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Society Review

Website: www.burysociety.com

Spring 2025

‘The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn’



Members of the Bury Society and ‘The Abbey of St Edmund - Reborn’ outside St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

The Abbey of St Edmund: A Millennium of History in West Suffolk has a new “shorthand” title of “The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn”.

Back in 2016, the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership was launched to bring together more than 20 partners, to conserve the historic

fabric and explain the heritage of the Abbey to local people and visitors. The Bury Society’s interest in the historic fabric of the town meant that it was closely involved in this partnership from the outset. The Society shared the aims of caring for the whole Abbey area and

explaining its heritage to all.

As many of you are aware, this project grew from the vision of the local organisations and individuals in the partnership, many of whom delivered the Abbey 1000

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Lord Bristol - Patron of project

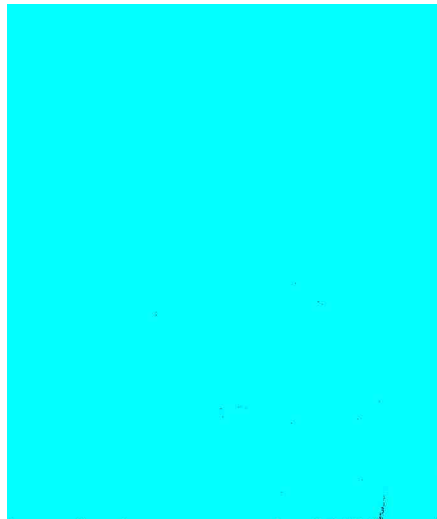
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millennium celebrations of 2022 (two years late because of the pandemic).

Bury Society members were closely involved with the new English Heritage Interpretation Panels around the Abbey.

The Society has plans for more interpretation panels and these are under discussion.

In March 2024 the National Lottery Heritage Fund said “yes” to the first stage of a £9.9 million project to bring the Abbey ruins and surrounding area, into a bright and sustainable future. It is led by a project board of the lead partners – the Cathedral, West Suffolk and English Heritage plus representation of the wider Heritage Partnership. In 2025, the Bury St Edmunds Society awarded a grant of £10,000 to this ambitious heritage project, making it the first



Lord Bristol.

organisation in the town to provide financial support.

Martyn Taylor, chairman of the Bury St Edmunds Society, explained that they had decided to use the Dr Rae Fund to make this statement grant to the Abbey of St

Edmund project. He said, “The Society’s aim is to ensure that as the town grows, it remains a beautiful place in which to live, work or visit; embracing positive changes which enhance the town whilst ensuring a balance with its precious heritage.

“We hope that, in making this early statement of support for this vital project, we will encourage other local organisations and businesses to do the same.”

More recently, the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides have pledged £2,500 to the “Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn” heritage project.

Adrian Tindall, chair of the Tour Guides, said “The time has come to turn words into action and we wanted to show our support in a tangible way. We’re most excited about the potential of this project to extend the reach of the town to wider audiences both across Suffolk and further afield.”

This is all part of “The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn” showing the Heritage Fund the strength of commitment to this project from the most ardent local supporters.

The Patron will be The Marquess of Bristol.

He said: “I am delighted to be the Patron of the project ‘The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn’.

“I have always loved the Abbey Gardens, which my family owned prior to transferring ownership to the borough council and they will benefit greatly from conservation of the ruins and inspiring interpretation. I think it is a wonderful idea to have the visitor centre with good links to the town centre, making it easy to get to while preserving the peace and tranquillity of the gardens.

“Personally, I feel a strong connection to The Abbey of St Edmund because my title of Hereditary High Steward of the Liberty of St Edmund is almost as old as the Abbey itself – so it feels like we have nearly a thousand years of shared history.

“I very much look forward to being involved with such an ambitious and thoughtful project.”

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Subscription increase from June 1, 2025

It is now a staggering seven years since we last increased the Bury Society subscriptions.

Over the years costs, particularly postage and printing, have risen dramatically.

Although we try very hard to break even we often have to dip into the purse for the social events that are offered free, like the very popular coffee mornings.

The Society is entirely reliant upon our loyal and active members, both new and long-standing, to enable it to continue without a deficit.

The proposed increase was announced at last year’s AGM in June 2024, so with effect from June 1, 2025, the subscriptions will increase from £15 to £20 for individuals, and from £20 to £25 for two people living at the same address. The Corporate and Under 30s sub-

scriptions will remain the same at £40 and £10 respectively.

Could we please ask you to increase your standing order now at your bank to reflect the new amounts payable at June 1.

The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO bank details remain unchanged:

**Barclays Sort Code 20 83 69
Account Number 00733091.**

Members who inadvertently pay the current subscription at renewal will be asked to make a top-up payment, and this is a time-consuming process for everyone.

Those who pay by bank transfer or cheque, please make a diary note of the correct details to pay at renewal.

*Sue Savage
Membership Secretary*

Alan Baxter

Guides get their act together



The Tour Guides, including in the middle of the photo from left to right, Adrian Tindall, chair of Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides; the Reverend Canon Matthew Vernon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral; Damien Parker, head of service (Green Space and Heritage) at West Suffolk Council and Alan Baxter, Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership.

I am renowned for introducing obscure connections into my writing. Not many people can associate Mother Teresa with Bury Tour Guides but we have taken notice of her wise words: "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

Partnership is very much at the fore of our thinking and is evident in many of our tours.

It is probably helpful to give a few examples.

For our dog-friendly tours we have benefited from Jon Kay, of Camp Tails, helping us understand how best to address the needs of dogs and to keep them calm and well-behaved (note for dog-owners: the tours are for people, we do not seek to provide the dogs with history lessons nor take them to their favourite trees!)

