

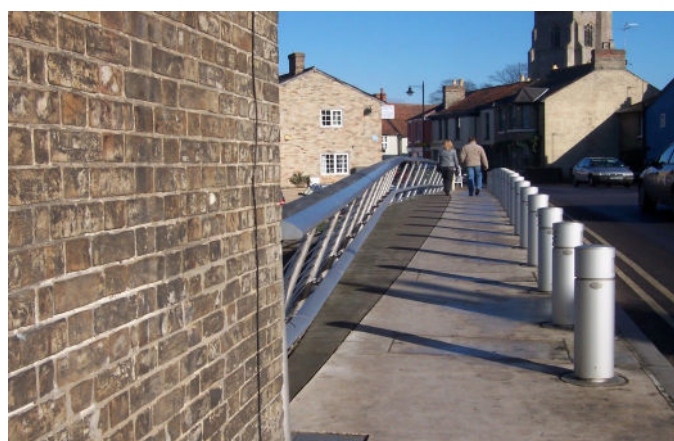
The SUDBURY SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2012



FORTY YEARS ON 1972 TO 2012



FROM OUR PRESIDENT

THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

The only wonder is that the Sudbury Society is only 40 years young! It seems to have been around for ever, and it is hard to imagine life without it.

The event which brought things to a head was the forthcoming abolition of the self governing, Borough status of the town scheduled for 30th March 1974. This was also the fate of nearly 350 English and Welsh Borough towns. One might characterise that as the start of the managerialist, centralised culture which has intensified ever since. Understandably, I suppose, it was assumed that amalgamating local authorities could achieve economies of scale etc, although what was not properly faced up to were the less easily measurable dis-economies of bigness, such as the soul destroying bureaucracy and loss of institutional memory, which goes with more impersonal entities, governmental or private.

At all events, 56 Sudburians, with a few outsiders, congregated at Salters Hall (then a school) on 14th January 1972 and unanimously agreed to form the Society as a charity using the model constitution of the Civic Society (now itself abolished - another sign of the times?)

The founding committee deserves to be remembered and honoured and comprised Will Barker, the Mayor that year who became President; my father Alan Phillips elected as Chairman, with the remaining committee members being Eileen Hoare, Geoff Kisby, Betty Bone, James Blackie, Philip Richardson, Diana Green, Mrs Wolfe, and Mr B McCann. In the next couple of years some came and some went, amongst the former being D V Norton, T Howlett, Tony Moore, Barry Wall, Peter Hoare, Sheila McLachlan, Kathleen Perry, John Blatch, Harry Eady, Jackie Kramers, Mrs Lillie, Mr S B N Williams, Mrs Black and Colonel Torrance Law. In the first year there were 60 or so members, 80 the next and 100 by 1974.

A study of the minutes of those founding years throws up some familiar preoccupations, not least of which was a by-pass for the town (the Society took over the work of the by-pass committee and its funds of £4.58! Incidentally, the Society's initial subscription was 50p).

They had to deal with a Sudbury Museum (which came and went but should certainly return); pylons on Friars Meadow (mercifully resisted); hauling Ballingdon Hall up the hill; signage around the town; house plaques (a big win); tree preservation, conversion of houses to offices in Friars Street and demolitions in North Street; problems around development of Brundon Lane and a threatened demolition of part of Francis weavers' cottages in East Street. And so it went on.

One of the first campaigns the Society got involved with was to save the best terrace of weavers' cottages in the town - 18 in stepped groups of 6 - in Inkerman Row (built to celebrate the Suffolk Regiment's heroics there). As has been repeatedly the case, classically with the Corn Exchange battle of 1962 (where I had to form an Association especially to unite the opposition to the demolition already consented to by the Borough Council) there can be tension with local councils. That is hardly surprising, because there are usually two respectable sides to big planning decisions and money is apt to win the day over heritage.

At all events, the Society decided early that councillors would be conflicted if they were also on the Society committee.

I suppose everyone thinks their own town is special, but I well remember that inaugural meeting and the palpable love and pride of Sudbury which came through and still, mercifully, does. The MP Keith Stainton, the county Planning Officer James Gorst, the chair of the Stour-Colne Trust Lord Abinger and the Mayor all endorsed the special duty on each generation of Sudburians to look after their town.

The world has, if anything, got more difficult since 1972. Local knowledge and loyalty across the whole country have less influence in the corridors of power - mobility, work pressure and rabid materialism and individualism have seen to that, along with an ever more dominant metropolitanism, where an increasing number of MPs and Peers really have no sense of the dynamics of country town living. We also suffer, as I suspect we always have done, from being a border town. A large slice of those who use Sudbury for work, shopping and recreation, vote in another county.

