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Society Review

Winter 2021

Celebrating 1000 years of the Abbey of St Edmund ... in 2022



The Abbey 1000 Group with the steel monk in the Abbey Gardens, left to right, Elizabeth Clement, Ian Campbell, Martyn Taylor, Jackie Burnett, Libby Ranzetta, Melanie Lesser, Matthew Vernon, Mary Porch, Robert Everitt, Richard Summers and John Saunders.

The year of celebrations due to take place in 2020 were again launched on St Edmund's Day (November 20) with a Civic Mass at St Edmund's Church.

Hopefully the programme of events can now proceed as planned.

The programme is made possible by a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £99,200, which has been

match-funded by local businesses and organisations. The fund supports projects that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage.

Bury St Edmunds' grant is intended to encourage a wider range of people to be involved in the town's heritage, many of them for the first time.

The events that are planned will involve local people and visitors in

telling the story of St Edmund, the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey and its relationship with the town.

Nine events supported by the grant will be supplemented by a range of other activities that is still growing, and the Abbey 1000 Group co-ordinating the celebrations would

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Bury in Bloom wins awards in virtual competition for 2021



There's cause for celebration across the town as Bury in Bloom has won two categories and the Silver Gilt medal in the Anglia in Bloom virtual competition 2021.

The competition covers the six counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

Entries were invited for 10 categories and eventually 233 entries were received by Anglia in Bloom.

David Irvine, co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom, said: "With this number of entries across six counties, it was always going to be a hard-fought competition, so scooping two of 10 categories' outright and Silver Gilt overall is nearly as good as it gets. We won 'Spring Planting Display' (The Smile Bed) and 'Public Space' (Nowton Park and the Abbey Gardens). The virtual competitions are very different to the real thing where judges visit for the day, and can be shown everything that's been done. In this competition the organisers decide on the categories before the



The Smile Bed on Parkway corner near Westgate Street.

event and they don't always match Bury in Bloom's projects."

David said: "The categories we won are the ones that I get the most compliments about. I am endlessly told how much everyone enjoys the 'Smile Bed' on the Parkway. It brightens up the day for lots of people and Woolpit Nurseries and CCG Gardeners do a spectacular job. The Abbey Gardens and Nowton Park are visited by well over a million people each year and many more online.

West Suffolk Council do a magnificent job and deserve the recognition. "Categories are restricted to five photographs per entry and more importantly only 50 words which is a tough call for a description of say the Abbey Gardens or rain-catcher project. It means making some difficult decisions. One spin off from our entry into the 'Wildlife and Wildflower' category is some wonderful aerial photographs taken when we commissioned a very keen amateur drone photographer. They had to be taken after the Abbey Gardens were closed so we needed special permission, however the results were spectacular. "We had a 60 x 40cm photograph made up on canvas to present to Damien Parker, of West Suffolk Council."

Copies of the photographs are available – contact David on Coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk With 10 Anglia in Bloom Gold awards Bury in Bloom had hoped to make it 11. However, they have some great new projects planned for 2022 when they hope the judges will return to visit properly.

David Irvine

'Flying squad' volunteers appeal

"I have a dream ...", not quite as grand as Martin Luther King Jr. But I'm aiming to form a small group of "Flying Squad" volunteers to solve the many short-term small problems that come up in the day to day running of Bury in Bloom and need a quick fix.

They are the small jobs around the town that demonstrate attention to detail that makes all the difference on judging days.

They are usually light work "quick-fix" problems which if left unsolved to become a much bigger

issue, or occasionally back-up jobs where the regular team are struggling.

You would be insured and even have special "Flying Squad" volunteers high-vis jackets carrying the Bury in Bloom logo. I hope to form a core of volunteers of which there are always a few available. If you think you could help please contact me on Coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk or just ring me on 01284 765504 to leave a message or 07860 397491. I really hope to hear from you.

Green Finger Awards are reinstated

The Bury in Bloom, Greene King Green Finger awards presentation took place at The Athenaeum on September 14.

School children, parents, care homes residents and staff all took part in the competition organised by the new Green Fingers co-ordinator Fiona Till, who only took over the role in March of this year.

Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards were presented by Jo Kreckler, of Greene King, to the winning schools, care homes and nurseries taking part, that asked for participants to consider "Recycle, Rainwater and Unusual" as their themes.

Fiona said: "Given that it was May 17 before non-householders could mix outside meant this year's entries were even more amazing.

"In growing terms, it's a wonder anyone managed to enter anything, and we had to keep the brief wide and varied. We were overwhelmed by the quality and number of entries, it took us two weeks to complete the judging. There were so many good entries that we wanted to recognise, we had to introduce new and special awards. We have some very talented gardeners, of all ages, in Bury St Edmunds."

Usually, the care home awards are made on location, however, this year for health reasons, they asked to join us at the full presentation.

The event was the first time care home residents had made any trip outside for 18 months.



Tollgate Nursery receiving their Silver Award, from Jo Kreckler of Greene King.

Chris Page, Anglia TV's weather forecaster, sent a recorded video of congratulations.

He supported the Bury in Bloom

Crafty Foxes Rainwater Harvesting project and recorded a promotional video.

David Irvine and Fiona Till

Three roundabouts set to get a facelift

With some roundabouts looking less than their best and some of our supporters signs showing their age I have initiated some restoration work. The new signs will be a longer lasting weatherproof compound called ACM (aluminium compound material) and we hope to start replacement in the next few weeks.

The three roundabouts we are concentrating on are the Tollgate Triangle, "With The Grain" and the Flight of Peace.

The Triangle is now nearly 10 years old and the "River of Flowers" has

lost its impact, so we are weeding and infilling/replanting the Geranium Rozanne that creates the effect. The whole site will be covered in rotted bark to reduce the weed pressure that caused the problem, and the work should take place early December.

"With the Grain" has a wooden retaining board that has rotted and sprung loose. We plan to replace it with 100mm steel edging and it will be held securely by 15mm steel bars. Proscape hope to do the work in the next few weeks.