An exciting new venture with BID for Bury will see the introduction of a guided tour accompanied by food tasting. We anticipate great interest in these.

Our Masters of the Air tours, which attracted 600 people last year, are planned to take place again, especially around the commemoration of 80 years since VE Day, showing what life was like in Bury during the Second World War.

These are enhanced by a visit to the Guildhall and input from their guides.

Continuing the War theme but going back to the First World War, in collaboration with the Suffolk Records Office, we will be launching a new tour based on a unique set of records of over 1,200 cases heard by the borough military tribunal, appealing against conscription.

This is a 90-minute walk bringing to life a selection of personal stories from the cases heard by the tribunal, showing where the appellants lived or worked, the reason and outcome of their appeal and the consequences of the tribunal's decision.

We have always recognised that there are people who cannot undertake lengthy tours because they are in isolation or through health conditions. In the summer we will be staging a limited number of walking tours of 20 minutes duration in Abbeygate Street with opportunities for some to travel on the town's rickshaws ridden by their wonderful volunteers; in addition to bringing enjoyment and entertainment, we hope that these will inspire reminiscences of shops and events from the past.

So, as you can see, our guides are committed to working in partnership to provide tours that offer variety, support people's needs and promote the town's economy.

We have also pledged £2,500 to the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn herit-

age project which will bring interpretation and conservation to the Abbey site, overall improvements and a visitors' centre.

I cannot close without mentioning the success of our ghostly and macabre season where we undertook over 900 bookings, exceeding the previous year's record of 828.

People were attracted to travel from across the Home Counties and our group tours proved extremely popular as presents ... and even for a hen party!

Our ghouls are now having a well-earned rest, so please do not disturb their summer slumber in the churchyard.

The non-reposing spirited guides, however, will be ready for the 11am daily tours which take place until the end of October.

Yes, there's a lot to fit in but our act has come together and you can experience these tours yourself and bring along friends and family for a special treat.

Can you beat another record recently set by an American author who undertook six of our tours in two days? As ever, all information is at www.burystedmundstourguides.org

John Saunders
Marketing officer
Bury Tour Guides

Launch of Pride in My Street



Spring has most certainly arrived, with many more daffodils flowering around town thanks to our amazing Bury in Bloom volunteers and bulb sponsor, Riverside Bulbs. It's also that time of year when we offer hanging baskets for sale, fully watered throughout summer by West Suffolk Council staff; it provides a little income for our charity, but most importantly enhances the floral offering in Bury St Edmunds, especially important for our nomination into Britain in Bloom this year – only the second time that we've been entered into the National competition!

This year, there will be one colour scheme that matches in with the Abbey Gardens ... and we all know how stunning their display was last summer.

For £100, we will supply a fully planted basket, install it on your property (using your own fitted brackets) and keep it watered until removal in September.

Please email Chris at coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk and we will send you an electronic form that you can complete and return to us with payment.

Many residents will also be preparing their front gardens for our annual Certificates of Merit scheme. However, we've taken the decision to replace it this year with a new scheme called Pride in My Street. Following the retirement of our volunteer co-ordinator, Lynne Wright, last year, it became very clear that visiting every house in town is becoming increasingly challenging. Daily emails in July also brought other issues to light; some streets/properties were being missed, inconsistency with the marking scheme, residents hiring



A little goes a long way.
Weeding, litter picking, cleaning street signs,
hanging baskets/planters, wildlife corridors etc.



- ★ Ask your neighbours if they'd like to take part
- ★ Register your interest via email to certificates@buryinbloom.org.uk
- ★ Take a few 'before' photos/videos along your street
- ★ Working together, find ways to enhance your street
- ★ Submit photos/videos via email to certificates@buryinbloom.org.uk no later than 31st July
- ★ Entries will be judged and certificates issued, with the best street winning £1K *

SPONSORED BY



* To be shared between all households along a named street, loaded onto Our Bury St Edmunds Gift Cards. Bury in Bloom is part of The Bury Society, a registered charity, Reg No. 1135640



in temporary displays or even bringing their back gardens to the front, just to gain a certificate before moving them back around. So now, Pride in My Street will encourage everyone along their street to participate in enhancing the area in which they live; weeding, adding planters, litter picking, sign cleaning, adding wildlife corridors etc., then submitting photos

via email to enter for certificates and a chance to win a share of £1,000 for the best/most improved street (loaded onto Our BSE Gift Cards and shared equally between every house in the street), keeping all prize money in town and encouraging community engagement – with huge thanks to our

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£35,000 donation from council

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sponsors, Greene King. Banners and posters will be going up all around town in the coming weeks with all the details of how you can take part.

Our main source of income has always been from roundabout sponsorship; sites owned by Suffolk County Council, adopted by Bury in Bloom and maintained by West Suffolk Council.

This agreement has always worked well, apart from a year or two ago when we lost two of our sponsors due to the poor condition that some sites were in over summer.

Thankfully, we have since had those sites sponsored by other businesses, but it sent a clear message that roundabout maintenance must have a clear contract setting out the standards we expect, from whoever the contractor may be; WSC or another party.

We are therefore obtaining quotes from the council and other local contractors to bid for the annual maintenance contract.

We are also incredibly grateful to Bury St Edmunds Town Council, who have increased their annual contribution to Bury in Bloom to £35,000.

This is to cover the cost of all hanging baskets and troughs previously sponsored by West Suffolk Council, as well as contributing to roundabout maintenance and other ongoing costs.

Given the importance of community events and projects now for the In Bloom movement, this increases our expenditure and management time quite considerably, so we are hopeful of a good outcome in this year's Britain in Bloom judging, taking place on Monday, August 4.

