenaeum, YMCA in Churchgate Street, British Legion Club in Guildhall Street, Rover Scout Den in College Street, St Mary’s Mission in Raingate Street, West Road Hall in West Road North and the WVS canteen at the

LNER station. The civilian population were not forgotten.

In 1940 the Ministry of Food set up its headquarters on Angel Corner and had another office at Lacey Scott, on Hatter Street.

The same year the American Red Cross gave Bury Women’s Voluntary Service (WVS) a mobile canteen to serve meals around the villages.

In its first seven months it served c50,000 meals: 44,486 pieces of fish, 30,812 cups of chips and 7,000 meat pies.

As more women took on war work demand for school meals increased. Kitchens were opened in the Guildhall Feffoment and Silver Jubilee which enabled children to get a hot meal without using their rations.

The Silver Jubilee initially served 60 meals/day which rose to 200 by the end of the war. On May 5, 1942, with much fanfare, Bury’s “British Restaurant” opened in St Mary’s School yard, Sparhawk Street, now the brewery yard opposite the Dog and Partridge.

Continued on next page.



British Legion Club in Guildhall Street.

during the Second World War

Continued from previous page.

These establishments were introduced by government to feed evacuees and bomb victims but were soon open to all. It was self-service and staffed by the WVS.

Meals were available between 12.30pm and 2pm except Saturday and it could serve 80 at a time and diners could buy a three-course meal for 11d without ration books.

The Bury restaurant, however, was notorious for serving meagre portions.

Winifred Challis, a Second World War diarist who lived in the town, wrote: "A few parsons at the British Restaurant today. The Bury St Edmunds British Restaurant seems to attract that class rather than the poor.



The YMCA in Churchgate Street.

The helpings are all too dainty for my complete satisfaction ... I still have to cook additional vegetables to be adequately nourished."

There were other restaurants in the area and whereas Sudbury lacked soup, there were more cabbages

available, and everyone got the same amount. Challis felt the Bury restaurant wasn't used to dealing with the poor and that she was given less because of her age (46) and sex.

The Bury establishment closed in 1949 due to lack of use although most other venues had already shut by the end of 1946.

There were, and of course still are, many public houses also willing to serve the hungry and thirsty service persons and civilians alike.

The town certainly did, and still does, "Serve the Services" very well. I have been told that Thingoe House, on Northgate Street, was used as an officers' mess but have been unable to confirm this. If anyone can tell me I would be grateful.

Catherine Buchanan

Record numbers take part in town tours

Resuming tours of Bury St Edmunds, in April, meant some significant changes – online booking only, smaller group-sizes, social distancing.

None of this deterred those who wanted a tour and the months of June and July in 2020 saw record numbers when compared against 2018 and 2019.

Some facts stood out – the staycation effect brought visitors from all parts of the UK; many local people experienced a tour for the first time and came back for more. Others enjoyed the special tours that celebrated Suffolk Day.

We are extremely proud of the feedback we receive – we display this on the former Ranger's Hut, in the Abbey Gardens, and it makes for interesting reading as to why people come on tours and the extent to which they have enjoyed them.

Our daily tour at 2pm remains a popular way of finding out about the Abbey and town.

We also have the range of separate tours which cover different phases of the Abbey over the past 1,000 years.



Miss Margaret (Caroline Holt) and Brother John (John Saunders) preparing for the children's tours.

We have tried to be as diverse as possible to meet the needs of individuals and groups, for example "Funny Stories for an Abbey Birthday" is a great way for the young and young at heart to learn about the Abbey's past whilst enjoying the activities provided.

In September, as part of Heritage Open Days, there will be tours of Abbeygate Street, these being suitable for those who may not normally take a tour because of physical or mental impairment or disability.

Tours of the Athenaeum will also be available. Looking ahead, Halloween will mean the resumption of our ever popular "Ghostly and Macabre" tours. So, there's plenty going on and we know that we will see many of you on our tours but for those who have not previously joined us why not give us a try?

All the information you need is at www.burystedmundstourguides.org

*John Saunders
Marketing Officer, Bury Tour Guides*

Town to benefit from ‘new normal’

Over the next three pages previous chairmen of the Bury Society give their views of the ever-changing development, good and bad, in the town. Simon Pott, David Rees and Sarah Green outline their opinions.

Simon Pott 2005-2008

I was chairman of the Society during a significant time of change for the town with the redevelopment of the livestock market going ahead at full pace, with an employee of St Edmundsbury Borough Council trying to stand up to a national development firm and coming off worst when the link between the old and new was not achieved.