The Flight of Peace has remained unsponsored for some years and following discussions with West Suffolk Council and others we have decided to underline the connection to the American servicemen who lost their lives flying from Rougham. We will be replacing the planted area (an 11 metre Star) with a permanent white five-point star.

The White Star will be installed early in December and we hope to have everything in place for another unveiling in June 2022.

David Irvine

Fascinating glimpses into the past

A recent search through the Bury Society archives has provided fascinating glimpses into our past and how this organisation evolved.

You may be aware that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the start of the Bury St Edmunds Society in 1971.

As part of that celebration of half a century of caring for our town, I wanted to highlight the story of the Society – how it started and what were some of the key points in its development.

Whilst the Review magazine can feature some of the stories, our website can show more images and information for those who want to find out more. These can then be available on social media where more information can be found. What happened in 1971 was extremely important and I needed more details of that pivotal campaign.

A “raid” planned on the Bury Society archives, stored in town, got delayed a few times, for various reasons, but has now taken place. There was some interesting material from there. In particular, the 1996 booklet - celebrating 25 years, May 1996.



We also got many more newsletters, going back to 1974 from the CAB files in storage. I wanted to ensure that we had proper coverage of 1971 before adding other things and the item “You must start it Barbara (a first-hand account of how the Society began)” does that.

The website now has the oldest surviving newsletters from 1973 onwards, the Anniversary booklet from 1996, cartoon covers, recollections from some past chairmen with added images, how the Bury Society

started Bury in Bloom in 1986 and more. Other items will be added in the coming weeks.

You can find the page in the “about” section of the website at <https://www.burysociety.com/category/scrapbook/>

We do have a gap in press cuttings before 2000 as the Bury Free Press archives were destroyed and the modern digital archives do not start until around 2000.

We have lots of post-2000 material, but I wanted to get some of the older material on first. Hopefully some members may have cuttings of the Society’s work before 2000 that I could use. In addition to our website work, the MCE committee felt that a specific 50 year publication would be the best way to celebrate.

It would explain to potential new members and others all the different things that we do and have done for our town. We are still working on the structure of this small publication, but it will likely have sections which provisionally are called: Origins (1971), Preserving Bury’s Heritage, Improving outdoor spaces, Influencing future development, Bury in Bloom, the Blue Plaque Trail, Projects (Magna Carta, Abbey Heritage, Awards), Communicating with our members and the Future.

If you can help with any cuttings from pre 2000 or have any comments on this topic, I would be very grateful to receive them.

Alan Baxter
media@burysociety.com

Heritage Champion Award for Martin Lightfoot



Martin Lightfoot (*pictured above*) has been recognised by the Suffolk Preservation Society with a Heritage Champion Award.

Bury St Edmunds has a great debt of gratitude for his work and expertise with specific examples including the Pakenham Water Mill, Unitarian Meeting House and most

recently the Grade I listed Guildhall of which he became Chairman of Trustees.

He has been actively involved in a number of heritage organisations and has served as director of the Suffolk Architectural Heritage Trust, Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, Bury St Edmunds Town Trust, with many projects in the town: Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust and the Unitarian Meeting House Management Company, of which he was director and secretary for many years. He gave further help to Camphill Communities, is a published author with the illustrated book “A walk around Bury St Edmunds”, and still found time for his other long-term interest in very old cars.

'Pocket Park' idea for housing estate

Along with many local residents, the Society lodged objections to plans to build 76 houses on an area previously allocated for a leisure/sports facility at **Marham Park**. We objected because the application lacks community involvement and does not represent local democracy as clearly advocated in central Government planning directives.

We also believe it would be a missed opportunity to help bring together the new community at Marham Park and act as a point of focus for the immediate neighbourhood.

The applicants say they are experiencing difficulty in finding a willing leisure/sports operator, so we have suggested they might join with the community and look to funding a greener, more bio-diverse option such as the Government's "Pocket Park" initiative. Such a facility might provide a less structured, more locally managed mix of activities, including a jogging track winding through wildlife gardens or a "trim trail" interspersed with individual outdoor exercise spaces and themed children's adventure play areas together with a community orchard and neighbourhood allotments. The Society's Bury in Bloom group has said it would be happy to co-operate.

The Society also commented upon revised plans to build nine flats on a vacant car sales site on **Tayfen Road**.

We had challenged earlier plans which included offices, so we were pleased to see that they have now been omitted.

However, we remain concerned about the building's cliff face appearance as well as the impact of CO2 emissions from Tayfen Road, especially as the Air Quality Assessment concludes the front of the site is subject to high levels of poor air quality.

So we have again called for a greener design solution with all living accommodation located to the rear.

We are encouraged that the council's Environment Team has now



lodged a Holding Objection seeking further information about how to reduce the impact of vehicle emissions. Members may recall that a few years ago, the Society suggested that Tayfen Road should become a tree lined "green lung" for the town - some hope!

Applications to convert former commercial premises into new homes continue, including the conversion of the former **Peatlings wine shop Westgate House on Westgate Street** into either two houses or one rather grand town house and plans have also been lodged to convert the hair salon on the corner of **Whiting**

Street and Churchgate Street into residential use.

No further news about the plans to locate the new hospital at **Hardwick Manor or the new hotel on the Buttermarket** or the application for 64 flats on **Thingoe Hill (off Fornham Road)**. However, the Society understands that revised plans will shortly come forward for the vacant **Cornhill Walk** premises and the wider Rail Station Group seems to be making some progress with Greater Anglia regarding remedial work and the long-term maintenance of the Railway Station.

Roderick Rees

Special General Meeting set to approve new CIO for the Society

Members will recall that at previous AGMs we have voted to restructure the Bury St Edmunds Society as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in order to give the Society the protection of being a corporate body with limited liability.

CIOs are the new structure for charities – they have only been available since 2013, but the vast majority of new charities are now formed as CIOs and many existing charities, like the Bury Society, are moving to the new structure.

