

AGM to be  
held in June  
Pages 8/9

Abbey 1000  
events diary  
Page 12

Society's  
2022 plans  
Page 13



# Society Review

Spring 2022

## We are now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation



*Bury Society members attending an event at Southgate Community Centre, in Bury St Edmunds.*

The trustees of the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO have announced that from April 1, 2022, a brand new

charitable incorporated organisation, called the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO (registered charity 1196640),

will take over the work of the former Bury St Edmunds Society.

*See more details on Pages 2 and 3.*

# Basil Oliver – the man who gave the ‘Pillar of Salt’ to the town

Standing proudly on Angel Hill, the affectionately named “Pillar of Salt” has been a meeting point for countless thousands of locals and visitors to the town since 1935.

Grade II listed, reputed to be the first internally illuminated road sign designed and erected in the country, its architect was the quiet unassuming Basil Oliver. Much has been written locally about the architects and builders of the Cathedral and the now ruined Benedictine Abbey, but in the first three decades of the 20th century no architect had a greater and lasting impact on the appearance of the town than our own Suffolk born Basil Oliver.

Basil, the son of a Sudbury brewer, was born in 1882 and educated at King Edward VI Grammar School in the town and following a spell at Liverpool University, completed his



*The ‘Pillar of Salt’ on Angel Hill.*

professional education at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London. Whilst architecture was his primary profession, he was a talented artist, having 10 pictures exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1890 and

1948. Basil’s artistic skills bridged both his love of all things “arts and crafts” and the emerging Art Deco movement which followed the Great War. This is no more evident than in the former Greene King Rose and Crown public house, on Newmarket Road, in Cambridge. The exterior is a classic 1928 Art Deco design, but many of its internal fittings were crafted by the Art Workers Guild, of which he was Master at the time. During this period, Basil had been retained by Greene King to build or re-fit its stock of tied public houses. Sadly, most of the records from Greene King and his work for them has been lost – but it is accepted that he was most likely involved in fitting out several public houses in Bury.

Basil Oliver’s work can be seen in other parts of the eastern region, including Castling’s Hall, Groton, and the acclaimed war memorial in Great Dunmow. However, it is in Bury that we can see a concentration of his skill, all visible from his “Pillar of Salt” – the old Borough Offices, described by Pevsner as “Neo-Georgian, tactful and completely uneventful” and also his 1935 sympathetic remodelling of the entrance hall and inner reception area of the Athenaeum. Basil was a prolific writer on his chosen profession including, naturally, “The Renaissance of the English Public House” in 1947. Whilst much is known about his public persona, his private life was unremarkable. Having never married he shared a house with his sister Violet Oliver for most of his adult life and was still working up until his death in May 1948, in Sudbury, at the age of 65. When the “Pillar of Salt” was first erected, it did not meet with universal approval by the residents of the town, but today we could not envisage Angel Hill being stripped of this unique piece of street architecture.

## Special general meetings pave way for the Society’s conversion to CIO

The Trustees’ application to register the Bury St Edmunds CIO was approved by the Charity Commission on November 17, 2021.

The new Charitable Incorporated Organisation’s registered charity reference is 1196640.

As the CIO is a new charity the trustees needed to wind up the existing charity and transfer everything to the CIO.

Two Special General Meetings were held online on January 13, 2022, and in person just before the Winter Lunch, on February 5, to vote on the following resolution:

“The members of the Bury St Edmunds 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.”

Both votes comfortably met the requirement of a two-thirds majority as all votes cast were for the resolution and there were no objections.

The trustees would like to thank all the members who attended the Special General Meetings, especially the one on January 13.

By the time you read this the new CIO will have taken over the operations of the Society.

The main practical change for members is the different bank account for your subscriptions.

*Tim Page*

*Terry O’Donoghue*



# What YOU need to do NOW as a result of Society becoming a CIO

**IMPORTANT – Members please read and take action.**

With effect from April 1, 2022, the Bury St Edmunds Society as you have known it will become “The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO”. A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) gives us the protection of being a corporate body with limited liability and has been available as a new structure for charities since 2013.

Members have approved the winding up of the existing charity and the transfer of all assets and liabilities to the CIO at the end of the Society’s current financial year, on March 31, 2022. The “old” Bury Society will then be dissolved.

## ***1 How does this affect you?***

Your membership will continue exactly as before under the new name.

## ***2 The bank details for the new CIO are:***

Name: The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO. This is a business account

Sort Code: 20 – 83 – 69  
Account: 00733091

## ***3 The current subscriptions are:***

£20 if there are two people living at the same address or £15 if you are an individual member.

The reference to use should be your name in reverse eg Smith J F S or Jones P R & T J (we have several names with the same initials to several surnames).

## ***4 What you need to do now:***

The next annual subscription is due on the June 1, 2022. Can you please do the following as soon as possible:

- If you have an existing standing



order with your bank but do not use online banking:

Cancel your existing standing order and set up a new standing order using the proforma enclosed and then take it/send it to your bank.

- If you use on-line banking:

Cancel your existing standing order and set up a new standing order payment “to pay on the June 1, 2022, and every June 1 thereafter until further notice”.

Use the new bank account details above and the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO as the account holder.

- If you pay by BACS:

Please note the new account details above and remember the June 1 renewal date.

- If you pay your subscription by cheque:

Make the cheque out to: “The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO” and send it to:

The Treasurer,  
The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO,  
The Risbygate Centre,  
90 Risbygate Street,  
Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3AA.

We understand that Barclays will allow the transfer of any amounts which are sent to the “old” bank account over to the new account for a very limited time only, so it is important that you make these changes as soon as possible.

If you are completely baffled by this, either email [members@burysociety.com](mailto:members@burysociety.com) or telephone Sue Savage on 01284 719243 for assistance.

