

# DISCOVER

## ABBNEY GARDENS VISITOR GUIDE



**DISCOVER** THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED ABBNEY GARDENS, IN THE CENTRE OF HISTORIC BURY ST EDMUNDS, WITH ITS EYE-CATCHING FLORAL DISPLAYS, ABBNEY RUINS AND BEAUTIFUL WALKS...



[www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/parks/abbney-gardens/](http://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/parks/abbney-gardens/)

## WELCOME TO THE ABBEY GARDENS

The internationally acclaimed Abbey Gardens, in the centre of historic Bury St Edmunds, attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, drawn by the superlative floral displays, the historic setting and the excellent facilities.

The six and a half-hectare (approx 16 acre) public park is part of the precinct of the former Abbey of St Edmund. The combination of floral excellence, formal bedding schemes and the ruins of the Abbey make the gardens a very special place to visit.

The site is meticulously maintained and has been awarded numerous accolades over the years. Approximately 20,000 plants are bedded out in the spring for the summer display and 12,000 plants and 20,000 bulbs are planted each autumn for the spring display.

The Abbey Gardens has features of interest for a wide range of visitors including the ancient ruins, an aviary, tennis courts, a water garden, a rose garden, a sensory garden, a pergola, a children's play area, a section of the River Lark, an information point (including plant and gift shop), a refreshment kiosk and public toilets.

Abbey Gardens are much loved by both the local community and the many tourists who visit them throughout the year. They are a stunning venue for the many and varied cultural events which take place in Bury St Edmunds.

## A HISTORY

The award-winning public park is part of the former Benedictine Abbey of St Edmund, one of the most powerful Abbeys in medieval England.

The Abbey Gardens were created in 1831 by Nathaniel Hodson. Originally, it was a botanic garden laid out in the same style as the Royal Botanic Gardens in Brussels. In 1936, the original layout of the flower beds in concentric circles was replaced by the sixty-four island beds which, together with illuminations, formed part of the Coronation celebrations for George VI in 1937.

The Abbey Gardens Sundial Fountain was gifted to the people of Bury St Edmunds in 1871 by the 3rd Marquess of Bristol. This Victorian drinking fountain, with sundial cube on the top, is an extremely early example - quite possibly the earliest in the country - of a sundial that allowed the town clocks to be set to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) rather than local time.



Here in Bury St Edmunds, on the right as you pass through the Abbey Gate, is the world's first internet bench! Installed in 2001 by Microsoft, the computer giant chose the town for the pilot scheme from hundreds of applications made by local authorities around the UK.

## THE GARDEN CAFÉ

The Garden Café kiosk is situated within the Abbey Gardens. The café provides refreshments, including hot drinks, cakes and a selection of treats to have your own picnic within the gardens.

Tea and coffee is Fairtrade and there is also a selection of healthy snacks available, as well as ice-creams, of course!

Kiosk opening times vary as follows but are always weather dependent and subject to change:

<b>January</b>	Closed
<b>February</b>	Half term only, 11am to 3pm
<b>March</b>	Weekends only, 11am to 3pm
<b>April and May</b>	Weekdays 11am to 4pm and weekends 11am to 5pm
<b>June</b>	Weekdays 11am to 4pm and weekends 10am to 5pm
<b>July and August</b>	10am to 5pm daily
<b>September</b>	11am to 4pm daily
<b>October</b>	11am to 3pm daily up to and including the October school half term break, closed thereafter.
<b>November</b>	Closed
<b>December</b>	Closed



# DISCOVER

## OTHER PARKS TO ENJOY IN WEST SUFFOLK...



**Nowton Park is less than 2 miles from the Abbey Gardens and consists of almost 200 acres of beautiful Suffolk countryside to explore.**

Until 1985, the park formed part of the Oakes family estate. It is now owned by West Suffolk Council and managed for recreation, leisure and nature conservation.

