

Abbey Gardens Friends

Newsletter, Summer 2026



"Helping to keep the Abbey Gardens a joy to visit".

(9-page edition)

THE ABBEY GARDENS FRIENDS WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE!

abbeygardensfriends.org

The centrepiece of the summer newsletter is the new Abbey Gardens Friends website which will go live on the day you receive this newsletter. Google it at your leisure!

It has taken a while to get everything in place before we launched it, I hope members and the public will think it was worth the wait. It's packed with useful information about Abbey Gardens Friends, our work, events past and present, a history of the gardens, membership forms, our newsletters, a gallery of pictures and finally how to contact us. When we have ticketed events, the website will also have the details of how and where to buy them. (See page 2).

I would like to thank all the people who have made contributions to getting this complex project completed but particularly Sarah White of WHITE IT, Ian Hobley our secretary who has kept us all on the straight and narrow, Dawn Butler who has taken on the role of web manager and Lynda Seldis and all the volunteers who feature in many of the gallery pictures.

Feedback and articles or pictures for inclusion on the website are welcomed and these should all be directed to our email address: abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

Paul Marsh, Chair Abbey Gardens Friends

POEM: The Glory of the Garden

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing: --"Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working
lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-
knives

Rudyard Kipling

(Written in 1911. (verse quoted is verse 5 of 8)



*The glory of the Abbey Gardens
unfolding in June 2026*

ANGLIA IN BLOOM ARTICLE ON PAGE 9

THE BURY BOTANIC GARDENS - HEINOUS CRIMES, SHENANIGANS AND MISDEMEANOURS



A TALK
GIVEN BY
PAUL
MARSH
(AGF Chair-
man) and
NICK
MARSH MBE
(forensics
expert)

IN AID OF
THE
ABBAY
GARDENS
FRIENDS



FRIDAY
16TH

OCTOBER

DOORS OPEN
6.30PM FOR
A 7.00PM
START

UNITARIAN
MEETING
HOUSE

BURY ST
EDMUNDS
IP33 1RH

SCAN THIS QR
CODE TO BUY
TICKETS



TICKETS (non-refundable) £10, TO INCLUDE A
DRINK AND NIBBLES

A talk entitled “Heinous Crimes, Shenanigans and Misdemeanours in the Botanic Garden” is taking place on

Friday 16th October at the Unitarian Meeting House. Tickets must be purchased in advance from ZEFFY, a ticketing website, [USING THE QR CODE IN THE POSTER ABOVE](#). Just aim your camera phone at the QR, then tap on the Zeffy link offered up. Please note that only members of Abbey Garden Friends can purchase tickets before 31st August, after this date tickets will be available to the public. Our intrepid marketing team will be publicising the event across Bury from 1st September. Tickets cost £10 each and include a glass of wine/soft drink and nibbles. All proceeds go to AGF for reinvestment in the Abbey Gardens.

Presenting the talk will be Paul Marsh, Chair of Abbey Garden Friends together with Nick Marsh MBE, an expert in forensics with an international reputation. The talk will investigate several crimes associated with the garden between the 1820s and 1860s. The motivations for the crimes covered in the talk will be all too familiar to us today harassment, envy, poverty and recklessness. Please be aware that content of the talk involves references to violence, injury and abuse and though these events took place beyond anyone’s living memory, some may find the content upsetting.

A short word about ZEFFY. It’s a ticketing website designed for community groups and charities. It originated in Quebec and recently came to UK. It’s free at the point of sale to ticket buyers BUT you will be invited to make a voluntary payment to ZEFFY when you get to the donation screen. If you choose not to donate to ZEFFY select “other” on the donation page and insert “0”.

Any difficulties with the QR code not working e mail:

abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

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IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY....

A BIG, BIG THANKYOU to all the volunteers and WSC staff who have made the recent spring plant sales such a success. Our redoubtable volunteer gardener team, led by coordinator Lynda Seldis, earned a whopping £1250 for AGF.



A GENEREROUS DONATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED

to help us purchase metal plant labels for the 40 trees on the new tree trail which a group of volunteers have been working on for the past year. The total cost of the labels is about £400 (@ £10 per label). If you would like to sponsor a label, please let us know at abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com. West Suffolk Council doesn’t allow names of sponsors on trees, plants, benches without strict conditions So we are not offering to put donors name on labels but any

AGF member who makes a donation for a tree label would be thanked via our newsletter and would be rewarded with a warm glow for the lifetime of the label sponsored!