# Bury in Bloom to represent Suffolk in Britain in Bloom 2022 competition



The 2022 finalists of the UK's largest community gardening competition – Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Britain in Bloom – have been unveiled and Bury in Bloom hope to be crowned champions as they look to wow the judges with their efforts to improve the town this summer. Bury in Bloom will compete in one of eight categories as they look to

secure a RHS gold, silver gilt, silver or bronze awards.

Each category winner is then put forward to be considered for the title of the overall RHS Britain in Bloom Champion for 2022. The results and winners will be announced at an awards event in October.

David Irvine, Bury in Bloom co-ordinator, said: "We're excited to make the RHS Britain in Bloom Finals for the first time since 2018 and with so many people looking to get involved in gardening in recent years it will be a great time to shine a light on the benefits it is already having in Bury St Edmunds. "We're up against some tough competitors from Cumbria to Cornwall

and Blackburn to Sevenoaks and with the Queen's Jubilee and Abbey 1000 celebrations taking place 2022 will be a busy year for Bury St Edmunds."

The Britain in Bloom judging follows closely behind the Anglia in Bloom judging that takes place in July which includes the Bury in Bloom Certificate of Merit, also known as the Front Garden Competition.

Finalists this year will be judged according to updated criteria that will help consider sustainability issues that are becoming the main motivations for participating in the in Bloom campaign.

*David Irvine*

## Certificates of Merit for front gardens

The Bury in Bloom Certificate of Merit, awarded to the best front gardens of residential and commercial properties in Bury St Edmunds is introducing new guidelines for gardeners and judges following changes being made by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). For the first time in its 58-year history the RHS has re-written the guidelines and added more weight to sustainable credentials to make a more meaningful contribution to reducing climate change and supporting wildlife.

Bury in Bloom has responded to this by introducing changes to the way they judge the front gardens. As well as colours, texture and foliage, points can now be gained for things like bee and butterfly-friendly plants, wildlife water features and rainwater harvesting. Lynne Wright, the Certificate of Merit co-ordinator, said: "The RHS guidance recommends re-thinking our planting strategy, so consider this as evolution not revolution. A traditional style of garden will still be able to score well but by selecting a more diverse range of planting additional points can be awarded. It is important resi-



*Bury in Bloom co-ordinator David Irvine and Lynne Wright, the Certificate of Merit co-ordinator.*

dents are aware of the opportunity to be awarded more points so they can review planting schemes."

Bury in Bloom 2021 used nearly 100 volunteer judges to cover every part of the borough of Bury St Edmunds. Lynne added: "Maps typically are updated every six to nine months so for some new build areas in Bury St Edmunds suitable maps might not be available in 2022. To be included in

this scheme the area has to be covered by the borough boundaries so if currently listed as eg Rougham this does not fall within the qualifying area. If anyone would like to become a volunteer judge, we would love to hear from you.

For more information contact Lynne Wright at [certificates@buryinbloom.org.uk](mailto:certificates@buryinbloom.org.uk)

*David Irvine*

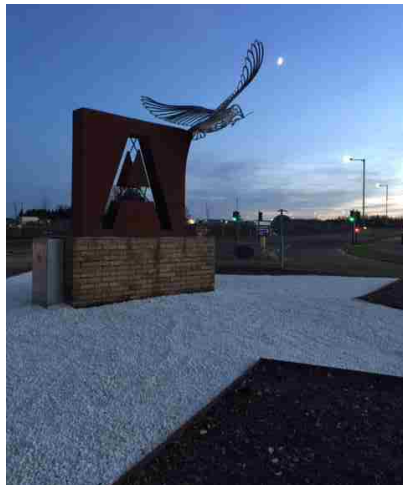


# Completion of symbolic roundabout sculpture to be carried out this year

Seventy-eight years ago, on Christmas Eve, 1944, a B17 Flying Fortress, nicknamed “Treble 4” left RAF Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, with Brigadier General Frederick Castle at the controls, having been chosen to lead a mission that involved over 2,000 heavy bombers focused on stopping the German offensive in the Ardennes. General Castle’s Flying Fortress developed engine problems over Belgium and had to drop out of formation and with no fighter escort the plane was immediately singled out by enemy fighters. With fires on board and two of the four engines burning, Castle refused to jettison his bombs to lighten the load of his severely damaged B17 due to allied friendly troops below. He ordered all his air crew to immediately bail out, leaving only himself and one other pilot remaining to assist. Their “Treble 4” B-17G bomber exploded before crashing into ground, close to American troops, killing Castle and the other pilot. Five of the crew of eight survived and General Castle was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Now as we approach the 80th anniversary (1942-2022) of RAF Bury St Edmunds (aka Rougham airfield) the operating base of 94th Bombardment Group, Bury in Bloom is completing a symbolic sculpture to commemorate the gallant American servicemen flying and servicing the B17 Flying Fortress out of RAF Bury St Edmunds by completing a commemorative sculpture standing on a white five-point star against a blue background.

Originally unveiled in 2016 the symbolic four-metre high “Flight of Peace” sculpture sits on a two-metre-high brick plinth and shows a dove carrying an olive branch emerging from the unfurled tail fin of a B17 Flying Fortress with the square A insignia. It was



*The Flight of Peace on the roundabout on the fringe of the Moreton Hall Estate.*

installed on a roundabout close to the Rougham airfield, at the junction of Mount Road/Lady Miriam Way, and remained incomplete as the Bury in

Bloom charity ran short of funds. However, the organisation now intends to complete the planned landscape surround showing the United States white five-point star surrounded by a blue background and hope to re-unveil the refurbished memorial in June 2022 about the time of The Queen’s platinum celebrations. David Irvine, co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom, said: “We had the funds to complete the massive five-point star in white marble, however we need to raise the £10,000 (\$13,000) for the final stage 245 sq metre blue background.