There is something for everyone to enjoy at Nowton Park: There are walking routes that vary from a short stroll to a long ramble round the perimeter of the park. You can explore the arboretum which features trees from all around the world, as well as beautiful wildflower meadows and ponds full of wildlife. In spring, there's a carpet of daffodils that bloom beneath the trees on the Lime Avenue.

You can lose yourself in Nowton Park's maze, or pick up a map and know exactly where you are! From the end of May to October you can explore the 2,500 hornbeam trees that make up the maze in the shape of a stylised oak tree.

The park is also home to a large play area, football pitches, a picnic area, cafe and visitor centre. Dogs are welcome but must be under control at all times and in some areas, on a lead.



**Discover the heart of The Brecks at Brandon Country Park, just 15 miles from the Abbey Gardens. Explore a land of open heathland, green forests, wide horizons and fresh air.**

With over 30 acres of parkland, there's lots to see and do at Brandon Country Park. Located in the vast Thetford Forest, Brandon Country Park lies in the very heart of The Brecks: a wild landscape of dark forests, open heathlands, sandy soils and iconic belts of pine trees that straddles the Suffolk and Norfolk border.

On your journey around the Park you will uncover an arboretum, a 'haunted' mausoleum, lawns and a lake, a historic walled garden, play areas and a café. There are also miles of nature trails and cycling routes to enjoy.





**West Stow Country Park, approximately 7 miles from the centre of Bury St Edmunds, comprises of 125 acres of unspoilt countryside to explore, including trails, SSSI heathland and woodland walks.**

There is plenty to discover; wildlife enthusiasts will enjoy visiting the two bird hides and a bird feeding area, as well as a lake and the River Lark with all the life that this attracts.

West Stow Country Park is perfect for picnics on sunny days, energetic winter walks or an evening stroll and the park also boasts an adventure playground for children, making it an ideal family destination.

The unique Anglo-Saxon Village site, with reconstructed buildings and museum sits in the heart of this Breckland landscape. The Visitor Centre has a variety of gifts themed around the site's 10,000 years of human history, plus items on wildlife, nature and unique souvenir gifts.

There is also food and drink available if you wish to stop for an awakening cup of coffee or a lunchtime snack. The café can be found next to the main car park, along with toilet facilities. Dogs are welcome in the Country Park, provided they are kept on a lead.



**East Town Park can be found in Haverhill, around 20 miles from Bury St Edmunds. The park has 50 acres of meadows and woodlands to enjoy.**

The country park also features an abundance of wildlife habitats, trails, a picnic area, shop and children's play area.

The park offers an insight into the history of Haverhill with Osier beds that serve as a reminder of the willows that once grew there and were used by local Haverhill basket weavers.

During the spring, visitors can see snowdrops, yellow aconites and watch the birds build nests. In the summer, there are lizards basking on log piles in the Sturmer meadow and banded demoiselle damselfly dancing around the brook.

The easy access trail which weaves its way through the millennium meadow offers those with reduced mobility an opportunity to enjoy the diverse wildlife in the park. Or take the 5 kilometre railway walk along the disused Haverhill to Sudbury line which operated from 1865 until 1967.







## ABBEY GATE

The ornate Abbey Gate you see today was built in 1327. It replaced an earlier gated entrance which was demolished by rioters who opposed the rules and taxes imposed by the Abbey.

## ABBEY RUINS

The Abbey Ruins located beyond the formal gardens are the remnants of the medieval Abbey of St Edmund. The Abbey Church was one of the largest Abbeys in Europe. The flint and rubble ruins that remain today were originally faced with finely dressed limestone. Most of this stone was removed after the Abbey was dissolved in 1539.

## AVIARY

There is a small aviary in Abbey Gardens with a variety of birds including canaries, budgies, Bengalis and Zebra finches and diamond doves. There is no charge to see these beautiful birds.

## APPLEBY ROSE GARDEN

Originally an orchard, this is now a beautiful and established rose garden with over 400 rose bushes. The rose garden is named after John Appleby, an American serviceman who served with the 487th Bomb Group in Lavenham. A donation of royalties from his book 'Suffolk Summer' saw the rose garden come to life. A bench made from the wing of an American 'Flying Fortress Bomber' and a memorial stone pay tribute to the many US servicemen and women stationed in Suffolk during the Second World War.