That process has been underway for some months – the charity trustees (the Committee) appointed Gareth Morgan of charity consultants, The Kubernesis Partnership LLP to advise

on the process. A new CIO constitution was agreed by the trustees and the CIO was registered by the Charity Commission on November 17.

As the CIO is a new charity, we now need members approval to wind up the existing charity and transfer everything to the CIO – we propose that this will happen on March 31, 2022, which is the end of the Society's financial year.

This will be considered at a **Special General Meeting at 7pm, via Zoom, on January 13, 2022**, where we invite members to vote on the following resolution – a two thirds majority of those voting is needed.

- The members of the Bury St Ed-

munds Society (registered charity 263230 – “the Society”) hereby resolve, in accordance with clause S9 of the Society's constitution, that the Society shall be dissolved on March 31, 2022 (or such other date as the Committee may decide) and all assets remaining after satisfaction of any debts and liabilities shall be transferred to the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO (registered charity 1196640 – “the CIO”) being a charity with similar objects to those of the Society. Any funds held by the Society for restricted purposes, including funds held for Bury in Bloom and the remaining funds of the Dr Alison Rae Bequest, shall be transferred to the CIO to be held for the same purposes as at present.

Under our existing constitution, the vote has to be confirmed at a further meeting at least 14 days later. So we will hold a further very brief **Special General Meeting before the Bury Society Winter Lunch on February 5, 2022, at 11.45am, at the Southgate Community Centre, Caie Walk, off Hardwick Lane.** (Any member can, of course, come for this brief vote beforehand, even if you are not planning to book for the lunch.) Note that under the CIO constitution, all members of the Society are also members of the CIO, so members will have similar powers in the CIO as they have in the existing charity.

Joining instructions: This is a meeting for members only. To register your interest e-mail: events@burysociety.com. Log on details will be sent out to all those who have registered interest, one week before the event date.

If you have any queries on this proposal or if you wish to see a copy of the Society's existing constitution or the constitution of the CIO, please contact Tim Page - Secretary and vice chairman, Bury Society, email secretary@burysociety.com

Time for a ghostly tour of Bury?



Darkness descends, leaves swirl, mists make visibility hazy, winter chills set in.

Yes, it's that time of year again when the Bury Tour Guides (*pictured above*) entice you with a ghostly and macabre tour.

Halloween signalled the start of this season with around 100 brave customers taking to the streets of Bury to be regaled by gruesome and spooky stories interspersed with the light-heartedness that provided a night of entertainment.

These tours are a huge success drawing people from beyond the town. It is a chance to learn why in 2001 academics of the Ghost Group from Cambridge University spent a night

at Cupola House and to find out the results of their vigil; to find out what happened to pictures at the Art Gallery in 1978; to discover where there were Bellarmine jars to ward off witches.

All this is conducted by an appropriately-garbed guide, their ghoul-ish or amusing appearance adding to the occasion!

Or perhaps the idea solves the dilemma of what to buy someone for Christmas or a birthday.

All the information you need is at www.burystedmundstourguides.org – you only need to question whether you are brave enough.

John Saunders

Tim Page

Baubles adorning Christmas trees mark babies' births during Covid

The Trees of Hope is the Crafty Foxes and Bury St Edmunds and Beyond project for 2021 promoted by the Bury Free Press.

Over 450 handmade baubles marking the birth of babies born during the Covid 19 pandemic adorn the Christmas Trees on Angel Hill, The Traverse, St Edmundsbury Cathedral and the Theatre Royal.

Banners near the trees highlight some of the lovely messages of hope written for the babies' futures.

Michelle Freeman, from the Crafty Foxes, had the idea to create time capsule Christmas baubles and Melanie Lesser, chairman of Bury St Edmunds and Beyond, helped obtain the funding and promotion for the project.

Each bespoke bauble is individually named with the babies' birth date on the outside, while sealed inside each clear bauble is rainbow-coloured ribbon, details of the babies' weight, day, and date of birth, together with a personalised message of reflection from the new parent or relation, giving the hopes and wishes they have for the babies' future.

Baubles were free to those that applied and were financed by the Bury Society, Our Bury St Edmunds, and West Suffolk and Bury St Edmunds Town councillors.

As sponsorship in kind Premier Printers produced the leaflets, Austin Cornish from Bury Developments provided the cherry picker to help place the baubles on the Angel Hill and Traverse trees while Bury Abbey Rotary volunteers hung the baubles at the lower levels. Rougham Estates provided three of the trees.

The baubles are placed according to the month of birth.

January, February and March are on the Angel Hill tree; April, May and June on The Traverse tree; July and August on the Cathedral tree; and September, October, November and December on the Theatre Royal tree. Michelle said: "It's been such an amazing project with so many members of the community involved. I



Michelle Freeman, third left, and Melanie Lesser, right, at the Angel Hill Christmas tree with members of Bury Abbey Rotary Club, left to right, Val Odgen, Nic Hardy, Peter Summers and Alan Chadwick.

have received so many lovely messages and photographs from parents when they find their baby's bauble." And Melanie said: "The baubles look fantastic on the trees adding to the Christmas celebrations in our lovely town. We are very grateful for the

funding we have received to make this project possible."

The baubles can be collected from the Bury St Edmunds library in January when they are taken off the trees.

Melanie Lesser

Christmas town centre prize draw

People are being encouraged to step into Christmas in Bury St Edmunds with a new, fun and safe way to enjoy the town centre and the chance to win a share of £500 worth of prizes.

Our Bury St Edmunds, in partnership with HSBC UK, has put together a festive interactive trail around the historic centre with a "12 Days of Christmas" theme.

The trail launched on Thursday, November 18, the same day as the Christmas Lights Switch On event. Participants need only their phone to either scan QR codes or send a text to participate. The trail is app-free without the need for players to download or sign up.

After visiting all 12 locations around

the town participants can be automatically entered into a prize draw with a chance to win one of 14 Our Bury St Edmunds Gift Cards including a top prize worth £100.