Last but not least, in our drive to encourage more community participation and sustainability responsibilities in town, we hosted our annual



ORDER YOUR BASKETS TO HELP BURY ST. EDMUNDS LOOK ITS FLORAL BEST

FULLY MAINTAINED BASKETS: £100 EACH

- ✿ **We will provide** ready planted colourful displays in water conserving containers installed for you on the outside of your building at the beginning of June.
- ✿ Baskets watered, fed and maintained all summer until the season has ended*.
- ✿ Baskets removed and all plants recycled at the end of the season.
- ✿ **You need to provide** and fix brackets strong enough to hold a max weight of 19kg (42lbs). To ensure the bowser can reach the baskets, the brackets on the front of your building must be positioned so that the base of the baskets are no higher than 3.5m (12ft) from the ground.
- ✿ Baskets are hung on own brackets at property owners risk.

Please fill and return the order form plus payment by 19th April 2025.

Cheque: Make payable to 'Bury in Bloom' & post to: Bury in Bloom Treasurer, 90 Risbygate Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3AA.

BACS: Email your order and confirmation of BACS payment date to treasurer@buriesociety.com, Bank details: Barclays Bank, Account name: The Bury St Edmunds Society CIO Bury in Bloom, Sort Code: 20-83-69, Account No: 60822396.

*Subject to Watering Route



Seed Swap for the second time on February 22, at The Centre, in St John's Street. It was a huge success, with hundreds of visitors throughout the day swapping seeds of veg, flowers and herbs with one another, raising £332 for Suffolk Wildlife Trust in donations from those who had nothing to swap. Thank you to Councillor Sayer from Bury St Edmunds Town Council for sponsoring the event again and to Naomi Hamer for co-organising it once again. Save

the date for next year, February 21. So, once you've grown too many seedlings, bring them along to our brand new Plant Swap at the Quaker Meeting House on Saturday, April 19 (Easter weekend) where you can swap young plants with others.

All money raised in donations comes directly to Bury in Bloom. I look forward to seeing you there!

Chris Wiley
Co-ordinator Bury in Bloom

West Suffolk archives is now moved to The Hold in Ipswich

Since the closure of the Raingate Street archive building in August 2024, all of our records and material have now been moved to the Hold, in Ipswich.

The archives are at least now safe there, and since the beginning of February are accessible again. But you need to be able to travel to Ipswich to view them, and this is not easy for many people in West Suffolk particularly if you are looking to travel from say Mildenhall or Haverhill.

And also the current view is that this important historic material should not only be securely stored and accessible to historians, but it should be on display and accessible to the whole local community in West Suffolk, with also interpretation of its importance. As an example the King Edward VI Grammar School Archive contains not only some important Abbey material, but a letter from Queen Elizabeth I to the school governors ordering them to dismiss the head teacher.



The archive building in Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds.

Since the closure of the Record Office in August 2024 we have had sight of a Suffolk County Council cabinet paper of February 2023 which looked at "Improvements to the West Suffolk Archives Branch". It is a very fair document showing the problems, with costings, of the Raingate Street building. It is important to understand that Suffolk County Council has a commitment to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Suffolk and extending the reach of the service to a much wider and more diverse audience.

The preferred option was for a New

Build Community Centre, at Western Way, in which the archives would have been part, and with a financial commitment from Suffolk County Council towards this.

Unfortunately this centre was abandoned for cost reasons.

The closure of the Raingate Street building was the second option.

So where are we now?

We think that we should look carefully at the Raingate Street building and see whether, with imaginative improvements, we could bring it up to modern requirements at a justifiable cost.

To this end we now have the building listed as a Community Asset. This means that if Suffolk County Council wish to sell the building we have first refusal.

So who are "we"?

We have now set up a charity, with great help from the Charity Commission, which could set up and run an archive in West Suffolk.

This charity's purposes are:

"The advancement of education for the public benefit in the history of West Suffolk through the maintenance and development of an accessible community archive as well as the provision of educational activities, lectures and seminars open to all."

It will not be easy to achieve these aims, but we are encouraged by the help and support from the archivists at the Hold, in Ipswich.

As a charity we can access grants and funding not available even to local authorities, but it is not only providing a suitable archive building, but also demonstrating how the not inconsiderable cost of running and maintaining the archive in the future is to be met. But we are determined to achieve this, not just for ourselves, but for future generations.

Martin Lightfoot
Trustee

West Suffolk Community
Archive

Future of Greene King holdings in Bury St Edmunds town centre

Now that Greene King is committed to moving their brewery operations to Suffolk Park on the Moreton Hall Industrial Estate thoughts turn to what will be happening to their vast holdings spread across the south of the town.

Though far too early to speculate what could be done with the industrial listed buildings and other heritage assets as well as the open spaces various ideas are being touted as to their future.

A meeting was held at the Unitarian Meeting House, on March 27 thanks to the chairman of the Churchgate Area Association, Vivien Gainsborough Foot, and where interested

parties, including the Bury Society had early discussions relating to possible outcomes.

It is hoped that Greene King's planning consultants, Turley, will prepare a Conservation Management Plan and will explain what properties Greene King propose to retain so at any subsequent meetings the March 27 attendees will be able to digest and formulate responses.

Until that is forthcoming it would not be prudent to publicly comment though it is anticipated that Greene King will listen to any concerns.

Martyn Taylor

Winter Lunch attracts 90 people

Once again, the Bury Society was delighted to welcome its members to our regular Annual Winter Lunch on Saturday, February 22, at the Southgate Community Centre, which was completely sold-out with more than 90 members attending.

