



February 2024

BTT Members,

Representing the BTT, John Popham has been central to the battle to keep the West Suffolk Record Office Archives in Bury St Edmunds.

John's report on the latest developments is on Page 7

If you wish to comment or include something in this publication, please contact the Secretary:

Gaye Rynsard

gayerynsardbtt@gmail.com

The Board values your feedback and contributions.

Dear Members

I would like to start this newsletter with a thank you to all the Membership for their continued support for the Trust.

I am pleased to say that new membership is on the rise and we have recently welcomed a number of corporate members who now include: Bedfords, Greene & Greene, BCR Infinity Architects, Hazells, Lacy Scott & Knight and Jaynic. We hope to expand our corporate membership to increase the awareness of the Trust through the business community. If you would like your company to join

the Trust then please contact Caroline Commins our membership secretary, contact details on the BTT website.

The Trust remains busy and you will see within this newsletter an update on some of our activities. Our training programme for students at West Suffolk College has a packed programme and we are grateful to have received two recent grants that have helped us keep this important project fully on track. We are also very pleased with the results of our renovations works to the South African War memorial.

You will also see that we have added our voice and skills to backing the call to retain the West Suffolk Record Office Archives within Bury St Edmunds. The Trust is not as a rule a pressure group but, on this occasion, we considered the availability of source archive materials relating to buildings and other heritage assets of the town was an important element to their understanding, maintenance and sense of place. The relocation to Ipswich of such archive material could lead to a deterioration to our built environment.

The Trust continues to remain busy in many other areas and we will try and keep you as updated as possible to our activities. Do please visit <https://burystedmundstowntrust.org.uk/> for further information.

Best wishes and thank you for your continued support.

Jonathan Lloyd, Chair

CCBE COURSE CONTINUES TO PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO TRADITIONAL METHODS

Last year we managed almost a full programme of activities for the construction students at West Suffolk College in the delivery of our Construction and Conservation in the Built Environment Course.

In the current academic year, this got off to a good start in the Autumn term and we have been able to organise activities that have created more opportunities for students to be exposed to and take part in traditional building activities.

An enthusiastic group of students was able to visit Orchard Barns, in Ringshall for a day learning about the conversion of felled timber into useable commodities such as structural posts, roof shingles and battens.

As in previous years, there was real 'hands on' experience as the students got to grips with traditional tools for log



splitting, shaping and shaving the timber.

This was an enjoyable day gaining knowledge and skills in an enjoyable, participative environment.

One of two planned walking tours took place in the Autumn term, and we tried something different this year. Instead of Bury St Edmunds, we took the carpentry students to Lavenham where there is an even greater density of traditional timber framed buildings to enjoy and learn from.

In this tour, led by John Popham, Students were able to look at the construction of fine timber framed buildings of 15th, 16th & 17th centuries along with more modern examples of traditional builds, limewashed render and traditional carved oak features.

In November, we were able to send a group of students to visit the Bulmer Brick & Tile Company works where they were shown the making of handmade bricks from the clay excavations to the firing in traditional



kilns. The students were given a great deal of information throughout the visit as they saw each stage of production, including important instruction on the correct mortars to use.

Looking ahead, our planned programme includes a visit this year to 8 Angel Hill, which is owned by the National Trust, where students can look around at some of the original building and some changes over the years, including next door where they will visit BCR Infinity Architects' office within the old stable block.

Other items on the programme include:

- A one-day hands-on training workshop on wattle and daub led by specialist, Gemma Sayers.
- A town tour looking at the historic buildings of Bury St Edmunds.
- A day visit to Holkham Hall to see the workshop and ongoing

works to the many Listed historic buildings on the estate.

- Another day visit to Holkham to look at the sustainability work that the estate is engaged in.
- A two-day workshop where the students will be building with flint and brickwork under specialist instruction.