ANGLIA IN BLOOM ARTICLE ON PAGE 9



VISIT BY SUFFOLK GARDENS TRUST IN AUGUST

Paul Marsh (AGF Chair) and Simon Hobson (West Suffolk Manager for Abbey Gardens, Heritage and Green Spaces) will be hosting a visit from Suffolk Gardens Trust members on Sunday 10th August. Suffolk Gardens Trust will donate £100 to us for the talk provided – Paul focussing on the history of the gardens and Simon concentrating on the garden as it is now.

SOME NEWS ON THE DONATION BOX WHICH WAS BROKEN

INTO ... West Suffolk Council have paid for the new lock on the donation box. To lessen the risk of further theft of public donations the box is being emptied every 2 or 3 days to minimise the risk to AGF. Public donations account for several hundred pounds a year all of which is returned in some form or other to the garden.



The Summer Quiz Songs, all gardens related! match the singer/composer with the music/group -No4 is hard! A few picture clues to help you are below.

1. Who composed “The Flight of the Bumble Bee”?
2. Which insect did Adam sing with?
3. For which plant did Joni Mitchell sing?
4. What was the first song ever played on Radio One?
5. What did Lynn Anderson never promise? “I beg your pardon....”



Historical Note No 9. Early Photography and the Bury Botanic Garden.

In the 1830s and 1840s Nathaniel Hodson, the lease holder and superintendent of the Bury Botanic Garden, was preoccupied with making enough money to pursue the study and presentation of plants from all over the known world to his subscribers. In the early 1840s one of his income generating ideas, was to host practitioners of portraiture using the new science/art of photography. Presumably, Hodson charged these portrait photographers for their use of the garden. He would have hoped such a novel attraction would also have drawn curious visitors. What follows is all about this novel and curious attraction - and believe me it's not all black and white!



Daguerreotype -by Richard Beards Studio 1843. Often photographs were mounted in elaborate hinged frames, lined with velvet & glass to protect the image. Portraits cost about 1 Guinea, cheaper than painted portraits but expensive, (a skilled tradesman of the time earned £20-£30 a year). Image: Courtesy Kodak Museum Collection

Photography, an amazingly precise means of capturing a moment in time must have been a revelation to the people of Bury who could (if they could afford it) obtain a true and lasting likeness of a loved one within a few hours. The earliest advert I have found relating to the Bury garden is 1844 for a Mr Boulter. (Possibly Mr Henry Boulter, photographer, of Bishopsgate, London.) At some point in the 1840s Boulter also had a studio at the Concert Room, Market Cross, Corn Hill. Between 1844-1861 at least 16 other portrait photographers (many with studios) emerged and disappeared in Bury. Benjamin Monson being one, who in 1855 had a studio above Mr Ruthers confectionary shop on Cornhill and a Mr Hilliard whose sales pitch was "A faithful likeness in 7 seconds". An itinerant photographer is listed in "The Directory of Early Photographers*" as working in the Botanic Garden between July & August 1854, so the appetite for photographs "au plein air" continued.". All these photographic studios predate the (wonderful) Jarman -

Spanton photograph collection. Other photographers who visited Bury in Hodsons lifetime with to photograph the architecture and scenery rather than people include William Russell Sedgfield, George Downes and John Dixon Piper but commentary on their work will have to wait until another day.

(*Directory of Early Photographers by Robert Pols (<https://earlyphotostudios.uk>))

"BOTANIC GARDEN

ABBEY GROUNDS

PHOTOGRAPHY

*Mr Boulter begs to announce to the inhabitants of Bury that he has made arrangements with the Proprietor of the Botanic Gardens, in consequence of which he will be enabled (for a very short period) to execute Portraits, by the Daguerreotype Process, with much greater facility than he could at the Concert Room *, the light being more favourable.*

Mr Boulter will attend Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 to 3 ...Specimens may be seen GRATIA, at the Library in the Gardens. Parties may favour Mr Boulton with a sitting, will be presented with a ticket enabling admittance to all parts of the Gardens."