The committee spent a considerable time putting forward an alternative proposal based on a lower ground floor parking area, which would have allowed the whole area to be developed above ground and could have been retail, offices and residential use. Although this gained some traction with councillors it was dismissed by officers as uneconomic leaving the large area for parking that now exists. In a splendid moment for the Society the council officer involved attended a meeting and under questioning told us that the car park could always be developed in the future.

Our excellent president at the time,



Simon Pott.

Sir Reginald Harland, gave us the immortal quote that this was the “NIH syndrome at work”, “Not Invented Here” – if they had not thought of it they would not be prepared to consider it.

At the same time the borough council decided a public building was a good idea, so the Apex emerged but at a shocking cost.

Bury St Edmunds is a classic English town and the Conservation Area has maintained a wonderful consistency which is much to be admired. The town laid out by the Abbot has flourished over many centuries and there is no reason to suppose that will change.

The remarkable range of buildings, many of them listed as of historic interest, adds attraction while a byline for the town was chosen as “A jewel in the Crown of Suffolk” whereas what was actually submitted was “The Jewel” which I believe to be more appropriate. The Abbot did not take into account the way the town would grow over the centuries and one of the greatest issues continues to be vehicles and parking in and around the centre of the town.

The livestock market may have gone but the town centre provisions market remains on Wednesday and Saturday of each week. West Suffolk Council would do well to help retain this asset.

Residential and commercial development around the town has moved on apace, particularly at Moreton Hall.

Insufficient credit has been given to the person who masterminded and drove this forward as leader of the council for many years.

This was John Knight, sometimes a controversial character, but we have much for which to thank him with the vision and personality to purchase the land and then see planning permission given in tranches. This continues now, the latest being a warehouse for a Belgian firm with others to come as the strategic position of the town is discovered.

So what of the future?

Great care must continue to be given to preserving the very best elements of the town and not allow it to be overwhelmed.

A balance has to be maintained and the changes taking place to retail space in the town centre must be dealt with in a most sensitive fashion.

I am convinced more shops will decant to the periphery and the irony could be the return of residential use and increased night life and cafe/restaurant use.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed a great deal for all of us, but there will be a “new normal” and Bury St Edmunds is in a good condition to benefit from it.

New school’s name is revealed

A new school in Bury St Edmunds is to be named after celebrated theatre, opera and film director Sir Peter Hall. The Sir Peter Hall School, in Bury St Edmunds, was chosen following an informal consultation organised by Unity Schools Partnership who will run the school in Airfield Road. The new special free school, in Airfield Road, will open

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The copy deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, November 22. Email copy to the editor Russell Cook at russellcook@sky.com

in September 2022 and build up to having a total of 80 students with social, emotional and mental health needs, aged between nine and 16 years old. Sir Peter who was born in Bury, founded the Royal Shakespeare Company and was described as “the most important figure in British theatre for half a century” following his death in 2017.

Tim Coulson, chief executive of Unity Schools Partnership, said he was delighted with the new name, which has been supported by both Sir Peter’s family and the Theatre Royal. He said: “All our schools play an integral role in their respective communities and this new school will be no different.”

Influencing ‘things for the better’

David Rees 2001-2005

My tenure as chairman was rather longer than most ... from 2001 till 2005.

I remember when there had to be an election for the office, but my selection was due to “press-ganging” as there were no other candidates and no volunteers.

I was lucky to have the assistance of Reggie Harland, an incredibly active past chair and our recently created life president and vice chairman Margaret Charlesworth, until her council duties forced her resignation. The society was flourishing; its social programme including visits and lectures under the direction of Sarah Green was popular and successful.

We went to London, Hertford, Saffron Walden, Birmingham, and Northampton.

The society sponsored a series of talks during the Bury Festival that raised its profile and filled the Athenaeum ballroom.

My suggestion of opening planning committee meetings to all members was approved but sadly not taken up. Without recourse to my personal diary and the excellent Society newsletters I would have forgotten many of the issues that arose during my four years, we were much busier than I recall, the town was really in a state of flux.

We started to be more confrontational with the borough planning committee having been recently too cosy with them, and we conversely co-operated more with the Suffolk Preservation Society with whom previously we had rather cool relations.

We were welcomed to the Town Centre Management Group under the chair of Nick Martin who laid the foundations of what is now BiD for Bury.

Sadly, the Conservation Area Advisory Committee was abolished by the council which made our input on planning more essential.