The building of two PODS at the College to Bury Town Trust designs with one in clay lump and one in traditional timber frame is hoped to take place this year. A very generous offer of materials for the bases and a demonstration and talk on this traditional method of slab forming will greatly assist this.

Our conversations with English Heritage continue and we are looking forward to building our relationship further and increasing the scope and effectiveness of the course with the College.

Alan Wilkinson

POST OFFICE DEVELOPMENT – STONWORK STAINING

Members may have noticed the staining on the new stonework above Market Thoroughfare on this development. This is in contrast to the elevation that faces the Arc where the stonework has not suffered. The difference between the two areas is probably their markedly different micro-climates.

We contacted West Suffolk Council about the matter suggesting the need for the insertion of a stainless steel cill and the cleaning of the stonework. WSC replied that “we are following the advice from the stonemason and contractor who installed the stonework. This is to let the natural process occur, which over time creates a hard calcite skin known as alteration rind”.

The Council also commented that over time the staining should naturally clear a bit and any cleaning before two years was not recommended.

They have said that they will keep the situation under review with the contractor. If needed, the stonework will in due course be cleaned in accordance with the stonemason’s recommendations.

They added “we are exploring options for potentially installing a stainless steel cill if the advice is that this would be beneficial overall.” We are keeping a watching eye on the problem.



John Popham



MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all our members who paid their subscriptions at the beginning of January.

Your membership is valuable to the work of the Trust and we appreciate your ongoing support.

For anyone who has not seen a standing order come out of their bank account, please send your payment in now, as subscriptions are due in January annually.

If you have a standing order set-up for later in the year, please could I ask you to change it so that it comes to us in January from 2025 onwards, for the correct amount of £12 for an individual or £18 per a couple and £48 for corporate membership.

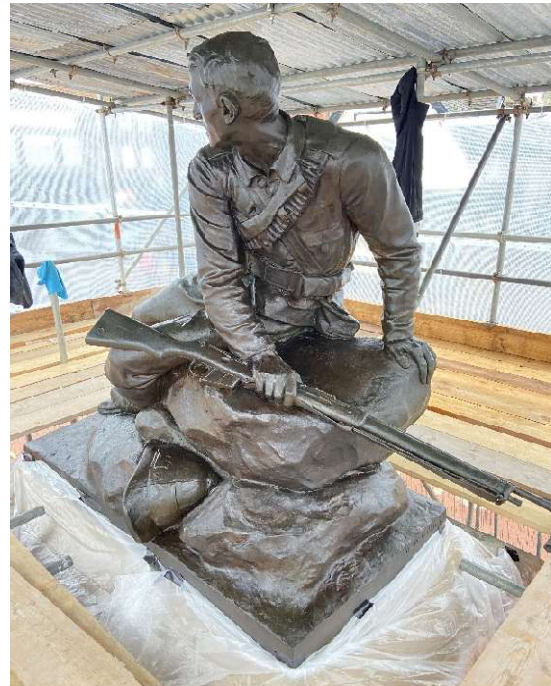
This will help enormously with the administration of the Trust. If you wish to send a bank payment, the bank details are Bury St Edmunds Town Trust, sort code 20-16-12, account number 30225738. Alternatively, you can send a cheque made out to Bury St. Edmunds Town Trust and post to BTT Membership Secretary, Bury St Edmunds Town Trust, 10 Crown Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1QU.

Caroline Commins



SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEMORIAL

The Suffolk Regiment South African War Memorial is a Grade II Listed monument that stands in the middle of Cornhill in the historic market square for Bury St Edmunds.



The memorial includes 193 names of men serving in the Suffolk Regiment, who lost their lives in the Boer War between 1899 and 1904. It was dedicated on 11th November 1904 and whilst there are records of the names in the stone being reworked in recent years, there is no historical record of the bronze work ever being significantly restored, nor cleaning of the higher stonework.

