



**BTT Members,**

**The BTT Board hope you will find this newsletter useful and informative.**

**If you wish to comment or include something in the publication, please contact the Chair on**  
[p.riddington@outlook.com](mailto:p.riddington@outlook.com)

**Or the Secretary on**  
[gayerynsardbtt@gmail.com](mailto:gayerynsardbtt@gmail.com)

**The Board values your feedback and contributions.**



## **Chair's Comments**

**Newsletter No 5**

Dear Friends and Members

### **News From Lockdown - November 2020**

Welcome to the latest of the random editions of our newsletter which has the usual section of updates on projects and campaigns.

So, we're still suffering from the pandemic and have struggled through another lockdown which meant we had to have our AGM 'virtually' so missed the social nature of our annual get-together. But at least projects go on and especially the work on 11 High Baxter Street. I, for one, have been really excited to see the building

opened up and its archaeology exposed. We hadn't expected to find quite so much of the original 15<sup>th</sup> C wattle and daub set between the wooden frames.

Alas, it has not all been good news and unexpected problems bequeathed by those who demolished the neighbour to the north in the 1960s mean we need to find more funds.

But I won't steal Paul Rynsard's thunder any further as he offers a more detailed update below. Please do enjoy Paul's words and those of the others who have contributed this time.



### **Update on 11 High Baxter Street**

The first phase of the work started at the beginning of October with a programmed completion at the end of January 2021.

We have had regular updates and visits to the house to review progress and address issues as they have come up with members of our working group and the architect and structural engineer in compliance with H&S rules and C-19 guidelines.

Following a very detailed HSE Executive inspection and review of the construction plans and H&S files, we were cleared to carry on works with a slightly enhanced cleaning regime to be in place.

They did point out that we did not have an Asbestos survey in place - although we had been given assurances by previous owner the site was clear and we had a certificate for some asbestos cleared, we had not been given documents to prove this. A new Asbestos report has now been done and some small elements of further asbestos located some of which will be removed. The HSE asked us to supply an audit trail of the house purchase and the previous owners assurances regarding asbestos which we have done.

After the scaffold was erected the work to remove the render started and this has started to reveal the original 15<sup>th</sup> C timber frame. The good news is that this is probably in better condition than we expected and requires only limited repairs at the weak points such as ground level corners and timber treatment for some limited insect attack.

We have found older window cills and frames on the rear elevation and we

will change the window specification to take these into consideration which will mean some larger windows.



So far, the higher risk area has been the large 16<sup>th</sup> C chimney in the northern elevation (that facing Marks & Spencer car park) You will remember that this double chimney was shared with the house that adjoined the property up until the 1960s. With the render removed, it can be seen that this chimney is in a very poor condition (extra support was put into the scaffold to brace it) The fire places had been removed and infilled rather badly so the structure has un-bonded. The structural engineer is looking at how much of this we need to take down and rebuild. We will be consulting with the conservation officer at the Council on our options.

Now the render is mostly removed we can see what we have to work with. We are working on plans to improve the insulation of the exterior walls to improve U-values - an essential element for our later heating strategy in phase 2. Looking at the makeup of the walls it must have been a very cold house if you were very far from a heat source.

We have received an offer from the Architecture Heritage Fund (AHF) with regard to our Phase 2 loan and we will be progressing this and hope to complete in time to overlap the two phases. The structural engineer has viewed trial pits by the garden walls and is ready to agree foundations of the extension. This will hopefully enable the architect to complete Phase 2 design work, Seamans can tender and we can negotiate a figure to our budget.

Some members have loaned us money and this has been essential and enabled us to start work before the AHF loan.

We are running a project deficit at the moment on project budget and sale value in what is an unusual market the agents tell us. The Board continue to carefully monitor the budget and remind ourselves that we are here to save buildings like this one.

We may need further help from members in cash flow terms as upfront costs for legal fees, licences, loan fees, additional asbestos costs and higher risks become apparent will all eat into our available funds. I can assure members that we continue to closely monitor our budget and



spending and our loans are only 50% of the end (conservative) valuation. On our outreach and educational plans (in AHF terms 'social impact') we produced a short video for the West Suffolk College construction department that was well received. This was done with the help of Harriet Kirkby-Smith who has joined us for a few months on work experience. In addition a member donated funds to enable us to ask Dr Alex Wakelem to research the history of the people who lived in the house and he has completed some very interesting work that built on that previously done by our Chair and Dr Pat Murrell. The archive of the Bury Free Press has proved a very useful source from coroner's report, auction details, court proceedings etc all have built a fascinating people's history of the house, High Baxter Street and the

town for these folk who worked at the craft/trades section of our society. We are discussing how best to take this work forward and will again probably looking for funding to turn into a booklet, video and presentations for schools and those interested. Finally, we hope to be able to show members around the house when present circumstances pass and we can do this safely. We also will be pleased to show photographs of the progress of the works, some of which we are putting on an Instagram account for the Trust. Most of these will also be found on our website (and a link to video etc).