The names of those we met, debated with and wrote critical letters to included Ray Novak, Andrew Varley, Steve Palfreman and our MP



David Rees.

David Ruffley. David was always a help and usually sympathetic to our views attending our committee meetings more than once.

Housing development was going apace and in retrospect much was good: Cathedral Meadows, Spring Lane, Saxon Gate, Laundry Lane, but our complaint was always: “Where is the affordable housing?” At this time Cupola House was on the buildings at risk register and we urged Greene King to do something ... they sold it off to a new owner who restored it splendidly and members of the society visited the renovated building.

The Manor House was a fabulous museum with an unrivalled collection, including the Sybil Andrews linocut of the market which the society had bought for it.

Despite our entreaties the museum was closed, the building sold off and the artefacts scattered, making most inaccessible to the public.

Demonstrations by members took place on Honey Hill against these decisions.

At this time, the Athenaeum was in poor repair and following our urging it was renovated by the council and with improved facilities and better disabled access it remains an asset to Bury.

The society appreciated the green tin tabernacle in Fornham Road, originally the Railway Mission. We

encouraged the Seventh Day Adventists to restore the building and supported them financially.

Other minor projects we discussed and lobbied about include the Greene King access road across the water meadows and the work on nature conservation in this area led by Doreen Tilley.

The fate of the defunct and deteriorating Round House on the cattle market site was solved when it was taken to bits at our request, restored and finally re-assembled at the Museum of East Anglian Life, at Stowmarket. The Arc had lain empty for years and the society was very keen to be involved in plans for its redevelopment.

It arranged open meetings with Jim Greaves the architect in charge from Michael Hopkins and organised a conference of interested parties where plans for increased shopping were discussed and of course proposals for car parking were mooted. The society urged that underground parking was what was needed, too expensive was the reply but Reggie’s persistence and his solid evidence resulted in a significant car park underground.

With the guidance of Ralph Baldwin, a retired architect we put forward an alternative plan which was rejected but we did present a long-detailed objection to many of the aspects of the Hopkins plan. Perhaps we were too pessimistic, certainly the shopping has worked, the Apex seems a great success, but the original criticism remains - the absence of a satisfactory link ... how is the Arc to join up with the market and shops?

St Andrew’s Street South remains an unpleasant barrier between the two and the sordid walkways, despite minor cosmetic changes, are still an affront to the town. We certainly were busy and involved in the town back in the 2000s.

Hopefully we influenced things for the better; fortune has favoured Bury and hopefully the society continues to exert a significant, albeit benevolent influence on the town we all love.

Protecting our heritage for the future

Sarah Green 2008-2011

I joined the committee when the late Reg Sharpe was chairman. In those early days of the Society much scrutiny and focus was on planning.

I recall there were two meetings a month, one for planning and the other executive for the running of the Society.

We had a representative on the council-led Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) where planning applications in the Conservation areas were discussed with the borough conservation officer, along with representatives of SPS, the Victorian Society, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, to name a few including local architects and surveyors.

It was a valuable coming together of experts and one learnt much about the town with efforts to protect its heritage and character. CAAC was disbanded some years ago.

I became chairman with the development of the Cattle Market site finally becoming a reality after years of debate, early failed plans and very mixed views.

One of the Society's concerns was the lack of "greenery" and soft planting and it was very pleasing that, through the Alison Rae Bequest, we were able to have more trees planted on the car park.

Coming forward at that time, were plans for the redevelopment of Station Hill and Tayfen, and the Suffolk County Council and borough council administrations moving out from the

Tower Tours resume

After a break of nearly 18 months, Tower Tours at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, have resumed and are available on Wednesdays at 2pm and Saturdays at 10.30am.

They last about 75 minutes.

Tickets cost £10 per person and must be pre-booked online via the Cathedral website <https://stedscathedral.org/visit/tower-tours> and are limited to four people.



Sarah Green.

heart of the town to a new building as part of developing a "Public Service Village" at Western Way.

To some, this was the method of streamlining local government but it was sad to see the demise of the town's visible and accessible governance, particularly the fine borough offices on Angel Hill which provided the backdrop of civic life and mayoralty for so many years.

Bury St Edmunds has a wealth of wonderful buildings to remind us of our history and heritage over many centuries reflecting our way of life and changes also.

The closure of the Manor House Museum displaying the superb collections given to the town was a great loss.

