



## CHURCHGATE AREA ASSOCIATION

**The Association caters for the interests of all residents, businesses and property owners, not only in Churchgate Street, but within the entire medieval grid**

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October 2023

### **Chairman's Report for the Churchgate Area Association 2022-23**

**The Annual General Meeting will be held on 28 October 2023 at the Unitarian Meeting House at 19.00 to which all residents and businesses are welcome**

After the main business of the AGM Alex McWhirter, Curator of Moyses Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds will entertain us with a tragic tale entitled:

#### **Infanticide and Insanity - A Victorian Suffolk Tragedy**

Wine and Canapés will be served after the meeting

**Community** One of the great things about a community is that it enables us to welcome people in a way that we could not as individuals and the sense of a true Community is what we bring to it. It's like a ship: we all need to pull together to keep it on course. This is how I look at our very special and, I sometimes think, unique community here in the Grid as it is a group of houses and businesses within two minutes of a town centre; with so many friends of differing ages, differing backgrounds and differing cultures enabling us to live happily as a whole. We have welcomed many friends from the US, Canada and from Ukraine who have enriched our lives enormously.

We are privileged to live where we do.

**Membership** Our membership of the Churchgate Area Association stands at 360 and is a significant signpost to what has been achieved by your committee over the last few years - the commitment of your committee to the wellbeing of our area is total, culminating in the glorious Coronation Street Party so ably organised and run by Patricia Clifton and her colleagues.

**Congratulations** to Libby Ranzetta on receiving her British Citizen Award at the Palace of Westminster: so very well deserved! This award was for Libby's achievements with EcoCarriers Bury St. Edmunds (whose strap line is: "Pushing pedals for a cleaner, greener town"), Abbey 1000, the Abbey Gardens, Bury Water Meadows Group, and last, but very much not least, she has had huge success in running the Bury Bike Train which is a way for children to ride their bicycles to and from school in a group, supported by adult cyclists. There are now 17 children cycling to school rather than being driven.

There is also a 'Library' of bicycles for children to borrow.

EcoCarriers BSE hired a wonderful new 'chariot' - a new pedicab, or bike taxi, for the month of August, to transport two passengers around the town. EcoCarriers BSE have decided to purchase this pedicab and fundraising is now taking place. Rides can be booked via 01284 413441 and there is no charge, although a minimum donation of £5 is suggested. EcoCarriers BSE is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society. Here is their Chairman, Libby Ranzetta, in her new chariot.



**Locality Grant** We have access to a Locality Grant which our District Councillors, Jo Rayner and Julia Wakelam, hold for our area and which can be spent on improvements to our district of the town. Jo has a total of £2500 for this year (May to May) and she can receive applications of any amount from £100+. Have you a particular gripe about anything local that could be improved with a grant? If so, do let your committee know.

**Where are the 30 extra residents' parking bays?** For the last 9 years we have been vociferously complaining and campaigning regarding the lack of action on the provision of an extra 30 residents' parking bays. It started in September 2014 when we heard that a West Suffolk Borough Council (as it then was) Officer, Steve Boor, had been allocated £30,000 to investigate permit parking zones, starting with Zone D. After 6 years we heard that the 30 parking spaces were promised **before April 2021**.

NOW? The last communiqué we had was that the Traffic Regulation Order had been agreed in February this year and, for those with sharp eyes, you will have seen new signs being erected in Westgate Street [presently covered up] so, perhaps, things are moving on at last.

**BUT**, the latest is that Suffolk Highways has made a legal error in the last consultation and must re-write it which now renders the February 2023 TRO invalid. There will now be another consultation (the 6<sup>th</sup>). What a wicked waste of taxpayers' money: as Cllr Julia Wakelam remarked, 'Words fail me!' I concur.

I have also been told by a senior Highways engineer that Highways had allocated a fund to install the extra residents' bays some years ago but the money was spent on something else.

I have a list of the 'Timeline of the extra-spaces' consultations' prepared for us by Cathy Friel if anyone would like to read it. Just ask me, but it makes very sad reading.

Zone D permit applications are now having to add an address to prove that the resident actually lives in the area which has resulted in there being more spaces available: this is excellent and has had quite a noticeably good effect.

