

# SUDBURY FREEMEN'S SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

## **Sudbury Freeman's Society**

COMMITTEE: - C A Grimwood (Chairman), R P Alston (Clerk) B L Hibble (Treasurer)

M E J Wheeler, Mrs S M Prior, A Shelley, M Batty, C J R Wheeler.

Malcolm Offord has decided to stand down from the committee and we thank him for the contribution he was able to bring to society matters.

The committee was elected at the Quinquennial meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 and will serve until the next Quinquennial in 2024.

The Chairman wishes to express his thanks to all who serve on the committees on behalf of the Freeman of Sudbury. Particular thanks as always go to the Clerk, Treasurer and those who assist in the running of the society website.

The committee is always keen to recruit more members, (especially younger members), to provide continuity and understudy current roles.

Any Freeman or Widow who wishes to be involved in any way, however small, should please contact the Chairman, Clerk or any other committee member. Assistance from non-Freemen and Widows is also welcome as under the constitution the committee has the ability to co-opt them on to committees. Your assistance and input are always greatly appreciated.

In spite of the ongoing pandemic and ensuing restrictions, the committee was able to meet, via Zoom, to ensure that society matters were addressed.

### Admissions

#### Historical Overview

The administration of the admissions process to the Freeman of Sudbury was transferred back to Sudbury Town Council in 2014. The Local Government Act 1972 made Babergh District Council responsible for maintaining the register of Sudbury's Freeman, but it was agreed by both councils to devolve the task back to Sudbury Town Council. Matters concerning the Sudbury Freeman are conducted through the council. The point of contact with the council being the Town Clerk, Mr Ciaran Griffin.

Application for admission by descent should be made in the first instance to The Town Clerk, Sudbury Town Council, The Town Hall, Old Market Place, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 1TL

The Town Council also has the powers to admit Honorary Freeman, which is exercised only on rare occasions.

Service as an apprentice to a Freeman in the town of Sudbury has always been a route for admission to the Freeman of Sudbury. However, the changing socio-

economic landscape within the town over the past thirty years has seen a reduction in the number of Freemen admitted via this route.

Malcolm Batty has produced an excellent document outlining a possible pathway to allow admission to the Freedom of Sudbury through nationally recognised apprenticeships with local trades and businesses partners. The proposal has many positives and would certainly provide a method of reopening the apprenticeship route to gaining the Freedom of Sudbury.

The matter will be discussed at the AGM, but I suggest the committee discuss and work towards agreeing a framework to be put to a conformational vote of the society at the AGM in 2022. We shall, as part of this framework, liaise with the town clerk and local business to gauge their interest.

At the last Annual General Meeting there were two new admissions to the Freemen of Sudbury.

Thomas James Page

Phoebe E J Wheeler

#### Deaths of Society Members

I regret to have to inform the society of the following known deaths of Freemen since the publication of the last annual report: -

John Shelley Nurser

Jean Margaret Moscrop

Olive Mary King

Also reported from 2019

Dorian Edynbry

#### Macebearers

Since the last report, there were no civic events requiring mace bearers. With the proposed easing of Covid restrictions it is likely that there will be requests for both a Civic service and Remembrance Day services.

Mace bearing duties are carried out at the request of the Town Clerk and have traditionally been performed by the Freemen of Sudbury providing a visual display of the important role we have played in the town's past. We are always in need of

more mace bearers so if you are interested, and can spare the time, please do volunteer.

**SUDBURY FREEMEN'S TRUST**  
**Established 1986**  
**Registered Charity No. 295764**

**Trustees:** M E J Wheeler (Chairman) Mrs S M Prior, Mrs I Gregory,  
A. Shelley, R Alston, C A Grimwood, Mrs F M Wheeler (Hon Secretary)

The current trustees, unless otherwise stated served during the year. All were elected or re-elected at the Quinquennial Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019, to serve until the next Quinquennial Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024.

During the pandemic a meeting took place on Zoom to support the SFT projects with vulnerable groups and individuals.

The Trust offers its support for elderly Freeman and Widows to help them meet the cost of the Local Authority 'Contact Care Line' emergency assistance and monitoring services. Applications by or on behalf of eligible Freeman and Widows are always welcome. Our grants are not 'means tested'.

