

Abbey Gardens Friends Newsletter, Winter 2025

*"Helping to keep the Abbey Gardens a joy to visit".
(9 pages of good news)*



GOLD FOR BURY ST EDMUNDS!



Left to right: Robin Burnett-Chair Bury in Bloom. Simon Hobson- Manager Abbey Garden, Heritage and Green Spaces, West Suffolk Council. Chris Wiley- Coordinator Bury in Bloom. Mags Slater -Greenfingers Project.

Photo courtesy of RHS.

The last weekend in October saw Chris Wiley (Bury in Bloom Coordinator) and a contingent from Bury at the 2025 Britain in Bloom at the awards ceremony in Brighton. Bury won gold in the large town category, just pipped as category winners by Grangemouth in Scotland. The overall Britain in Bloom winners in 2025 were Southport in Bloom. More recognition from Anglia in Bloom judges on page 7.

You can read about the winners of Britain in Bloom at:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom/bloom-awards-results#awardsandwinnerslist>



OCTOBER PLANT SALES:

The Wednesday plant sales in the garden made over £2400 and promoted the Abbey Gardens with locals and visitors alike. Many thanks are due to Simon Hobson's team from West Suffolk Council and all the volunteers led by Lynda Seldis. A fantastic effort all around. Plants which sold like hot cakes were Dahlia tubers followed closely by Salvias, all taken from the summer display in the central beds.

SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE REMINDER:

The subscription rate for being an Abbey Gardens Friend will be £7.00 per annum from 1st January 2026.

Please notify your bank of this change to save our membership secretary lots of work. Many thanks.

Anyone joining Abbey Garden Friends between now and 31st December 2025 will enjoy free membership until the new subscription rate begins.

Like all thriving community groups, we need to encourage new membership to ensure our longer-term future and to help us keep our beautiful garden a joy to visit.



THE ABBEY GARDENS FRIENDS COMMITTEE:

Paul Marsh - Chair

Anne Weedon - Treasurer

Ian Hobley -Secretary

Margaret Stephenson - Membership Secretary

Rob Cunningham-Snell & Simon Charlton -committee members

We can all be contacted via: - abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

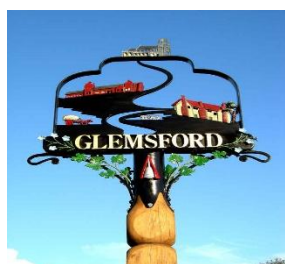
A THANKYOU MESSAGE: Debbie Batson has stepped down from her role as Treasurer, and I am sure all of us in Abbey Garden Friends would like to thank Debbie for her contribution to keeping our finances in order.

THEY WHEELED THEIR WHEELBARROWS: Not Molly Malone but Brian, one of our volunteers who has been incredibly busy restoring three old and rather decrepit garden barrows which had been languishing in the yard. We had been contemplating buying new barrows but fortunately for us Brian took on the daunting job of restoring them to pristine condition. The picture, bottom left, is the large barrow before restoration, the bottom right shows the two smaller barrows after restoration. These have been named



Betsy and Caroline, after Mr Hodson's wives. The larger barrow will be christened Mr Hodson when finished. The barrows look splendid, each with restored metalwork, several coats of forest green paint and all new woodwork. Betsy and Caroline have been hard at work in the garden for the last few weeks and will be joined shortly by Mr Hodson!

OUREACH TALKS ABOUT THE ABBEY GARDEN: Paul Marsh continued his series of talks to promote the garden and its history. On a rather dank night in late September, he visited Glemsford and gave a talk to a packed hall in the local gardening club. The club kindly donated £50 to Abbey



Garden Friends. In mid-October Paul gave a talk to the Southgate Centre Friendship Club. Amongst the lively audience were many born and bred Burytonians who shared their stories of the Abbey Garden in times past. The Friendship Club also made a generous donation to Abbey Garden Friends. An invitation was extended to