## CENTRAL AREA

The formal beds and borders greet you as you walk through the great Abbey Gate. With benches along the perimeter, this is the perfect spot for enjoying a few moments' peace and quiet whilst watching the world go by.

## PILGRIM'S HERB GARDEN

The garden features many traditional medicinal plants believed to cure most ills and ward off evil spirits. It was inspired by a now famous manuscript written at the Abbey in the 13th century which is housed in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

## MEMORIAL PEACE GARDEN

This garden is the venue for the annual Holocaust Memorial Day service, held in late January. It also commemorates the local massacre of 57 Jewish residents who died at the gates of the former Abbey on Palm Sunday, 19th March 1190.

## SENSORY GARDEN

Designed with the visually impaired in mind, this garden is full of fragrant and tactile plants for everyone to enjoy.

## THE RIVERSIDE

The River Lark runs along the eastern side of the Abbey Gardens. The Abbey historically used the river as a water supply, food supply (from the fishponds), a power supply (for the water mill) and as a trading route.

## THE WATER GARDEN

Tranquil and calming, the water garden is a relaxing place to enjoy some shade on sunny, summer days.

## THE WILDFLOWER LABYRINTH

The labyrinth is a new feature in the gardens planted in spring 2020 to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Abbey of St Edmunds. The labyrinth has been sown at the eastern end of the abbey church where the former tennis courts were located.

## WILDLIFE BIRD FEEDING AREA

There is a special wildlife feeding area within the Abbey Gardens. It is located along the eastern bank of the river, by the Bridge Entrance. The new dovecote next to the feeding area was designed to home the pigeons so that visitors walking under the Abbey Gate don't receive any unwanted gifts! Please only feed the local wild birds in this area.

## CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

The well-equipped children's play area and treehouse are nestled by the river and divided into sections by willow weaved partitions. There is a lot for the adventurous (and not so adventurous) to do. There is also a sand and water area so don't forget your bucket and spade.



## TENNIS

Our brand new tennis courts are ready for their first games, sets and matches. There are two courts available all year round and can be hired online.

For charges or booking please visit:  
[clubspark.lta.org.uk/AbbeyGardens](http://clubspark.lta.org.uk/AbbeyGardens)

For more information and also Coaching courses, please visit the website or visit the Abbey Gardens information centre next to the Aviary. Please note shop opening hours vary according to availability of staff and volunteers.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