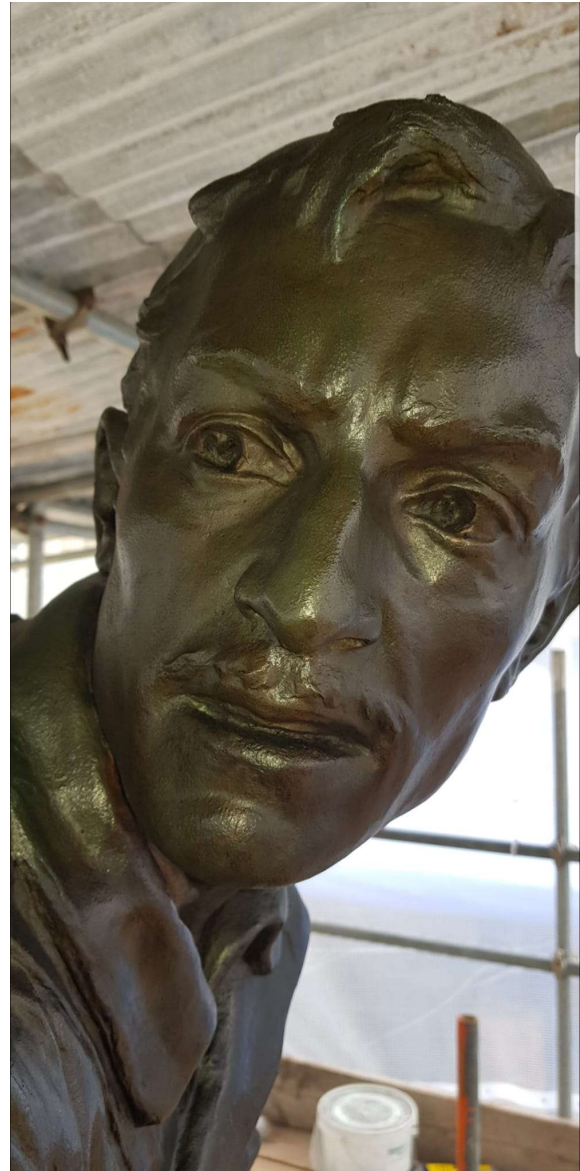
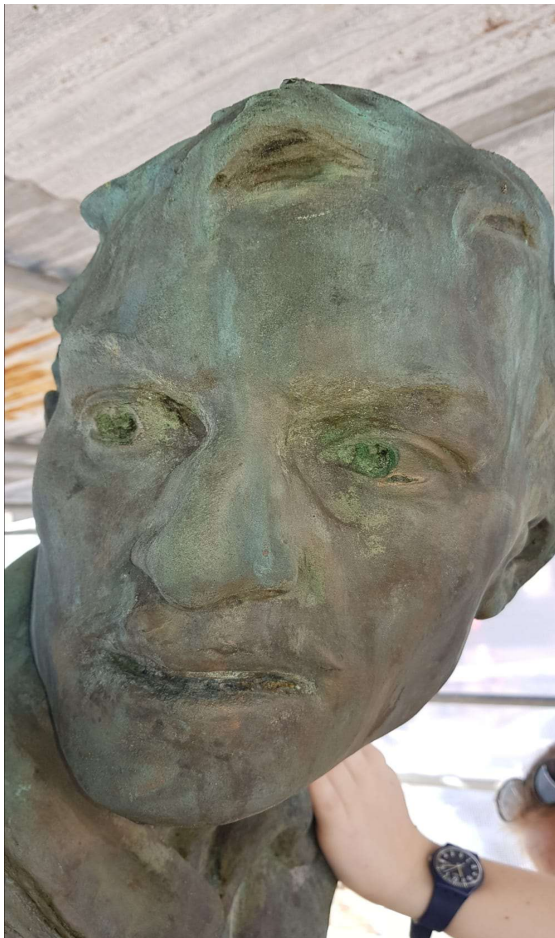
With money provided through a local donor and Bury Town Council, Richard Rogers Conservation have carried out a wonderful restoration of the memorial, with the works completed in November 2023.