While talking about parking you may have seen that, after waiting 4 years, the 20mph sign has reappeared on the 'gateway' when driving into town from the south on Crown Street. We have been pushing for this for some time as there is still excessive speeding particularly down Crown Street and Whiting Street and up Churchgate Street.

Many residents are concerned that the 20mph speed limit in the town is being ignored. After a meeting with the senior officers at the County Council, whose brief is Growth, Highways and Infrastructure, plus the head of Transport Strategy, it was agreed that the County Council would arrange for some automatic traffic speed counters to be put down on Crown Street, Churchgate Street, Westgate Street, Bridewell Lane and Whiting Street as the drivers on these streets are deemed to be the worst offenders at breaking the speed limit.

**Pollution and EV charging** A sub-committee, headed up by Geoffrey House, has been addressing the problem of the effect that pollution is having on us all and is pressing on hard with the installation of EV chargers in our streets.

The latter is going to be extremely difficult to achieve as most of our pavements are too narrow for the placing of chargers, and parking bays must be considered, but the County Council (like every other Council in England) has received £1,362,000 of funding from the Department of Transport as part of the Local EV infrastructure (LEVI) pilot scheme. This will see a total investment of around £2.75m for SCC, thanks to additional contributions such as commercial funding.

Suffolk County Council hopes to install community EV charging, PV solar power and battery storage at over 30 sites in urban and rural areas. Inevitably the placing of EV chargers in rural areas is much easier but Geoffrey is working with Ubitricity, the contractors who are involved, as well as WSC and SCC to achieve chargers in our area.

**Public Space Protection Orders** These give police and council extra powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and are being renewed. This is good news.

**Cumulative Impact Assessment areas** This is not such good news. A CIA is used by West Suffolk Council to help to restrict the number of licensed premises or the extension of licensing hours in the town centre to ensure their customers do not add to the existing problems of crime, disorder, or anti-social behaviour. The Special Area Policy (as it then was) was introduced in 2009, after a campaign by the CAA with the support of our late Councillor, Paul Farmer. It was renewed in 2014 and was renamed the CIP (Cumulative Impact Policy) following the recommendation of the police and was extended to include the town centre. While it is apparent that there are some problems with noise and disturbance, West Suffolk Council did not feel there was sufficient evidence to justify retaining a CIA policy. The CAA

Licensing committee is most disappointed with this decision and will keep a watching brief. If anyone needs to report issues of ASB, please email: [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

**Honey/biscuit coloured grit** The west side pavement in Whiting Street South had been dangerous and very uneven but we were delighted when it was resurfaced with honey biscuit coloured grit after we had made strong representations that this pavement should not be resurfaced in black tarmac - so very out of keeping with our old houses.

**Sycamore trees growing out of house gratings in Churchgate Street and Westgate Street, and Buddleia - friend or foe?**

It depends on whether these plants flourish in a garden or on the inner edge of the pavement.

Here is a photograph of the splendid Peter Layland who, almost single handedly, tries to keep our pavements weed free. He works hard around town and is always cheerful, listening to his music as he walks. It has been a particularly difficult year for him as West Suffolk Council (understandably, for the sake of the bees) banned glyphosate weedkillers which means that buddleia has proliferated at an alarming rate.



Other weeds and grasses have increased rapidly and are difficult to control unless another method of extermination is found. The trend for leaving nature to its own devices has become divisive and some residents worry that the neglect will lead to long term damage - i.e., after 3 years of doing nothing there are 2 or 3 sycamore trees growing out of cellar gratings in the Grid which will grow into large trees if they are not obliterated. While many local residents support the reduction of herbicide use, there is scepticism: was the policy intended to be environmentally friendly - or part of a council cost-cutting measure? Have contingency plans been put in place? I have been in touch with Cllr. Frank Stennett who is a West Suffolk Councillor for St. Olaves Ward in Bury, and who is putting his weight behind this move to eradicate the weeds. New methods need to be trialled including the hot water removal system: Waterkracht. This business can be located at [info@waterkracht.nl](mailto:info@waterkracht.nl) or the UK agent:

