



CHURCHGATE AREA ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No 57 April 2017

www.churchgateassoc.org.uk

The Association promotes the interests of all residents and businesses, not only in Churchgate Street, but also in the general area of all those streets that lead directly off it.

An Invitation to the April Social

Our next Social Evening will take place at 19.00 on 21 April at the Unitarian Meeting House when the speaker will be the Mayor of St. Edmundsbury, Cllr. Julia Wakelam. She will be speaking on a Green Issue of her choice.

After the talk our normal upmarket drinks and nibbles will be served at no charge.

We hope that as many of you as possible would like to join us.

NEWS IN THE GRID

Broadband

It is confirmed that the Broadband cabinet in Bridewell Lane will be in place by the time of the Social - it is promised for the end of January. We are still pushing Suffolk County Council for another cabinet in Whiting Street.

The Town Centre Master Plan

The TCMP has come about because of the planned 5000 new houses that the town has to have. Richard Summers (past president of the Royal Institute of Town Planning and who lives in Whiting Street) is the CAA representative on the working party.

The CAA, Bury Society and others held a successful meeting in October about the “pre-consultation” on issues and options for the TCMP. The CAA distributed a circular to all residents and businesses in the area about “Traffic in the Medieval Grid”. It aimed to “achieve a safe and attractive environment to preserve the atmosphere of the medieval quarter”. It also proposed a one-way traffic system and an extension of pedestrian priority areas as “shared space”. Most people who responded indicated that the detailed traffic proposals were unacceptable.

Nonetheless, there was general support for the main aims that had been proposed: Remove through traffic particularly HGVs: Reduce traffic volumes and speeds: Extend pedestrian priority: Provide for the needs of cyclists and the disabled: Extend resident and business only car parking: Divert visitors to edge of town centre car parks. The CAA committee thinks the TCMP should take a comprehensive approach to traffic circulation, volume, speeds and car parking in the Medieval Grid in the wider context of changes in the town centre and the expansion of the town as a whole. It wants more drastic measures to reduce traffic speeds including automatic speed feedback signs, pavement “build outs” and raised pedestrian crossings, including a new one on Crown Street between the Cathedral and the Norman Tower.

There will be an **OPEN MEETING** on Wednesday 22 March from 6.30pm at The Athenaeum, Angel Hill to discuss the Borough Council's Consultants draft report on the Issues and Options for the Bury St. Edmunds Town Centre Master Plan.

Zone D traffic review undertaken by Alpha Parking.

This report can be viewed on:

[http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/parking/Parking/Bury St Edmunds car parks/upload/Phase-2-Consultation-Final-Report-November-2016.pdf](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/parking/Parking/Bury_St_Edmunds_car_parks/upload/Phase-2-Consultation-Final-Report-November-2016.pdf)

Litter Bins

Thanks to Mark Walsh, who is Head of Operations at the Borough Council and a great friend and supporter of our work in the Grid. He has listened to our pleas and installed two more litter bins - one at the top of Churchgate Street and one outside the BT exchange. We owe him a bottle of whisky.....but, maybe that would be seen as an inducement.

Police News

Suffolk Police are appealing for witnesses and urging communities to be vigilant following a series of break-ins across West Suffolk. Anyone with any information about these crimes, or who believes they may have witnessed any suspicious activity in their local community, is asked to contact Western Area CID on 101, or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Chief Superintendent David Skevington says: "We recommend people use the 'close it, lock it, check it' system for home security, double checking that windows and doors are properly secured to help prevent the risk of burglary. A light on can be a simple tactic to deter a thief when no one's at home, and you should avoid displaying valuables where they can be seen by would-be burglars.

An A-Z list of crime prevention advice is available on the Suffolk Police website: <http://www.suffolk.police.uk/advice/crime-prevention-z>.

David Skevington highlights the following **home security advice**

1. Consider fitting burglar alarms to deter a thief from targeting your home.
2. Use timer switches to turn on lights and radios to give the impression that someone is at home.
3. Never leave spare keys in a hiding place outside, such as under the doormat or flowerpot.
4. Ensure that valuables can't be seen from the window.