Any questions please do not hesitate to drop me an email or call: -

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[paulrynsard@gmail.com](mailto:paulrynsard@gmail.com)  
07831105062

### **A Note from the new Membership Secretary**

After so many years of dedicated and loyal service as BTT's Membership Secretary, Margaret Charlesworth's retirement will mark quite a sea change for BTT and its Members.

Whilst I never shall be able to emulate Margaret's incredible and personal knowledge of all BTT's Members, with your help and support, I hope to be able to build on the firm foundations she has laid and to continue to develop the legacy she leaves behind her.

Soon 2020 also will be behind us and we can look forward towards another BTT Membership Year, albeit still with some Covid uncertainties. Your BTT Trustees busily have been preparing for the new Membership Year, due now to begin on 01 January 2021 and on 01 January each year thereafter.

After several years of stability, it surely will be of no surprise to Members to learn that, as from next January, the basic annual Subscription Fee is being raised from £10 to £12 per year, still a wonderful bargain at only £1 per month.

A new Membership Application Form also has been agreed and, very soon, all Members will be invited to complete the new Form and to amend their Membership Fees as appropriate. BTT appreciates and values your continuing interest and backing, and will be delighted to welcome you for another year as a Member, or even perhaps as a Life Member.

What a wonderful start to the year that would be, and maybe a BTT Membership Subscription would make a superb, easy-to- arrange Christmas present too, for anyone interested in the heritage of our town and its conservation!

Just drop me an email at [BTTmemsec@btinternet.com](mailto:BTTmemsec@btinternet.com) if you are interested in this.

Meanwhile may I wish you a safe and Happy, if subdued, Christmas.

Surely, we shall meet in 2021?

**Marian Shaw**



## **West Suffolk Local Plan consultation**

In commenting on the West Suffolk Issues and Options consultation BTT (27.11.20) welcomed the principle of many of the proposals, but sought to ensure that where essential they are mandatory elements of the plan. At this first stage the draft plan identifies the matters of prime concern and defines how they will be taken forward. While, in general, the draft covered the issues well it fell short of the full commitment required to tackle plan priorities. It mentions the “challenges of climate change” but fails to make them a strategic priority which must be properly addressed.

Bearing in mind that the plan period runs until 2040, in relation to the historic environment while we concurred with the selected issues, we drew particular attention to the need to provide for:

- possible national changes to planning controls;
- further modifications necessitated by climate change; and
- the economic impact of Covid-19.

We said that these in combination may lead to:

- the increased conversion of town centre and other properties from commercial to residential use;
- work to improve the insulation value of older buildings to assist in their becoming carbon neutral;
- in the longer term the impact of further growth that is planned for

the surrounding area on the town centre resulting in part from increased national house building requirements effectively imposed on West Suffolk; and

- changes to traffic controls and car parking as the use of cars in the town centre evolves.

These changes will present a challenge which will need to be properly addressed in planning policies that adequately protect both national and local heritage assets and their settings.

**NOTE: During September and October BTT replied to two other consultations – the Government’s Planning for the Future White Paper, and Changes to the Current Planning System. The Trust’s full responses to these and the Local Plan will shortly be posted on the Trust’s website where you will be able to read them in full.**

**John Popham**



## **Post Office Development and Town Centre Masterplan**

Last year we reported that the Post Office re-development had been (6.11.19) unanimously approved by West Suffolk Council.

In the event the planning permission was not issued pending sorting out a legal agreement. When the scheme finally returned in July there was a re-consultation as its design had been amended. Important detailing to the north elevation and some other areas

had been omitted on the grounds of cost. After submitting a formal objection to this change the Trust held discussions with the Council about the issue which eventually resulted in a change of mind on their part. The originally approved design was reinstated. We thanked the Council for this reversion when final approval was granted in July.

As members may have seen, demolition work on site is now virtually complete and construction should start in January 2021. Completion is scheduled for June 2022. Other works connected with the Town Centre have been delayed. When they recommence the first Town Centre Masterplan project will be enhancing St Andrews Street South along the length where it crosses between the Arc and the town centre.

**John Popham**



### **Bury St Edmunds Railway Station**

As you may remember BTT has been actively involved with the Rail Station since 2015 – when we prepared a report, which is on our website. This detailed the long-standing repair problem at the station (estimated then to cost over £2m), and indicated a number of enhancements that were urgently required. Since this date we have been working with all connected parties. Good progress has been made on several fronts.

- The urgent repairs to the station master's house have been effectively completed and the

building is now weather tight and secure.

- The new 74 space car park we sought to the rear of the station has been completed and is in operation.
- The proposed northern entrance for which we argued has finally been agreed and funding has been granted by DfT – but starting on the work has been delayed because of government programming.