Bury and Suffolk Herald newspaper 25th September 1844 "



Richard Beard, who purchased the franchise from M. Daguerre. Image courtesy of The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné

Mr Boulter would have had to purchase a franchise, to use the Daguerreotype method from Mr Richard Beard. Beard had purchased the sole rights for Great Britain and her territories from Louis Daguerre in France. It is thought to have cost Beard £20,000 (approximately £3 million in today's values). Beard's studio was at The Royal Polytechnic Institution on Regents St, London. He does not seem to have taken many photographs himself but employed others, including Mr Jabez Hogg, to run to his trademarked studio. Beard's focus was on selling franchises for at least £1000, (usually payable by instalments), the real money-making part of the enterprise. When the Daguerreotype method was used by photographers without a franchise, Beard did not hesitate to prosecute them via the Court of Chancery. All his franchisees were required to stamp their photographs "Beard Patentee". Beard's trade name was reportedly as famous in its day as Colonel Sanders is to southern fried chicken—instantly recognisable. Beard is said to have asked clients to "say prunes" (as opposed to cheese) as the camera was exposed because it made the sitter purse their lips rather than grin. (Hmm, not sure about that!).

As the Calotype/Talbotype (the main rival photographic system to Daguerreotype) became more widespread. Beard tried to enter a partnership with William Henry Fox Talbot, its inventor, but they could not agree terms.

Beard was a serial entrepreneur, sometimes making money, sometimes not and as the photographic market became more competitive Beard he returned to his previous business of buying coal, buying wholesale from pit heads in northern England and then retailing the coal in London, but neither photography or coal made him a fortune, and he died a bankrupt in 1885.

Finally, back to Henry Boulter, he seems to have been quite successful as this comment in the local newspaper reports....

"Mr BOULTERS Daguerreotypes are very successful, and members are taking advantage of the "pencil of light" to right their features on enduring metal with unerring accuracy"

Bury and Norwich Post Wednesday 12th June 1844.

FINDING MR HODSON. If you come across a daguerreotype marked "Beard Patentee" (they are very rare) with some indication it was taken in Bury between 1840 -1861, or even better the Botanic Garden. I would love to see it as it might be an image of our Mr Hodson, which has so far eluded me !



Self portrait of Louis Daguerre 1844.



Jabez Hogg photographing, Mr Johnson, thought to be the earliest image of a portrait studio. Daguerreotype by Richard Beard c1843. Courtesy of the National Media Museum, United Kingdom.

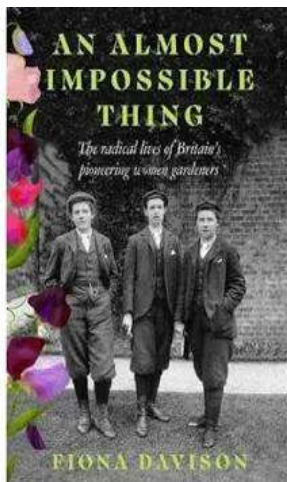
MAYORS GARDEN PARTY – SUNDAY 10TH MAY 2026

BY ABBEY GARDEN FRIENDS LYNDIA SELDISS & LINDA MUNDAY

By invitation, two members representing each community group working in our beautiful town, attended the garden party. The weather was so cold and windy, we were unable to gather in the Garden but with the Dean's blessing, we moved into the Deanery where we were welcomed by the Stagecoach Choir in the Hall. The Mayor, Donna Higgins, then gave an inspiring speech and she thanked the local community groups for all their hard work. The Stagecoach Choir continued to entertain us with an excellent short concert which was followed by afternoon tea.

It was such a pleasure to meet members of other organisations from the town and to find out about their work.

Our thanks go to Donna Higgins for her kind invite and to the Very Reverend Joe Hawes for his hospitality



BOOK REVIEW.... An Almost Impossible Thing

By Fiona Davidson, published by Little Toller Books 2023. ISBN 978-1-9115068-37-8

A book exploring the lives of pioneering women gardeners who carved careers in the male dominated world of horticulture in the late 19th and early 20th century. Fiona Davidson, Head of Libraries and Exhibitions at the Royal Horticultural Society, describes the lives of women who became respected figures in the horticultural trades often overcoming deep rooted male prejudice and long held views about how things should be. The women featured started training colleges, ran smallholdings and managed great estates and their stories are explored in this absorbing and enlightening read. The skills and confidence of these pioneers helped reshape Britain's horticultural landscape.

SPECTRAL, COMING SOON TO THE EDGE OF THE GARDEN

It's a close-up of two people whispering and spreading gossip in a lime wood carving, leading to the "Capital" punishment of 18 people (supposedly witches), convicted without any shred of evidence hundreds of years ago! Here, in Bury, in public, 1/2 mile away from where the carving will be sited!

Plus there is a connection between this event and the Witch trials at Salem in America!