Traffic News

One of our members recently noticed cars using the pathways through the Great Churchyard as a short-cut between Crown Street and Honey Hill and remembered that bollards used to be in place between the Cathedral and the Norman Tower to prevent this happening. I contacted Jo Raynor, our borough councillor, to report this and within a very short time the bollards are back in place (and with the Cathedral vergers holding a key). Thank you Jo for such swift action. Alan Broadway

Membership Subscriptions

Our membership year started in October, so if you haven't paid for the current year you are invited to do so now. Membership is still only £3 per person and entitles you to two social events per year (one at the AGM) with speakers and refreshments. Please renew by cheque (Churchgate Area Association) or cash to 25 Guildhall Street, IP33 1QD. Judy Broadway, Membership Secretary

WHAT'S ON IN THE GRID

Arcadia by Tom Stoppard
Theatre Royal 30 May - 6 June

As You Like It by William Shakespeare
Picnic-in-the-Gardens, Abbey Gardens 4 - 8 July

For more information go to www.burytheatreworkshop.org.uk

If you have any events that you would like publicised in the CAA Newsletter please send details to the Editor

History of the Hatter Street Cinema. Part Two by Pat Church. Continued from the January CAA Newsletter.....

Time not being on our side I immediately wrote an open letter to several independent operators, offering an addition to their estate, the most interesting one was Picturehouse cinemas A predominantly Art house circuit, a concept that was far away from constantly competing against cineworld, Problem was they couldn't consider us for at least another six months but were most interested. We couldn't lay idle for that amount of time, so we as a team put forward a solution to Hollywood by all lowering our pay rates and run on a skeleton staff for the next six months, so after only a three week closure we re-opened the doors, now it may have been due to the publicity of our closing, as there was very little press on the re-opening, but we had an upsurge in the business and was ticking over very nicely, in fact so nicely Hollywood would no longer relinquish the lease when Picturehouse came looking us up. I really thought we had blown our chances, and for the next year kept in constant touch with them.

Sad, in some ways to say it was the recession that brought the trading of Hollywood almost to its knees again, of the seven sites one by one they started to go down Fakenham, Lowerstoft, Ipswich, it was about that time we all knew 'we gotta be next' so I earnestly wrote to Picturehouse cinemas And paved the way for discussion with Hollywood for them to take us on

So in February 2010 Picturehouse cinemas came into Bury st Edmunds with the same vision as myself that would challenge the common perception of cinema entertainment and another phase in the history of this building began.

The first stage of our refurbishment works Was the auditorias they have been updated to a very high standard (locally known as the wow factor) the state of the art projection technology, including 3D and satellite equipment, has also been installed.

The second stage was our new façade and identity: incorporating a new entrance that would move us away from the shared entrance with the attached Bingo Club

Whilst all these works were going on we were planning and building The third stage (and perhaps the jewel in the crown) this would be the transformation of the empty premises adjoining the cinema, which once complete would comprise a delicatessen style restaurant and bar. Going to the pictures will no longer be an in out venture, as you will be able to combine a relaxing drink or a sociable bite to eat with a good movie:

And the entertainment on offer doesn't stop there! We also screen live transmissions of world class productions from the New York Metropolitan Opera and the National Theatre via satellite on the big screen: joining these will be a season of live broadcasts of ballet from the Bolshoi in Moscow and the Opera de Paris.

So coming full circle, the Abbeygate is now once again the place to be!

But after all this work and effort we still had stormy waters ahead which were way beyond our control. It appeared that Picturehouse backers dried up and pulled out overnight, leaving them high and dry, so to speak. And would you believe, it was Cineworld that stepped in and bailed them out it seemed they had been looking closely at this arm of the business and the steady growth over a short few years, but as it was far removed from their own type of operation, to buy into a well established Arts cinema group seemed an ideal solution.

