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Society Review

Website: www.burysociety.com

Winter 2025



Bury In Bloom won the Gold Award in the Large Town category in the Britain in Bloom competition. Pictured with the certificate at the ceremony, held at the Grand Hotel, in Brighton, are the members of the In Bloom team including, from left to right, Robin Burnett, Bury in Bloom chairman; Simon Hotson, Abbey Gardens manager; Chris Wiley, Bury in Bloom co-ordinator; and Mags Slater, Green Fingers co-ordinator.

Generous donation to the Dr Rae Fund

The Society has been fortunate to be given a significant donation of £100,000.

The donor was struck by the successful application of the Dr Rae Fund in the past and has specified that £80,000 will be held in the fund “for

local projects of creation or preservation” without further conditions.

The remaining £20,000 will be held in the Society’s general reserve. Gift Aid will apply to the donation so a claim will be made in the autumn of 2026.

Whilst we are extremely grateful for such generosity, the donor has requested absolute anonymity so therefore will not be publicly acknowledged.

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Crowds at Christmas Lights event

Thousands of people flocked to the town centre in Bury St Edmunds for the annual Christmas Lights event. The lights flickered and the crowds were entertained with a host of attractions and stalls.

Organised by Our Bury St Edmunds business improvement district (BID) this is one of the main events over the festive period and this year new lights were in place to illuminate the Market Thoroughfare for the first time in several years. The free-admission event saw the town centre packed with stalls for gifts, crafts and good causes, fairground attractions and a host of festive characters to meet including Santa on his sleigh, assisted by his elves.

Other characters on the night were the Snow Lion and a larger-than-life Polar Bear. The Snow Queen, Ice Princess and their snowman friend also returned.

The Christmas Lights event was held on Thursday, November 20, which



Santa on his sleigh at the Christmas Lights event. Photo: Phil Morley/ Dominika Woloch

was also St Edmund's Day. This was reflected in the event with a special wolf-themed free children's workshop from Crafty Foxes.

Prior to the occasion the BID's chief executive Mark Cordell said: "I know how much the people of Bury

St Edmunds and all our town centre businesses look forward to seeing the Christmas decorations to which now include the Market Thoroughfare recently widened to connect the town centre with Arc Shopping Centre. I'm especially grateful to Rougham Estates who once again have very generously provided the Christmas trees for Angel Hill and The Traverse."

All the lights in the displays use the most energy-efficient LED bulbs and the time they remain on is carefully managed to conserve energy.

Throughout the afternoon and evening there was a full programme of stage entertainment including local choirs and performances from schools and colleges. The Our Bury St Edmunds Christmas Lights event is supported by ShopSafe and Bury St Edmunds Town Council.

30 projects supported with a range of grants

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The Dr Rae Fund is the principal vehicle for the Society to receive and make grants.

The original bequest in 1981 from Dr Alison Rae was £86,181 and, with careful investment, the fund has provided grants of over £130,000.

To date, more than 30 projects have been supported, with grants ranging from £20,000 to as little as £100. Recently the fund has provided £10,000 to the Guildhall to support heritage activities and, as a lead partner in the "The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn" has contributed £10,000.

A further £2,965 has funded the replacement of chains and mats for hanging baskets, £1,000 supported the St Edmunds Catholic Church Heritage Vestments Project and Moyse's Hall Museum acquired the 17th Century book the "Tryal of Witches" with

a grant of £1,500 matched by the Friends of the Museum.

As a result of the donation the Dr Rae Fund can now continue to be a vital source of grants to enhance the environment in Bury St Edmunds and for important heritage initiatives.

For smaller projects it can make a meaningful contribution, though we usually look for match funding from other sources rather than providing the full cost.

The fund also enables the Society to have a major role in larger projects. The Dr Rae Fund is held in the Society's investment platform - if you feel you have a project worthy of support, please do get in touch with Terry O'Donoghue, the secretary and deputy chair of the Bury Society.

Ben Booth
Trustee and Treasurer



The snow lion at the Christmas Lights event. Photo: Phil Morley/ Dominika Woloch.

Brewery's masterplan unveiled

On November 3 Martyn Taylor and I attended a workshop meeting with Greene King (GK) representing the loose association of local amenity groups set up in the spring.

This included a presentation of the Draft Master Plan (MP) by Allies and Morrison, GK's consultants.

Following a site visit in the early summer we had made comments to GK about the aspirations of the different amenity groups and while we were encouraged by and welcomed GK's commitment to the consultation process, little of what we'd suggested in our earlier consultation had made its way into the draft MP.

One thing now clear is that GK will only have the microbrewery, beer café and shop as their presence on site after their move. If they need offices in the town, they will not be on the site.

So, the brewery buildings and land will all become vacant except those limited parts of the brew house.

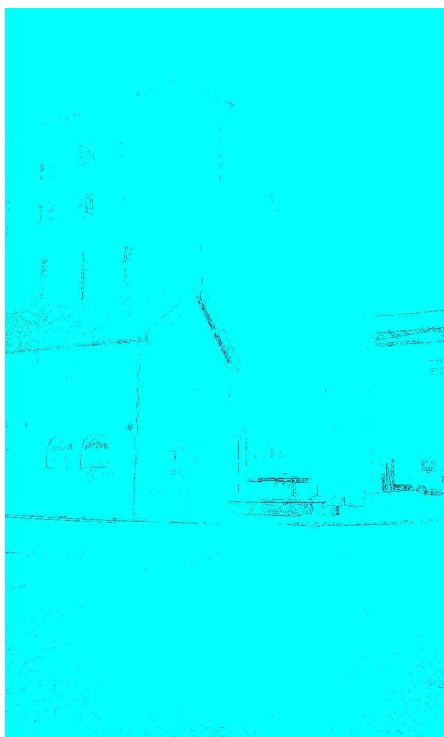
While we accept that GK are a commercial organisation and will wish to ensure the reuse of their property will be commercially viable, we do feel that there has to be a balance between the commerciality of reusing the site/buildings and public benefits.

We feel that the current draft MP reflects a level of, particularly residential, development which heavily weighs on the commercial side.

We are particularly concerned about two key issues:

- **Traffic and parking:** There is a lot of development proposed, this will make a major difference to the traffic and pressure for parking at the south end of the "grid". This is not addressed in the draft MP at all.

- **Development is proposed on the undeveloped area south of Westgate Street.** This parcel of land represents about the last area of open land that would have always delineated the south boundary of the Norman new town, an internationally significant heritage asset. This part of the site is quite rightly protected by its inclusion in the Town Centre Conservation Area.