Once everyone had made themselves comfortable, Peter Riddington, architectural consultant and Bury Society planning advisor, gave a richly illustrated talk on the development of Bury St Edmunds, tracing the transformation of the town from its Saxon origins to how the town may look in the coming years.

I'm sure everyone will agree that Peter's insights have helped us appreciate anew our interesting and beautiful town.

After the talk, we enjoyed a two-course lunch, followed by a raffle, the money raised from which will go towards our projects throughout the year. The Bury Society would like to thank the Southgate Com-



Members enjoying the Winter Lunch at the Southgate Community Centre.

munity Centre team for hosting us once again, and to Andrea and Elite Catering for the delicious food.

I would also like to thank my fellow Trustees and advisors, as well as our volunteers, who ensure that the Winter Lunch is always such a success. Stay informed about all our events on our website: they are a great opportunity to meet other members and

learn more about what is happening around the town.

Our next members' event will be the Spring Coffee Morning, which will be held on Saturday, April 12, at the United Reformed Church, on Whiting Street from 10.30am to 12 noon. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sam Saloway-Cooke

Ian Collins talk on author Ronald Blythe

The Bury Society was delighted to welcome writer Ian Collins to the Quaker Meeting House, in Bury St Edmunds, on November 29, for a talk on the much-loved local author Ronald Blythe, alongside readings by actor David Holt, from Blythe's writings, and from Ian's recent biography, *Blythe Spirit*.

Best known for his classic 1969 "Akenfield", Ronald Blythe wrote more than 40 books exploring the overlapping patterns of East Anglian life, the Christian calendar and the natural seasons.

His writing, especially his long-running "Word from Wormingford" column in the *Church Times*, celebrated the ordinary and overlooked aspects of life, grounded in his love of nature, poetry and tradition. Both Ian Collins and David Holt were friends of Ronald Blythe, who died last year at the age of 100. Ian spoke about Blythe's childhood in rural Suffolk, his wartime experi-



Ian Collins (left) with Ronald Blythe on his 99th birthday.

ences, his faith and his writing career. He focused on the wide range of connections he formed with other creative people throughout his life, from E M Forster, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears at Aldeburgh, to Cedric Morris, Arthur Lett-Haines and Maggi Hambling at the East Anglian School of

Art, at Benton End.

David Holt's readings that interspaced the talk brought Blythe's world and words into colourful life. After the talk, attendees had a chance to ask Ian and David questions, and purchase copies of Ronald Blythe's books, as well as the biography.

Ronald Blythe had a strong connection with Bury St Edmunds – he had been Lay Canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral since 2003, and a special Thanksgiving Service was held for him in 2023 – so it was a real privilege to be able to hold this talk in the town.

Thank you to everyone who came to hear the talk, as well as those who helped to make the evening such a success.

A special thanks to the Quaker Meeting House for their warm welcome and to the team at Waterstones for bringing a wonderful selection of books.

Sam Saloway-Cooke

Minutes of the Annual General

Details of the Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO held at 7pm on Thursday, June 13, 2024, at the Guildhall, in Guildhall Street, Bury St Edmunds

MINUTES

1 Welcome and introduction by the chairman. The Society's chairman Martyn Taylor warmly welcomed those present.

2 Talk by Adrian Tindall.

Adrian Tindall, a local town guide and former Suffolk archaeologist, gave a very well received illustrated talk entitled "A neat and beautiful Theatre: the story of Bury St Edmunds Market Cross".

3 AGM

a) Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr and Mrs Short, Elaine Adams, Richard Stewart, Peta Levantis, Sarah Green, Mr and Mrs B Milner, Lorna Brook, Sandie Taylor, Melanie Lesser and Melanie Mills.

b) Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on June 8, 2023.

These had been circulated previously in the Review and were approved with no matters arising.

c) Chairman's report.

Martyn Taylor presented his report. He highlighted the year's activities and the work of individual trustees and advisers in helping make the Bury Society such a respected voice in the town and surrounding area. Planning issues have once again consumed many hours of the society's time and the fight still continues over the closure of the Records Office (Suffolk Archives) in Bury St Edmunds. Only a few days before the AGM, the news of the relocation of the Greene King brewery reached the public domain and now raises questions on the future of the current town centre site and its many listed buildings. The Society

continues in its remit as the town's civic society, helping where asked; commenting on planning matters; supporting other organisations and providing a full programme of events under the stewardship of the events secretary, Sam Saloway-Cook.

Attention was also drawn to the success of Bury in Bloom in winning the Anglia in Bloom Gold Medal. Martyn thanked Sue Savage and Russell Cook for their work on membership and the Society Review. Finally, due to rising costs, the trustees have found it necessary to raise membership subscriptions as from renewal in 2025. These will be £20 single membership and £25 joint membership and a concessionary £10 membership fee for those under 30 years of age. The latter to encourage a wider membership amongst the younger generation.

A full transcript of the chairman's report is available on request to the society secretary.

d) Planning officer's report.

Ed Thuell, the planning officer presented a summary of activities over the last year.

He reminded the members present that whilst the society reviews all planning applications, it aims to comment on those that impact Bury's heritage assets and civic spaces. In doing so, the society feels it is important to remain constructive with any comments and do not seek to be obstructive, or indeed, be seen just to wave proposals through.

Ed went on to list those proposals objected to and others still outstanding of particular interest.

Finally, he commented on the work undertaken in reviewing the proposed West Suffolk local plan and the disappointment in finding no real vision for the future as regards Bury St Edmunds.

A full transcript of the planning officer's report is available on request to the society secretary.

e) Bury in Bloom report.

Robin Burnett, chair of Bury in

Bloom, presented his report.