Interactive elements of the trail will include a greeting, the competition answer, a chance to find out about special Christmas activities in the town and – because it wouldn't be Christmas without one – a traditional "cracker" joke.

The company behind the trail is Hello Lamp Post, which is working with Our Bury St Edmunds for the first time. The Christmas Trail can be found in Bury St Edmunds until New Year's Eve and the prize draw will be made in January.

Bury St Edmunds cannot be

Bury St Edmunds was formerly Beodericsworth, an Anglo-Saxon settlement.

A large Benedictine abbey was built to house the body of the Christian King Edmund of East Anglia, martyred in 869AD, and who brought tremendous wealth and prestige to the town.

At times there was resentment by the townspeople as the abbey owned, collected rents and taxed the town for over 500 years until its dissolution in 1539.

In 945AD the abbey was given an area of land approximately one square mile from the shrine of St Edmund, the first patron saint of England by another Edmund, King of the West Saxons.

This gift, known as the Banleuca, formed the town's ancient boundary, not breached until the building of the Mildenhall Estate in 1946.

The earliest form of urban expansion occurred between 1066 and 1086 when, according to the Domesday book, there were 342 houses built on land previously under the plough. The instigator of what was to become the oldest purposely laid-out Norman town in the country was a French abbot named Baldwin.

The properties were timber-framed, non-domestic dwellings and had their living areas (Solar) on the first floor with workshops at floor-level (Domus).

What was once a magnificent Abbey Church, with its ancillary buildings now in ruins, was originally encased in an oolitic limestone from Barnack on the Northamptonshire border; but the lime-mortar and flint cores are the merest of remnants.

It is hard now to visualise what one visitor called "a town within a town" when all that remains is two impressive gateways (the Norman Tower, the secular entrance, and the Abbeygate, the religious entrance) and two fine churches (St James Cathedral and St Mary, our civic church).

The abbey grounds would eventually be turned into fine botanical gardens



An old photo in the early 1900s showing the Corn Exchange, now Wetherspoons, looking down Abbeygate Street.

in 1831 and are a major factor in making the town a tourist destination, a lifeline for the town.

The town is fortunate to have "squares" laid out from St Mary's Square, the former Anglo-Saxon market place, Chequer Square, Angel Hill, and the modern-day Charter Square on the Arc development.

Of course you could add Cornhill and Buttermarket as well. All these interesting open spaces add to the diversity of the town.

Brick was not a common building material although it is known that Abbot Curteys had bricks manufactured at Chevington.

The earliest secular buildings in the town which still survive today are the borough museum, Moyse's Hall and the Guildhall, perhaps the oldest civic building in the country, dating from the 12th century.

A disastrous fire in 1608 started in Eastgate Street sweeping through the town destroying much of its centre. This is why most of the older properties are on the south of the town.

Cupola House, once the finest Stuart building in the town and an apothecary from 1693, is now just a pastiche, having been mainly destroyed by fire in 2012; a re-build utilising

remnants having successfully taken place. The Georgian era saw a trend to move from timber-framed properties, in vogue brick and stucco fronted facades, hiding up the timber delights within though notable Hall Houses, in Bridewell Lane, Whiting Street and Churchgate Street are survivors today.

The so called "better sort" of people eventually lived here attracted by entertainments, such as theatre.

A plethora of fine buildings from the Queen Anne and Georgian eras are still with us and include the Angel Hotel, Athenaeum, Manor House, Cloptons Asylum, Market Cross, Theatre Royal, 81 Guildhall Street, Angel Corner, Northgate House and the delightful Unitarian Meeting House to name but a few.

As the latter is one of many non-conformist chapels here, I wonder if the town fell out of love with state-run religion after the abbey's demise.

After all it would be over 300 years before another Church of England church would be built, that of St John the Evangelist.

The coming of the railway had a major impact on the town, from 1846.

Continued on next page

branded ‘just any old town’

Continued from previous page.

Twenty years after the Northgate station opened the town secured a major feather in its cap when the Royal Agricultural Show came in 1867. It underlined the town as a prime mover and shaker in the agricultural world as well as animal husbandry. This unfortunately did not cut any ice when after 170 years the cattle market finally closed in 1998, the reason, mad cow disease.

How strange that the initials of our town BSE would be the name of the endemic Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy.

The Arc, an ultra-modern shopping precinct with its very avant-garde star attraction, the ill-fated Debenhams built on the cattle market site, is a bit like Marmite.

Though in its favour the Apex, a wonderful entertainment venue, takes some beating.

As time passed by, the town which once relied on the wool and yarn trade xpaned, the industrial age albeit slow and sure eventually making an impact.

Victorian expansion, mainly to the west of the town, was more suited to white collar workers whilst to the north of the town, with its slums of the future in Long Brackland and Cannon Street, housed hard workers in the mills, coal and railway yards. The Greene King Brewery, Bobys and the Sugar Beet factory became the main employers of the town, then along came the London Overspill initiative bringing with it more work, hope and more homes via housing estates.

Perhaps the largest employers these days are the NHS and councils, which I suppose is not surprising. Against this background of development it is amazing that the town has retained its uniqueness.

Thanks to concerned residents St John's Street, with its independent shops, survived demolition, these people forming the Bury Society. Compare Bury St Edmunds to say Ipswich and Bedford, a few nuggets architectural wise but difficult to find,

the latter having its heart and soul ripped out.

As a local tour guide when I take visitors around an oft used quote is “what a wonderful place, why haven't we been here before?”

For Bury to continue as it is will be difficult, planners do have to shoulder the lion's share of responsibility. As I have said so often, we are a medieval town with a medieval grid more suited to horse-drawn traffic, making vehicular traffic a nightmare. There are no easy solutions to this. What is becoming more obvious is

that the town has become not only a fantastic tourist attraction but a gourmet destination, we are blessed with very good eateries, the so-called “café-culture” of Abbeygate Street a case in point. The beautification of the town by the very successful Bury in Bloom initiative also adds to the tourist offer.

In recent years Bury St Edmunds has frequently figured in the top 10 places to live, and why shouldn't it? After all it is “not just any old town!”