The many treasures were eventually found a new home in a secure purpose-built storage facility at West Stow, some of which can be seen on display in Moyse's Hall Museum which has changing exhibitions from time to time.

It always seemed strange to me that with a growing town, disappointingly we saw the diminishing of other amenities, from an art gallery in the Market Cross, bus station, and the Crown and Magistrates Courts, and more recently the good facilities in the fine Post Office building.

I have some doubts about the future of the Police Station in Raingate Street but hope that the invaluable resource of the Record Office will remain in Bury St Edmunds.

Finding a way forward for the future

use and maintenance of the upper floor of the Corn Exchange as a public venue was the subject of much discussion.

The planning application from Weatherspoon raised concerns for added late night drinking seven days a week in the town centre and the then problems of anti social behaviour.

However, much to the council's relief, the change of use was a welcome solution.

Most would agree that Tim Martin's enterprise has preserved this historic building and improved the night time economy of the town centre with no ill effects.

The successful launch of the Blue Plaque Scheme to acknowledge and celebrate the lives of individuals who contributed to the life, culture and events of our town was an important achievement.

The Bury Society is one of 1,700 civic and amenity Societies across the country as members of Civic Voice, the national charity for the civic movement, previously the Civic Trust, which champions the aspirations and efforts to protect and enhance our towns and cities.

I was pleased that we joined as I found their network a valuable source of information, advice, monitoring government policies, especially planning, giving strength to campaigning and with opportunities to link up and learn from other Societies.

Towards the end of my time as chairman, we were looking forward to reaching the 40th anniversary with a new Society logo and layout of the newsletter with Society Review and planning a programme to celebrate this important milestone.

It is a great pleasure to be writing this as we arrive at a 50th anniversary with a summer celebration marking this special event.

I am particularly delighted that the most historic Guildhall, now so beautifully restored, is the venue and returning to be an important part of the community of our much loved town.

Ad multos annos!

Ten-seater Bicycle Bus for the town

The height of the coronavirus pandemic saw Bury St Edmunds rickshaw at its busiest yet. Many cyclists in the town, furloughed from work, volunteered to help deliver prescriptions and shopping using their own bicycles and by the third week of lockdown our service had rapidly expanded from the customary 10 or so “joy rides” a week round the Abbey Gardens to 40 deliveries every day. Then, thanks to locality grants from the town and West Suffolk councils, we were able to purchase a cargo bike for deliveries, and two additional passenger rickshaws to cope with increased demand for covid-safe lifts to vaccination and other medical appointments.

As a result there is now ample joy ride capacity for West Suffolk residents experiencing limited mobility or social isolation, and the rides are still offered free of charge, seven days a week.

We collect passengers from anywhere in Bury - including car parks, for those who live elsewhere - and drop them off there after the ride. The rickshaws carry two passengers, and solo passengers can travel with one of our volunteer Chatty Chums (current covid restrictions permitting). The Abbey Gardens is the most popular destination but often people opt to visit somewhere different - perhaps the street where they grew up, or to look at a new housing development.

Whilst we have enough rickshaws for the time being, we are working on acquiring a rather special “multi-person e-bike” for next year, codenamed the Bicycle Bus.

The plan is to use this ten-seater machine to get children to and from schools in the medieval grid in an effort to reduce car use, congestion and poor air quality in the centre of the town.

At the same time, children will be able to cycle to school with their friends in safety.

It's an idea that has proved successful on the continent, such as the Normandy scheme (*pictured above*).



A “multi-person” Bicycle Bus similar to the one that the Bury St Edmunds Rickshaw team are planning to acquire.

There, the bus is part of contracted transport provision for the education authority.

In Bury we plan to use suitably trained and managed volunteers to deliver the service as a community project.

Bury lacks decent cycling infrastructure in many parts of the town, so we are grateful that drivers are courteous and patient where our rickshaws share the road with cars.

In this era of climate change, more cycling and less car use must surely be one of the adaptations society has to make. We hope that the Bicycle Bus will help start children off on a lifetime of cycling, and encourage parents to leave the car at home.

To book a free rickshaw ride, or for more information call 01284 339449 or visit bserickshaw.org.uk

Libby Ranzetta

Over 60 members still to renew

It has been a very difficult year for social get-togethers and I can understand why some people are reticent about paying society subscriptions. Nevertheless, we would struggle to continue our work without them and, at long last, a few events have been organised.

So, if you know you haven't paid your subscription could you please let me have payment (£15 individuals, £20 a couple at the same address) payable to The Bury St Edmunds Society and posted to 19 Sicklesmere Road, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2BP. Bury Society subscriptions are due on June 1 each year.