“It’s a big project for us and we hope that families of USAAF servicemen can contribute to this lovely memorial as part of the 80th anniversary of RAF Bury St Edmunds.”

*David Irvine*

## Appeal for volunteers to help compile competition portfolios

Bury in Bloom is busy making preparation for the entries into the Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom competitions.

They are judged separately: one in July (Anglia in Bloom) and one in early August (Britain in Bloom). This means two complete portfolios used by each set of judges that draw their attention to what we are doing, and so are a very important part of the entries. If anyone feels they could help compiling the portfolios I would love to hear from them. In addition to the main Anglia in Bloom entry we will be entering the “Special Award Nominations” that include:

- Crafty Foxes Bury in Plume – Community Project;
- The Floral Labyrinth – Best conservation/Biodiversity project;
- Bury Water Meadows BioBlitz – Best conservation/Biodiversity project;

- The River of Flowers – Best floral display by an individual or community;
- Britannia House – Best Sheltered Housing project;
- Glastonbury Court – Best Care Home Garden;
- Tollgate Primary School – Best Grow Your Own project;
- Abbey Gardens – Best local authority floral display;
- Abbey Gardens or Nowton Park – Best public Open Space;
- Something in the Best young people’s project under 12;
- Something in the Best Young People’s Project 12 to 18 years.

The most important message I need to put out is the request for volunteers on judging days. We need more people than you can imagine. Contact [coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk](mailto:coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk) or telephone 07860 397491.

*David Irvine*

# Clothiers of the town were master cloth makers with large workforce

Originally thought to be a cross between a Southdown ram and a Norfolk Horned ewe the Suffolk sheep, with its black face and legs, produced a quality fleece, though it was said that “the Suffolk Sheep’s cheese was notoriously hard and you could use it to sole your shoes.” Interestingly, Shakers Lane, in Bury St Edmunds, derives its name from Shackage, moveable pens that allowed sheep to graze the leavings of a previous crop ie turnips.

Whilst it is an accepted fact the Abbey of St Edmund in medieval times were large landowners and provided employment for much of the town, as time progressed the wool trade came to the fore.

After all, this was the primary industry of the medieval economy in Bury, the coverlets made here being a speciality. The clothiers of the town were master cloth makers employing a large workforce.

They carried out shearing, scouring and an initial cleaning to clean dirt off, then sorting took place.

The wool was then straightened via carding using teasel, a tall spikey plant to draw out the fleece’s natural fibres, or combing using large metal combs to untangle the wool. It was given to the spinners to spin the wool whilst still in its “grease” (lanoline) as the yarn was less likely to break using drop-spindles.

With the advent of the spinning wheel in the 14th century these were superfluous to requirements. The wool was washed yet again to remove the grease then dyed using natural occurring plants such as woad. The spinners produced a yarn thread which was set on frames by the weavers, the vertical being the warp, the horizontal, weft.

On completion of the weaving the last obnoxious process in medieval times involved “walking” the woven product in urine known as fulling to tighten it up.

Finally another wash and you could call it cloth.



*A woolsack on a wall in St Andrews Street South, Bury St Edmunds.*

Also in the past the cloth was put on tenterhooks being stretched out to prevent shrinkage.

The cutter would complete the whole process, trimming and shaping the cloth whilst the job of the alnager, an officer of the crown, was to inspect the cloth ensuring it met with standards prior to being sold.

As time went on, some work for weavers and spinners was outsourced, women taking on this role working in their own homes being paid “piece work”, the more you produced the more you were paid! Between 1354 and 1530 there were 86 vocations in the town, the highest number associated with the wool trade so not surprisingly the earliest guilds reflected this.

The Candlemas Guild, which would evolve into the Guildhall Feoffment and still with us today, is the most notable.

This ruling elite known as burghesses with power brokers such as Jankyn Smyth and John Baret, who had married into the rich Drury clothier family, were not necessarily involved directly with the wool trade but certainly benefitted by the wealth it created within the town. Both contributed to the internal fabric of St Mary’s Church.

After the Abbey’s dissolution and the granting of the town’s first charter in 1606 by James 1st/6th there were two wool-halls in the town. One was near the Market Cross owned by the 37-man corporation that now ran the town, the other the

Clothiers Woolhall where today’s Woolhall Street is situated.

Released from the religious constraints exerted on them by the Abbey they would eventually start to enjoy the new-found freedom of non-conformism. Yarn merchants such as Samuel Cumberland and John Corsbie attended the Independent Chapel (now United Reformed Church) in Whiting Street. Here they exchanged ideas and inter-mingled.

Though preferring St Mary’s, James Oakes, “Mr Bury St Edmunds” of his day, inherited a yarn business from his uncle Orbell Ray, many of his combing sheds occupying land in St Andrews Street South.

James went into partnership with William Buck but with the downturn of the wool trade at the end of the 18th century because of an influx of Flemish weavers, imported textiles and the Napoleonic wars, Oakes went into banking; his fine house in Guildhall Street reflecting this. Buck went on to partner Benjamin Greene to form a new venture that would sow the seeds of the Greene King Brewery.

The fantastic diaries kept by James Oakes detailing life at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century are a fabulous resource for future generations.

Lavenham is acknowledged as the best example of a wool town in England with its fine timber-framed properties, however, these exist today only because the wealthy of the town left after the decline of the wool trade. This resulted in these houses not being Georgianised by “the better sort of people” as they were in Bury.

The last wool merchants trading in Bury St Edmunds were Clayton Schofield of 70 Guildhall Street, with his yard at the rear, and Eastern Wool growers in the 1960s also in St Andrews Street South.

*Martyn Taylor*



# School children helping to create mosaic of Edmund for Abbey 1000

Mosaic workshops are being held as part of the celebrations of the Abbey 1000.