Martyn Taylor

Raft of events lined up to mark 1000 years celebration

Continued from Page 1

welcome ideas for additional events (email abbeyofstedmund1000@gmail.com).

Here are some highlights:

Exhibition of seven Abbey Manuscripts in the Cathedral Treasury (May 2 to June 9). This will be the first time that the manuscripts have been reunited in their place of origin since 1539. Hand written and decorated by monks in the Abbey, they are on loan from Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Pilgrimage (April/May 2022)

A group of walkers will make a pilgrimage from St Benet's, Norfolk, to Bury St Edmunds, arriving on May 14. Another pilgrimage group will walk from Ely to Bury St Edmunds in the spring to mark the historic anniversary.

Town Tours (May to November)

On five days each week the Town Guides will offer one of these tours: Abbey Habits, Bite-size Abbey, Circling the Abbey, The Dark Side of the Abbey and Legacy of the Abbey.

Abiding Wisdom and procession of

Benedictines (May 14 to 15).

One hundred Benedictine monks and nuns from communities across Britain, and possibly abroad, will gather in Bury St Edmunds for the first time in 500 years since the dissolution of the monasteries. They will be joined by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury.

The gathering will take part in a procession into the ruins of the Abbey Church; there will also be talks and workshops in the Cathedral and Ecumenical Vespers with monastic chanting.

Other notable events include:

Abbey Crypt Sculptures exhibition (May to November); Bury St Edmunds BioBlitz (May 20 to 21); Abbey 1000 Concert – Elgar's Enigma Variations and the Abbey 1000 Commission (May 28), the Suffolk Philharmonic, will present the Abbey 1000 Concert, Elgar's Enigma Variations, including “Nimrod”, as well as a new work specially commissioned for Abbey 1000, “Into The Light”; **St Edmundsbury Cathedral Flower Exhibition (June); Schools' Celebration (June 29); and Picnic in the Park (July 16).**

Libby Ranzetta, Chair, Abbey

An 'honour and a privilege' to serve as chairman of the Society

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. It follows on from the last two editions of the Review where the leading lights of the Society reviewed their time as chairman to mark its 50th anniversary.

Karen Hurden, Tim Page and current chairman Martyn Taylor sum out their time in office.

To take over as chairman of the Bury Society was an honour and a privilege, and I was grateful for all the knowledge and expertise within the committee members.

At this time the Tourist Information Centre was located (centrally) on Angel Hill.

The council decided to close this and relocate the facility to the Apex with another information point (currently closed) inside the Cathedral Shop. Despite strong opposition from many, including the Society, the council proceeded with this plan.

In July there was the Bury in Bloom judging in the Cathedral and the celebration of the "River of Flowers" on the Tollgate Triangle – a stunning blue river of flowers orchestrated by Adrian Bloom.

The highlight of my term as chair of the Society was to continue the work involved in the 800th anniversary celebration of the Magna Carta. An enormous amount of background work had been undertaken

As a part of the celebrations of the Magna Carta, a long-hidden Bury St Edmunds mosaic was moved to a more prominent position in the Abbey Gardens.

There is also an enduring reminder of the Magna Carta – in addition to the plaque on the Cathedral ruins there is a sculpture by Nigel Kaines in the Abbey Gardens that celebrates Bury St Edmunds connection with the Magna Carta story.

On October 28, 2014, the Bury Society hosted the last of the Magna Carta 800 Celebrations in our beau-



Karen Hurden

tiful Cathedral including a talk by Andrew Phillips, Lord Phillips of Sudbury (then known as Jimmy Young's "Legal Eagle"), who explored the world-wide fascination of the Magna Carta.

The role of planning officer (Roderick Rees and Richard Summers) covered a wide area and generally addressed new developments.

In addition to this, the Society had continuing wider aims "to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest" in the town.

For example, the "Leg of Mutton" piece of land between the River Lark and the A14 was under threat of development.

The Bury Water Meadows Group was delighted to announce in a press release in April 2014 that the Government Planning Officer, in his draft report, rejected St Edmundsbury's plans to develop "Leg of Mutton" as part of the Vision 2031 proposals.

Also, when I became chairman, Skinner Street had its historic significance diminished because of the deplorable state in which it was kept.

As part of a crusade to restore Skinner Street as an asset for the town, we presented plans to the borough, including to restore lighting and an option to improve waste disposal

and add planters.

Street lighting was restored and Skinner Street is no longer used to store the market waste disposal during market days. We hope for further improvements in the future.

The Bury Society submitted its opinion on the creation of the Waste Hub outside Bury.

Having had representation from a few members who were opposed to it, we took a wider perspective and supported the plan.

The Hub was completed and is currently an effective way for the community to book a time to deal with their waste.

During my time as chairman, I attended regular update meetings at West Suffolk House on various topics, and came to appreciate just how diverse and complicated a town like Bury St Edmunds is and also how organisations like the Bury Society can make a difference.

Karen Hurden

Sadly during my term, we had to report on the deaths of two retired members of the committee.

Sue Sollohub – In 2012, Sue stood down as our long serving Newsletter Editor.

A Memorial Service was held on August 26, 2014, at St Mary's Church, Ickworth, attended by many members of the Society.

Mike Ames – In May 2014 we reported the death of Mike Ames.

A previous chairman of this Society and a founding member of Bury in Bloom, chairing it for 25 years, retiring in 2011.

He was Mayor of both St Edmundsbury and the Bury Town Council, and had the distinction of being awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the community of Bury St Edmunds.

The Bury Society attended the service to commemorate his valued life and service to Bury St Edmunds which was held in St Edmund's King and Martyr Church.

Having a ‘ringside’ seat at the heart of the development of the town

My year as the chair of the Bury Society saw a decline in our town’s civic status but an upwelling of grassroots civic activity.

The closure of our fine magistrates court was announced; a huge loss to our town which calls itself the Shrine of a King and Cradle of the Law, coming so soon after the Magna Carta celebrations.