The plan is to place the carving just outside the Abbey Gardens itself. In this case immediately over the Lark foot bridge.

-thanks to John Williams for this article



ANGLIA IN BLOOM ARTICLE ON PAGE 9

VISIT TO WOLFE HALL GARDENS, 25TH JUNE



On what was almost the hottest day of the year to date, a group of 8 AGF members paid a visit to Wolfe Hall Gardens, near Barrow. We were met by our hosts and owners of the Hall and Gardens, Jo and Mark Howard. Immediately being offered tea, coffee, water, cakes and sausage rolls, we were seated in a nice, shaded area (once a shed!), accompanied by a remarkably tame swallow looking after her nest. While we were present, Jo tells us, 3 swallow eggs hatched. In this shade, over refreshments, Mark and Jo gave us a history of how they had

developed the Gardens over the last 6 years, from a virtual wilderness of untamed land. Both Jo and Mark were (rightly) very proud of what they have achieved. They have further improvement works planned for this coming winter.

In return, Paul (Marsh) was able to give Jo and Mark a potted history of the Abbey Gardens – and the AGF members benefitted from his knowledge, too. We perambulated through the Gardens, in two stints, to allow us to re-hydrate and set off again.



Jo and Mark have planted about 300 trees in total, including some traditional English apple tree varieties. The first lot of cider made from these was, according to Mark, undrinkable - sadly. They hope for more success with their second batch! Amongst the many varieties of flora and fauna that we espied in big swathes were....



Californian Poppy (*Escholtzia*), Yellow Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium*), Cat Mint (*Nepeta Catavia*), Jerusalem Sage (*Phlomis*), Sea Holly (*Eryngium*), Purpletop or Argentinian Vervain (*Verbena Bonariensis*) and also some beautiful sculptures on display. Having gorged ourselves on the lovely sights in the gardens we departed at about 12.45, the whole visit being very informative and enjoyable.

Wolfe Hall Gardens are open on selected days in July and August – we were specially looked after as the first visitors of the season. Our entry fee was good value for money; all proceeds from entrance monies are donated to the St Nicholas Hospice by Jo and Mark. I am pretty sure that those members present at this visit would thoroughly recommend a visit to the Gardens, particularly in view of the noble cause that entry monies are given to. Our thanks go to Jo and Mark for making us so welcome.

Ian Hobley

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ABBAY GARDENS LABYRINTH - BY REVEREND SARAH GULL. If



you haven't seen the Labyrinth lately it is strongly recommended! Planted with wildflowers in 2021 on the site of the old tennis courts, it attracts plenty of visitors, including many varieties of bees. Last year it won a special award for its biodiversity with Anglia in Bloom. The volunteer gardeners have helped to protect it with willow hoops around the outside. Walking the labyrinth is an ancient form of spiritual practice associated with pilgrimage. The path meanders its way to the centre. Unlike a maze there are no dead-ends-

all you have to do is follow the path to the centre, turn around, and walk back again. The winding path may be seen as a metaphor for life's twists and turns, or a journey of faith. In our busy lives it provides people with a chance to walk thoughtfully.

<https://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/whats-on/details.cfm?id=1125147>

<https://stedscathedral.org/events/labyrinth-afternoons/>

ANGLIA IN BLOOM

A VERY BIG THANKYOU TO THE ABBEY GARDEN VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED PREPARE FOR THE JUDGING DAY ON 24TH JULY. AND A VERY BIG THANKYOU TO SIMON HOBSON AND HIS WSC GARDENS TEAM



Abbey Gardens central beds being planted up by our volunteers in early June 2026.

THE GARDENS LOOKED ABSOLUTELY SPECTACULAR ON JUDGING DAY - INCLUDING THE GRASS!

Many Abbey Gardens Friends were involved in the lead up days getting the garden to look its very best. This was particularly difficult because of the hosepipe ban which forced Simon Hobson and his team to water the centre beds by hand in the days leading up to the 24th July. Several AGF met the judges to help Bury in its bid to win Gold across the town and in the Historic Gardens category.

Pictured plants, left, include – Tagetes Erecta Antique Yellow, Geranium Wilhelm Langguth and Canna Tropicana Black.

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Answers to Summer Quiz.

1. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
2. Ants - Adam and The Ants
3. For the Roses
4. Flowers in the Rain - The Move
5. A Rose garden

abbeygardensfriends.org

----- END OF THE SUMMER NEWSLETTER -----