Suffice to say that I reflect on the town of my upbringing, which had a third of the present population, and remember for example its plethora of locally owned and run shops and businesses whose proprietors were well represented on the council; the four Borough Courts, all conducted in the town hall - the quarter sessions court, the county court, the magistrates court and the coroner's court - all gone. And of course there were the two hospitals, St Leonards and Walnuttree, now in their death throes. I also fondly remember the annual Carnivals, the two cinemas and so on.

Despite all this I am by no means a pessimist. Sudbury is still marked by its people, most of whom are grateful to live here. We still have a wonderful diversity of thriving businesses, not least our silk mills; Gainsborough's House is a jewel in any crown and, like the enviable Quay Theatre, was not here in my youth; the fabulous water meadows are evermore appreciated (what other town can rival them?); the market hill, which Sir John Betjeman wrote so glowingly about in defence of the Corn Exchange, is still intact and still a magnet; the old heart of the town, indeed, is still largely preserved, and its Victorian additions more and more appreciated along with the medieval legacy; the three great gothic churches wonderfully punctuate our skyline (and, again, which other town of our size can boast such a trio).

So, we rightly celebrate 40 years of commitment, resistance and success (with a few failures, of course). I think we can, with some quiet belief, look forward to another such 40 years. To achieve that, however, we need to think hard about how to engage firstly a younger element and secondly a steady flow of incomers. In the process, we can assure them of fun and good company along with the commitment needed to protect and enhance the priceless inheritance which is the town of Sudbury.

Andrew Phillips

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As reported elsewhere we held our 40th Anniversary Dinner at the newly refurbished Mill Hotel on Friday. It was a terrific party and was a celebration, not a commemoration, of all the Society stands for. Members and guests enjoyed an excellent repast with a most passionate and brilliantly perceptive speech from our President, Lord Andrew Phillips. Before he launched into a knowing history of our Society and our achievements (and failures) he grabbed the opportunity to deliver an attack on the failures of England's society at large. He rightly stated that our fractured country can only be repaired, not by corrupted politicians, bankers and institutions but by us as concerned citizens and above all by the involvement of our youth. Whilst today's newspapers report that our government will make it a condition that potential immigrants must know the first verse of our national anthem are they so ignorantly unaware that the majority of our own teenagers have never been in a situation to learn, let alone sing, those words. Imagine the children of France, America or our neighbour Ireland not so knowing?

Our own Sudbury Society suffers from having an aging membership and committee. We must do more to involve and allow decision making from Sudbury's youth. If not there may not be a Sudbury Society to celebrate our 50th anniversary.

We have many campaigns and battles to fight. The retention of Walnuttree Hospital (however it is developed) is our priority together with the acquisition of the current outpatients department for civic use, possibly as a town museum and archive centre. People's Park looms on our agenda and our support to the original owners, the Freeman's Trust, and the campaigners must be taken for granted. We must work together with our Town Council to ensure that the Hamilton Road bus park area is sympathetically developed, not in years to come, but now, so this eyesore no longer mars our fine town. Councillor John Sayers must be supported in his aim not only to preserve Belle Vue but to return it to the care of the Town. There are many other areas of concern, from keeping a watching brief on the future of our Library to supporting the residents of Sandy Lane in the removal of the recycling site to a more suitable place. The increase in the number of empty retail units and their replacement by charity shops means an ever decreasing income from business rates which must be made up from elsewhere.

Your Society does not have all the answers but at least, as Sudbury's truly independent voice, we are trying. If you are not already actively involved please join our ever stretched Committee, your Town needs you!

Peter Thorogood

MEMORIES

FROM CARYL KNIGHT

MEMBERS I HAVE KNOWN

I haven't been Membership Secretary for very long, but I have been a Member of the Sudbury Society for what seems like a long time. Trying to recall when my husband and I joined up has been impossible, although it was in the eighties. I know this because I can remember recruiting two of my colleagues where I worked, and I left that employment when I bought my business in 1989. We were standing having coffee on the terrace of the Granary looking out over the meadows beyond the Mill Hotel, and extolling our good fortune at being able to live and work in such a wonderful place. I can remember commenting that membership only cost £3 a year for a single person, and that they would then be able to say proudly they were supporting their town through the civic society, and would also get some interesting talks thrown in for good measure. They must have been impressed because both joined up.