The Trustees once again express their sincere thanks to Fiona Wheeler for her considerable work as Honorary Secretary to the Trust and for updating the website with monthly newsletters from Adrian Walters and Ross Bentley about the common lands. The website has continued to receive emails from people who are researching their Sudbury history.

**Grants paid:**

Several 'Contact Care Line' payments were made to Freeman and Widows of Freeman.



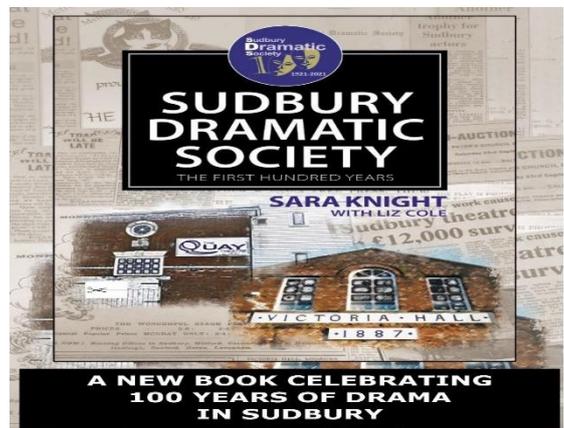
An update on the restoration of the Gainsborough family graves headstone in Sudbury Cemetery. The project to refurbish the stone in the Sudbury Cemetery which marks the final resting place of the human remains of the Gainsborough family vault together with remains from other prominent Subarians, extracted from Friars Street Chapel in the 1960's was completed in December 2019.

The stone looks so much better and can now be seen from a distance. The work has been carried out to an extremely high standard with Neil Luxton carrying out much of this restoration without charge.

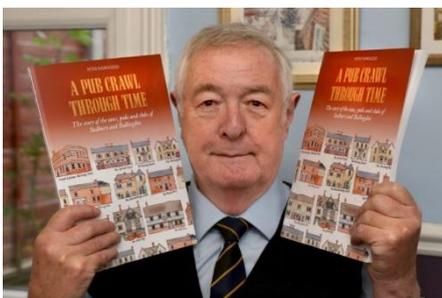
Funding was provided for the Sudbury Freeman's Society website which also includes information about the projects supported by The Trust.

### Sudbury Dramatic Society

The Trust contributed towards the cost of a book about the history of the Dramatic Society. The Book was printed in March 2021.



### Peter Thorogood's Book about Sudbury Pubs



The SFT provided the seed funding by way of a grant to help with production and design costs of A Pub Crawl Though Time. The book delves into the history of over two centuries of Sudbury pubs, inns and clubs. The books were printed in December 2020. Copies (some signed by the author) will be available for sale (£14.99) at the AGM.

### **Finances**

Historical Over-view

The Trust was established in 1986 primarily to form part of the 1987 settlement with The Sudbury Common Lands Charity following the sale of Harp Close Meadow. At its foundation, the only material source of income of The Trust was a share of the net income of the Sudbury Common Lands Charity. In recent years, as more land was purchased costs then increased in real terms and higher standards of conservation were sought; the net surplus of The Common Lands declined to the extent that this Charity now depends to some extent on financial support from external bodies and the timing of the receipt of payments, particularly from state 'quangos', are unpredictable.

The Capital of The Trust, mostly 'The A R Wheeler Fund', is invested by professional fund managers, appointed by the Trustees, with a medium remit to produce a modest but sustainable income over the longer term. It is expected that the income from the A R Wheeler Fund will be more stable than that from the Sudbury Common Lands Charity over the long term

The Trustees intend to distribute the net income after expenses in grants over the medium term but need to maintain prudent reserves for contingencies and the Trust's regular commitments.

Freemen and their families are invited to include The Sudbury Freemen's Trust amongst charities they support with their generosity.



## **SUDBURY COMMON LANDS CHARITY**

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 212222

Chairman:- Peter Fulcher

Freemen Nominative Trustees: - C A Grimwood, C J Wheeler, N Eley and M J Wheeler.

Elected at Quinquennial Meeting 2019

The Sudbury Common Lands are among the oldest recorded grazing pastures in England. It is because of the Freeman of Sudbury that the Sudbury Common Lands exist today, and the charity was set up to manage those lands. Four Freeman are elected to serve a five-year term on the committee. Some have also served on sub-committees at various times to assist on a range of charity matters.