The mosaics are inspired by St Edmund's original bejewelled shrine. The project is jointly funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and locality budgets from West Suffolk councillors Richard Rout and Robert Everitt.

Michelle Freeman, from The Crafty Foxes, and Bury St Edmunds school children are creating the legend of St Edmund using individual mosaic pictures which will combine to decorate the sculpture plinth.

The plinth will display a series of sculptures from May to November in the crypt within the ruins of the Abbey.

Workshop attendees have designed sections of the story.

They will see the project from the initial concept through to choosing colours and tiles and then using the reverse mosaic method to put onto a steel frame.

The frames are clicked together to form the story. They will then be attached to the wooden plinth.

Each school has been given a section of the story to bring to life.



*Pupils from Sexton's Manor Primary School with their mosaics.*



*Some of the mosaics created by children from Sexton Manor Primary School.*

The pupils looked at illustrations and discussed ideas before starting on their drawings

Michelle said: "It is so lovely to work with children whose ideas are fresh and new and listening to what they think these characters in the legend might look like and behave like. The children know they are lucky to have been selected by the school and all rose to the challenge. For children the huge hurdle is getting them to think big as they tend to draw things the size of a tiny ant! We discussed proportions and scale and got some great ideas."

Mr Everitt, West Suffolk councillor, added: "Richard and I are delighted to be supporting this project. It gives the pupils a chance to learn the history of the town, the importance of the Abbey and the chance to leave their

own legacy with the creation of the mosaic"

Melanie Lesser, Abbey 1000 committee member, said: "The Abbey 1000 community projects enhance the young residents' sense of belonging in the town. The projects help to make them feel confident, engaged, and purposeful. Hopefully they will be able to show their families the mosaic in place in the Abbey Gardens after the end of the Abbey 1000 celebrations."

In a few weeks Michelle will return, and the groups will create their section of the story in mosaic tiles. Schools involved are Westley Middle School, Hardwick Middle School, Sebert Wood Primary, St Edmundsbury Primary, Sexton's Manor Primary and Tollgate Primary.

**Melanie Lesser**

# The minutes from the Society's

**The meeting was held on Thursday, May 27, at 7pm, online via Zoom webinar.**

## ***1 Welcome and introduction by the Chairman***

Those present on the webinar were welcomed by the Society chairman, Martyn Taylor, to the 50th AGM of the Society before introducing the speaker, Anne-Marie Howell, principal planning policy officer, West Suffolk Council.

## ***2 Talk by Anne-Marie Howell – “A long term plan for our town”***

Anne-Marie Howell presented an illustrated talk on “A long term plan for our town”. At the conclusion of the talk, questions were invited from the participants using the Q&A facility.

## ***3 Annual General Meeting***

### ***a Apologies for absence***

Apologies were received from Joseph Boyle, Marion Shaw, Sandie Taylor and John Saunders.

### ***b Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday, January 21, 2021***

These had been circulated previously in the Review and were subsequently approved, by means of a virtual poll, with no matters arising.

### ***c Chairman's report***

Martyn Taylor presented his report saying: “A warm welcome to you ladies and gentlemen of the Bury Society, the 50th AGM of the Bury Society.

“Hopefully, this should be the last time the Bury Society will have to hold its AGM using Zoom technology. The lack of physical togetherness that the society holds dearly since the Covid 19 pandemic first hit the country will be improved in the coming months.

“Since our last AGM held in January, we have seen some changes in the town.

“The loss of the flagship arc business Debenhams and the Cornhill Walk appeal application being dismissed probably the most significant, the society supporting the concerned residents of Well Street.

“We have also sadly lost a prominent member of the society, Judith Cawthorne.

“The membership though is still strong at over 600 and importantly is still well supported by you the members.

“We hope to be able to offer some events this year which you can find on our upgraded website and in the Society Review which goes from strength to strength.

“This year Bury in Bloom, ably led by its co-ordinator David Irvine, has some innovative ideas such as rainwater harvesting and pyramid planters.

“To help with the commemoration of the formation of the society the Bury Society has commissioned a spectacular wood carving panel of an interpretation of the Abbey, whose millennium was hoped to be celebrated last year (and we know what happened then).

“This will be carried out by notable local carver, Clint Rose and will be available for schools to view and will eventually go on display in Moyses Hall.

“The society would like to thank councillor Patrick Chung and the Town Council for funding this.

“Whilst on the subject of thanks I close my somewhat brief report with a big thank you to the members of the Executive Committee and Bury in Bloom Committee and to you as continuing members of the Bury Society.”

### ***d Planning officer's report***

Roderick Rees presented his report saying: “The Society wrote to express general support of the West Suffolk Local Plan and the town's status as a ‘go to’ location

for shopping, entertainment, employment and education.

“We also sought assurances to protect the town's historic environment, especially within the conservation areas - and we called for improved public transport and rail links with the wider West Suffolk area.

“The Society supported plans to bring the Suffolk Hotel back to life by converting the empty Edinburgh Woollen Mill premises on the Buttermarket. However, the Society was aware of local concern about the entrance foyer being located on Higher Baxter Street, so we suggested that one of the existing shops might be converted into a ‘market bar’ to provide an alternative access from the Buttermarket.

“The Society also commented upon the redevelopment of a brownfield site on Thingoe Hill, off Fornham Road, with 46 flats.

“The site is wedged between the railway line on one side and the A14 on the other, so we questioned how the plans would respond to the issues of noise and CO2 emissions.

“We also queried whether traffic control measures are required on Fornham Road.

“Another brownfield site upon which we commented, was the former used car sales site on Tayfen Road, almost opposite the junction with Springfield Road.

“The plans are for a four-storey building comprising nine flats and three separate offices.

“We considered the site was being over-developed and presented an overbearing cliff-face appearance to the road.