He started by reminding those present of the success in winning, he believed, Bury in Bloom's 13th Gold award. This was in Anglia in Bloom Large Town category.

Robin focused attention on the continuing drive for sustainability, particularly planting perennials instead of annuals.

The water harvesting scheme now provides 15,000 litres of water harvested from roof tops.

The society's hanging basket programme is now peat-free.

Robin paid thanks to the Bury in Bloom co-ordinator, Chris Wiley, for his energy and enthusiasm in promoting various community projects.

Finally, a heartfelt plea was put out for more volunteers to come forward to help with the activities of Bury in Bloom.

A full transcript of the Bury in Bloom report is available on request to the society secretary

f) Treasurer's report.

The treasurer, Dr Ben Booth, commenced his report by thanking assistant treasurer, Sarah Nunn, for all her hard work in the task of detailed book-keeping.

The treasurer then pointed out that hard copies of the latest accounts had been printed for members present and included the Statement of Financial Activities and current funds available to the society.

A full copy of the certified accounts would be available on the Charity Commission website within a few days.

Ben then went on to point out that the society continues to show a healthy financial position.

However, rising costs necessitate the raising of membership fees as already outlined in the report by the Chairman.

A full transcript of the treasurer's report is available on request to the society secretary.

Continued on next page.

Meeting held in June last year

Continued from previous page.

g) Election of trustees.

Terry O'Donoghue explained that the Society holds its AGM to receive the annual accounts and trustees report and to elect the trustees.

A third of the trustees (which is

three) must retire at each AGM together with any co-opted trustees.

The trustees standing down this year were Robin Burnett, Sarah Nunn and Stephen Moody.

All of those standing down declared a willingness to continue serving as trustees.

All trustees were then individually returned unanimously.

The members present were also advised of the names of the "advisers" who serve on the executive committee.

4) Questions from the floor / open forum.

Martyn Taylor invited questions from the floor.

There were a number of questions which included seeking further clarification as to the current position of the Record Office (ongoing discussions with West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council) the future of Moreton Hall (the answer was, it is not clear beyond running repairs) and a comment seeking assurance that the society will robustly comment on the West Suffolk Local Plan (confirmed we will certainly be commenting strongly).

There was one question for Bury in Bloom concerning the state of the "Smile" bed (Robin Burnett will look into this matter).

There being no other questions the meeting finished at 8.40pm.

Jess Rose Hughes says goodbye to committee

It was with our best wishes, and a little sadness, that the Executive Committee of the Bury Society said goodbye to Jess Rose Hughes, who resigned to focus on her career in February this year.

Jess had been elected a Trustee in June 2022 and brought her experience working in fundraising to support grant applications for a number of Bury Society projects, including the Alfred Williams Charitable Trust grant that has enabled discounted prices for events throughout 2024. The eagle-eyed attention to detail that she brought to our committee meetings will be missed.

We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Annual General Meeting

The third Annual General Meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Society CIO (Charity Reference Number: 1196640) will be held on

**Thursday, June 26, 2025 in the Guildhall,
Guildhall Street**

Refreshments will be served from 6.30pm and the meeting will commence at 7pm

All members are welcome and encouraged to attend

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and introduction by the Chairman**
2. **Talk by Terry O'Donoghue.** "From Bazaars to the Bizarre". The lesser known and more unusual gatherings in the Guildhall over the centuries.
3. **Annual General Meeting**
 - a. Apologies for absence
 - b. Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM (2024) and any matters arising
 - c. Chairman's report
 - d. Planning Officer's report
 - e. Bury in Bloom report
 - f. Treasurer's report
 - g. Election of trustees
4. **Questions from the floor / open forum**

Sam Saloway-Cooke

Working to preserve and enhance water meadows and chalk streams

The stories of the Bury Society and Bury Water Meadows Group have some interesting similarities. Both were formed in response to concerns about unwelcome development.

For BWMG the concern related to plans that would have affected an area of historic farmland to the south of the town.

In the case of both organisations a decision was taken to contune separately following the successful resolution of the original issue, with BWMG choosing to work to preserve and enhance the water meadows, and the chalk streams flowing through them.

Bury St Edmunds has the privilege and responsibility of hosting two examples of this precious, globally rare habitat that is capable of supporting an array of iconic species such as brown trout, kingfisher and water vole.

The scope of the work undertaken by BWMG has expanded dramatically since its establishment over 10 years ago.

The group's primary area of operations ranges from Ram Meadow to the north of the town and then follows the course of the River Lark upstream, through the Abbey Gardens and the site of the monastic fishponds in the Crankles, south to No Mans Meadows.

We have around 200 members with a dedicated core of volunteers who turn out in all weathers to do their bit for the local environment.

Our work is seasonal and throughout the year we run three work parties a fortnight. During autumn and winter, when the birds are not nesting, we wade in ditches, clearing undergrowth and low-growing tree cover to create a light and shade mosaic of habitats to encourage biodiversity; where the unsung but vital fungi, slightly scary stag beetles and more glamorous kingfishers can thrive.

This is when we continue our ongoing



Members of the Bury Water Meadows Group working with scythes on the side of the river bank.

ing habitat management work at the open water scrape in Ram Meadow. As the days lengthen and the weather becomes warmer we discard our waders and take up scythes to cut down nettles along the Lark Path, and in Crankles South in pursuit of our aim to create a wildflower meadow which is already showing good signs of progress.

Whatever the time of year, we finish our work party with a sense of achievement in a job well done!

If you would like to learn more about us and what we do then pop along to the Abbey Gardens on Friday and Saturday, May 16 and 17, when we will be running our annual Bury Wildlife Day event.