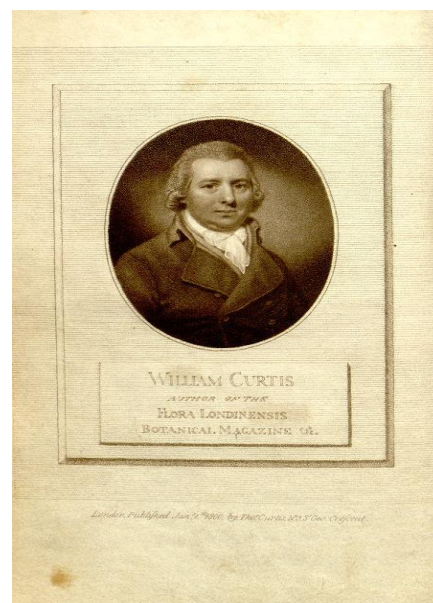
Paul by both clubs to return with his new talk about the Botanic Garden after Nathaniel Hodson, covering the period 1861-1918.

On 23rd October several of us attended Dr Pat Murrells very interesting talk at the United Reform Church on Whiting Street entitled “Bury’s Georgian Garden”, which was of course all about Nathaniel Hodson and the creation of The Bury Botanic Garden. All the proceeds from Pat’s talk were donated to St Nicholas Hospice Care.



Paul’s 2026 diary for his talks about the Abbey Gardens for organisations outside Bury is already fully booked. Paul will be talking in Bury (at several venues) Boxford, Fornham and Brockley. If you have a group who would like to know more about the garden contact our secretary at abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

A POEM: Poems about nature and gardens often adorned the front page of the Curtiss Botanical Magazine in the 18th and early 19th century and the poem below is one such. It was written by Charles Lloyd, a friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner). Lloyd suffered serious bouts of epilepsy (perhaps mistaken then for mental illness). He was at one time cared for by the botanist Erasmus Darwin, father of Charles Darwin. Sadly, Lloyd is said to have died insane at an asylum near Versailles in 1839 aged 64. However, he writes a beautiful poem.



William Curtis (1746-1799). Founder and editor of The Botanical Magazine (which became Curtiss Botanical Magazine, in his honour, after his death). Nathaniel Hodson had many of his plants featured in the magazine between 1815 – 1830

*The Flowers, which grace their native beds,
Awhile put forth their blushing heads,
But e'er the close of parting day,
They wither, shrink, and die away:
But these, which mimic skill hath made.
Nor scorched by sun, nor killed by shade,
Shall blush with less inconstant hue,
Which art at leisure can renew.*
Charles Lloyd. (1775-1839)

NEWSLETTER QUIZ: A RIGHT ROYAL MIX UP.

Match the Monarch and consort (1-6) with the period of their reign

(A- F).The monarchs are those who reigned between the opening of the 1st Botanic Garden in 1820 and when it became a public garden in 1912.You may be surprised (or not) at how British and Germanic royalty was, and still is, interconnected. A clue about one pairing is given on page 7a nd another in the photo below. Good luck.

- 1.George III & Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz
- 2.George IV & Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel
- 3.William IV & Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen
- 4.Victoria & Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha
- 5.Edward VII & Alexandra of Denmark
- 6.George V & Mary of Teck

- A.1910 - 1936
- B.1837 - 1901
- C.1901 - 1910
- D.1820 - 1830
- E.1760 – 1820
- F.1830 -1837



Queen Victoria and Prince Albert 1852

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WALKS AND TALKS IN THE ABBEY GARDEN FOR ABBEY GARDENS

FRIENDS: Simon Hobson (West Suffolk Council) and Paul Marsh will be leading walks around the garden on Wednesday 3rd December (already fully booked) and Wednesday 1st April 2026. Simon will be talking mainly about the garden and Paul mainly about its history. Each walk starts at the Abbey Gate at 10.30 am, lasts about 1.5 hours and is limited to about 12 people. Walks can only be booked on a first come first served basis via Ian Hobley our secretary: abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com



IN THE PAPERS:

Did you see this article in the Bury Free Press in September?

CHRISTMAS TREES, BOTTLE BUDDIES AND CRAFTY FOXES:

On 18th November Michelle Freeman of Crafty Foxes, the Mayor and numerous others met on Angel Hill to help decorate one of the town's Christmas trees with bottle buddies. These festive decorations were made by children from Westgate Primary School and are made of used water bottles and other recycled materials. Three children from the class that made them were there to help put them on the tree and to see their handiwork put on public display. Abbey Gardens Friends supports Crafty Foxes, including their application for Town Council funding, and we donated £100 of our funds to help things along. Well done to all concerned. Look out for pictures in the local press. Lynda Seldis and Paul Marsh were also there helping with proceedings and chatting to the public and press about our work.