As a member in those early years I was not very involved – Fridays were out as far as meetings were concerned – the membership being lower we met in the Christopher in those days – so other members would have been my link with what was going on. Then I joined Sudbury Duplicating Services. This gem of a small secretarial business was run by Janet and Thelma – and there was not much either of those two ladies didn't know about the town, the commerce, the sport, and the people who lived in and around the district. Into that world I fell, and subsequently into the centre of a group of people using my typing services. *(Janet was certainly a member and her widower, Peter, still is.)*

We were situated over the Institute Club in Station Road, and this was the main watering hole for a majority of the Sudbury Society Committee, especially those on Planning! I know of at least one who is still a member of the Sudbury Society. Geoff Williams, Treasurer, of whom I wrote in a recent newsletter, would come upstairs to order membership forms, letterheads, subs demand letters – you name it – we printed it. Then later we printed the Newsletter, which Val Herbert edited – but that was a lot further into the nineties. So started the trickle of gentlemen (*who in those days would not have considered typing their own letters*) through the door asking for help with their various missives. If you read the Free Press in those days and the letters had a male name on the bottom, then many of them would have been typed up by us before being taken to the Editor in the Borehamgate offices. Needless to say, and as many of you will know, the various rants will be exercised before and after the drafting of a letter of complaint, so we became very knowledgeable about all the various iniquities which were being perpetuated in the name of either the tax payer, rate payer, town or district authority, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all.

Now we come to some of the "Causes" which the Sudbury Society got involved in. Station Road would have seen the demolition of Dixon's old garage (now a drive in car wash) to make one of a couple of entrances into a new and very plush Maltings development. This scheme would have seen Waitrose as the anchor store and further retail outlets around it. Harry Turner, a local estate agent, (*he who saved the Old Granary, now the Quay Theatre, from demolition*) was against this scheme and he had the backing of others living and working in the town centre, and a campaign of opposition was launched. Many letters, strategy notes and official reports were routed through my typewriter, Harry coerced both Cecil Wells and Alan Philips into writing letters, which introduced me to both gentlemen who then brought their own projects through the door. *(All three of these gentlemen had very able secretaries in their own businesses, but were honourable enough to pay someone else to do what they saw as their private business.)*

Cecil introduced Betty Bone to the joys of having a typed letter as opposed to a handwritten version, and she marched joyfully through the door to give me a decade of her business – she used my membership of the Sudbury Society as weapon to get her work prioritised – and so further causes were introduced. She also made Cecil offer his garden for the annual Sudbury Society lunch parties, and I can still hear his grumbles when she wasn't in earshot.

Does anyone remember the Southern Link Road? This was a proposal that instead of having a Western Bypass (or in some cases there was the hope it would be as well as) a road would come down from Ballingdon Hill, across the river at Lady Island and end up at a round-about in Great Eastern Road. I am sure someone could correct me if I am wrong on that, I am a trifle vague – I was fighting the first of the People's Park battles at the time. The Sudbury Society and Betty Bone, were dead against this,

as I am sure we would all be if it was mooted now, and she and Harry Turner mustered their recruits. It eventually went to a Public Enquiry at which they both spoke eloquently, and the Link Road was abandoned (*although I think that was more to do with Braintree District Council not wanting it*).

Other frequent visitors to the office were Mrs Joan Black, a founder member. Mr Alan Gilbert (his wife and son are still members), Mr Eady from Vanners, Lord Abinger, Barry Wall, and then the later recruits to the Society, David Burnett, Roger Burden and David Rayner – all giving me a glimpse into other aspects of the town we live in.

As we stand now in 2012, forty years on from our beginnings, we have a membership of approximately 250 people – not enough! It is more than it was, but it should continue to grow and grow and grow, the more so because life as we know it now imposes much more on us, whether we like it or not, and without civic societies to highlight the proposed loss of amenities and stand up to the planners and bureaucrats who think they know best, where would we be?

Caryl Knight

FROM ROGER BURDEN

All I knew about the Sudbury Society at the time I became its secretary was that one local person of my acquaintance (I myself being a Londoner by birth) regarded it as 'elitist' and 'irrelevant', which didn't sound enormously attractive. However, having volunteered to do my bit, I felt I should at least show willing for a week or two, and so turned up to the meetings. I quickly found out that my acquaintance was wrong on two counts – the Society was not elitist (or they would never have wanted anything to do with me!) and it wasn't irrelevant; it had a genuine vision of what should be being done for Sudbury, and what should be avoided like the proverbial plague, and was always willing to let its views be known. It was however a little on the small side; in fact, there was a distinct shortage of members, which is why I'd been recruited as secretary before even becoming a member!