Another loss was the main Post Office on Cornhill – one of many casualties of the move to online transactions.

The operations were moved next door to W H Smith and there was a real fear that the fine building would be lost.

Fortunately the façade has since been saved as part of the council-backed redevelopment of the site.

It also became clear the merger of St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath councils would result in the loss of our town’s borough status jealously guarded since 1604.

The Society mounted an ultimately doomed campaign to stop this during and after my time in the chair.

With the Vision 2031 local plan in place, the Society was deeply engaged in the Town Centre Masterplan, with the help of Richard Summers.

With the Hollow Road waste transfer station application rumbling on, Roderick Rees ably guided the committee in balancing individual interests with those of the wider town. The Society through Roderick joined the town’s efforts to safeguard and revive the railway station. A direct result of this was the eventual opening of the car park to the north of the station.

A privilege of being chair was witnessing the myriad ways in which the Society works to keep our town a special place.

Bury is such a “can do” place – where local residents, businesses and the council get stuck in together to get things done.

A small example of this grassroots civic pride, which has since borne



Tim Page.

greater fruit was John Williams’ wooden monk sculpture in Eastgate Street.

John saw the ugly tree stump and got in touch with Melanie Lesser at Bury in Bloom who in turn got permission from the council.

The Society paid for his tools and the result was a fine sculpture.

For me that is the real essence of how the Society serves its members and the town. It is not just with the Society Review and events we put on but with the many little ways we work behind the scenes to help

keep our town special. Throughout its existence the Society’s Bury in Bloom sub-committee has been a key part of our work in harnessing the willingness of people to keep the town special.

A highlight for me is always the Certificates of Merit judging.

This year marked 30 years of Bury in Bloom and to celebrate the town enjoyed a visit by the BBC Radio 4’s “Gardeners’ Question Time”.

Finally there were two bits of good news for the town.

Firstly the Guildhall refurbishment project, which the Society helped fund in a small way, made real progress. But more importantly for me, we saw the rise of the Cupola House replica out of the ashes of the original so tragically lost by fire.

Looking back I see 2015 to 2016 as a period of relative calm for the town between the twin storms of the 2008 and 2009 financial crisis and the pandemic.

As ever the town was adapting to outside pressures whilst keeping its own sense of identity and civic pride, and it was a privilege to have had a ringside seat.

Tim Page

Extra weekend parking spots

Christmas has officially begun in Bury St Edmunds and festive town centre visitors now have even more choice where to park thanks to support from Greene King which is offering its car park at no cost during weekends.

The warm glow of Christmas lights organised by Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District provides an attractive welcome to town centre visitors. The lights switch on marked the start of Christmas in Bury St Edmunds and a series of events organised by town centre partners including West Suffolk Council.

A lights and music extravaganza, a full Santa experience, Christmas

markets, live music and carols are all among the town centre entertainment designed to bring festive cheer to local communities and boost the tills of shops, restaurants, cafes and other town centre businesses at this time of year. Greene King and West Suffolk Council are making additional weekend parking available, so people can “Park and Walk” to beat the busy town centre car park queues.

The council’s Olding Road car park, which has 300 spaces, will be available to the public to use at no cost to users at weekends. And Greene King is making 200 spaces at its car park off Cullum Road available for parking from 8am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday.

Membership is so important to the future and well being of the Society

I had been on the committee of the Bury Society since 2006 and in 2010 was asked by then chair Sarah Green if I would undertake carrying the logistics of installing commemorative Blue Plaques to notable people of the town.

This I did and in 2012, with the assistance of fellow committee member Colin Taylor (not related) we put seven of these (an eighth followed) on several buildings in the town after I had researched the plaques.

You could say this was my only major achievement while being on the committee during this period.

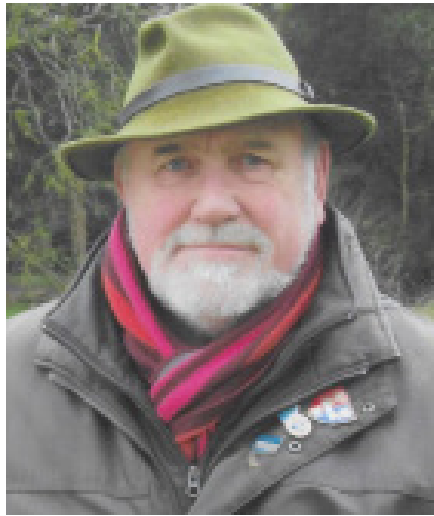
However, I was somewhat taken aback when Tim Page asked me to become his vice-chairman in 2015 and even more surprised when Tim, through pressure of work at his successful business, decided to step down as chairman and in effect we reversed roles and I became chairman in 2016.

One of the things that I have found is a misconception of the general public that Bury in Bloom is a council run initiative; but no, it is a sub-committee of the Bury Society responsible amongst other things for successfully entering floral competitions, innovative ideas for roundabouts and the very popular certificates awarded to front gardens etc.

Bury in Bloom celebrated 35 years in 2021, the same year as the Bury Society celebrated 50 years, both notable achievements.

A celebratory "picnic" at the Guildhall, where we had financially supported its restoration a few years ago, was very successful and well received.

The society is open to all and with that premise in mind and now with the aid of the MCE (membership, communications, events) sub-committee of the Bury Society the membership has flourished and is now in excess of 600 despite Covid 19. In recent years just some of the social events members attended were trips to Eltham Palace, home of the



Martyn Taylor

Courtaulds; Sandringham House; up the canal to Little Venice, London; down the River Deben; and visiting Chatham Dockyard, as well as recent co-ordinated enjoyable visits to Clare and West Stow. Along with these are the well attended Autumn get-together coffee mornings, where members are encouraged to bring their friends who may even join, and this also applies to the ever popular, Winter Lunch. An interesting quiz on Bury St Edmunds open to all was also well attended.

So the social side of the Bury Society is strong.

Published three times a year, the Society Review is still a valuable asset of the Society appreciated by members.

Another important part of the society has always been the monitoring of planning applications.