Unfortunately for Picturehouse the Cineworld finance package enabled them to take control of Picturehouse by running it as a separate company alongside their own multiplex circuit with the promise that 'nothing would change' 'yea sure' I've heard that all before.

After only a few short months the minoppolis commission picked up on this and decreed that Cineworld would have the complete monopoly in certain towns and counties, to help control this they decreed that at least three sites must be sold off or closed. Aberdeen, Bury & Cambridge. . Now this was something that none of us could have foreseen and that air of uncertainty reared it's ugly head again.. As Aberdeen was leased from the local council this was going to revert back to their control and continue it's Art House presence in the city. Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds were going to be sold off as a package deal' this would make the offer very attractive to potential buyers, so let the sale begin. Over the next few months several potential buyers came to view what we had to offer: Some just to nose around, others that wanted to stamp their brand of operation into Bury which was a complete contrast to what we had achieved with Picturehouse and I made this very clear at my weekly meetings with them.

Then it was suddenly announced that Cineworld were changing the goalpost and keeping the Arts Cinema Cambridge and selling off their multiplex complex, that meant we would become a stand alone site, sink or swim on our own merits. Once this news reached all the potential buyers they started dropping out one by one, it seemed Cambridge was the carrot and they thought Bury was just not big enough to go it alone. . . their loss. . . Waiting in the background during these negotiation's was a Mr Tony Jones this was the man who with the current MD Lyn Goleby co-founded Picturehouse Cinemas some 25 years earlier, although he dropped out of the picturehouse scene some years to concentrate on running Arts Film festivals up and down the country, he has complete control of the Cambridge, yearly film festival.

This then set the scene for him to be the front runner in the Abbeygate sell off stakes, and with the support of Lyn Goleby took control of the Abbeygate Picturehouse on June 6th 2015.

Overnight our fortunes changed yet again with many of the support systems being turned off at midnight that day. It really was going to be a sink or swim operation until we got on our feet. Luckily for us we have such a loyal and understanding customer base and they supported us unreservedly whilst the difficult transition was taking place. Cineworld that now controlled Picture house started to close off the IT systems that we had been buying into on a customer client basis, a months notice was given that the web site and box office system would be discontinued,

A local Cambridge company was commissioned to create a tailored system for us so as to take over our existing systems, just this one area created so many problems with memberships, advance booking tracking, our live transmission events and many more I.T functions.

It was during this period I in agreement with the new owners decided to step back from the control of this new concept of everything computerised, this area of the business had been increasingly causing me so much stress over the past year, it was obvious something had to give, so after consultation with our new owners a deal was struck that I would hand the reins over to my deputy Jonathan who was well into this new innovation and I would concentrate on the more public relations and live events also on the maintenance and upkeep of the inner fabric of the building.

I have to admit that although filled with in trepidation as to how I would feel about stepping back I need not have worried, it all seems to have settled nicely and my new roll has made little different except from relieving me some of the IT stress that was making me unwell.

About three months into this new process we were informed the Bingo Hall that shares the property with us was closing it's doors in a months time: Obviously being the same landlord we would have the first option, something I have been waiting in the wings for years to happen. But are we in a position to take it on right now, I need to put my convincing hat on again and talk to the money

men, Headed by Mr Tony Jones, although now or never. I feel quite confident that a deal will be struck and an expansion of the Abbeygate Cinema will happen. . . I have been closely involved in drawing up plans for a new screen and entrance to be added. But hang on there: It has just been announced that Tony Jones is stepping down as Managing Director of the Abbeygate Cinema and is handing the mantle over to a Mr Alastair Oatey this was a high ranking person in the Ex-Picturehouse cinemas who will take control with immediate effect along with Mr Tony Jones who will be a silent member of the new board. The development of the building has now been revitalised and planners and architects are currently working on the next phase. So if history is anything to go by, we aint finished yet.

Your Committee 2016/17

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this has come a little early for us.it'