There was, however, no shortage of ideas or drive among the members whom we did have, and over the period in which I was secretary a number of initiatives were introduced which resulted in an increased profile in the community and increased numbers of people joining. As a professional writer with some experience in event organisation and press relations, I contributed what I could, but modesty – and, indeed, honesty – forbids me to claim any great deal of credit. My main contribution was to keep the minutes of committee meetings and to see them properly distributed. Oh, and occasionally to tone down the accounts of clashes between some of the stronger personalities present, whose names I will forbear from mentioning. However, it would be impossible for me to recall this period without mention of Betty Bone, whose vivacity, strong opinions and personality made a strong impression on me, and the committee.

Unfortunately, after a number of years I was forced to resign from the committee on health grounds, and after that lost touch with the Sudbury Society, though occasionally attending events which it organised (and which my wife and I enjoyed). It has gone on from strength to strength since my day, and I wish it all the best and further growth for the future.

FROM DAVID BURNETT - *Former Chairman*

The Editor has suggested that, as she has a small space to fill, I might write down my memories of becoming Chairman of the Society. A small space sounds about right since more than ten years have passed and I now have only fragmentary memories to draw on.

I joined the Society at some point after taking early retirement in 1996 but initially I had no thought of even joining the Committee – I was far more interested in my own research into the histories of the surviving Victorian commercial and industrial buildings in the town (later published under the Society imprint as 'Victorian Legacy').

I think that I was 'head-hunted' by Vice President, Bob Hewett, who felt that I had more to contribute. He suggested I join the Committee with a view to eventually taking over as Chairman from the redoubtable Betty Bone. When the time came (2001?) Betty seemed happy to step aside whilst still remaining very active in the Society – her coffee mornings were legendary. She was also still a member of the Committee – I can remember trying to bring overlong meetings to a close and Betty raising new issues under AOB when the rest of us were ready for home! However, she was always extremely supportive as I began to put my own mark on the shape and direction of the Society.

PLANNING IN SUDBURY

Any celebration of the Society's contribution to Sudbury's development must be tinged with regret at lost buildings, missed opportunities, poor decisions, hopes not realised. This is a personal view. We moved from south east London in 1980 but have only lived in the centre since 2000. A planner once said that the towns we love and cherish are those we walk through rather than those we drive through and this is certainly true in my case now that much is within walking reach.

What's to celebrate? The water meadows of course from Borley Mill down to Cornard which still ensure a clear distinction between town and the meadows/countryside beyond which few small towns now enjoy. The wonderful Market Hill is still largely intact since the threatened loss of the Corn Exchange (and in consequence several other buildings) was averted by local people including many subsequent founding members of the Society. This handsome space is at its best when the centre is full of people and stalls rather than parked cars, a situation which is yet to be resolved.

And to regret? The loss of Inkerman Row (an early campaign) and several other terraces/groups which would now be highly valued, but lost out to the influential zeal (typical of the time) of borough surveyor and highway engineers.

Other lost buildings in recent times? The maltings on the site of what is now Waitrose. Cundy's warehouse on the still derelict site opposite the bus station. Had this survived it might by now have been imaginatively converted and might have kick-started the area's revival. I always regret the loss of the fine police station which closed the view down King Street. We tried to ensure the retention of the Brunton's office building in Station Road but were unable to prevent or improve the intrusive and lumpen building that now occupies the site.

Ongoing and future battles? Belle Vue House seems safe for now but we have to be vigilant. We are campaigning for the retention of the historic core of Walnuttree Hospital and for sensitive treatment of St Leonard's, not historic but important in the town's recent past. The NHS outline proposals seem to promise potentially good solutions, but again we have to be vigilant. As to the bus station and surrounding area we tried very hard but in vain to achieve a scheme which embodied the quality and coherent space proposed by the Civic Trust study.

Housing? The provision of yet more of it is seen as good and necessary but how will it impact on a small historic town which has had to cope with so much development since the old LCC expanded town days? Development in hand includes Chilton Woods of course but also Carson Drive in Cornard, the housing which would go on the Sainsburys site, and some on the much contested Peoples Park site. In addition Babergh in its 2011– 2031 strategy plans to add another 850 houses – 350 to Chilton, and 500 on land to the south of Newton Road. We are trying to encourage the higher standard of design and sustainability which has been achieved elsewhere but it's a hard battle here.