Greene King's brewery in Westgate Street.

The draft MP describes the proposed housing as an "extension of the grid". The proposed narrow access routes are described as "The Lanes" implying that the significance of the area has not been taken into consideration. Our original consultation response outlined various potential "public

benefits" that could be offered with the re-planning of the GK estate and most of these were not included in the draft MP. Our suggestions included providing a car park for the grid and for the Theatre Royal, as well as drop off points for St Edmunds School and provision for the extension or outdoor space for the Feoffment School in Bridewell Lane. These are not at present ruled out, but the draft MP sees these potential locations occupied by houses and would be subject to the overall viability of the site redevelopment. The uses for the redundant buildings still seem very sketchy with community and other uses still not decided. This will take some more detailed analysis to establish how these historic industrial buildings can be adapted to new long-term uses. We look forward to future engagement in the new year and do hope some of what we have said will be reflected in the designs as they get more detailed.

This is an edited summary of the comments we made to GK. Should you wish to see the full version it is posted on the Bury Society web site.

Peter Riddington
Planning advisor

Museum witch trials link up

Moyse's Hall Museum, in Bury St Edmunds, will be forging links with a museum in Salem, Massachusetts, as part of a project to explore the shared history of the infamous witch trials and encourage US visitors to the town.

The trial of Amy Denny and Rose Cullender, from Lowestoft, held in Bury St Edmunds in 1662 set a legal precedent that directly influenced the Salem witch trials in Massachusetts.

Information on these connections will go on display at both the Salem Witch Museum and at Moyse's Hall Museum this winter.

A series of lecture swaps is also planned with the Salem Witch

Museum giving lectures to the Bury St Edmunds Museum audience and vice versa – helping to create a mutual exchange of knowledge and culture.

Moyse's Hall Museum is currently curating an exhibition that is focused on the Witch Trials of Bury St Edmunds and East Anglia. This exhibition shares the victims' stories, supported by a wider study of the early modern period to explore the reasons why the murderous witch trials may have occurred. The museum is working with academics from across the UK and the exhibition features loaned-in artefacts never seen on public display before.

Training set for new tour guides

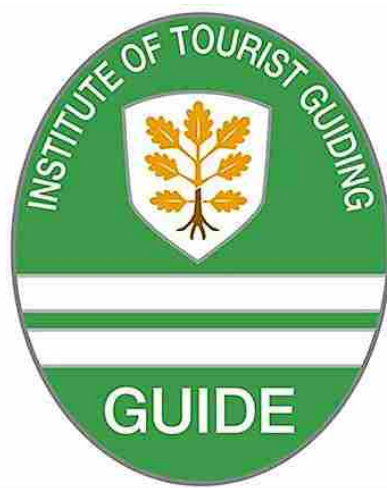
Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides (BARTG) are about to start training a new cohort of guides.

The last intake was recruited and trained in 2017, and since then (and particularly since the pandemic), the number of those fit and available to guide has gradually been diminishing. In addition, it is expected that the proposed NLHF project The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn will, if approved, hugely raise the profile of the abbey and transform Bury St Edmunds as a tourist destination. The training course will prepare a new generation of tour guides to welcome the anticipated upsurge in visitors to Bury over the coming years. The training course is accredited by the Institute of Tourist Guiding (ITG), the gold standard of tour guiding competence.

This requires a rigorous programme of classroom and practical sessions, exams and assessments to attain full ITG accreditation.

The course is a landmark partnership between BARTG and St Edmundsbury Cathedral which would, for the first time, see Cathedral guides accredited by the ITG.

It has been made possible by a generous grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, secured with the help of West Suffolk Council. It is an innovative “hybrid” course, concurrently training two groups of



tour guides: initially as White Badge Guides qualified to conduct tours of the Cathedral and, for those wishing to progress, as Green Badge Guides qualified to conduct tours of the Abbey and town.

This arrangement provides economies of scale by, for example, teaching shared modules required for both badges, such as presentational skills and detailed knowledge of a single historic building.

It has proved quite a challenge both designing the course and securing ITG accreditation for it.

In fact, so unique is it that the ITG are assessing it as a possible model for future training courses.

The objectives of the course are to equip students with the essential skills: a sound knowledge and

understanding of the history of the Abbey, town and Cathedral, an understanding of their contribution to Bury's visitor economy, the ability to present knowledge in a clear and engaging manner, and to do so safely for all members of the public, and behaviours that meet the ITG's Code of Conduct.

Classroom tuition will be provided by Cathedral experts and BARTG's accredited guides and by external tutors with research expertise in the history of the Cathedral, Abbey and town.

It will be complemented by a programme of practical exercises, tour shadowing and practice tours to build the confidence and knowledge of the students.

All students will be allocated a mentor, to provide them with advice and support. The course was advertised in September and resulted in a strong and enthusiastic field of applicants. Interviews were held in early November and places offered soon afterwards.

The course will start in January, 2026, with the first White Badge Guides qualifying by Easter and the first Green Badge Guides by July. We're very much looking forward to what promises to be a busy and stimulating start to the New Year.

Adrian Tindall

Rickshaw team recruiting new volunteers

Seven years on from the launch of Bury St Edmunds Rickshaw we are doing well and continuing to add to our list of “joy ride” clients and food collections. This means that we complete an average of 150 rides every month and this high mileage, along with roads not designed for bicycle rickshaws (unlike their native home countries of the Netherlands and Denmark) have meant a significant time with individual bikes off the road this year.

To combat this we have taken steps to recruit a Rapid Repair Team to deal with the most common issues of flat tyres or battery connections.

We have also raised money to help purchase a new bike to give our existing fleet time to be off road without impacting our busy schedule. We are currently recruiting new volunteers; we especially need help from administrators who help run the service from our virtual control room. Each member usually volunteers one day a week, helping to co-ordinate both joy rides and food deliveries, ensuring everything runs smoothly and safely.

Full training and support are provided — you just need access to a computer or laptop. Alterna-

tively we are still recruiting for our Rapid Repair Team. If you're practical, handy, and want to help keep our bikes on the road, we'd love your help. We would expect you to offer a flexible half-day on-call shift each week to respond when small issues arise and we would offer a full day of training in basic bike repair and maintenance. If you would like more details of how you could help contact our administrators on 01284 339449 between 9am and 12 noon, Monday to Friday, or leave a message at any time and we will call you back.