“And, looking to the future, surely ‘work/home’ apartments might be a more sustainable proposition than self contained offices.

“The Society also 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

*Continued on next page.*



# 50th Annual General Meeting

*Continued from previous page.*

1974, but now has only a 10-year life expectancy.

“The proposed hospital is one of 26 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 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.

“Wider afield, the Society commented upon recent government plans which would make it easier to convert shops and commercial premises into residential use – which, to our concern, includes conservation areas.

“We are now beginning to see the results of this legislation with recent applications to change empty premises in the town into new homes.

“And, finally, there is still no news about the Cornhill Walk shopping mall, following dismissal of the appeal in February.”

## *e Treasurer’s Report*

Doug Beardon presented his report. The Treasurer’s report (previously published in the most recent edition of the Review) and the financial statement for the year ended March 31, 2021, had been circulated with the agenda of the AGM.

He thanked all new members for joining and existing members for renewing their membership.

He thanked our commercial sponsors and the councillors who had sup-

ported us with funding and their time. He thanked Knights Lowe for the preparation of the accounts. He invited questions directly to him via email [treasurer@burysociety.com](mailto:treasurer@burysociety.com)

## *f Appointment of Trustees and Officers*

Tim Page said that there would be no changes in personnel at this AGM but that there would be a number of trustees stepping down at the May 2022 meeting. He invited any member of the Society interested in becoming a trustee to contact Martyn Taylor. He then announced the voting, by virtual poll, for the approval of the minutes of the AGM of January 21, 2021, and the election of the trustees. The minutes of the AGM of January 21, 2021, were unanimously approved. The following trustees were all re-elected: 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.

## *4 Questions from the floor/open forum*

Martyn Taylor invited questions from the participants, using the Q&A function. He then closed the 50th AGM of the Bury Society by thanking all those who had attended this Webinar AGM and thanked all members of the committee and the members of the Bury Society for their unstinting support. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.16pm.

# Annual General Meeting

**The last Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society (Charity Reference Number: 263230) and the first Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO (Charity Reference Number: 1196640)**

**will be held on Thursday, June 9, in the Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street**

Refreshments will be served from 6.30pm and the meeting will commence at 7.00pm. All members are welcome, and encouraged to attend.

## AGENDA

- 1 Welcome and introduction by the chairman.
- 2 Talk by Martyn Taylor: Fifty Glorious Years - A look back over the Bury Society’s achievements.
- 3 Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society (CRN: 263230).
  - a Apologies for absence.
  - b Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM (2021). and any matters arising.
  - c Chairman’s report.
  - d Planning Officer’s report.
  - e Treasurer’s report.
- 4 Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO (CRN: 1196640).
  - a Appointment of trustees and officers.
- 5 Questions from the floor/open forum.

# Hopes for the redevelopment of Cornhill Walk get positive reaction

The Society's committee has had sight of new pre-application proposals for the redevelopment of the vacant **Cornhill Walk** premises. Members will recall the Society lodged a strong objection to the original plans for 48 apartments over two large shops and a 24-hour gymnasium.

We were concerned about the scale of development, bulkiness of the design, highways/parking issues and the excessive retail space. The application was refused by the council and then dismissed on appeal. Overall, the committee was positive about the new plans.

We welcomed the reduction in retail area and the reduced apparent storey height by setting back upper floors. A U-shaped plan has overcome the bulkiness of the previous design and helped to address the issue of overlooking properties on the north boundary.

We were also supportive of the overall design concept of three terraces of varying character around a central parking courtyard. The Society therefore wrote a generally favourable response but also making some suggestions as to how the design might embrace a more local context.

The Society also 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.

Preliminary plans suggest the existing building will be demolished and replaced by surface parking and a new multi storey car park.

The Society accepted the case for building the new hospital at Hardwick Manor with caveats about access, parking and making maxi-



*Plans for Cornhill Walk are moving forward.*

mum 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 suggested some design changes to plans for the **used car**

**site on Tayfen Road** and welcomed planned remedial work to the **Railway Station.**

It supported access changes to the **St Benedict's Lower School car park** and suggested some boundary screening.

The executive committee noted proposals to use the basement of the former **Debenhams Store** as a cinema and proposals to vary planning conditions for residential redevelopment of **Burlingham Mill off Station Hill.**

It decided not to comment on pre-application plans for alterations to the **Deanery and various shop front alterations in the town centre.**

A decision is awaited following the Bury Society's previous objections to plans to build houses on land originally proposed for leisure and sports facilities at **Marham Park near Fornham.**

The Society noted the marketing of the former **St James' School site** for residential development and decided to await a planning application before expressing its concerns.

An important point to note for the future is that West Suffolk Council will be undertaking a **public consultation on "Preferred Options"** for the West Suffolk Local Plan from May to July.

The Bury Society is forming a sub-committee to deal with this when it is launched.

*Roderick Rees and  
Richard Summers*

## Roderick steps down

**Roderick Rees has stepped down as the planning officer for the Bury Society after many years of dedicated scrutiny of planning applications and planning policies in the town and a passionate campaign against "faux 19th Century pastiche design".**

**Richard Summers has taken over as Interim Planning Officer for a limited period until a replacement is appointed.**



# The mystery of the brother and sister green children of Woolpit

Once owned by the Abbey of St Edmund, the village of Woolpit derives its name from Wolf-pits that were to be found here.

Part of Suffolk folklore, two children, their ages unknown, were found in one of these pits. What was unusual about them was the greenish hue of their skin.

The brother and sister siblings claimed they were from a subterranean world called St Martins land and were drawn to the light after hearing bells coming from the direction of Bury St Edmunds. Neither spoke English and their garb was strange and though food was offered to them they would only eat green beans!