Richard Counihan
Chair
Bury Water Meadows Group



Winter waders helping to clear the river of weed and debris during the Winter months.

Rickshaw's heat-at-home meals

The Bury St Edmunds Rickshaw team continue with their regular work of collecting food from suppliers around town to deliver it to food-banks and other charities.

It also partners with many care homes providing rides for their residents.

Recently the team took part in one of the biggest regular events (in terms of people helped per day) when they took part in the Reducing Isolation with Food, which is a partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure and West Suffolk College, delivering heat-at-home meals to those who live alone. This gives an opportunity to chat to volunteers and happens every few months and this time they delivered 86 meals using all five rickshaws and an EcoCarriers cargobike.

Bags of Taste are running a Home Mentored Cooking Programme in Bury St Edmunds, working in a partnership with Gatehouse.

They offer this opportunity to local residents who are on low incomes. They provide a tailored support programme to show them how to budget and increase their confidence in the kitchen by learning how to cook delicious, low-cost meals. We are delivering bags of ingredients to these residents.

This seems to be going well and we may have to add another rider if it expands.

The Bury Tour Guides have recently discussed with us having specific dates when a rickshaw could be used to make their tour more accessible with a rickshaw-friendly route. We are adding a dementia-friendly ride on June 8 and July 6 where walks/rides will go up Abbeygate Street with town guides using photos of old Bury as a discussion point.

The Theatre Royal has added us as an accessibility partner for those finding it more difficult to attend the theatre. We have agreed to provide some support for their Bloom Festival in April and can provide both a rickshaw and, if required, a chatty chum who can accompany the client to the event. We are also in discussion with



One of the Bury St Edmunds Rickshaws in the Abbey Gardens.

Ickworth House and Gardens, in Horringer, about collaborating with them for a day during Heritage Open days in September as we did last year, providing access to some less accessible parts of the park.

We are currently sponsored by several local businesses and are looking to raise more money for the maintenance of our bikes by offering additional sponsorship packages, including on the rickshaws, on riders

tabards and on our revamped website. Current sponsors include No5, Jacobs Allen, Hayward Moon and Warren Services.

Our "Charity of the year" with the Arc has now come to an end.

We are also discussing with some of the care homes how they could help us to raise money with a variety of collaborative events.

Liz Stacey
Trustee

Skating rink coming to the town

Ice-skating will return to Bury St Edmunds town centre in December with the announcement of plans to install a free-to-use synthetic skating rink thanks to funding from Bury St Edmunds Town Council.

The attraction is being organised by Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District (BID) and will be located at the Arc Shopping Centre. It's expected to be in place for the duration of the school Christmas holidays. The rink will be part of the Christmas In Bury St Edmunds Experience which will see a variety

of events in the town centre from mid-November and through December arranged by a partnership of different organisations.

Bury St Edmunds Town Council is one of the Christmas in Bury St Edmunds Experience partners and has agreed to put £50,000 into town centre Christmas activities in 2025. Details of the exact dates and opening times of the skating rink as well as information about other Christmas activities in the town will be available at www.christmasin-burystedmunds.com

Bazaars, arguments and tragedy:

Those who have had the pleasure of a tour of our historical Guildhall will be aware of its rich history spanning over 850 years. Today, after a break of some 50 years, the town council once again utilise this civic building as do other groups for meetings and celebrations. Some of the major events and famous people who have made use of this building are well documented. What is less well known are some of the uses of the building which give us an insight into previous attitudes, day to day life in the town, and tales of both sorrow and celebration. The following article by Terry O'Donoghue provides the briefest of glimpses into Victorian Bury.

As today, back in the 1800s the Guildhall hosted craft fairs and bazaars.

One of the most notable of these was the triennial hospital bazaar.

Founded by the Marchioness of Bristol soon after the opening of the town's hospital in January 1826, by the 1830s it was a major event.

The Bury Free Press reporting on the 5th triennial bazaar in 1839 wrote:

"On entering the hall shortly after 12 o'clock, we found it filled with a great number of nobility and fashion of the town. It was a splendid display of taste and industry."

Indeed, by the afternoon the reporter commented that it was impossible to approach the stalls and that some 1,500 persons had paid for admission.

The whole event raised £2,481, that's the equivalent of £239,000 in 2024. Regarding money, in the first half of the century "tradesmen, labourers, mechanics, servants etc" were invited to deposit their earnings in a "Bank for Savings", open on a Monday from 12 o'clock until 1pm in the Guildhall.

In the 1800s when suffrage was not universal, the Guildhall on occasions at election time, hosted The Receiving Barrister.

The Receiving Barrister's task was to adjudicate on challenges by one political party or another on a per-



The Guildhall Courtroom mid 19th Century.

son's right to register to vote, or indeed to have their vote struck down post-election.

Reports of these proceedings indicate that they could be quite heated and the barrister irritated by the irrational arguments sometimes put forward: this often occasioned the demand to personally witness the settlement of expenses or damages.

The Coroner's Court sometimes convened in the building, the proceedings often hastily arranged due to tragic events.

Sadly, numerous verdicts of suicide were recorded.

One such case in 1893 related to a William Mendham, former landlord of the Masons Arms who having displayed no sign of distress, was discovered by his servant kneeling on a chair, his head submerged in a butt of water.

Another suicide recorded on June 2, 1891, was that of George James Saunders who hanged himself having never got over the death of his young son the previous November.

The Petty Sessions also heard cases of attempted suicide, a most serious crime back then.

Often, the reasons why were never sought and the words invariably accompanying the sentence was for the defendant "to pull themselves together."

Victorian words and terminology can jar with 21st century sensibilities.