Liz Stacey, Trustee, BSE Rickshaw

Gold in large town category



Pictured, left to right, are members of the Bury in Bloom team with the Anglia in Bloom Awards: Mags Slater, Green Fingers co-ordinator; Simon Hotson, Abbey Gardens manager; Chris Wiley, Bury In Bloom co-ordinator; Yaz Long, Green Fingers co-ordinator, Robin Burnett, chairman Bury in Bloom; and Linda Seldis, Abbey Gardens volunteer.



As the year draws to a close, there are many things we should feel proud of, particularly entering into Britain in Bloom.

It's not often you get a shot at the nationals, but I am so proud of all our volunteers and sponsors for coming together and achieving a Gold Award in the Large Town category. Two Golds in one year – let's continue what we've done well, and more, into 2026. Although not in Britain in Bloom next year, we have big plans in the pipeline.

Plus, coincidentally, Bury St Edmunds is the host town for Suffolk Day in 2026 – an unofficial National Day celebrated annually on June 21. I'm aware that the town council and Our Bury St Edmunds are planning some events for this day, showcasing the county's special qualities.

So, let's go one step further and celebrate Suffolk via the In Bloom campaign.

Watch this space, but if you have any suggestions or would like to volunteer/sponsor a new display, please get in touch with me via email at

coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk

A new take on Certificates of Merit this year saw us launch "Pride in My Street"; a community centred initiative to inspire residents to take pride in their local areas, coming together as neighbours, or individually, to showcase their good work on projects such as litter picking, adding floral displays, cleaning road signs, weeding pavements etc. All of these tasks, no matter how small, help to enhance our town and showcase its beauty.

If countries like Germany can do it, why can't we? Let's bring some local pride back into Bury St Edmunds.

So, with thanks to our headline sponsor, Greene King, a panel of judges voted for Risbygate Street/ Out Risbygate to win in 2025,

awarding their hard work cleaning pavements, adding veg and book swaps, planters and applying for a local defibrillator to be installed outside the Co-op. I wonder if this would have happened if it wasn't for "Pride in My Street"?

Some more good news is that, following a funding bid to Havebury Homes' Community Investment Grants, Bury in Bloom has been awarded just shy of £5,000 to purchase new pyramid planters and railing troughs.

These will be installed throughout the town and along Eastgate Street, as part of our work next year alongside Bradley, our new town council warden.

We've already assisted in repainting the bollards down Eastgate Street, with more projects to follow. The future is certainly looking bright for Bury in Bloom, so I'd like to express my thanks once again to all of our supporters, and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2026.

Chris Wiley
Co-ordinator of Bury in Bloom

Why out of town developments matter

With the inevitability of a void being left by Greene King as they relocate from a central position within the medieval conservation area, the next 12 months will present the Bury Society with the greatest challenge in influencing the physical look of the town since its founding in 1971.

The Bury Society was founded in the face of the threatened redevelopment of St John's Street and associated widescale demolition of Victorian Bury St Edmunds, which, if it had succeeded would have devastated what is now seen as a great asset to the town.

The plans for the current Greene King site affect the physical landscape of the town and are commented on elsewhere in this Review; but other proposed developments on the edge of town and immediate villages bring with them both opportunities and challenges which do not appear to have received the degree of attention required by the various developers and more importantly, on first

glance, local government.

Mark Cordell as CEO of the BID recognises the positive aspects of an increasing local population in terms of increased footfall in the town centre, and to quote Mark: "A likely consequence is Bury moving up the table of desirable and profitable town centres."

He also points out "that increasing visitor numbers may flow from this Making Bury a 'must visit' destination."

Mark also fully accepts that a number of negative aspects could be a consequence of an expanding population, many of these having already been identified by the Bury Society. The charity has always recognised that Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area could not be preserved in aspic – indeed we have constantly striven to maintain a positive and balanced approach when invited to comment on specific plans.

However, it is now clear that the acceleration in completing existing

developments, and the proposal for new sites, could place an intolerable strain on the town's infrastructure and public services.

When looking at any proposal, current examples being the never-ending expansion of Thurston and the current plans for Rougham, Westley and Great Barton, there is always mention of green spaces, perhaps a school or a local shop, but important matters such as the increasing pressure on the existing road network and choke points into town receive scant attention. More importantly, any comments regarding provision of healthcare often do not tackle the core need for adequate GP or dental provision which is essential to match any explosion in population.

Most times, the mention of building a care home seems to be the way to tick the box and deflect attention away from these vital considerations. Another question to be asked is when planning the new hospital, was the current growth in population adequately considered?

The subject of providing extra policing resources is also an important consideration, as sadly, graphs show there to be a proportionate increase in criminality with a rising population.

As a society we are only too aware that the preservation of the town's identity and attractiveness as a place to live means that we will also need to pay close attention to those developments outside the old borough boundaries as well as those within, and comment and lobby in the same balanced fashion as before. We can never guarantee our lobbying will be successful, but a continuing strong vibrant membership must add weight to any representations we make. We would particularly look to those now residing on the newer developments to join the Society and make themselves heard, so that we can better help our collective voice to resonate with those tasked with improving the services and amenities within our community.

Terry O'Donoghue

Town voted one of UK's most dog friendly towns

Dog-lovers have voted Bury St Edmunds one of the most dog-friendly in the UK.

At an awards ceremony in London on Thursday, November 20, the town was the runner up as the UK's most dog friendly town making it the third year running that it has reached the final of the competition which is chosen by public vote. Chief executive of Our Bury St Edmunds BID, Mark Cordell, said: "We are disappointed not to win the title but we are incredibly proud to still be one of the most dog friendly towns in the UK and we thank everyone who voted for Bury St Edmunds.

"With our town centre welcoming dogs in many of our businesses, it means that residents and visitors know that they can stay longer in town and don't have to leave the

four-legged member of their family at home."

Bury St Edmunds has developed its own dog-friendly scheme which helps visitors and residents easily identify where their canine companion is made welcome.

Around 140 different businesses have signed up to the scheme meaning they can display a blue paw print logo sticker and water bowl.

Owner of doggy daycare centre Camp Tails, Jon Kay, who helped found the town's dog-friendly initiative, attended the ceremony with his dog Loki.

Cockermouth was declared the winners and Mr Kay said: "We are thrilled to be again recognised as one of the most dog-friendly towns in the country for the third year in a row."

Elizabethan celebrity dances into town

At 7am on February 10, 1600, the performer, dancer and clown William Kempe, having accepted a wager, set out on his "Nine Days Wonder" to Morris dance from London to Norwich, a distance of 110 miles.