This leaves the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan to guide the remaining outstanding repair work and future maintenance on the historic fabric of the station. BTT acts as coordinator for the BSE Rail Station Group (BTT, Bury Society, Town Council, and Our Bury St Edmunds) which is fronting this project. We have been actively working with Greater Anglia on the preparation for this and are currently waiting for the publication of the William's report on the future of the railway before we move on to the next stage.

**John Popham**



### **Education**

The **West Suffolk College BTEC, Level 3 course, Construction and Conservation in the Built**

**Environment** is the first permanent course of its type in England to have a mandatory conservation element. After seven years work with the College BTT provides, with the help of its partners, the conservation training for the course. Conservation work is not an option for the students - it is built

into this part of the main syllabus. The importance of this for the future should not be under-estimated. Around 40% of all building work in Bury involves conservation work of some sort.

This year as a result of Covid-19, all lectures so far have been virtual by use of video. They have in part been prepared by the Trust filming conservation work, and also by a few students from the College. Our High Baxter Street project was first video to be completed. We are hoping that by next spring we may be able to commence site visits again – but if not, the remaining conservation elements of this year’s course will also be via video.

John Popham

## **Unitarian Meeting House, The Bury Town Trust Beneficiary, launch new publications**

Bury Town Trust chair, Peter Riddington is the author of a monograph about the Unitarian Meeting House, *A Very Special Building*. It was to be unveiled at the meeting house’s birthday party in March, but sadly coronavirus prevented that.

Almost 30 years ago the Bury Town Trust provided funds to complete the restoration of the Unitarian Meeting House on Churchgate Street and the building is still thriving.

The Friends of Bury Unitarian Meeting House are pleased to highlight two



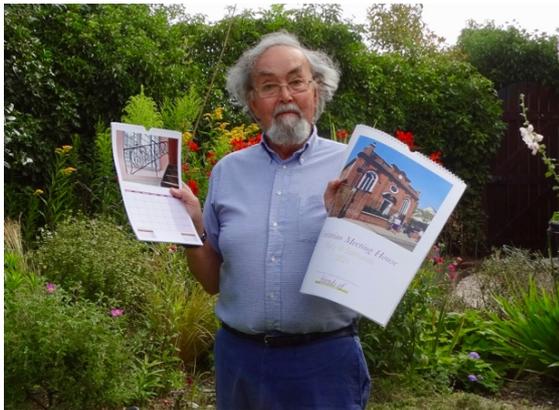
new publications available for purchase that celebrate a beautiful and remarkable place of worship in Churchgate Street, which has become a much-loved venue for concerts, theatre and other social gatherings in the town.

*A Very Special Building* is a 16-page full colour monograph, packed with illustrations, and written by local conservation architect and your Chairman, Peter Riddington (*pictured below*). The booklet is based on a well-attended talk given by Peter at this early eighteenth-century gem back in March 2018.

The Friends felt Peter’s lecture was such an informative evening that they wanted to ensure the material was made available to everyone in an attractive book form. In the booklet, Peter details what makes the building so distinctive because of its extremely rare cultural, historical and architectural qualities.



Additionally, the Friends have produced an attractive **2021 Meeting House calendar**. The A4 and A3 size productions features a large colour picture each month - including some of the architectural detailing showing why the Meeting House is recognised as a building of national importance and Grade One Listed.



Secretary of the Friends, Martin Gienke (*above*), said “We’re very pleased that even more people can enjoy this magnificent building through the beautiful calendar and informative monograph. And all proceeds go the Friends to help keep the premises in good order.”

The Calendars and *A Very Special Building* are on sale for £9 each or £15 if you purchase both together. They are available from Martin Gienke ([martin@gienke.net](mailto:martin@gienke.net)) or from Martin Lightfoot ([lightfoot@freebie.net](mailto:lightfoot@freebie.net)) Chantry House, 5 Hatter Street, B.S.E.

After the restoration of the Unitarian Meeting House was completed in 1991 the administration of the building including lettings and maintenance was put in the hands of a Management Company until 2016 when the

Unitarian Trustees, who own the building, formed a House Committee to look after it. A manager and caretaker were employed.

At the same time, the Friends of the Unitarian Meeting House was established to keep the Meeting House open for the public to enjoy and use. Keen people are encouraged to join the Friends - and get involved

### A final plea

We have been two or three board members short for some time now and this is affecting what we are able to achieve.

We have advertised these roles and would encourage anyone with the time and energy to help the Trust by becoming a board member (or persuading someone you know who has these qualities to volunteer!).

The two particular skills we need are someone with a legal background and someone who has had involvement with practical building conservation. If you think either you, or someone you know, would like to find out more about these posts please do let me know.

Meanwhile do stay well everyone, who knows what the world will be like when we emerge from this crisis, but what we do know is that things won't be easier for our built heritage. If we want to ensure our old buildings survive, we need to help them do so with good, viable uses.

This is likely to be much more of an issue after the pandemic than it was before. So, please, if you can do get involved with us and, most important, keep safe!

Best wishes to you all,

Peter Riddington

Chair Bury Town Trust