Traffic and People? This is a tough subject. The town suffers from being on a major route which still results in heavy vehicles passing through Market Hill and down vulnerable Cross Street. This seems unresolvable though many of us, but not all, still see future salvation in the increasingly remote possibility of a western bypass. We have sought to correct the distorted balance between people and vehicles in favour of the former. Many of our members are older and some are disabled so ease of negotiating crossings and narrow pavements is an ongoing concern of ours. Elsewhere Val Herbert and I report on the outcome to date of our 2003 Pavements Survey. Easy access to and use of buildings is important to the Society and we check planning applications with this in mind.

From the beginning the Society has commented on building and environmental proposals. We do it now on an established basis with our Planning Group comments going to both the Town Council and Babergh. How influential are we? We know we have some impact but perhaps we have to be content with constantly raising awareness of good design, care for existing buildings and accessibility. In 2003 and 2006 we organised the Alan Phillips Awards in an effort to commend good design across a range of building projects. It is sad that we have not since felt able to stage the competition due to there being insufficient examples to ensure an adequate number of nominations.

A problem is that many applications are not by good designers be it house extensions, shopfronts or something larger. There are still opportunities to exploit sites within the town rather than use up more green

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AN ACCESSIBLE TOWN CENTRE

This is a celebration of what has been achieved and our hopes for the future.

Back in 2003 Valerie Herbert and I collaborated on a Society publication which addressed the needs of pavement users in the town centre. Our Pavement Survey concluded that being a pedestrian was frequently stressful and that there was a need for an overall strategy to make the town centre “a truly inclusive, comfortable and safe place for all pavement users” instead of being weighted in favour of drivers. The County Council responded positively describing our Survey as “extremely useful” and stated that it would be considered in the preparation of the Local Transport Action Plan for Sudbury. There was one quick response influenced by one of the most powerful photographs in the Survey – a husband helping his wheelchair using wife up the step in front of Thomas Gainsborough’s statue. The short ramp which replaced it is beneficial and safer for everyone and now probably goes unnoticed.

Other improvements have followed –

The accessible crossing at the entry to Gainsborough Street where reducing the roadway allowed the pavement outside HSBC to be widened to accommodate people waiting to cross and others to pass.

The accessible crossing of East Street near the Post Office where the narrowed roadway is also a contribution to safety.

The provision of more “dropped kerbs”, a gentle slope to roadway level, is making journeys in a wheelchair less subjected to round-about routes for lack of a rational provision.

The widening of the pavement incorporated in the Library entrance improvement (itself of great benefit to those users who previously had to trek round to the back entrance) resulted in a narrower roadway down towards Friars Street. This still hazardous area must count as “unfinished business”.

The updating of the King Street existing crossing fits in with our strategy although currently contentious, largely we suspect because of the uncertainty as to whether it is a speed hump or is a means of establishing the equal rights of pedestrians at this important crossing point.

Also unfinished business is the limited improvement at the still hazardous junction of Gainsborough, Stour and Gregory Streets. Linked with this is the need to slow down traffic speeds along the latter and provision of a safe crossing at the key route across to St Gregory’s.

Two key junctions are generally agreed to be seriously in need of major improvement – Belle Vue and Great Eastern Street/Station Road. Whatever is proposed needs to ease both traffic and pedestrian flows. Work at the latter junction surely can’t wait on realisation of the Hamilton Road development.

Another improvement and contribution to pedestrian safety would be some 20mph restrictions. Where other towns and cities have gone ahead and done it we are still at the stage of considering some experiments. Contrary to the perceptions of some of us traffic through the town centre does often exceed 30mph and any restriction would have to be properly enforced.

Stephen Thorpe



*Gainsborough Street
crossing pre-2003*



*Market Access
(step now removed)*



Crossing King Street

THE ARTS IN SUDBURY

The Sudbury Society has built its reputation around activities that include protecting, developing and improving features of historic or public interest in the town and alongside the fascinating programme of Events that we offer we have more recently begun to enhance these fundamental considerations further by organising two visual arts exhibitions.

More recent announcements that Mary Portas had selected 12 run down British high streets to be her flagship 'Portas Pilots' as part of the Government's rethink about its planning reforms inevitably might lead one to consider what criteria might be relevant to improve these high streets?

The focus of these Portas Pilots is generally levelled upon the retail opportunities within the town and how they might influence the energies of community networks and local economies. However, the Sudbury Society perceives this is just one aspect of the whole gamut of requirements that create a critical mass for a town to enable its community to thrive.