Collecting payments from members who pay by cheque and/or do not have access to e-mail is time-consuming, and a reminder published in the Spring Review is often missed.

Currently there are over 60 members who have not yet paid. In total this amounts to almost £1,000 in revenue. Standing orders are straightforward to set up and avoid the need for phone call reminders and postage stamps, so if you have a tendency to forget when your payment is due, please ask me to set one up, or go to your bank and they will do it for you. For the past five years we have kept the membership total at around the 600. This is a substantial body of residents when it comes to appealing against planning applications. Fortunately, we have a steady flow of new members to cover any natural fall-out.

Please help us to continue the good work by paying your subscription on time.

Sue Savage - Membership

Will we see people return to living over the shop in the town centre?

Are we going full circle with the planned changes of shops being turned into homes in the town centre? Well, the answer is “Yes”.

Historically, living over the shop was the norm for small businesses and one person traders.

Some will doubtless recall, for example, Mrs Cutting’s antiques business, in Guildhall Street, and the splendid sweet shop, in outer Eastgate Street, whereupon opening the door a bell would tinkle, a jolly woman would come from the back parlour to the counter, sweets would be tumbled into the brass pan of the scales thence tipped into a paper bag which deftly flipped over would secure one’s purchase ... happy memories.

Such small businesses could readily convert to full residential use upon the owners retirement but for many medium sized outlets in the town centre a problem arose; when the operator retired, or the lease expired, the incomer may not have wanted to live in town thus the living accommodation above the shop became empty or was used for storage.

In the 1980s the Bury Society became concerned with this trend publishing “Living over the shop”

and seeking to encourage the use of storeys over shops for residential use coupled with the desire that the town maintained a presence of people in the evenings and not then becoming a lifeless area.

This was before the growth of a night-time economy which apart from the intrusion of Covid-19 we have seen recently.

There were, however, difficulties. Access and means of escape which had hitherto been through the shop was no longer acceptable and so we saw upper floors falling into disuse. But what of the future?

Inevitably the arrival of on-line shopping will stay with us but it is essential that the quality of our principal streets is not lost; a mix of small traders, multiples (backing up their on-line activities), pubs and restaurants is vital if a good town environment is to be kept.

Covid apart, I am optimistic that we will see a move of specialist traders into the town’s smaller units and hopefully to live over their shop or if not, and mindful of housing needs, that local authorities promote the use of upper storeys for residential use.

Yes, there will be challenges, space standards, updated building regulations, the ever tweaked planning legislation et al but “where there’s a will there’s a way.”

For larger units we already have a precedent in town, the flats incorporated in the Arc development.

And finally, to be controversial and doubtless making myself unpopular with some, I hold the view that to move into a town centre or its densely populated adjacent streets it is unrealistic to assume that one should be able to park outside one’s house.

Anticipating an increase in town dwellers linked with an influx of those coming into the town from the developing estates for shopping or entertainment, parking policies need a new and bold approach. To accommodate these increasing numbers I suggest low-rise decked parking on part of the present car park area between Parkway and the town centre, that parking to include spaces specifically allocated to town dwellers.

Too revolutionary? A subject for debate!”

Peter Plumridge

Website’s additional new category

This is our 50th year and we are using that as an excuse to look back at how we got here.

Some articles have been in the Review, but other items are displayed on our website at www.burysociety.com

There are many reasons why we have a website, but we only recently realised that people with impaired sight can make use of it like a kind of “audio book.”

The computer can read out articles and even entire Review issues, so that some of our members with severe sight problems can enjoy them.

In our website section called Review, we have added some new pages.

Review archive 2018-2015 has copies of our Reviews from this period that you can read from cover to cover.

Review Gallery 2012 to 2001 has the front covers from past Reviews from these years, showing how it has had changing styles, but always championed local issues through time.

Review archive 1997 to 1994 has some items from the 1990’s newsletters, click on the caption to see a pdf with artwork, articles or even poetry.

We have added a new page called

Bury Society Scrapbook in our website section called About.

This will feature a range of different news items about our past – a kind of scrapbook.

There will be press cuttings, photos, articles and artwork. Some items you may remember but others you may not know about.

More will be added throughout the year to gradually build up a picture of what we have done over the last 50 years.

Take a look. We hope you enjoy reading about your Bury Society.

Alan Baxter

What does future hold for historic Hardwick Manor?