Unfortunately in recent years the town has seen some developments slip under the radar, possibly with the amalgamation of St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council, with expansion on the northern side of town in particular. It seems Bury St Edmunds now has a fondness for flats.

However, the important reversal of the planning application to re-develop Cornhill Walk can be seen as a recent success, the future awaits on

this. Another planning success has been co-operation with the council over the reconfiguration of the former post office, its innovative solution to the so called "missing-link" whilst still retaining its iconic Victorian façade, an important factor in its design.

Other successes have been working with the railway group to improve the railway station and station master's house; interaction with the council over the Town Centre Masterplan with fruitful meetings at the Athenaeum attended by many interested parties.

We have recently seen a trend of commercial premises turning to residential use even to the extent of Edinburgh Woollen Mill possibly moving back to its origins as a hotel. More and more Bury St Edmunds is becoming a gourmet destination. Coffee shops and bistro-type restaurants are popping up, their customers adding to the tourist offer - the town is becoming a very popular place to visit and stay.

In the last few years the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership has been looking at ways to conserve the abbey site as well as giving people a better understanding of its purpose with the help of English Heritage along with the Bury Society, a founder member.

It was hoped to celebrate the millennium of the founding of the abbey in 2020 but because of Covid this celebration had to be put on hold, hopefully next year things will be different.

My final thoughts are with the families and friends of members we have sadly lost over the last few years, our first chairman Dr David Dymond one of these just recently.

Members are so important to the society; without your support we would not exist.

So I say to you and the work carried out by the officers of the Society, thank you, and here's to the next 50 years!

Three events help to get Society back to ‘cautiously’ socialising once again

Whilst the Covid pandemic provided great periods of uncertainty during this year, the Bury Society was able to provide three notable social events for its members and guests – all of which were oversubscribed, indicating the relief at finally being able to cautiously socialise again.

The year of events finally got under way in July with a celebration of 50 years of the Bury Society in the grounds and Banqueting Hall of the Guildhall - a fitting venue for such a celebration as the Guildhall has been the centre of civic celebrations in the town for over 800 years.

A picnic was not originally envisaged when considering how we mark our 50 years, but curiously it was an ideal solution for a year of unprecedented challenges.

Within a few days many attendees at the picnic were gathering again for an afternoon visit to West Stow.

From a dedicated undercover area, members and their friends were able to embark on two entertaining tours of this historical site – one was to get an appreciation of all the practical work carried out over the last 50 years to uncover the secrets of the early Anglo Saxons who lived and worked at West Stow, indeed all along the fringes of the River Lark and into modern day Bury St Edmunds.



Members on a tour of the West Stow Anglo-Saxon village.

The second tour along the Beowulf and Grendell trail was led by our own Alan Baxter who focused on the oral folklore handed down through the generations, and how the writing of J R R Tolkien was inspired by this Anglo-Saxon story.

Once again we are grateful to Stephen Moody who spoilt the guests with a selection of homemade cakes during the course of the afternoon.

A visit to Clare in August showcased all the work carried out by the Clare Country Park Trust in making the town a popular visitor attraction.

They certainly made the members and friends very welcome, even

treating the assembled group to a short (and humorous) announcement by the Clare Town Crier in his full regalia.

After refreshments in the newly restored “Old Goods Shed” within the country park, the members and guests were taken on a guided walk around the town trail, bringing to life some of the rich history of this historical town.

September saw the last of our events programme for 2021 with a day of guided walks around historical Lavenham.

Like all the other events, these hugely enjoyable walks were oversubscribed. Such enthusiasm at the return of live events bodes well for the upcoming programme for 2022.

Terry O'Donoghue



The first event this year following the Covid pandemic was the celebration of 50 years of the Bury Society in the grounds and Banqueting Hall of the Guildhall.



A welcome from the Clare Town Crier.

Second year of multi-year habitat management in Ram Meadow

In the autumn of 2020 volunteers from the Bury Water Management Group began the first year of our seven-year habitat management plan agreed with West Suffolk Council for the open water scrape in Ram Meadow.

The objective is to open up a new part of this water habitat each year to light and air and to reduce the impact of trees and reeds drying out the water.

Upon starting there was only 15% open water and the habitat was less attractive for reed and sedge warblers, water vole and dragonfly and damselfly species, all of which have been recorded there in the past.

We continued through the autumn of 2021, running four more volunteer events.

The work began by coppicing willow, which both blocks light from the scrape and also hides the habitat from the public's view along the adjacent footpath. Over two half days we created a large pile of some 150 cubed metres of cut willow branches.

The plan is for this to be converted

into woodchip to be laid along the Ram Meadow paths.

Over a further two half days volunteers with in-water training then went into the scrape and pulled a section of great reedmace (bullrushes) by hand. These heavy reeds up to 2m tall were then floated to the water's edge, loaded onto a wheelbarrow and left in habitat piles on the side.

This was different to the first year when we pulled mainly branched bur reed and we noticed that this water has now been colonised by hornwort, a native oxygenating plant.

The result was a new sector of open water meeting up with the area cleared up last year.

Other volunteers were busy managing poplar coppicing and laying out wood-chipped poplar from the first year's activity onto the public footpaths.

Many people in Bury St Edmunds have never ventured beyond the football ground into the wildlife area behind.

The site used to be the main holding meadows for livestock going

to market but was passed onto the local council in 1996 after the Tesco development.

The site is part of the River Lark floodplain, consisting of low-lying meadow with a network of drainage ditches.

The silting up of the ditches and the drying out of the scrape through willow and bur reed have combined to threaten the habitats.

The Bury Water Meadows Group is therefore pleased to be taking on conservation activities with the aim of creating and maintaining more favourable habitats for flora and fauna over all of Ram Meadow. The removal of these trees and reeds (along with excess hemlock and nettles) makes room to increase those plants which are more likely to support our native insects, birds and bats.

We're proud of being able to make a big difference already after our first two years of work and we look forward to seeing how nature responds.