Here in Sudbury we certainly need the partnership between the Town Hall and the business community to ensure that small businesses are not squeezed by the superstores and that our independent greengrocers, butchers, bakers and service outlets are not forced out of business. But, in order to be able to fully flourish and provide citizens with a feeling of ownership of our town we need to encompass a mix that includes a safe environment that values sporting activities, the built and landscaped environment, a range of cultural and social facilities and, not least, arts activities.

Discussions around the issue of how to underpin these issues were very much to the fore of the Sudbury Society thoughts when we launched the bi-annual exhibition *Visions of Sudbury* way back in 2005.

Visitors to St Peter's in the Market Place will be aware that there are already a number of organisations who present a programme of successful general art exhibitions throughout the year. However, in line with our brief as a local charity, the Sudbury Society decided that we should invite artists to focus entirely upon Sudbury and to celebrate our town and its environs through their depictions.

We wanted local artists to respond to and submit whatever aspects and images they considered reflected our town and we were not disappointed. Not only did the artists create some compelling images that impressed our visitors but also many of those same visitors wanted to purchase a 'Vision' to hang on their walls. When we inspected our visitors' book we were amazed to discover that many had come not only from the United Kingdom but also from around the rest of the world! Presumably they had been drawn to Sudbury to visit the Museum home of Thomas Gainsborough and decided to purchase memento whilst on their visit?

The success of this venture encouraged the idea that we should also celebrate something that was increasingly apparent—that Sudbury has an amazing number of people who make and create and we wanted to cele-

brate this abundance of skills.

And so it was that the idea of the bi-annual Sudbury Summer Art Show was born in 2010. It was decided to encourage local talented people who make work in 2D and 3D and who live within a radius of ten miles of Sudbury and invite them to exhibit. Again, the first exhibition proved successful with good visitor numbers enjoying the high standard of work on display and many of the delighted artists made at least one sale. We are now anticipating that the second exhibition at St Peter's in mid July will prove equally popular.

In furtherance of our search to put the arts on the map in Sudbury the Sudbury Society linked with Gainsborough's House and Sudbury's Town Twinning Association in 2007 and organised a programme of artistic activities for a group of Danish visitors and local aspiring artists. All who participated enjoyed a full week of activities. These included a series of courses in the Print Workshop at Gainsborough's House, a visit to the studio of artist Michael Carlo and also outings to some locations where our great local masters Constable and Gainsborough produced their early work. As such we were able to celebrate the continued artistic heritage of both Sudbury and Suffolk

Sally Freer



Market Van 2009 by
J.S.B.Hawkins



Viewing 2011



Private View 2009

ST LEONARD'S, SUDBURY COTTAGE HOSPITAL

Phyllis Felton drew a large audience at the April meeting for her talk on the history of Leonard's, Sudbury's cottage hospital, from its founding in 1868 to the present. Its origins go much further back than 1868 – to 1372 in fact, when St Leonard's was the name of the leper hospital on Melford Road founded by John Colney, a mayor of Sudbury and himself a leper and who, much later, gave his name to Colney's Close.

But it was for Sudbury's new hospital on Newton Road built in 1868 in the Domestic Gothic style that the name St Leonard's was used again. At first, with just a matron/housekeeper, nurse, servant and errand boy, the hospital tended Sudbury's poor working classes. Although it cost the hospital 14 shillings a week per patient, patients were charged only 2 shillings.



The hospital was built at a time when new discoveries and inventions were developed, such as germ theory, disinfection and anaesthetics. Doctors were honorary and gave their services free, often paying for equipment, improvising with what they had and even financed a telephone out of their own pockets. It was an age when doctors were often 'characters'. St Leonard's quickly developed a good reputation and local people were proud of it. In the first 25 years it treated 2,500 patients, two-thirds of whom recovered with some years having no deaths at all, hence the hexagonal mortuary was only large enough to accommodate one body, two at a pinch.

A contributory 'insurance' scheme of twopence a week was started and endless fundraising took place. This enabled the hospital to expand with isolation wards, matron's cottage, extensions, updated operating theatres, nurses' home, and the grandest of all, the King George V Memorial Wing opened in 1938.

A present resident of Sudbury, Betty Scrivener, made history when, in 1943, she became the first woman to give birth in the new maternity ward – but there was nothing to mark this auspicious event! The National Health Service took over in 1948 and, inevitably, things changed. Sudbury's population grew, facilities became centralised until the decision was taken to phase out in-patients so that in 1997 the last seven patients were transferred to Walnuttree Hospital (formerly the Union Workhouse).