When Dame Anne Cullum, the second wife of Thomas Gery Cullum made her will, it included an entailment clause, whereby only male members of the family would be able to inherit the Hardwick Estate and its contents.

Hardwick House, formerly an Elizabethan mansion but subsequently much altered, was set in enormous grounds.

Her step grandson George Gery Milner Gibson had taken on the family name Cullum in 1878 enabling him to inherit.

Unfortunately from him there was no issue, this very cultured man never married and died in 1921. After his death, the crown seized the estate under the intestate act of 1884.

In June 1924, the contents were sold save for the Cullum Library now in Suffolk Archives (formerly Suffolk Record Office) and valuable works of art including the James Tissot portrait of Sydney Cullum. Hardwick was offered for sale to be purchased by Thomas Oakley, of Luton, and demolished in 1925. Much of the interior was reclaimed. Financier Halford Hewitt, from Kensington, had Hardwick Manor created in 1925-27 after local

timber merchants, who had purchased some of the estate for the timber, declined the former gardener's cottage.

Panelling and a staircase were used in the re-modelling of Hardwick Manor in 1927 by local builder H G Frost who lived nearby at Stonebridge. Kersey, Gale and Spooner were the notable architects who were responsible for St Pauls Anglican church, at Southwark.

The extravagant Hewitt had at one time 11 gardeners working on his gardens. He was also instrumental in setting up an eponymous national golf tournament for ex-pupils of public schools played at the Royal Cinque Ports golf club in Deal; still going today. Local builder Leonard Sewell, colloquially known as Lennie, purchased Hardwick Manor in 1953 for a rumoured sum of £20,000. He later became mayor of Bury St Edmunds. For many years, the annual Hardwick Fete in aid of the hospital was a popular attraction.

In October 2020, it was announced that the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust purchased the eight-bedroom Hardwick Manor and grounds for £3.5 million with an eye for future expansion.

Martyn Taylor

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Team sets up a pollution group

The poor state of Britain's rivers has been highlighted in the media recently, with documentaries and reports exposing the commonplace dumping of untreated sewage by water companies.

The Lark and Linnet are not immune from this.

Anglian Water admitted to discharging untreated sewage into the Lark from their Great Welnetham and Fornham treatment works for a total of 420 hours in 2020.

Our rivers also suffer from road run-off - a combination of toxic hydrocarbons, heavy metals and petrol - and agricultural run-off.

Phosphates and nitrates from fertiliser wash off the land in heavy rain to end up in the river, and feed algal blooms that absorb oxygen when they subsequently decompose, suffocating the natural river ecosystem in the process. Whilst uncontrolled run-off from farms south of Bury is a major problem, the principal source of phosphate pollution in the Lark originates from our mainstream diet of meat and potatoes.

Jo Churchill, the Bury St Edmunds MP, became involved earlier this year when a local angler complained to her about very low levels of riverfly - the invertebrates at the bottom of the aquatic food chain - in the Lark downstream of Bury.

Ms Churchill charged the River Lark Catchment Partnership (RLCP) with producing a report about the situation and an action plan for improvement. She also undertook to look into government policy concerning the removal of phosphates from domestic sewage, and to support local public information campaigns.

The report and action plan were published in April.

RLCP has set up a multi-agency pollution group, with Bury Water Meadows Group leading highly active sub-groups on sewage pollution and road run-off.

In addition, both groups are participating in an EU-funded project called Preventing Plastic Pollution that is led by the UK Freshwater Biological Association to understand better how to tackle the four million tonnes of plastic that enter the sea from our



The outfall at Fornham water treatment works. Note the different colour of the water entering the river, and increased vegetation downstream (left of the photo).

rivers. Whilst it is tempting to blame agri-business, the water companies, and their regulators for the pollution in our rivers, we citizens should understand that all the water coming out of our power showers and hosepipes has been "borrowed" (as Anglian Water put it) from the environment, and is returned there once it has passed through our bodies and our drains.

Would we use tap water more sparingly if we knew it had been taken out of the chalk aquifer underground us at the expense of the

(aquifer-fed) chalk streams and their ecosystems?

Would we take more care over what we put down our drains if we knew how much of it ultimately ends up in the river?

Thus we have the situation now where Bury's two chalk streams - out of just 300 chalk streams on the entire planet - depend on effluent from water treatment works to sustain any kind of flow.

It is no wonder the riverflies are struggling.

*Libby Ranzetta
Bury Water Meadows Group*

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.