Multevo Hot Water Weed Control based in Darwen, Lancashire - [info@multevo.co.uk](mailto:info@multevo.co.uk)



**Coronation Street Party** This was our third Street Party; amazingly this year's was in glorious sunshine which made it even more special. Very ably organised by Patricia Clifton and her committee it was a remarkable success with almost four hundred people attending, an ice cream van and 93 donated cakes. (And delicious they were too.) It was great to see so many people stay on well past the (supposed) closing time, chatting, and having fun which meant that we did not re-open Whiting Street as we should have done at 5 o'clock but nobody minded. We were enormously grateful, as always, to the 6<sup>th</sup> Bury St. Edmunds Scouts for generously storing our four hundred metres of bunting and lending us a great number of tables and chairs. We were assisted by the Unitarian Meeting House and the United Reformed Church and, of course, by many, many willing and cheerful residents of the Grid.

We were also thankful and delighted to receive a £500 locality grant from the Bury St. Edmunds Town Council arranged by Cllr. Jo Rayner as well as substantial donations from:  
Churchgates Accountants  
Dignity Funeral Services (Fulchers)  
Guildhall Studios  
Hayward Moon  
Jackson-Stops

We are truly grateful to these businesses.

**A Floral Crown fit for a King** The designer of the fabulous new floral crown on the corner of Crown Street and Honey Hill was Duncan Drye of Vikings Forge. He also fabricated this beautiful structure, and beautiful it is as you can see from the attached photograph. The structural engineering was carried out by Jonathan Morrish of Morrish Structural Engineers of Whiting Street who told me that it is very well anchored into the ground to prevent it blowing away. Woolpit Nurseries supplied the plants, and the Abbey Gardens Team prepared the ground and carried out the planting.

Bury Town Council and West Suffolk Council sponsored the Crown which was unveiled on 17 May by Barbara Segall, an award-winning horticulturalist and freelance garden writer. Her wonderful new book 'The Secret Gardens of the Southeast: A Private Tour' was published last Autumn and has been described as "A tour of some of the UK's most beguiling gardens in the counties of Kent, Sussex and Surrey, the counties that exemplify 'the garden of England'".



**Good with your hands? Need something repairing?** I am delighted to announce that there is now a Repair Café taking place every other month in the Unitarian Meeting House in Churchgate Street, organised by Mark Wharton. This is how he describes his efforts:

***“Repair Café, Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds***

***Next Repair Cafés will take place on Saturday 11 November and Saturday 13 January 2024 at 11.00 a.m.***

*Duration: 3 hr*

*Public: Anyone on or off Facebook*

*Bin it? No way!*

*Book a slot for your repair by emailing [repair.cafe.bse@gmail.com](mailto:repair.cafe.bse@gmail.com)*

*We have a team of repairers who can fix:*

- Bikes*
- Electrical/Electronics*
- Toys*
- Knitting*
- Sewing*
- Wood/Furniture*
- Textiles*
- Computers*
- Jewellery*
- Toys*
- Sharpen anything*

*Challenge us - try to beat the dancing lobster for the weirdest repair  
There'll be refreshments available on the day.*

*The Repair Café is an international charity. Our repairers are all volunteers. There are no guarantees that we will be able to repair anything, but the point is to have a go, share knowledge and skills and to try not to chuck something in the bin. All repairs are free, but a small donation is always welcome to cover the costs of the venue and insurance."*



This is David Emerson who completely and brilliantly took apart and mended my leaking kettle. There is wonderful fun atmosphere in the café while the repairs are taking place - talk about toys for the boys!

To book your slot at the Café, email: [repair.cafe.bse@gmail.com](mailto:repair.cafe.bse@gmail.com)

**SOS and SOSS: Save our Swifts and Save our Suffolk Swifts** An update on the Swift situation. Last year part of my Report featured the dire state of the Swift population whose numbers are in freefall. The British Trust for Ornithology recorded a 69% decline in numbers. It is believed numbers have fallen further in the last two years from 59,000 pairs to 48,000. Swifts and three other cavity-nesting species - the house sparrow, swallow and house martin are now on the red list of endangered British birds meaning that they are at risk of extinction. A desperate situation.