As they were deemed to be foreign, they were sent to a local lord, Richard De Caine, who had them baptised, he not knowing if they were Christian or not.

Shortly after the boy contracted an illness and died.

The girl gradually lost her green colour, learnt English and ate normal food.

Unfortunately for her she was described as “very wanton and impudent”, eventually given the name Agnes she supposedly married a royal official by the name of Richard Barre, at Kings Lynn.

Well, all these intrigues, according to two chroniclers William of Newburgh, writing in 1189, and Abbot Ralph, of Coggeshall, in 1220, only served to “muddy the waters” in an era when there was a bloody confrontation known to history as the Battle of Fornham, in 1173.

The big question that had to be addressed: who were these children and where did they really originate from?

The root cause of why there was ever a battle at all lay with the Earl of Leicester, Robert de Beaumont, and his wife the Countess Petronilla. Taking advantage of the instability in the country following the baronial wars and the aborted coup by three of



Henry II's sons, he invaded England with a force of 3,000 Flemish mercenaries and loyal knights.

Landing at Walton, near Felixstowe, he marched north intending to meet his own forces coming from Leicester.

After sacking Haughley Castle he went on to be confronted by a royal army led by the King's Justicar, Richard De Lucy, the Chief Constable of England, Humphrey De Bohun and four other noble lords along with 300 knights, presumably on horseback.

At the head of the royal army flew a banner of St Edmund blessed and given by Abbot Hugh I of the Abbey of St Edmund.

The two sides engaged near the three Fornhams, All Saints, Genevieve and St Martin, the latter obviously a major element in the green children's story.

Unfortunately for the main antagonist Leicester, his army of mercenaries were caught trying to ford the River Lark and were shown no mercy, the townspeople of Bury joining in at the killing field.

Beaumont and his wife were captured and ransomed, returning from France years later.

A postscript to all of this occurred in 1826 near the church at Fornham

St Genevieve when an ancient ash tree being felled on a mound of earth gave up a hidden secret when about 40 skeletons were revealed.

The theory was that these violated bodies were given a proper burial after the battle, as opposed to the mercenaries.

Since then two swords from that period have been found, the latest in April 2017 in a pond at the All Saints Hotel.

So what has this to do with the green children?

Were they part of the Flemish baggage train that may have been left behind after Haughley, after all this is only a few miles away from Woolpit?

However, that doesn't explain the St Martin connection unless of course some of the Flemings escaped and got back to the baggage train and told the children.

This might explain where they came from but not their skin colour.

Did the children have some dietary deficiency, they may only have had access to vegetables, perhaps they had cirrhosis, a complaint of the liver. Their strange clothing may have even contributed to their “greenness”; Flemings were renowned as weavers but had the natural dyes on their clothes bled, the dye not being “fixed” properly.

In recent years preposterous theories have been put forward, eg the children were aliens, not of this world having survived a glitch in a time warp!

As a rich part of East Anglian folklore this story has much to be commended.

*Martyn Taylor*

## Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

**The copy deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, July 18. Email copy to the editor Russell Cook at [russellcook@sky.com](mailto:russellcook@sky.com)**

# Abbey 1000 events start in Spring

After two years of pandemic-induced delay the Abbey 1000 celebrations get underway this Spring with the commencement of a season of abbey-related guided tours on April 1 followed by a pilgrimage from Ely to Bury and culminating in a day exploring the past, present and future of pilgrimage to the town.

The pilgrimage theme continues in May. Walkers will make a five-day journey from Norfolk, in the footsteps of the monks from St Benet's, who were sent to Bury by King Canute to help form the Abbey. From there pilgrims will cross the River Bure to Norwich. The next days will be spent walking through

the Norfolk and Suffolk countryside and stopping at places of worship along the route. They arrive in Bury to a gathering of Benedictines for the first time in 500 years since the dissolution of the monasteries.

Monks and nuns from Benedictine communities around Britain and other countries, with lay Benedictines and speakers (including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams) will explore the wisdom of Benedict for 21st century living. The weekend (May 14/15) will include ecumenical worship, fellowship, celebration and a procession into the abbey ruins.

May will also see the "Secrets of the Abbey: History Returns" exhibition of seven manuscripts from the Abbey Scriptorium, which are being reunited for the first time in their place of origin since 1539. They will be displayed in the Cathedral Treasury. The postponement of the millennium celebrations until this year has allowed a number of additional events to be added to the original 2020 programme. These include the Bury Water Meadows Group's BioBlitz - a mass participation race against the clock to find and record as many species as possible of plants and animals in the abbey precinct (May 21); a recreation of local medievalist scholar M R James' 1932 lecture on the Abbey of St Edmund (May 26); and a series of dramatised talks exploring different aspects of the Guildhall's tumultuous relationship with the abbey (June 7, 14, 21).

Look out for the world premiere of local young filmmaker Christian Horsnell's documentary on Edmund, at Abbeygate Cinema in late Spring, and a fascinating "Finding Edmund" trail of iconography. The self-guided Abbey 1000 Heritage Trail around the town centre, developed by Our Bury St Edmunds BID and Martyn Taylor will start at the end of May and run until St Edmund's day in November. Details of all Abbey 1000 events are on the website [www.abbeyofstedmund1000.co.uk](http://www.abbeyofstedmund1000.co.uk)

*Libby Ranzetta*  
*Chair of the Abbey 1000 Group*

## M. R. James on the Abbey Church at Bury St Edmunds

A recreation by  
Robert Lloyd Parry  
of a lecture given  
by M. R. James in  
1932

Thursday, 26 May 2022 7pm  
The Athenaeum, Bury St Edmunds

Tickets £10 (under 18s/students £8) available online at [www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/MRJames](http://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/MRJames); by telephone (01284 758000); or from the Apex Box Office (Mon-Sat 10am-4.30pm)

Event promoted by the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership

Thanks to the Bury Society for its generous financial support





# 2022 programme is finalised

February saw the Bury Society live events finally emerge from the shadows of the Covid pandemic. The annual Winter Lunch witnessed a record number of members and their guests, treated to the usual high standard of catering from Andrea and her team at Elite Cakes and buffets. We were also fortunate to have as the guest speaker Charlie Haylock who entertained the room with tales of his time as dialect coach to Ralph Fiennes, star of the Netflix film "The Dig".