Kempe was the celebrity of his day, famed for his stage jigs and as one of the Chamberlain's men alongside Shakespeare, he proved himself a talented actor, playing Dogberry in "Much Ado About Nothing" and Peter in "Romeo and Juliet".

He was also associated with Shakespeare in the construction of the Globe Theatre. Returning to Kempe's wager to dance to Norwich; having left London in great style accompanied by Mr Slye, his taborer (beater of a small drum), **pictured above, right**, it turned out that the nine days of dancing to Norwich took several weeks, the crowds along the way and various impromptu performances slowing his progress. He also later recalled how he was nearly killed having found himself between two fighting horses and their flailing hooves.

In late February, Kempe, attired in a low cap (complete with feather), slashed doublet and breeches, with long streamers attached to his shoulders, danced into Bury St Edmunds. By now he was in some discomfort and pain, but at Bury the weather came to his rescue, heavy snowfall preventing him leaving the town for nearly a week. It is said he took lodgings for himself and his wife on or around Crown Street, close to St Mary's Church.

Whilst quite prepared to play up to the crowds when performing, just as with many celebrities today, he was fiercely protective of his privacy at all other times.

Again, in a similar fashion to 21st Century media stars, he employed bodyguards to keep the fans at bay. The story goes that when he and his wife wanted to attend St Mary's church, it would only be after dark. His bodyguards, or minders, were strategically placed along the roadway preventing inquisitive locals



from approaching the couple, or even catching a glimpse of them as they walked across the road to the church. Finally, the weather having improved, William Kempe and his entourage left the town on March 3, to continue his progress to Norwich, eventually arriving in the city on the March 9, 1600, to great acclaim and cheering crowds.

Kempe had won the wager and to maximise any earnings, he later published an account of his journey, supposedly to prove to doubters it was true. I am sure that if he was alive today, William Kempe would be among the elite of social media stars with a following in the millions.

Terry O'Donoghue

Campaign to tackle rough sleeping

The charity Bury Drop In has relaunched its Looking for Change campaign with the support of West Suffolk Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Council, Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District, Suffolk Constabulary and the Bury Free Press.

The charity works to support homeless and vulnerable people including rough sleepers, people sofa surfing at friends' houses, people in hostels, and people who West Suffolk Council is supporting in temporary accommodation. The Drop In provides a safe warm meeting place twice a week where people can get a hot meal and access support. Looking for Change encourages people not to give money directly to people they see on the streets. This is because in some cases the people are already accommodated and receiving support for drug or alcohol addiction. Public donations of money to rough sleepers sometimes feeds that addiction

and can result in people losing, leaving or refusing accommodation, jeopardising efforts to help them. Bury Drop In asks people to instead donate online. The money people give to the Drop In is then used to help people who have been rough sleeping, who have been accommodated, have received any relevant support for addiction or mental health issues and are ready to move on into their own home.

People can donate to Bury Drop In at www.burydropin.org/donate. If anyone sees or suspects someone is rough sleeping the quickest way to tell the council is through <https://thetstreetlink.org.uk>

Copy deadline for next edition of the Review

The deadline for the next edition of the Bury Society Review is Monday, March 23.

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

Enjoy the atmosphere as Bury

The recent cold weather heralded the beginning of the Christmas season here in Bury St Edmunds, and the Christmas Lights switch on event attracted thousands who wrapped up against the cold to enjoy the festivities.

The town embraces these events with gusto, and it is always heartwarming to see the streets full of families enjoying everything that Bury offers. Despite uncertainties at home and abroad, Bury is again bucking the national trends in terms of the health of the retail and hospitality industry with new businesses opening and others expanding.

We are certainly not immune to the challenges and local businesses really do need your support throughout this season and beyond, but it is great to see the few empty premises being snapped up in and around the town. It shows confidence by businesses large and small to invest in Bury, its buildings and people.

The former Post Office has finally signed tenants with Adnams of Southwold relocating into the unit in St Andrews Street, a prime site with good footfall to the Arc Shopping Centre, and Esquires Coffee “esquiring” the unit facing the Cornhill. (sorry about that pun!) With the apartments already taken, these new tenants complete the long-standing project.

Bury in Bloom is planning a large colourful wall mural on the blank white wall in Market Thoroughfare with “A jewel in the crown of Suffolk” – (I wonder who came up with that fantastic tag line?)

The mural will brighten up a rather non-descript walkway no end, as did a previous project on the subway leading from the Parkway multi-storey car park.

Shop fitting has also started on two other empty units whilst another high-profile unit has gone “under offer”.

It is thought that Trespass – the outdoor clothing store - has taken on the former Adnams unit on the Cornhill, whilst Taco Bell – a large



All the fun of the fair at the Christmas lights event. Photo: Phil Morley/ Dominika Woloch.

multinational franchise- is fitting out the long-empty former Giraffe unit next to Cineworld.

This unit was originally taken over by the cinema to add an extra screen, but maybe the arrival of Everyman Cinemas in the Arc scuppered that idea. Good to see an empty vacant premises being reused and adding life to the area.

The remaining two former restaurants next to Cineworld have seen plans lodged to be converted into a much-needed dental practice by “My Dentist” who are expanding from their present site in Risbygate.

Over the last couple of years, the casual restaurant scene has been hit badly by inflation and increased costs which has seen many chains downsize or close altogether, disposable income is tight for many, and the fast casual chains suffer first.

Back on the Cornhill, the former Sneezy's shop is now under offer, again benefitting from the huge footfall in Central Walk.

A prominent shop, it's re use will again bring life to that area.

Paddy Power, the betting shop just along the road, has closed along with 44 other branches across the UK; increased legislation and online competition (low costs compared with running a chain of shops) has seen many betting shops close recently countrywide.

The Arc has seen the arrival of luxury skin care specialist Rituals which means that only the old Select shop and a basement unit under Primark remain vacant.

In these current times, shopping centres are seeing increased vacancies as chains downsize, but again, the Arc is beating the national trend and seeing demand for premises in what is now definitely the prime area for retail.

As for independents, it is great to see the expansion of Alema Coffee to a high-profile site in Abbeygate Street, again showing confidence in Bury by local businesses.

Having a loyal and growing customer base encourages investment and brings jobs.

My retail analyst “role” at BBC Radio Suffolk sees me regularly comment on local and national retail/ hospitality news.

Recently we discussed Black Friday - its pros and cons and how to not be scammed on “too good to be true” deals. Shopping locally means that it is our businesses that benefit.

We await the latest news on the former Toy Master unit on Cornhill which seems to have been “under offer” for months, whilst rumours continue to circulate on the future of the Wilko store.