Arriving in England in the summer to breed, the high, soaring scimitar shapes in the sky, flying at almost 69 mph, swifts are one of the great joys of life. As one of the fastest birds on earth, the swift is quite astonishing - it is capable of travelling an average daily total of 497 miles, not bad for a bird that is only 16 centimetres long. Swifts, graceful and sooty brown, migrate every year from sub-Saharan Africa, refuelling in Portugal and France, but otherwise sleeping, eating, mating and grooming themselves mid-air on their 4,000-mile migration. The weather this year has not been at all conducive to us lying on our backs in the garden and being mesmerised by these wonderful birds swooping and chattering above our heads, but we all love them.

Anyone can circulate a Parliamentary petition and, if it receives 100,000 votes, then it would be allowed to be debated in the House. Such a petition named, "Make swift bricks compulsory in new housing to help red-listed birds" was circulated and received 109,000 votes. This was then debated in Parliament, and you can watch the debate or read the transcript by cutting and pasting the https below into your computer.

*It begins: "This is an incredibly important issue, with a huge number of people having signed the petition. The campaigning has helped raise awareness of the plight of this iconic and much endangered species. It is a fairly simple ask in terms of putting measures in place to provide for endangered species in new-build housing, but this is an incredibly urgent debate as these birds are, quite frankly, running out of time. Swifts, house martins, starlings and house sparrows recently joined the international red list of species experiencing sharp population declines, and it is essential that we take action to prevent their extinction. In the UK, the swift population has declined by 69%. Swift bricks are one measure that could help turn the corner for those four species.*

*There are two further advantages to the brick over the box. First, although the brick is primarily aimed at swifts, it can also offer a home to another species that is in decline, and which was the music of my childhood, the house sparrow. We do not see them as much as we used to in urban areas.*

*Secondly, particularly in the south-east of England, the brick protects swifts from being evicted by the parakeet. The six swift boxes on my house have been overtaken by parakeets, which are able to widen the opening because it is wooden, rather than brick. Using bricks would give other species opportunities and would protect swifts from being evicted by more aggressive species.'*

Watch the debate: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBC6vjIFcag>

Read the transcript: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-10/debates/203F1289-9D61-415A-9429-984EFBF599F5/NewHousing.SwiftBricks>



This beautiful sculpture of two Swifts is situated in 'Sculpture by the Lakes' a beautiful park that nestles in 26 acres of glorious Dorset countryside in a tiny village called Pallington a few miles east of Dorchester. Simon Gudgeon is the sculptor and owner. Well worth a visit if you on your way to the West Country.

**Your committee** All your committee members have been assiduous in working hard for our community this year with much work being carried out on the Accounts, EV charging and Air Quality, Licensing, Membership, the Newsletter, Planning, Secretarial and Traffic and Parking, and I wish to place on record my great thanks to them all without whom nothing of what we try to achieve would be possible. For the committee I have nothing but praise for your dedication, commitment, and the fun we have working together.

We are extremely sorry to be losing Nick Moon this year who has been our Treasurer for 10 years and who has given 10 years of valiant service to our community. I will miss his wise advice and assistance very much.

**Vivien Gainsborough Foot**  
**October 2023**

**STOP PRESS! Be the first to hear:**

There will be a most dramatic modern rendering of Shakespeare's Pericles in the magical setting of Ickworth Park in August next year staged by the Theatre Royal.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, in Lebanon, escapes assassination by sailing to Tarsus (now modern-day Turkey) but is dramatically shipwrecked and washes up on the shores of Pentapolis (Libya) where he meets and marries the beautiful Thaisa only for her to drown on their way back to Tarsus in another shipwreck. Thaisa magically survives and, thinking Pericles is dead, becomes a priestess in the Temple of Diana.

Meanwhile there is a plan to kidnap Pericles' daughter Marina and sell her to a brothel, but the brothel rents her out as a tutor to respectable young ladies. The goddess Diana appears to Pericles in a dream and tells him that he will find Thaisa in the Temple; therefore, all ends happily with the reunion of the family.