Who could have imagined that there were so many variations of the Suffolk dialect as you move across the county?

The rest of the year is now taking shape, commencing on Saturday, April 23, with a coffee morning for members, at the United Reformed Church, in Whiting Street (10.30am till noon).

The evening of June 9 will see the first live Annual General Meeting in two years at the Unitarian Meeting House, in Churchgate Street (6.30pm to 9pm).

The evening will also incorporate the first public meeting of the charity under its CIO status.

During the evening, Martyn Taylor will be looking back to 50 years of the Bury Society and the highlights of our work in the town over that period.

We are also able to host two "out of town" excursions this year, the first being a coach trip to Diss and Earsham Hall, on Thursday, July 7. Upon arrival in the morning, our colleagues at Diss will play host at the historic Corn Exchange which was refurbished only a few months before



*Charlie Haylock telling members at the annual Winter Lunch, at Southgate Community Centre, how he coached Ralph Fiennes in the Suffolk dialect for his role as Basil Brown in the film "The Dig".*

the first pandemic lockdown. They will be providing refreshments on arrival and then guided tours of this historic building.

There will be plenty of time to wander around this charming and historic market town before departing in early afternoon to Earsham Hall.

This fine country mansion is both a private home and host to the family business of antique restoration.

It has a fascinating history going back to the start of the 1700s, with a connection to Bury St Edmunds, as alterations to the building in the mid 1700s was undertaken by John Soane, later Sir John Soane, the same architect who substantially altered James Oakes's house and banking headquarters in Guildhall Street.

Soanes's most famous work was the design of the Bank of England and

11 Downing Street. Our afternoon at Earsham Hall will be rounded off with a cream tea within the hall, hosted by the owners.

In September, subject to final detail, another outing is planned to visit Sheringham on the North Norfolk coast and the day includes an excursion on the famous heritage Poppy Railway which runs through stunning scenery on its way to Holt.

Time will be allowed in both towns to enjoy the atmosphere of these two delightful gems of North Norfolk.

As publicised, 2022 sees the much delayed Abbey 1000 celebrations in the town and the Bury Society will be involved in the Community Day being held in the Abbey Gardens on Saturday, July 16.

Volunteers will be handing out goodie bags to our visitors and we will be working in conjunction with the Bury St Edmunds Association of Registered Tour Guides to ensure everyone appreciates the rich heritage of our town.

Returning to some semblance of normality has proved, and continues to prove challenging, but the MCE committee members have been working hard to bring back live events for all our members and their friends.



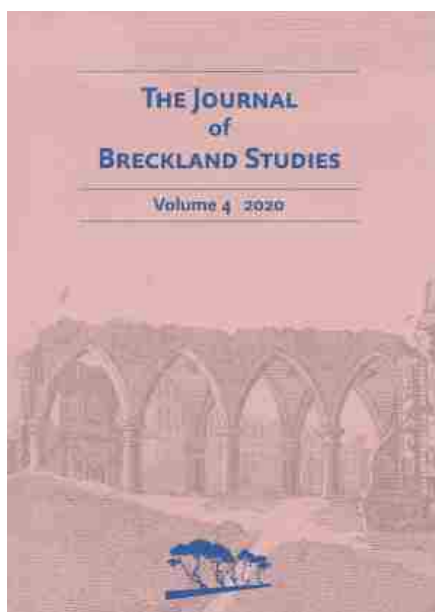
*Earsham Hall, one of the venues planned to be visited in July.*

**Terry O'Donoghue**

# Journal commemorates millennial anniversary of foundation of abbey

I hope that members will be interested to hear about the publication of the latest volume of the Journal of Breckland Studies, which commemorates the millennial anniversary of the abbey's foundation in AD 1020. The abbey exercised a considerable degree of control and influence over the Suffolk landscape throughout the last 1,000 years and each of our authors focuses on a different aspect of Bury's rich history.

Contributors to the volume include Michael Lewis, head of Portable Antiquities and Treasure, at the British Museum, whose article brings together, for the first time, the growing corpus of St Edmund pilgrim badges which were procured by visitors to the abbey and examines what their distribution can tell us about the extent of its influence. Francis Young, a noted historian and author who has published extensively on Bury St Edmunds, examines the rebellion of the townsfolk against the abbey



in 1327–9 and explores the strained relationship between the monks and the town's residents. Mark Bailey, Professor of Late Medieval History at the University of East Anglia, analyses the ways in which the abbey

managed and exploited its main Breckland landholdings during the medieval period.

This serves as a reminder of the important roles which topography and hydrology play in the development of settlements, and this is explored by Libby Ranzetta, chair of the Bury Water Meadows Group, whose paper on the hydrogeology, landscape and historical usage of the Rivers Lark and Linnet, which converge within the abbey precinct, highlights the significance and value of these globally rare chalk streams.

Finally, local historian and author Martyn Taylor, chairman of the Bury Society, presents a fascinating guide to some of the individuals and events commemorated in the numerous plaques and inscriptions to be found on buildings and memorials throughout the town. Many of these have historical connections to the abbey, the abbey and the town having benefited from (but not always enjoyed) a symbiotic relationship which spanned some 500 years until the events of the Dissolution unfolded.

Like many of the planned celebrations of the abbey's millennial milestone, the appearance of this volume has been delayed by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Journal's editorial panel would particularly like to thank the Bury Society, without whose generous contribution publication would not have been possible.