Ian Campbell

Crane towering over town centre comes down



It had dominated the skyline of Bury St Edmunds town centre since April but the 18-metre high tower crane has now been dismantled. The tower crane, which was so huge that it took a mobile crane to help put it up and take it down, had been used for work on West Suffolk Council's redevelopment of 17-18 Cornhill, the site of the former Post Office.

Once completed next year, the redevelopment, being undertaken by Barnes Construction, will deliver two ground floor business units with 12 flats above. The Victorian Cornhill front has been carefully preserved. Restoration work on the front alongside the installation of new more energy-efficient windows is due to be completed in the

coming weeks. At what was once the rear yard of the Post Office a new frontage has been created, designed to help turn the street over time into a destination in its own right rather than a service road.

Meanwhile, the walkway at Market Thoroughfare between the Arc and the historic town centre has been widened at ground level by more than 50 per cent to 3.8 metres.

Julie Baird, director of Planning and Growth at West Suffolk Council, said: "This illustrates the progress that is being made in turning this exciting and bold vision into a reality. I would like to thank all those members of the public and town centre partners that helped collaborate and shape the town centre masterplan and through it."

Mourning the passing of Society's first chairman

Dr David Dymond, one of the foremost acknowledged experts on local history and the first chairman of the Bury Society, has died, aged 88. He was president of the Suffolk Records Society and a vice president of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History as well as the British Association for Local History. He was given an honorary doctorate by the University of East Anglia for his services to history and education in the region. He also co-authored "A History of Suffolk" and did important research on Long Melford church and Lavenham.



Dr David Dymond with his wife Mary.

These are some of his many academic achievements, however, it was his appointment in 1971 as the first chairman of the newly formed Bury Society in a campaign to "Save St John's Street", then threatened with wholesale destruction that brought him notable attention. David's approach was non-confrontational towards the council, always reasoning that people wanted more of a say in what the council was proposing for the town. On October 23, 1981, at the Society's 10th celebration meeting in the Athenaeum an enthralled packed audience sat listening to his lecture on the importance of the town's history. He was a charming man who spent many hours in the local Records Office (living conveniently next door) always thirsting for more knowledge. In July 2020 David was presented, at his home, with a Festschrift which is a collection of writings in honour of a scholar in his lifetime by 17 colleagues, edited by Dr Evelyn Lord and Dr Nick Amor, entitled "Shaping the Past", subtitled "Theme and Place in History". The Bury Society and the town has lost one of its foremost citizens and will be poorer for his passing. He leaves Mary, a devoted wife of nearly 60 years and three children.

Martyn Taylor

Cathedral reopens Tourist Information Centre

Visitors to Bury St Edmunds can find out about the town and things to see and do on a visit using the tourist information point at St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

The information hub is part of the Cathedral Shop, on Angel Hill, and had been closed since March 2020, firstly because of the pandemic and various lockdown restrictions, which prevented it from re-opening. Then a serious flood in May 2021 caused damage to the stock and fittings, requiring extensive repair.

The newly refurbished TiP is now open from 10am to 5pm, Mondays to Saturdays, and 11.30am to 4pm on Sundays.

A team of volunteers is on hand to answer questions, give directions, hand out maps and trails and advise visitors on the wealth of attractions and events available in the town and surrounding area. It also stocks souvenir books, postcards and gifts for sale.

The TiP is one of a number in the town including The Apex and Moyse's Hall Museum.

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Winter lunch to feature Charlie Haylock

Events for 2022 will get underway with the traditional Winter Lunch which will be held on Saturday, February 5, at the Southgate Community Centre.

To accompany this lunch we are delighted to announce that Charlie Haylock, the Suffolk dialect coach on the acclaimed recent film "The Dig", will provide us with an intriguing and sometimes hilarious look behind-the-scenes on his involvement with the making of this Netflix film of the story of Basil Brown and the famous Sutton Hoo burial ship.

Charlie's talk will take us through the whole journey, starting with a misunderstanding from what he thought was a "scam" e-mail from a film producer, through the coaching process that took place, finally enabling Ralph Fiennes and other actors to portray authentic Suffolk accents without sounding like West Country pirates!

In a both informative and entertaining talk, Charlie will explain the extreme lengths Ralph Fiennes took, not only to play Basil Brown, but to become Basil Brown.

£70,000 to improve stay at the park

West Suffolk Council has invested in a £70,000 upgrade to its car park at Nowton Park.

The work took place in October and it included resurfacing, relining and clearing of vegetation around the car park.

Jo Rayner, cabinet member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs, said: "Nowton Park is popular with organised groups such as Parkrun and local football clubs as well as people going for a walk or taking their children out so they can run off some steam."

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The copy deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, March 28.
Email copy to the editor Russell Cook at russellcook@sky.com



Charlie Haylock on the set of 'The Dig' with Ralph Fiennes who portrayed Basil Brown in the film of the uncovering of the Sutton Hoo burial ship.

A booking form for the Winter Lunch is enclosed in this copy of the Review. Places are limited, so as they say, please book early to avoid disappointment.

An entertaining interlude is guaranteed for the Bury Society members, which hopefully will be the opening round of what will be an uninterrupted series of events in 2022.

To that end plans are well advanced on an excursion in May to the historic town of Diss and then on to the famous Bressingham Gardens.

Our colleagues at Diss have kindly offered to host us upon arrival at the refurbished historical Corn Exchange, where we will be served refreshments followed by a guided tour of the building and displays of

its rich history.

Currently this excursion is planned for Thursday, May 12.

Regarding the balance of events planning for 2022 it is very much the desire to resurrect the cancelled excursions from 2020, including a trip to the Time and Tide museum at Great Yarmouth followed by an afternoon at Somerleyton Hall.

The Society is also looking at what more local events can take place during the year, especially a twist on the ever popular Saturday "coffee and cakes" mornings.

Hopefully, full details of the events programme for 2022 will be published in the first couple of months of the new year.

Terry O'Donoghue

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

Either use the website: theburysociety.org.uk 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 that of the Bury Society.