Annually in the Guildhall, throughout the 1800s and into the 1900s, the AGM of the "Eastern Counties Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles" took place.

The institution was based near Colchester but the president was the Marquess of Bristol.

The title of this organisation would indicate an uncaring attitude, but upon further investigation, whilst the understanding of mental illness was lacking, the basic good intention to provide care was not.

However, what does appear strange is the prevalence of column inches in the local papers seeking votes from the guardians for specific named individuals.

An example is from the Bury Free Press, in November 1859, where votes were sought to elect Jane Watling, aged 14, into the institution for a term of five years.

It was stated that her parents, living in Southgate Street, were industrious but that two of their five children were "idiots."

Whilst such dark events interrupted the normal workings of the Guildhall, reports from the Petty Sessions often throws up the amusing and absurd. The cases of bigamy brought before the court are too numerous to document individually.

There is also the odd case or two of

Continued on next page.

the Guildhall in Victorian times



The Guildhall pre 1817.

Continued from previous page.

men on a market day being apprehended and brought before the court for attempting to sell their wives. This may seem extreme, but divorce

was not an option for the working classes in Victorian England. Therefore, we can clearly see that the Guildhall has accumulated a rich history over the centuries, always reflecting the attitudes and challenges

facing all shades of society.

For details on booking a tour of the Guildhall to learn more of its history, simply talk to Jill or Katie (01284 247037) or email admin@burystedmundsguildhall.org.uk

Bury Baroque's inaugural concert

It has been a long-held dream of Rosy Payne (violinist) and Chris Dexter-Mills (harpsichordist), both already well-known performers in Bury St Edmunds, to form an orchestra specialising in the performance of Baroque music on instruments from the period.

Late in 2023, they began by inviting enthusiastic local players with a shared understanding of this approach, to "playing days" led by a specialist professional violinist, Cambridge-based Rachel Stroud. Other players with an interest in this approach were encouraged to join the ensemble to gain experience of playing on period instruments for the first time and explore aspects of period instrument playing and stylistic practices. Using authentic instruments or good copies, the string players all use



gut strings and baroque bows. After four successful study days exploring a range of music from the period together, the group is ready to share the results with a live audience. The Inaugural Concert, "A Box of Delights", will be held on Sunday, May 18, at 5pm, in the Athenaeum, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds. It will feature as its centrepiece the ever-popular "Summer" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons", first published in 1725, 300 years ago this year, with leader Rachel Stroud as soloist. The programme will also include

other pieces by well-known composers such as Telemann and Purcell. Co-founder Rosy Payne said: "This is an exciting new venture for the town, as we bring its first period instrument orchestra to a local audience in the splendour of the Athenaeum, which was originally designed for all sorts of entertainment for the townspeople." After the concert, audience members will be encouraged to linger in the bar, where they will have the chance to meet the orchestra and get a closer look at the instruments they play. Further details about the concert and the group can also be found on its website www.burybaroque.net. Tickets are on sale now, £15 adult (with other concessionary rates) and can be purchased in advance via the website or on the door.

Rosy Payne

Consequences of conscription on the town in the 1914-18 War

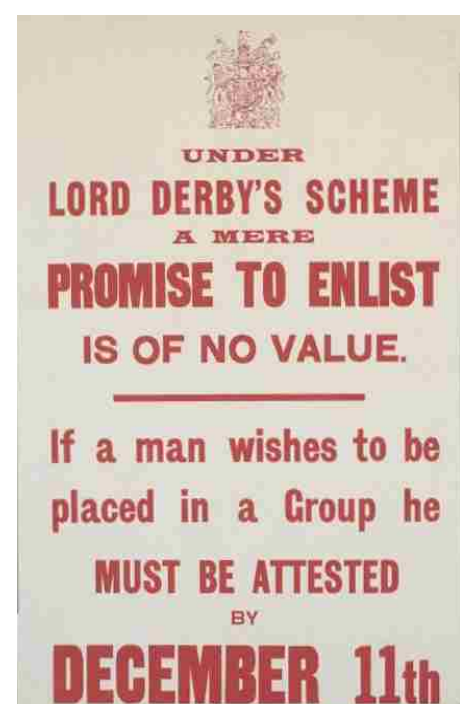
For 2025, in collaboration with the Suffolk Record Office, the Bury St Edmunds tour guides are introducing a new tour based on a unique set of records of over 1,200 cases heard by the borough military tribunal, appealing against conscription. Sifting through the large amount of background information has provided a great insight into the attitudes of the time, the unbelievable hardship that any war brings, and to many families the tragedy of loss. The background to this episode in our history is that by late 1915, the casualty rate on the battlefields of Western Europe threatened Britain's ability to continue the fight. Initially, Lord Derby the General Director of Recruiting, attempted to lift volunteer numbers via a scheme where men could "attest their willingness to serve" if called. It was envisaged that young single men would be called first and married and older men if necessary. The scheme failed, and in January 1916 the Military Act introduced a blanket conscription, initially for men aged 18 to 41. Those who had willingly attested to serve, or had felt pressured to attest,



were now faced with the stark reality of going to war. Military tribunals were set up nationwide to hear the cases of those men seeking exemption, either temporarily or permanently. The reasons for appeal included personal or family hardship, being engaged in vital war work, or having irreplaceable specialist skills. Only 0.7 per cent of cases were based on conscientious objection. The Bury St Edmunds Borough Tribunal case records survived, despite orders to be destroyed. We therefore have a unique glimpse of life in the town during the Great War. Whilst having to make some very difficult decisions, on occasions, comments made by its members appear comical some 110 years later. To one appeal that his work as a dairyman was irreplaceable, the answer was: "Have you employed women to milk cows. They are very clever with cows." And to a dentist: "People can wait for

professional attention to their teeth until after the war." In light of the recent publicity around NHS dentists in Suffolk, the wait goes on! For Summer 2025 the guides are introducing a 90-minute walk bringing to life a selection of personal stories from the over 1,200 cases heard by the tribunal. We see where they lived or worked, the reason and outcome of an appeal, and the consequences of the tribunal's decision. There are six tours planned in the calendar for 2025; the first being in June and the last only a few days before Armistice Day, in November. You can visit the website burystedmundstourguides.org for details of all the dates and a link to make a booking. By the end of 2025, it is also my aim to air this important moment in the town's history and some of the characters involved via a 50-minute illustrated talk.