In spite of the restrictions imposed over the past year of lockdown the rangers have continued to maintain the jewel in Sudbury's crown, the Sudbury water meadows. Each year a programme of farming and conservation works is put in place in order to sympathetically manage the land and allow nature to flourish. This vital work is on occasion supported by volunteers from the Riverside Project team. Part of the farming project is the annual grazing on the meadows which, thanks to John Coleman, has again taken place albeit at a reduced capacity.

Following his retirement from the post of Ranger, Adrian Walters continues as Clerk and Mentor, setting up and working from an office within the Christopher Centre. With Nick Shimwell confirmed in the role of Ranger, the newly appointed Assistant Ranger found that the requirements of the role were conflicting with other opportunities and took the decision to resign.

The Trustees have again undertaken an intensive recruitment process and are delighted to have offered the position to Jack Cresswell. He has enthusiastically accepted the job and will take up the role in the summer after graduating from university.

The common lands have again shown their true value, allowing the towns people a much need escape from the pandemic and providing a valued excise resource. However, the problem of litter and increased footfall has led to the deterioration of the footpath surfaces which has led to the programme of works having to be adapted and reprioritised to repair the damage.

Covid-19 has had an impact on the day-to-day practises of managing the common lands. All tasks had to comply with Government directives. Unfortunately, the working parties have only managed to get out for five days this year which has put extra pressure on the Rangers.

Despite this, the wildlife continues to do well. A Great White Egret was seen on North Meadow Common and there have been increased sightings of Red Kites and Ravens.

The Deptford Pinks are having their best flowering season since the SCLC management began. By contrast, the Marsh Orchid population has seen a significant reduction with only 34 flowering plants.

Water voles are still present alas in lower numbers but there is increased otter activity particularly around the Croft and Mill Race.

The Charity gave rent holidays to the Christopher Centre and the tenants at Grove Cottage. Nevertheless, the Charity's finances remain strong with an £8000 deficit being offset by some extremely generous donations which are always welcome to support the great work being done by the team.

We pass our thanks to all rangers, voluntary rangers and various working parties whose work allows us to continue to enjoy the beautiful riverside and water meadows.

### **Freemen of England and Wales**

Communication from the Freemen of England and Wales came via the spring journal (No 197). Once again, due to the ongoing pandemic most guild events so far in 2021 have either been postponed or cancelled. Details of the 2021 AGM will depend on further Government restrictions. Further information will be available on their website ([www.freemen-few.org.uk](http://www.freemen-few.org.uk)) or in the next Journal due out in the summer.

Restrictions allowing, we are hoping to invite our Warden of the East, Angela Prestley, to the annual walk and AGM.

The Executive of the Association, has appointed a small working group, tasked with reviewing and renewing the governing documents, thus improving practices in a number of areas. Alan Shelley as vice president of FEW, along with other fellow area wardens, will be involved in this group which will identify various issues and define solutions. We wish Alan success in this matter which will benefit the association and all its members

The executive have also been working with website designers to improve the FEW website. Thoughts and comments are welcomed via email at [membership@freemen-few.org.uk](mailto:membership@freemen-few.org.uk).

### **The Freemen's Society and Data Protection Regulations**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a requirement by law which became effective from 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 to replace the current Data Protection Act. Under the GDPR the charity has to explain why it collects personal data and how it intends to use it. If you do not give your consent the society may not be able to contact you again.

The primary purpose of holding this information is for the society to be able to provide Freemen with information relating to agendas, minutes, society matters and other information.

The society holds the following information: names, physical address, email address and telephone numbers

The society will use the data in the following ways: to make contact by email, mail and telephone.

The Society does not store 'sensitive personal data' as defined by the GDPR.

The Society does not buy and will never sell data or use records other than to contact the relevant individual.

The Freeman data is held on the one computer under the control of the Chairman of the society. Society data is only available to the Chairman and Clerk of the Society.

Changes to personal information must be advised in writing. This may require further proof of identity such as providing an old address or by forwarding new details by the email address that is held by the Society.

**Deletion of Personal Data:** When there has been a reported death of a Freeman, the details of the individual will be removed from the Freeman's role prior to the next annual report. A valid request can be made at any time to delete individual details. This must be made in writing to the Chairman which who will action the request immediately.