Until contracts are finally signed and

Continued on next page.

continues to buck the trend

Continued from previous page.

dotted, they will continue to be just that - rumours.

I would love to see work on the former RBS bank start as soon as possible. This prominent building has been empty for far too long and needs to be brought back to life. Again, Bury has been fortunate to keep its bank branches so far. Imagine the damage their closures would cause in regard to empty premises and the difficulty in adapting those buildings for alternative use. It would also be fantastic to see movement on Cornhill Walk. A sensitive redevelopment of the site would improve footfall, safety and the sanity of local residents. For most retailers and hospitality businesses, the last quarter of each year is when they make the vast



A busy town centre with stalls set up in Cornhill during the Christmas lights event. Photo: Phil Morley/Dominika Woloch.

majority of their profits which then sees the business through the quieter months after Christmas. It is vital that we continue to shop locally rather than spend online. Our town centre is certainly healthier than almost everywhere I visit; Cambridge and Norwich being comparable to Bury in terms of vacancies

vs demand. Enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of our precious markets, independent businesses and local chains in the run up to Christmas, a real experience to be with friends and families alike and share the magic of the season.

Stephen Moody

Creating a memorial to the innocents

Back in April of 2025 a small group was convened at the Apex to consider the possibilities of erecting a memorial somewhere in the town to those people who had been accused and executed, here in Bury St Edmunds, for witchcraft. Sue Warren, Melanie Lesser, Martyn Taylor, Dan Clarke and myself put our heads together as we all felt that the great injustice which had been done to those many people - men as well as women - should be marked in a permanent way and that their stories should not be forgotten. As you no doubt know, at the time of witch-fever, Bury was the seat of the county assizes and major court cases from across Suffolk were heard in the town, including those concerning accusations of witchcraft. Witchcraft trials were recorded from as early as 1599, but Bury's notorious place in the witch craze which was raging across the whole country at the time, came to its peak in 1645.

The self-proclaimed "Witchfinder General", Matthew Hopkins and his band of "witch-prickers" had instigated the trial, and on August 27 of that year, 16 women and two men were found guilty and hanged in one go. This was the largest single trial and execution of the whole grim campaign. Although there were other trials in the meantime, the trial in 1662 of Rose Cullender and Amy Denny (or Duny) from Lowestoft had far-reaching implications. Both women were found guilty of witchcraft and hanged in Bury and a pamphlet about them was published called "A Tryal of Witches". The details of their case became the model for the notorious Salem Witch Trials, in Massachusetts. In the last month, we've looked at potential sites for a memorial which would have relevance to the story of the trials, but also attract footfall and be visible and accessible. Of course there are many hoops to jump through to secure somewhere

that suits all parties. We will also need to secure funds to have the memorial designed, built and inscribed. In the coming year, Moyses Hall Museum will be consolidating links with Salem, to do some collaboration on the trials held in the respective towns, so it is hoped that the unveiling of a memorial might coincide with that. Many American visitors to the town are intrigued by the link. We looked at memorials elsewhere in the country where, similarly, people want to ensure that the needless hounding, torture and ultimately the deaths of such innocents are not forgotten - including Pendle, in Lancashire, and Bideford, in Devon. We were inspired to draft some wording which would remember Bury's most notable trials and end with the words: "In the hope of an end to prejudice and intolerance" which will serve to remind those reading it that the needless attacking of people seen as "other" should always be guarded against.

Lynne Whitehead

Dental surgery plans for Market Cross

A new purpose has been proposed for The Market Cross, Cornhill, which has stood empty for some time now.

The proposed use is for the first floor to become a dental surgery. The application is lacking in detail, at this stage as no proposed plans have yet been put forward and we have been in touch with the council to request additional details, namely... floorplans.

Historic England though have already commented and has concerns over the proposal "on heritage grounds, in particular the change of use from a public venue to a private business and the possible impact on the building from changes associated with that."

Whilst additional dental services is certainly something that is a public benefit the overriding question will have to be "is this a suitable use for such a significant building." Those that attended the Society's annual general meeting in 2024 will recall Adrian Tindall's talk on the rich

and varied history of the Market Cross so perhaps the transition to dental surgery is the next step in this colourful story. The balance then is between minor intervention to create such a facility and bringing the building back into use. How long should such a prominent building sit dormant waiting for the right use?

Or should a viable use be encouraged to ensure the buildings ongoing use?

We will reserve judgement until we see the proposed plans but, in our view, the special interest of the fabric and space must be preserved and any intervention in the space must respect this valuable heritage asset.

We have in the last couple of months objected to two planning appeals within the town centre. One for a new dwelling on the site of the former St Petronilla's.

This setting being our key concern, due to a lack of archaeological understanding that currently exists for

the site. We have also objected to the appeal on the refused development of Cornhill Walk.

Our objection, as always, here has been around the scale of development, which will particularly impact neighbouring streets through its increased scale, that does not blend in with its setting.

The proposal as such fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal would also demonstrate an additional burden on parking in the town centre, with a significantly low number of spaces compared to Suffolk County Council standards.

The society is increasingly aware of the impact that developments outside the town centre may have on Bury's special interest and wider environments.

Crest Nicholson have recently presented their public consultation for the Rougham Airfield development.

The proposals are at an early stage and works are slated to start in 2029. The proposal is currently for approximately 500 homes.

The proposal also includes 20 hectares of employment land, plus community space and "older-person" accommodation.

Space is proposed to be reserved for a new primary school.

The proposal will retain the museum and also proposes "Runway Parkland" so there are nods to preserving the heritage of the site.

We shall keep a close eye on the proposals as they develop.

We are also currently working on a proposal to set out our planning ambitions for development and planning within Bury St Edmunds.

It is becoming more common for developers and applicants to approach the Society for comment and support, which is welcome, but guidance can be tricky.

In planning terms this would be an informal document but it is hoped that a document setting out our key principles in planning matters would be of benefit to developers and members in understanding our ambition and principles.

Ed Thuell

Work gets underway for new recreational leisure facilities

A contractor is now on site to begin enabling works as part of the redevelopment of the former depot and warehouse on Olding Road, in Bury St Edmunds

In September 2025 West Suffolk Cabinet agreed the plans for refurbishing the former depot and part of the warehouse to make them suitable for a trampoline park, padel courts and a further recreational leisure use.

Part of the former warehouse will be demolished and alternative uses for the site are being explored such as outdoor sports pitches.

Xtreme360, a trampoline park provider, has signed an agreement to lease with the council for the refurbished depot.