Now all that remains is an out-patients' department, X-ray department, mental health therapy unit and office staff. The question now arises: what will become of St Leonard's when all its health facilities are moved to the new Church Field Road site in two years' time? Let us hope that the original building at least can be retained and sympathetically converted to a new use.

Anne Grimshaw

Owing to lack of space a report on Ashley Cooper's talk on Sudbury's Chalk has been held over until the next issue

PLANNING IN SUDBURY

(continued from page 6)

space outside but it demands skill and a willingness to introduce compatible modern design which is better able to cope with highly restricted sites. Some alterations to houses such as replacement windows do not need permission but can adversely affect not only the building itself but also those adjoining it. We are still trying to persuade the district council to introduce the Directive which would require permission in the Conservation Area to be sought and granted.

And the future? It is going to be very difficult to accommodate more housing and the resulting traffic while maintaining the vitality and quality of the town centre. The Society's mission to care for the past and the future is going to be severely tested. Are we up to it?

Stephen Thorpe

SUDBURY'S PHOENIX - from Corn Exchange to Library

This year Civic Voice, the national umbrella organisation for civic societies including the Sudbury Society, chose 23 June as Civic Day. Unfortunately, no one on the Sudbury Society committee was available to arrange anything for that day. Rather than ignore Civic Day, the Sudbury Society had its Civic Day a week later on 30 June. But, more important than that was this year is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Sudbury Society. To mark the occasion I gave a 20-minute slide-talk entitled *Sudbury's Phoenix: from Corn Exchange to Library* five times during the day in the library meeting room.

I had originally given the talk at the Quay Theatre Local History Talks last winter after researching the corn exchange (now library) - one of Sudbury's iconic buildings - perhaps *the* most iconic. It was the saving of that building from demolition in the 1964 that gave rise to the Sudbury Society which uses the corn exchange as its logo. You may remember the exhibition mounted by the Sudbury Society in the library for last year's Civic Day.

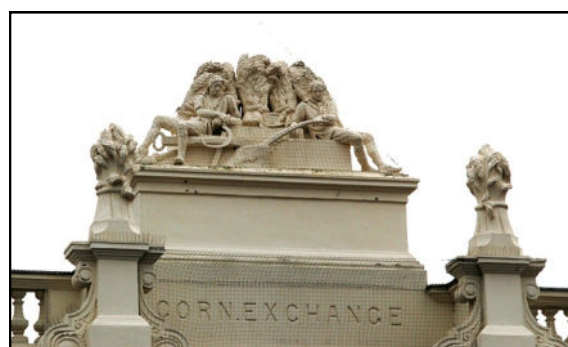
The slide-talk was something of a 'tribute' to the corn exchange and its architect and builder and the people who rescued it from demolition. Each of the five sessions was attended by an interested audience who really seemed to enjoy it and several of the library staff attended the talk.

You've all been in the library but how much do you know the building? Do you know when it was built? Who was its architect? (The answers to both of those questions are clearly visible in the library above high above the front door: 1841 and H.E. Kendall.) Documents of 1841

show a list of shareholders who funded it, the architect's travelling expenses, the cost of a town crier and a printer's bill for advertising a celebratory dinner to mark its opening.

The corn exchange was also used as a concert hall, a market for dairy produce, fruits and vegetables and, during the Second World War, provided refuge in its cellars in case of air raids. And have you *really* looked at the sculpture of the reapers on the roof? Close-up photographs show the detail of the reapers: the buttons on their gaiters, the bows on their knee breeches, their thick-soled shoes, even the veins on their hands as well as the twists and knots that secure the sheaves of corn. What are they sitting on? It's a plough. Thus is shown the whole cycle of preparing the ground for planting the seed that grows into wheat that is cut by the reapers...

Next time you're on Market Hill have a good look at them - can you spot the hat of one of the reapers?
Anne Grimshaw



Reapers on the Roof

(Photo: Roger Kistruck)

TONY WHEELER

Local historian Tony Wheeler died four weeks to the day after the printers delivered his book on the origins of Sudbury Street names *What's in a Name?* See the Spring Newsletter. The race had been won by the Sudbury Museum Trust to get it published before the veteran member of the Society died from pancreatic cancer and he was well enough to enjoy the enthusiastic reception it received. But he would have been amazed had he lived, to see both the initial print run and a reprint almost sold out in within three months. A second reprint of the £5 book is on order. Ever generous, he left a legacy to the Society in his £2m will in the form of a share but the amount will not be known for some time.