This memorial was ahead of its time in commemoration of the everyday man, with 160 of the 193 names listed being 'privates', the lowest ranking soldier. The artist, Arthur Walker, borrows from classical work but uses the style in a more modern interpretation – unlike other memorials of the time Walker

conveys a more realistic view of war, with his Suffolk soldier not head bowed and respectful but reflective and battle weary, almost even beaten.

The appearance to the bystander is then a memorial that is easier to engage with, representing a community that was in an agricultural depression at the time of war, where many of the private soldiers had enlisted simply to escape the rural poverty at home. This memorial has a considerable significance, locally and nationally, and in particular to the town, commemorating the Suffolk Regiment soldiers in Bury St Edmunds.

Aoife O’Gorman



Restoration: Before restoration (left) and the statue after work had been completed (above and previous page).

PROPOSED CLOSURE of the BURY ST EDMUNDS RECORD OFFICE

BTT learned with surprise, when the Suffolk County Council budget was published in January, that among the proposals contained in it was the closure of the Bury Record Office.

This would result in all the records currently held in Bury being relocated to the Ipswich archives in The Hold. The proposal is of major concern to the Trust and many other organisations and residents in the town as well all the other West Suffolk towns and villages.

This proposal stemmed from September 2023, when West Suffolk Council announced the cancellation of its Western Way project which had included a new record office. The County Council explained that West Suffolk had created the problem and that they were now unable to proceed with an alternative. This was because the financial restrictions placed on them in their 2024/25 budget meant they would have to cut arts funding and cancel the Record Office project.

In view of the concern about this, two BTT Trustees met Cllr Richard Rout (Vice-Chair SCC) on 15 January and explained the position to him. At the meeting Cllr Rout was handed a copy of a Submission prepared by the Trust. This requested that the County form a Working Party comprised of representatives of interested organisations and individuals. They would examine the problem and report back with a recommended solution to

the County. The Council was asked to agree to put a decision on hold until they had received and considered the report. Following this request, a meeting was held on 26 January with Cllr Bobby Bennett (at that date portfolio holder for Equalities and Communities) when the Trust asked her to form a Working Party in accordance with the terms we had previously handed to the County Council. She said that she would consider this.

Her response was received on 1 February explaining that the County were proceeding with their decision to close the Record Office but offering to convene a working party to decide how best retain some of the archive material that might be most important locally in the town. This offer was unacceptable to the Trust.

As a consequence of the County's decision, the Trust prepared and lodged a formal Referral to the County Council Monitoring Officer explaining the concern being expressed by multiple organisations in the town including the Bury Society.

In the Referral, BTT noted the Council's duty properly to consider alternatives, as well as giving the correct weight to the national historic importance of Bury St Edmunds. The Council was also asked to assess and quantify the extra costs and time spent travelling through to Ipswich in perpetuity for West Suffolk residents if the Bury archive was to be closed.

Additional factors we noted included the loss of the educational value of the current archives, and the likelihood

that the location of the archives in Ipswich would result in fewer deposits in future, plus the environmental damage of all the extra travelling involved.

BTT's submission concluded that "the lack of a report which examines all relevant aspects of this matter and justifies this proposed closure, the failure to consult and, not least, the fact that this proposal was buried within your authority's 2024-25 budget raises serious concerns".

It went on to state it was considered that "...the proposed actions by your Council to be detrimental to good administration ..." and that "... if not properly remedied could generate an application against the Council for judicial review."

The Trust's submission has been acknowledged by the County Council.

The annual Budget meeting of the County Council was held on 15 February when an attempt to seek an amendment to consider the Working

Party proposal raised by BTT was rejected and the budget was approved including the closure of the Bury Record Office.

The offer of a working party to decide on and where crucial documents should be stored in future was repeated by the County but this is not an acceptable substitute for the loss of the Bury Record Office and its facilities. At the time of going to press a response from the County Council Monitoring Officer is awaited.

John Popham