Historical Notes No7: Nathaniel Hodson and a botanical painting by Augusta Innes Withers (1793-1877) of his hybrid mimulus.



The world of horticulture in the 19th century was dominated by men. But here and there woman of talent shone through to leave a legacy we can still enjoy today. Augusta Innes Withers is one such woman and has a unique connection with the Abbey Gardens.

Born Augusta Baker, she was a clergyman's daughter; she lived and worked in London all her life. She married an accountant, Theodore Withers, 20 years her senior, and gave lessons in flower painting for money. She eventually became Flower Painter in Ordinary* to Queen Adelaide during the 1830s and 40s. She drew for books and magazines such as Curtis's

Botanical Magazine, John Lindley's Pomological Magazine, and The Transactions of the Horticultural Society (later to become the Royal Horticultural Society). At one point, she applied to Jackson Dawson Hooker at the Royal Botanical Garden at Kew to become the resident Botanical Flower Painter, but she was rejected. Her most famous illustrations were the orchid paintings in James Bateman's *Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala* (1837-41) and Benjamin Maund's *The Botanist*, a five-volume series that introduced 250 new plants from 1836 to 1842. Maund's series is notable for its many female artists: the plates within were drawn by Maund's daughters Sarah and Eliza, Augusta Withers, Priscilla Bury, Jane Taylor and Miss R. Mills among others. However, of particular interest to Abbey Gardens Friends will be the painting she was commissioned to make of Nathaniel Hodson's *Mimulus roseo cardinalis* (or Hodson's hybrid mimulus), which appeared in *The Botanist* in 1838 (above left). She is credited as the artist, bottom left of the picture (above left - blue arrow).



(Right: Queen Adelaide, partner of William IV who reigned from 1830-1837).

*Flower Painter in Ordinary, also called Flower Painter to the Queen, is a position in the United Kingdom awarded to a painter taking commissions from the reigning monarch.

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY AWARDS A LEVEL 5 CERTIFICATE TO OUR VOLUNTEER GARDENERS.... read on

At the Anglia in Bloom seminar held on 13th November (the debriefing event for Anglia in Bloom entrants) Hodson's Helpers (also known as our volunteer gardeners) were awarded a level 5 certificate (the highest possible) and a £15 gift voucher from the Royal Horticultural Society. In the feedback from the Anglia in Bloom judges our volunteers and the West Suffolk Council gardeners were praised for their work in the Abbey Gardens and around the town.

RHS website says this about level 5 certificates:

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*"The RHS Britain in Bloom Level 5 certificate signifies the highest achievement, often in the "It's Your Neighborhood" scheme, meaning a community garden or project is deemed **"Outstanding"** for its exceptional year-round involvement, strong community participation, excellent horticultural standards, and positive environmental impact, earning top marks for vision, hard work, and creating a beautiful, sustainable space for everyone to enjoy."*



ALL ABOUT TREES

The tree survey group has been continuing its work - identifying trees for inclusion in a new, probably digital, guide to some of the more interesting trees in the garden. More updates as we get closer to completing this extensive project. The double trunked conifer just inside the garden and adjacent to the Abbey Gate and tourist guides' hut is to be felled in the coming weeks. We hope to make use of the

trunks with another wood carving – if all things go to plan. Following a recent tree survey, Simon Hobson (Manager, Abbey Gardens, Heritage & Green Spaces, West Suffolk Council) has had to make plans for the replacement of some damaged/diseased trees in the garden and make provision for planting a number of new trees on virgin sites, a total of 11 replacement or new trees. Simon has asked Abbey Gardens Friends to pay for these, at a cost of about £1700.



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Newsletter quiz answers:

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|--------------|----------------|
| 1.George III | E. 1760 - 1820 |
| 2.George IV | D. 1820- 1830 |
| 3.William IV | F. 1830-1837 |
| 4.Victoria | B. 1837 -1901 |
| 5.Edward VII | C. 1901-1910 |
| 6.George V | A. 1910- 1936 |
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-----THE END OF WINTER 2025 EDITION -----

The Abbey Gardens Friends Committee