Terry O'Donoghue



Young photographers skills are celebrated

The work of a talented and creative group of Young Photographers was celebrated at the Tudor Kitchen, at the Guildhall, on Saturday, January 18, at the prizegiving for the Rotary Young Photographer Competition, run by Bury Abbey Rotary Club. The competition was launched at a photography workshop at the Guildhall in October, run by sculptor and photographer Nigel Kaines.

Youngsters were tasked with taking a picture inspired by the theme of "Wonderful Water" – a theme inspired by the mission of Rotary International to provide clean drinking water to developing communities.

The winners came to celebrate their success at the prizegiving at the Guildhall and the children's families attended to support their loved ones as they received their prizes and certificates from the Rotary Vice President Melanie Lesser and representatives of the Bury Photographic Society.

Emily, aged 10, won the Junior Category with an image of water bubbling in a fountain. Winner of the Intermediate age group was Heston

Caunter (13) who had taken a photo of reflections in water by night.

Charlie Richardson (15) won the Senior Category with a photo of a sunset over the lakes at the Suffolk Wildlife Trust centre, at Lackford. All winners and runners up were awarded framed prints of their work as well as prizes from the Rotary Club and special prizes donated by The Flyer Magazine were awarded to the three winners.

The three winning photographers will go through to the next round of the competition where they will compete against youngsters from across East Anglia and have a chance to be entered into a national competition.

The competition was judged by a team including Jo Sweetman, the chair of Bury St Edmunds Photographic Society, and local professional photographer Carol Street. The competition and preceding workshop were supported by Bury Town Council through Abbeygate ward councillors Annabelle Mackenzie, and Nicola Iannelli-Popham.

Melanie Lesser

Historic Suffolk volunteer appeal

Historic Suffolk (formerly Suffolk Building Preservation Trust), is a local volunteer-led charity dedicated to the conservation of the county's historic buildings. It currently owns and runs three iconic properties: Little Hall, a C15 hall house and museum in Lavenham; Pakenham Watermill and Thel-netham Windmill, both of which are fully functioning flour mills. Each property is managed and operated by a team of volunteers, encompassing a wide variety of skills. The Trust campaigns for the rescue and preservation of historic buildings, which are under threat of demolition. Currently, it is working with fellow heritage organisations,

Historic Norfolk, SAVE, Historic England and the Railway Heritage Trust, to stop the destruction of a number of Victorian railway stations in the region, and to find alternative sustainable uses for them. We are always on the lookout for volunteers to either help at the buildings we own, or to provide expertise in a variety of other areas. If you feel you could offer help/advice in the fields of publicity (especially social media), IT and law. We are also seeking a volunteer with good organizational skills to help manage our "Save Our Stations" campaign. For further information contact chair@historicsuffolk.org.uk

Piers Hart

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Replanting at Memorial Garden

The Angel Hill Memorial Garden, in Bury St Edmunds, has undergone a thoughtful replanting, a result of a collaborative effort between the Bury St Edmunds Abbey Rotary Club and West Suffolk Council staff. This project introduces a sustainable planting scheme designed to create a serene space for reflection, while honouring the original purpose of the garden as a place of remembrance.

The eye-catching memorial was designed by architect Sidney Naish and constructed by builders Messrs Linzell and Edmundson.

It was unveiled on Thursday, October 13, 1921, by General Lord Horne GCB KCMG ADC and dedicated by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

The newly introduced planting design ensures the garden continues to reflect its original purpose, while enhancing its peaceful atmosphere with climate-conscious, resilient plant species. The project has been developed in close collaboration with Nick Hardy, President of the Bury Abbey Rotary Club of Bury St Edmunds and Abbey Gardens manager Simon Hobson.

The Rotary club provided the funds to buy the 180 plants which were carefully selected to provide year-round interest, texture, and colour, while also contributing to the sustainability of the space.



Replanting work taking place at the Angel Hill Memorial Garden.

The renewed Angel Hill Memorial Garden will stand as a living testament to both remembrance and environmental responsibility, uniting the past and future in a harmonious tribute. The new planting scheme in-

corporates species that will not only thrive but also honour the memorial's long-standing commitment to remembrance and respect.

Melanie Lesser

Programme of upcoming events

Saturday, April 12: Spring Coffee Morning, at the United Reformed Church, on Whiting Street, 10.30am to 12 noon.

Wednesday, May 28: Full-day excursion to Layer Marney Tower, in Essex. Tickets available online, see details and booking form enclosed.

Thursday, June 26: Annual General Meeting, in the Guildhall, Guildhall Street. Refreshments will be served from 6.30pm and meeting will commence at 7pm. Details inside on page 9.

Clarification of article

To clarify the contributor to the article in the Winter edition of the Review entitled "Businesses seeking to invest in the potential of Bury St Edmunds" was Stephen Moody. We apologise for the missing details.

Editor

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, July 7.

You can email copy to the editor at russell.cook461@btinternet.com

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 are welcomed and used accordingly but they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bury Society.