The council has engaged Pentaco as the main contractor to initiate the enabling works which started with the demolition of internal

structures that are unsuitable for refurbishment. From December 2025, shotblasting and priming of the internal steel frame will commence to meet current building and fireproofing regulations.

More significant changes to the site will begin in January 2026, as works commence on the removal of the old roof and outdated exterior cladding.

External works to the former balling shed have now been completed and internal works have commenced to fit out the building.

The building is due to accommodate the council's emergency planning and election store as a relocation from other council sites. Diane Hind, the cabinet member for Resources at West Suffolk Council, said: "This is a fantastic new offer for our residents and visitors."

Biodiversity in our water meadows

The water meadows in Bury St Edmunds cover some 120 acres and encompass two rivers, numerous ditches, woodland and meadows. All of this is habitat for wildlife, but what wildlife do we have, both resident and visiting?

To find out, we have a core team of nine volunteer “citizen scientists” who regularly walk different sections of the meadows from the rugby club to Compiègne Way. We love spending time walking in the fresh air observing and recording any plants in flower and anything that moves, from deer to the smallest insects, always hoping to spot something we haven’t seen before to increase our knowledge.

The purpose of recording the wildlife is to help us monitor the biodiversity of the area. If we know what flora and fauna we have, we can protect and improve habitats for them. Over the past 18 months, we have created a ditch to add habitat particularly for water voles.

A “dead hedge” was built to create a wildlife friendly barrier to protect the ditch, but which also offers harbourage for other species such



A snake found in the water meadows.

as insects and fungi. To help maintain these 120 acres we have a team of 25 regular volunteers who constantly battle the overgrowth of nettles, fallen trees and silted up rivers and ditches, not to mention the litter and dog poo. We are always on the lookout for undesirable invasive species like Himalayan balsam and pull this out before it sets seed in late

summer since its roots destroy the banks of the rivers.

The data generated by the biodiversity recorders is added to our own data base and then into a national database, a time consuming but necessary task.

Our records allow comparisons to be made between areas in the meadows but also from year to year.

The species we find vary slightly every year according to the weather. For example, Spring of 2024 was very wet and there were few butterflies to be seen, but this summer, the warm and dry conditions led to an abundance of them. This autumn has also been very fruitful, as you may have noticed, with plenty of berries, nuts and seeds to help our wildlife through the winter; fungi too have been plentiful.

We have recorded thousands of observations and the adage that “the more you look, the more you see” is certainly true for the recorders.

*Gill Evans
Bury Water Meadows trustee and
co-lead of the biodiversity
recording team*

Catching up at Autumn Coffee Morning

Our regular members’ events are a fantastic opportunity to meet other members, speak with the Bury Society Trustees and find out the latest news about the town.

Our Autumn Coffee Morning, at the United Reformed Church on Saturday, October 12, was no exception: a chance to catch-up with friends and neighbours, while enjoying tea, coffee and delicious cakes from Stephen Moody.

Martyn Taylor brought a fascinating selection of materials relating to the history of Bury St Edmunds Pageants, which included photographs, programmes and scripts from these spectacular dramatic performances. We were also able to provide updates on our current campaigns. My thanks to the people who volunteer their time and energy to make these events such a suc-



Members attending the Autumn Coffee Morning.

cess, as well as the members of the Membership, Communications and Events committee.

Our next members’ events include the Bury Society Winter Lunch, which will be held at the Southgate Community Centre on Saturday,

January 31, and the Spring Coffee Morning, on Saturday, April 11, at 10.30am, at the United Reformed Church. For more details, see the events page of the Bury Society website.

Samuel Saloway-Cooke

Tiel Rotary visit Bury St Edmunds

Members of the Bury St Edmunds Abbey Rotary have hosted visitors from Tiel Rotary, in Holland. Arriving by ferry at Harwich, the visitors then had a breakfast at a member's house, meeting several Bury Abbey Rotarians.

The group of Dutch and British Rotarians then went to Depden Care Farm to help replace some rotten sleepers in the vegetable garden, as well as weeding and feeding the llamas, donkeys and pigs.

They were encouraged and directed by staff member Tom Chapman and the chair of the Millennium Trust, Jerry Massey.

After all the work, everyone enjoyed a BBQ at the farm.

In the afternoon, the visitors either played padel tennis or had a tour of the Bury St Edmunds' Guildhall with a tour guide.

After a fun party on Saturday evening, Sunday gave the visitors a chance to see the bells rung in the Norman Tower.

They then went over to Woodbridge for a guided tour of the National Trust's Sutton Hoo.

A fascinating visit to the boatshed, the home of the Woodbridge Riverside Trust, enabled the group to see "Sae Wylfing", a half-size working replica of the Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon ship.

After a late afternoon meal the Tiel Rotarians departed for the ferry home.

Tiel Rotary President Rudolf Rude said: "As well as enjoying the hospitality and culture, we were invited to help at Depden Care Farm, which was a great way to support the local community - a key part of Rotary."

Bury Abbey Rotary President Melanie Lesser added: "Club members all enjoyed showing the visitors the lovely visitor attractions in and around our town.

"It was so good to work on a project together at the farm, which is one of the many local charities we support. "I would like to thank all the venues for giving us all such a warm welcome."

Meanwhile, the Abbey Rotarians



The Rotarians from Tiel and Bury St Edmunds at Depden Care Farm.

have been involved in a Photographic Workshop.

Thirteen youngsters aged between 11 and 17 gathered at the Guildhall, in Bury St Edmunds, during the October half term break to participate in the event aimed at inspiring them to take their photography to the next level.

It was led by photographer Carol Street and assisted by members of the Bury Photographic Society, the Bury Abbey Rotary Club, Bury Sketchers and Guildhall Garden Volunteers. The young people worked hard to capture imaginative images from around the Guildhall Garden.

The theme was "Happiness in Nature", and the students found many examples around the garden. Two members of the Bury Sketchers were capturing the beauty of the garden and the Guildhall garden volunteers were working in the sunshine. The workshop was organised by Bury Abbey Rotary Club and supported by Bury Town Council.

The event is the launch pad for the national Rotary Young Photographer competition, open to any young person between 11 and 17.

All workshop attendees have been encouraged to enter their photos for the competition with the "Happiness in Nature" theme.

Bury Abbey Rotary Club would be pleased to hear from any young per-

son in the age category who would like to enter the competition.

