

BURY UNITARIAN CHURCH: 2019 Annual Report:

*2019 was dominated by several important events. In 1719, the foundation-stone of the first Bury Church was laid; the licence to carry out religious-proceedings was granted; and the first service took place. The main celebration of our 300th Anniversary was held on December 1st, 2019, when we invited our congregation and friends to join us for a service, afternoon tea, and four short presentations which outlined significant periods in our history. More than 80 guests attended, including Revs. Beryl and John Allerton, both of whom had served as Ministers of our church, and who offered their own special contributions to the service. GA President, Celia Cartwright, offered GA greetings; Rev. Kate Brady McKenna conducted an excellent service, and the choir and organist provided musical contributions. GA Vice-President, Anne Mills, welcomed guests, after refreshments had been served, and read out greetings from those who had been unable to attend. Barrie Dixon, one of The Lord Lieutenant of Manchester's deputies, was present, as was Councillor Trevor Holt, the Mayor of Bury, and several former Mayors and Consorts. A new brass plaque, on the reading-desk, one on the bell from the original chapel, and a new pulpit-fall now commemorate our 300th Anniversary. Throughout the year, our services and events were filmed, to provide us with a special record, and we look forward to viewing the finished version. Truly a day to remember!

*Weddings also proved significant; it was more than four years since our last wedding, but, in 2019, we held three! The first one, between Candice and Suzanne, was our first same-sex wedding and, therefore, historically important; it was also the first same-sex church wedding in the town of Bury, and attended by the local Registrar, in honour of the occasion. Our second wedding saw Lorraine Maden and Peter Hunter married; Lorraine and her family have long attended our church, a continuing, and pleasing, association. Our Minister, Kate, and her partner, Adrian, were the third couple to be married, on an October day, which saw more than 100 guests present at the service and wedding-breakfast, including a dozen Unitarian ministers, in full rig; this was a magnificent occasion, full of goodwill, happiness, and laughter; our hosts were extremely generous, and it was a pleasure to be present. We are delighted to offer the happy couple our hearty congratulations.

*Once again, in September, 2019, we opened our church for Heritage Weekend; this was masterminded by Betty Kenyon and Damion

Langford, who assembled an astonishing amount of material of all kinds and displayed it effectively, throughout the building. Visitors to this event included The Mayor and Mayoress; the GA Vice-President, Anne Mills; James Frith, M.P; and the architect of the fourth chapel, Terry Ratcliffe; David French wrote an article for us, about the current chapel, and, during the year, we have been compiling a Book of Memories, which will be on display shortly; this will complement our 2019 film, but material can be added to it, in the future, whenever we wish.

*On May 17th, we were very much at the forefront of a memorable occasion in Bury: the unveiling and dedication of Victoria Wood's statue. Although this stands just beyond the boundary of the Church Gardens, it is close enough to our building to look as if it belongs to us! The Brighouse and Rastrick Band practised inside, beforehand, and were supplied with refreshments, as were Council-members and VIP's, and Kate devised and delivered a superb dedication-service, in the presence of Chris Foote Wood, Ted Robbins, Graham Ibbeson, Rishi Shori, and a goodly crowd of townsfolk. This was an occasion on which we were able to offer generous hospitality, which was appreciated; our gardens and premises were also greatly admired. Since the statue's arrival, we have noticed that many visitors come to be photographed, or to leave floral-tributes; quite often, they stay for refreshments, too, which is all to the good!

*Two former members returned, to rejoin the church-congregation, this year: Harry Taylor and Ian Barlow; sadly, Harry died, later in the year, as did Fred Mitchell; both men had participated fully in church-life and will be greatly missed. In most respects, our regular activities continue successfully, and we keep ourselves busy and active. As we proceed with upon our fourth century of Unitarian presence in Bury, we remain proud of our congregation's reputation for warm, friendly hospitality---long may this continue!

Anne Mills: Chairman of the Congregation, and Church Secretary:
March, 2020.