The cover price of the Journal is £12.50, but Bury Society members can buy copies for the special discounted price of £8 (which includes postage and packing).

Any members wishing to do so should email their order to [info@brecksoc.org.uk](mailto:info@brecksoc.org.uk) and details of payment options will be sent by return.

## David Irvine to stand down as Bury in Bloom co-ordinator

David Irvine (*pictured right*), the co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom, is standing down from his role later this year. And now the group is on the look out for someone to replace him from October.

David started as co-ordinator back in October 2019 and has been responsible for a great deal of work and success with BiB. He said he was sad to be leaving as he has enjoyed working in the role and was grateful to the many people who accepted and supported him over the three years.

He said: "I now see the limit of my abilities on the horizon with an increasing inability to give the role what it requires. With that realisation, I felt it was better to plan an organised exit allowing for a smooth



changeover. I am quite happy to take a back-seat role if required. Our big news this year is being selected as a finalist in the 2022 RHS Britain in Bloom competition. Being a winner will be a national event so it's my prime objective as I approach my final six months. And we will of course be entering the Anglia in Bloom Competition."

**Dr Richard Hoggett**  
**Issue Editor**  
**Journal of Breckland Studies**



# Giving out the correct where, how and why

Was there a synagogue on the Cornhill?

Who was the leader of the 1831 riots?

What caused the town's great fire?

Why are the ruins mainly of flint?"

It is sometimes nice to hear that you have answered a question before it has been asked, especially when the would-be questioner worries about asking something that others already know.

This often happens during guided tours when the Bury Tour Guides give their comprehensive account of what happened, where, how and why within the town and abbey, but we are always keen to satisfy our enquirers.

Feedback shows that visitors, including local people, come on tours knowing little about the town or the significance of its abbey but by the end of 90 minutes they go away with those nuggets of information and interesting conversation points that will later be shared with family and friends.

It is perhaps more important than ever for the Tour Guides to focus attention on the abbey being founded over 1,000 years ago and we have come up trumps with special tours that give an almost forensic examination of the what, how, when and why.

Imagine life as a monk, hear of the concerns of the townspeople, the turbulent times, the wealth and importance of one of the three biggest abbey churches across Europe.

On various days each month these tours take you very much beyond the scenes and it is worth experiencing all four different abbey-specific walks.

"Can't spare 90 minutes", I hear someone say. Then bring your sandwiches for the whistle stop "Bitesize" tour lasting 60 minutes which will reincarnate the times of the Abbey.

The guides will play their part



*Bury Tour Guides Terry O'Donoghue, Caroline Holt, John Saunders and Adrian Tindall.  
Photo: Bury Tour Guides.*

throughout the year in making Abbey 1000 a success, especially helping the harder to reach groups and children.

Another of their tours "Funny Stories for an Abbey Birthday" will take place in the Easter and Summer holidays and is a way of entertaining and educating younger people and their older chaperones.

The expectation is that everyone will enter into the spirit of fun and activity - last year it was wonderful to see the enthusiasm of grown-ups as they chanted aloud as Danes or supporters of Edmund or pulled funny faces to match the gargoyles on buildings! Leading the activities will be guides dressed as monks or ladies from history.

They will be more noticeable this year in their new green outfits so be sure to accord with our strapline and "Follow Us".

Tours operate twice per day and one evening per month but booking is online only.

The dates, times of events, tour prices and booking arrangements vary as shown on the website [www.burystedmundstourguides.org](http://www.burystedmundstourguides.org)

**John Saunders**  
*Marketing Officer*  
*Bury Tour Guides*

## YOUR CONTACTS

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# 10-year action plan being developed

The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership has continued its meetings online during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is working in parallel with the Abbey 1000 Group in preparing for the Millennium Celebrations which will now run from April to November this year.

It is preparing to establish itself as an independent charity in the form of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as the Bury Society has done and is currently consulting its partners and the heritage agencies on its draft governance documents.

It is also preparing to consult the local community on the draft Overarching Plan for the whole Abbey of St Edmund area. This will focus on the mission, the 10-year vision and the five key themes: inspiration, conservation, connection, learning and engagement.

The Heritage Partnership is developing a draft 10-year Action Programme which outlines potential projects that have been identified from ongoing work. This is feeding into a major funding bid which is being prepared by the Cathedral and West Suffolk Council. A new visitor leaflet has been published which includes an outline map and a summary of the key points of interest across the Abbey of St Edmund. It is now available at the Cathedral Tourist Information Point, the Apex and other heritage venues in the town.

## Appeal for pots

Does anyone have any unwanted/spare plant pots ... any size?

David Rees is opening his garden on July 3, for Hidden Gardens of Bury. Last year £525 was made for St Nicholas Hospice from the event and along with Jean Winning they are hoping to do the same but are running short of pots.

Please contact Jean on 01284 706004 or 07526 760251 if you can help.

She can collect any pots or you could leave them outside her front door, 42 College Street, or pop them behind David's double doors at 44 College Street.



*The abbey ruins in the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds with the Cathedral in the background.*

A major development during the last year had been joint work with English Heritage on the design of 12 new heritage interpretation panels which will be installed around the Abbey Ruins this year. A longer term Heritage Interpretation Plan is also being developed.

The Heritage Partnership is working with English Heritage and West Suffolk Council on urgent repairs to the historic fabric. This includes defects to the walls on the north side of the

former Cloisters and the west end of the former Chapter House. Other repairs will follow.

The Research Agenda Working Group is contributing various events to the Millennium Celebrations.

The Online Talks in late 2020 and early 2021 were a great success. A Travelling Exhibition and the recreation of a famous lecture by M R James will follow soon.

*Richard Summers*

**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](http://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.**