All that is necessary is to submit an original image which fits the theme either on our website or by email to buryabbeyrotary@gmail.com. The closing date is December 12 and the website is <https://rotarygbi.org/projects/young-people/competitions/rotary-young-photographer/>

On November 19, Bury Abbey Rotary held its annual St. Edmund's Day Dinner at St Edmundsbury Cathedral attended by 336 guests. The evening draws together residents and local businesses for a grand celebration of the town's patron saint. Additionally, this year, members from Kevelaer Rotary, Bury St Edmund's twin town in Germany, joined in the festivities.

Around £29,000 was raised for four local charities: My Wish, Gatehouse, Cancer Support Suffolk and the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn. President Mark Murphy MBE, a well-known local radio personality and avid supporter of St Edmund, entertained attendees with his humorous talk, "It Shouldn't Happen to a Radio Presenter."

And an auction led by Ed Crichton from Lacy Scott & Knight featured 12 special lots, sparking friendly competition and generous bids.

Melanie Lesser

Abbey of St Edmund consultation

The Community Consultation Outcomes have now been published by the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project.

They include the Bury Society's public meeting on October 1 at the Guildhall and the consultation exhibition held in St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

On behalf of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, Bury Society members and others were able to hear a detailed half hour presentation about the project from James Mellish (project manager).

They also heard from the Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, which is the lead partner in this project. That was followed by a question and answer session, the key issues of that session are recorded in the Community Consultation Outcomes.

More recently, the project has successfully passed the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Development Phase review, enabling continued preparation toward a delivery phase application in 2026.

The review panel acknowledged the strong co-ordination and professional standard of work to date, noting clear alignment with the original approved purposes.

The panel also made further suggestions, some of which are outlined below.

The traffic calming approach, to facilitate access to the new visitor centre from Angel Hill, needs to be confirmed.

The Interpretation Plan will be further strengthened to include more on nature and biodiversity.

The Activity Plan will continue to be refined.

Delivery partners, local organisations and Cathedral staff have been instrumental in their feedback prior to finalising this document.

Community biodiversity and archaeology excite most stakeholders, with plans to work with priority target audiences, including, but not limited, to youth groups and young carers.



The meeting at the Guildhall about the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project.

The Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) is the county's primary archaeological database, but Abbey site records are incomplete and inaccessible. The Abbey of St Edmund Partnership has identified significant gaps and recommended HER enhancement as a high priority. Updated records will support planning, research and public engagement via the on-line Suffolk Heritage Explorer. Its direct impact

on youth engagement is limited but can be enhanced through complementary educational activities in digital recreation, biodiversity, art, music, and drama. The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn application will be submitted in February 2026, then will be part of a demanding competitive process before a decision is announced by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in June 2026.

Alan Baxter

Consultation on new checklist for planning applicants

West Suffolk Council has opened a consultation on changes relating to the documents that have to be submitted as part of planning applications. The consultation, which will run until 5pm on December 19, is on changes to the council's Local Validation Requirements – a checklist of matters that developers and other applicants preparing a planning application need to consider and submit with their planning application. It follows directly on from the council's adoption of the West Suffolk Local Plan in the summer. The council has reviewed and updated its Local

Validation Requirements to ensure that they reflect and deliver on the local plan policies which were themselves shaped through public consultation. West Suffolk is now consulting on 38 Local Validation Requirements covering everything from affordable housing to the mix of housing on a development, the size of new homes and tenure, through to parking and travel plans as well as providing open space and community facilities.

For more details visit www.west-suffolk.gov.uk/Council/Consultations/wsc-local-validation-list-consultation-november-2025.cfm

The swimming pools of the

The Romans were very much to the fore in keeping clean by washing themselves.

Regular personal hygiene was important to them, this was very evident with their usage of naturally-occurring hot springs such as those which were to be had in Bath.

However, as time progressed the idea of washing your body to remove the grime you were likely to accumulate during your daily activities was frowned upon; in fact the use of perfumes etc to mask body odours was among the upper classes the preferred way.

I nearly said sweat, hardly likely for the upper echelons of society for this was something the working classes were more likely to do and consequently reek of body smells. The proverb "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is not a direct quote from the Bible though the concept of cleanliness, both physical and spiritual, is emphasized in scripture. It is thought to have been used in the writings of ancient rabbi Phineas ben Yair and later attributed to well-known preacher John Wesley in 1791.

Gradually washing became popular, with shifts occurring over several centuries.

In the 18th century, public opinion began to favour more frequent bathing, particularly for health reasons. By the 19th Century, periodic bathing was becoming common as body care became a way to distinguish yourself from the hoi-polloi.

Apart from having the opportunity to wash yourself via water drawn from your own well in the privacy of your own home, here in Bury St Edmunds the Lark and Linnet rivers offered a way forward to perform your ablutions unless you could use a local public pump.

That was until an enlightened builder by the name of Lot Jackaman decided to provide for the town its very own swimming baths.

Lot was born in Norfolk and arrived in Bury in the 1840's as foreman to renowned local builder, Thomas

Farrow. Lot's best-known building in the town was the Corn Exchange of 1861.

He had visited Germany and was impressed with the municipal swimming baths in that country.

So in 1870 Lot built "covered in" Swimming Baths at the top of Maynewater Lane behind a house appropriately called Bath Cottage: his baths supervisor living there. In 1893 the pool was taken over by the Bury Town Corporation and later acquired by the Greene King brewery as a private pool for their employees. A lovely story told to me for my book Bury St Edmunds Memories was by one of the Ransome sisters, Betty, born in 1921 and Joan, in 1923.

Quote: "One of the funniest things I recall is swimming among frogs which got into the brewery swimming baths in Maynewater Lane." I digress because Lot built a fine house around the corner at number 1, Westgate Street, in 1884, sadly he died a year later. His house, displaying all of his building talents is still there. Under the eaves is written JACKAMAN, BUILDER, STONE & MARBLE MASON.

Strangely another facility used as swimming baths were the retting tanks at the Flax Factory, off Cullum Road.

In 1918 in and around what we know today as Cullum Road, meadows were purchased by the Board of Agriculture to grow flax so its end-product, linen, could be used for the covering of aeroplane wings. Though the factory was in full production by 1919 the war's end meant a cessation of any further involvement in this linen-making process with the factory closing down, 1923/4.

The workforce had consisted mainly of women whose job was to break down the flax plant, remove seeds for future planting and then use a scutching machine to separate the long flax fibres known as tow and the waste woody matter called shive.

The flax was then soaked in large retting tanks to soften the cellulose

for around 20 days. The factory had its own spring so the water supply was not a problem.

With the factory closing the tanks were used for swimming.

The next swimming pool in the town was on the Playfields, just off Prospect Row. It was opened in 1922 by the mayor, Councillor J P Parkington.

