



April 2023

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 Secretary:

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The Board values your feedback and contributions.



11 HBS – Members’ Visit

Trustee and site director Paul Rynsard welcomed the BTT’s Patron Jo Churchill MP to 11 High Baxter Street for a site visit recently.

Works to the property are drawing to completion and the Board would like to invite all members for a viewing on **Friday, May 12 2023 (4pm-6pm).**

Board members will be on hand to answer any questions and we are certain that everyone will be impressed by the work done to safeguard and improve this important property in Bury St Edmunds. Do please let Gaye know if you are likely to attend.



Jo Churchill and Paul Rynsard at 11 HBS.



Conservation Training getting back on track.

As many readers will know, the 2021-22 academic year was a challenging one in respect of the programme for work BTT do with West Suffolk College.





In the aftermath of Covid we were not able to take students out or send in guest speakers or workshop leaders for half of the academic year. This meant that the programme was condensed into one and a half terms and consequently, some activities did not take place.

In the current academic year things have improved **considerably** and we have been able to organise many more of the activities, giving opportunities for students to be exposed to, and take part in traditional building activities.



So far this year we have been able to take two groups of carpentry students to Foxhall Woods where they learned about selection of trees and conversion to timber for shingles and battens. The students were able to get some hands-on experience including

log splitting using traditional hand tools.

The feedback from staff and students was all positive and an enjoyable time was had by all. Despite it being November, the weather was kind to us.

Paul Rynsard kindly provided another opportunity for a group of students to visit 11 High Baxter Street where they were able to see the historic building restoration work and new build extension approaching completion.



A highlight of the year occurred in early February when a first-year group of students were treated to a fascinating tour of the Bulmer Brick & Tile Company works where they were able to see the whole process from digging out clay, through to hand-made brick production including the firing in traditional kilns.

The visit included a very informative talk by Tony Minter including a presentation of their growing collection of rare bricks and mortars.

Most recently, the first-year bricklaying students were taken on a Town Tour led by Peter Riddington. Students were given an interesting insight into some of the History of Bury St Edmunds and shown examples of stone, flint and brick masonry from



different periods and different styles including some of 'how not to do it' in respect of cement mortar with soft brickwork.

We also managed to fit in an additional visit this year to 8 Angel Hill, which is owned by the National Trust, but currently unoccupied so that the students could look around and see some of the original building and some changes over the years, including next door in the old stables where they were able to see BCR Infinity Architects office within the old stable block.

Still to come this year is a planned programme including:

- A one-day hands-on training workshop on wattle and daub led by specialist, Gemma Sayers.
- A town tour looking at timber framed buildings led by Peter Riddington.
- 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.
- Lastly, in June, a two-day workshop is planned where the students will be building a flint and brickwork wall under the

instruction of specialist, Andy Cunningham.

We are also hoping to get two PODS built at the College to Bury Town Trust designs with one in clay lump and one in traditional timber frame. We have received a very generous offer of materials for the bases and a demonstration and talk on this traditional method of slab forming.

Our programme is evolving and, whilst we have not been able to deliver every activity in the original list, by the end of the summer term, we will have delivered many valuable opportunities for the construction students and we hope that some of them might be inspired to develop their skills in the traditional crafts that are still much in demand with so many historic and protected buildings.

We have also seen the beginnings of a conversation with English Heritage and we are looking forward to building that relationship further and developing the effectiveness of the course with the College.

Alan Wilkinson – Board Member



Former Post Office site

The re-opening of Market Thoroughfare in February marked the effective completion of the redevelopment of the former Post

Office site. A task that took some 6½ years in total.

BTT's involvement with the project goes back to 2016 when the Trust prepared preliminary drawings for the redevelopment of the site. Just as these were completed, we



Front view of the old Post Office

discovered that the then St Edmundsbury Borough Council was endeavouring to acquire the site. After discussion with the Council, it was agreed that we would work with them.

The aim was to produce a scheme that retained the fine Victorian facade but redeveloped the remainder of the site. Initially the Council thought about inviting a few local architectural practices to submit designs but, in view of the importance of the location, the Trust pressed for a full architectural competition which was agreed.



Before: back view of PO building

While retaining the Victorian Frontage onto Cornhill the competition brief sought to enhance the link between the historic town and the arc shopping centre. It required the creation of a new retail frontage on St Andrews Street South as well as along Market Thoroughfare in order to add interest and vitality to the currently blank walls. There was also a condition to “create activity” on upper-level floors which was “likely to be residential”.

The winning design by Donald Insall Associates, with two ground floor retail units and 11 flats above, has achieved these objectives in a distinctive style. It not only relates well to its surroundings with a subtle mix of ashlar and brick, but provides a widened vital link between the arc and Cornhill.

Agreeing the final detail of the scheme to be constructed was not without its difficulties. The tenders came in significantly over budget which resulted in the Council simplifying important elements of the detail. BTT, Bury Society and the Town Council, objected to these changes.

BTT submitted detailed comments and also pressed the Council in discussion with them explaining that “the integrity of the original scheme should be respected” in part because the land to the north of Market Throughfare could be redeveloped in the future.

This resulted in the key details being re-instated to address the concerns that had been expressed. The amended planning permission was finally granted in July 2020. The finished scheme greatly enhances the



After: the rear of the building

area and improves access between Market Place and the arc.

John Popham – Board Member

DIARY DATE

Please note that the BTT AGM 2023 will be held on Tuesday, October 31 at the Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds (start 7pm).