Val Herbert

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday 21st August

Harwich Harbour Afternoon Tea Cruise *

Departs 2pm returns 5.30pm

Price £23.50

Booking essential

Friday 28th September

7.30pm Friars Hall, School Street

Six Hundred Years in Sixty Minutes

-everything you have always wanted to know about St Peter's

An illustrated talk by Mr Roger Green

Friday 26th October

7.30pm Friars Hall, School Street

Friars, Footballers and Beyond

An illustrated talk by Mr Alan Cocksedge

Friday 30th November

7.30pm Friars Hall, School Street

A History of Royal Mail Coaches in East Anglia

***Cruise with Afternoon Tea –BOOK NOW!**

The river cruise vessel 'Orwell Lady' will be leaving Ipswich Wet Dock at 2pm on Tuesday August 21. We will be cruising down the river under the Orwell Bridge and past Pin Mill to the Stour estuary. (Weather permitting) there will also be an opportunity to see from the water Britain's largest container port at Felixstowe and historic Harwich.

We return to Ipswich at 5pm. On the cruise, in addition to the scenery and sights, we are promised a substantial home-made cream tea provided by Mary Duggan Fine Cuisine with an assortment of mini sandwiches, fruit scones with preserves and cream and a selection of delicious sounding cakes. The cruise company say that 'a large lunch before the cruise may impair ability to take full advantage' of this spread!

The cost of the cruise is £23.50 per head. Our Events Secretary, Diana Clifford, is now taking bookings for the cruise. Contact her in one of the following ways....

1. By phone: 01787 379499
2. By e-mail: Diana.Clifford@btinternet.com
3. By post: 18 Weaver's Lane Sudbury CO10 2EZ enclosing your cheque.

Please indicate if you can provide seats for members who may not have their own transport.

NB. If you contact her by 1 or 2 above please follow it up asap with a cheque made out to the Sudbury Society.

Diana must receive your bookings by Tuesday August 14.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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David Burnett

Vice- Chairman

881661

Sue Ayres

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Patricia Thorpe

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All articles to Caryl Knight in the first instance, please.

knightsofrosevilla@yahoo.co.uk



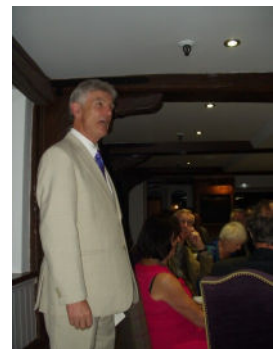
40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (1972-2012)

On 29th June 60 members and guests gathered on the terrace of the Mill Hotel in Sudbury to mark the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Sudbury Society. After the complimentary drinks everyone went into the restaurant for a 3 course dinner. The seating plans and name cards (with the pre-chosen menu on the back, very useful) had all been very competently arranged by Diana Clifford; her swan song as Events organiser. Quite soon the first course arrived and the loud chatter became quieter as everyone tried their choices. There seemed to be general approval which continued with the following two courses, the raspberry Pavlova being particularly popular. When coffee had been served the Chairman, Peter Thorogood, thanked all the people who had been involved in the preparation of the event and then introduced the speaker for the evening, Society President, Lord Andrew Phillips.

He gave us an interesting insight into the beginnings of the Society which had started in 1964 in an informal way with passionate people wanting to save the Town Centre and in particular the Corn Exchange, from threatened demolition. He related how many well known people including John Betjeman, were rallied to the cause and himself, then a young lawyer, put the case before the official enquiry.

At least 40 witnesses waited to give evidence. After ten or so submissions the Judge enquired how many more were to be called, on being told there were at least another 30 he called a halt and found in favour of the townspeople. The Corn Exchange was saved and became the Library. Now, after its recent refurbishment, it is still a great ornament to the Townscape - saved in the nick of time from becoming a Tesco store!

After the saga of the Corn Exchange it was felt there was a need for a civic society with the interests of the Town at its heart and so the Sudbury Society was formed with an initial membership of 60 or so which soon increased to over 100 with an annual subscription of 50 pence!. The first committee meeting was held in January 1972. Lord Phillips ended with an impassioned plea that the Society should continue with its work and also to try and particularly engage young people in the rich history of the Town of Sudbury.



The Chairman thanked Lord Phillips both for his talk and for some interesting ideas for the future of the Society. He also thanked the members for their support for the 40th Anniversary evening recognising past achievements and hope for even better things in the future. The whole event after being 'in the pipeline' for nearly a year was considered a great success and a worthy mark of the Society's aims and ambitions.

Heather Coltman
Photos: *Anne Grimshaw*