As it was unheated you could describe it as a lido. The difference between a swimming pool and a lido is that the latter was always open to the elements; here in Bury you could consider getting water at 60°F fortunate.

Included at the lido were slipper baths, so that members of the public could also get a hot bath.

This was through the courtesy of the nearby turbines for the town's electricity supply, this powered by the town's refuse collections.

Hire of a towel and soap would cost you 9d.

The pool closed in winter, but hot baths were still available on Saturdays and Sundays.

An example of the charges you were expected to pay in 1968 were: adults 1s 6d entrance, juveniles under 15s, 6d and spectators would have to pay 6d. However, you could buy a season ticket for £1 15s, juveniles 15s.

There was a group of doctors who had their own season tickets; they used to go to this open air swimming pool early in the morning to swim when nobody else was about.

Some would arrive in their dressing gowns ready to go straight in.

Bury Corporation plumber, Frank King, was the superintendent and when he was on duty he taught hundreds of children how to swim. Some other swimming pools in the town were: Beech Hill, Hospital Road courtesy of the NHS, Westgate School, St James Grammar School? off the Vinefields and Sports Direct Fitness Centre.

Currently the following are still with us: Bannatynes Health Club, off

Continued on next page.

town over the ages



Bath Cottage, in Maynewater Lane.

Continued from previous page.

Horringer Road; David Lloyd Club, Marham Park; and Moreton Hall Health Club. I apologise if I have missed any others.

With the opening of the Bury St Edmunds Sports & Leisure Centre in 1975 with its indoor pool the swimming baths at the Playfields were no longer used and subsequently demolished in the same year.

The sports centre was to enjoy many years trouble-free until it was burnt down on March 19, 1980, part of several arson attacks within the town.

Tragically yet another fire, this time accidental whilst refurbishment was being carried out in 2004, resulted in over a million pounds worth of damage to the sports centre. It re-opened after 17 months.

The original swimming pool was 33 metres long so designed to enable a swimmer to do three lengths for 100 metres, however with an Olympic swimming pool being 50 metres long it was decided to reduce the pool in its refurb to its now 25 me-

tres. A learner pool is adjacent to it and next to this is the children's play-pool complete with two flumes and pirate ship.

All in all it is an experience to be enjoyed by the whole family.

And now the centre is under another refurbishment.

Martyn Taylor

Improvement work at leisure centre starts

The first stage of improvements at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre has begun.

Under this phase the fitness suite will be redecorated and new equipment installed, including the enhancement of the E-gym. This phase includes the installation of a new dedicated Spin Studio.

Also included in the first phase is work to the existing health suite, which will be refurbished with a modern sauna, steam room and new solarium facilities.

This phase is expected to finish in March 2026.

YOUR CONTACTS

Society website
www.thebursociety.com

Reg Charity No. 263230

COMMITTEE

Chairman
and Heritage Advisor
Martyn Taylor
chair@bursociety.com

Secretary and
Vice Chairman
Terry O'Donoghue
secretary@bursociety.com

Treasurer
Dr Ben Booth
treasurer@bursociety.com

Planning
Ed Thuell
planning@bursociety.com

Planning advisor
Peter Riddington

Membership
Sue Savage
members@bursociety.com

Programme
Sam Saloway-Cooke
events@bursociety.com

Bury in Bloom
Chairman
Robin Burnett
chairman@buryinbloom.org.uk

Co-ordinator
Chris Wiley
coordinator@buryinbloom.org.uk

Review editor
Russell Cook
russell.cook461@btinternet.com

Website
Alan Baxter
media@bursociety.com

OTHER MEMBERS

Sarah Nunn
Patrick Chung
Stephen Moody

Series of events held for members

Over the last few months, Bury Society members have enjoyed a variety of interesting events. In addition to the Annual General Meeting, in which Terry O'Donogue entertained with tales from the history of the Bury St Edmunds Guildhall, and the recent Coffee Morning, we have also enjoyed a fascinating talk on the Battle of Fornham of 1173 and a full-day excursion to Harwich. Back in July, Dr Michael Walker's illustrated talk on the Battle of Fornham presented the details of this little-known event from more than 850 years ago. Dr Walker traced the rebellion of Robert Beaumont, the third Earl of Leicester, against Royalist forces during the Great Revolt, the invasion of Suffolk by his army of Flemish mercenaries, and the siege of Haughley Castle, the talk went on to describe the "hard and grievous battle" in Fornham beside the River Lark.

Our August excursion to Harwich was an enjoyable day, as members explored the history of the town with the help of the expert tour guides. Everyone was greeted by the Town Crier at the steps of St Nicholas Church, before enjoying refreshments and a walking tour of the town. A particular highlight was the Electric Palace Cinema: built in 1911, it is one of the oldest unaltered purpose-built cinemas and is again used as a community cinema. After lunch, members were shown



The Harwich Town Crier greets members of the Bury Society on the steps of St Nicholas Church.

around the Redoubt Fort, which was built in 1808 to defend the port of Harwich against a Napoleonic invasion, and which is now a mili-

tary museum. The events programme for 2026 is also taking shape, with a varied selection of tours, talks and members' events.

Samuel Saloway-Cooke

Programme of upcoming events

Tuesday, January 20: Tour of Bury St Edmunds Sugar Beet Factory, 5.30pm to 7.30pm. See website for details.

Saturday, January 31: Annual Bury Society Winter Lunch at Southgate Community Centre, from 11.45am. Tickets £35. See booking details enclosed.

Saturday, March 21: Talk by Adrian Knowles, senior ecologist with the Essex Wildlife Trust, on using maps to understand the changing landscape of East Anglia, at the Quaker Meeting House, 2pm to 3pm. See website for details.

Saturday, April 11: Spring Coffee Morning, at the United Reformed Church, on Whiting Street, 10.30am to noon.

Saturday, May 9: Talk by Peter Riddington, architectural consultant, on the architecture of Medieval Suffolk Churches, at the Unitarian Meeting House, 2pm to 3pm. See website for details.

Thursday, June 11: Annual General Meeting, with talk by outgoing Bury Society chairman Martyn Taylor entitled "Bury St Edmunds Through Time – Revisited", at the Guildhall, 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Keep an eye on the events webpage (burysociety.com/events) for more information and to book.

Survey of the membership

We would like to know more about our members and how they view the society, so we hope you will help us by completing the enclosed survey, either online at the link below or on paper. To show our appreciation, completed surveys accompanied by an e-mail (or postal) address will be entered in a draw for a £25 M&S voucher.

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.