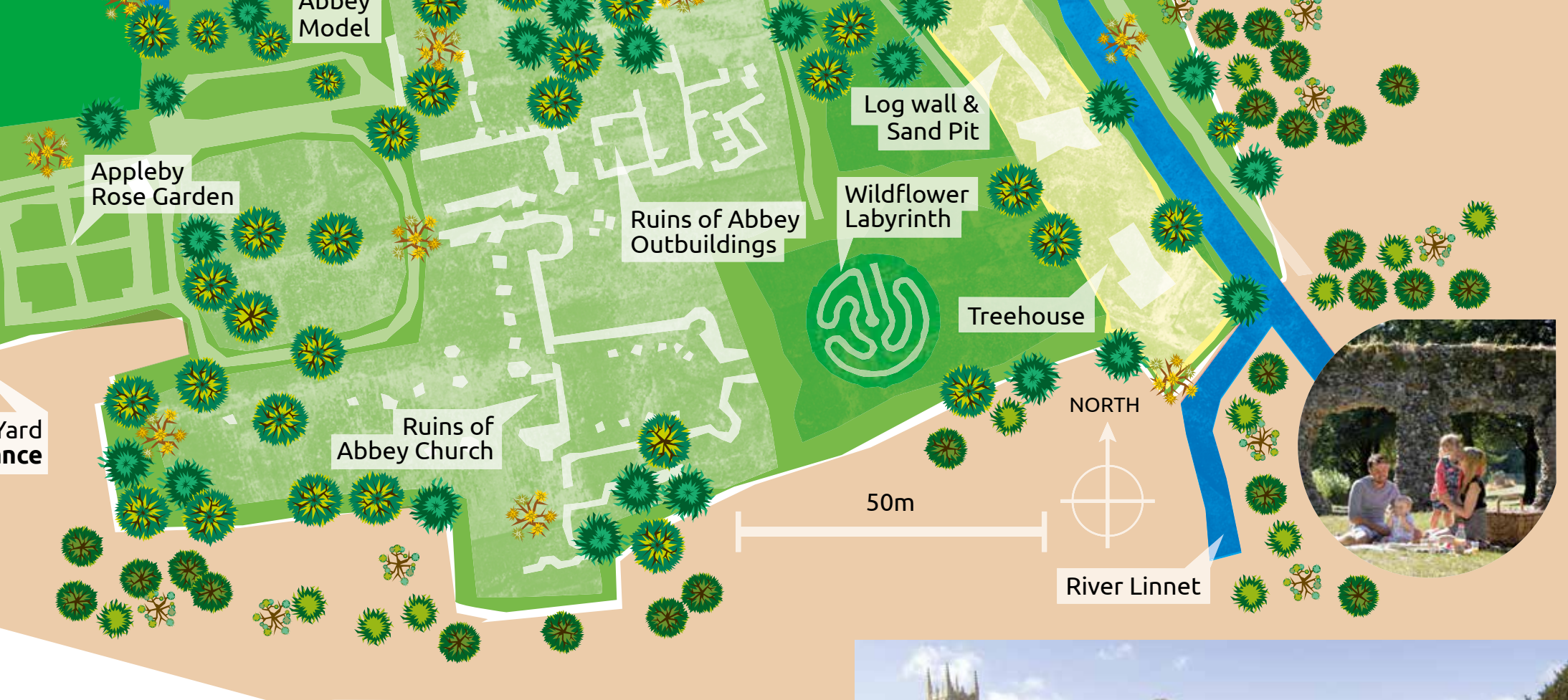
- No Cycling.
- Protect and respect wildlife, plants and trees and this special place.
- Don't climb on the ruins for your own safety and to avoid damaging the historical remains.
- Keep dogs under control at all times.
- Please observe the closing times.











## ABBEY GARDENS FRIENDS

The Abbey Gardens Friends are an independent group of volunteers from the local community who work in partnership with West Suffolk Council for the good of the gardens.

There are two types of Friends;

- **Volunteer Friends** who are actively engaged in some way, for example, working in the gardens (the gardening group) or serving on the committee.
- **Support Friends** who do not wish to be actively involved but who appreciate and enjoy the gardens and wish to express their support for them.

The gardening group assists with regular ongoing tasks to be found in all public gardens: digging, weeding, lifting and replanting and trimming the shoots from the boles of trees; and there are also specific projects to undertake.

In addition, with the support of the council, the Friends have their own programme of activities and run events for the community, most of which take place within the Gardens.



If you would like to join the Abbey Gardens Friends, please email:  
[abbeygardens.bse@btinternet.com](mailto:abbeygardens.bse@btinternet.com).





## OPENING TIMES

### **Summer: April – August**

Mon-Sat: 7.30am – 8pm

Sun & Bank Holidays: 9am – 8pm

### **Mid-Season: September & March**

Mon-Sat: 7.30am – 6pm

Sun & Bank Holidays: 9am – 6pm

### **Winter: October – February**

Mon-Sat: 7.30am – 5pm

Sun & Bank Holidays: 9am – 5pm

## HOW TO FIND US

**Abbey Gardens, Mustow Street,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1X**

Abbey Gardens can be found in the heart of Bury St Edmunds, next to St Edmundsbury Cathedral and at the bottom of Abbeygate Street.

Bury St Edmunds Railway Station is 0.6 miles (0.96km) away.

Bury St Edmunds Bus Station is 1 mile (1.6km).

## PARKING

There is parking across from Abbey Gardens on Angel Hill, but spaces are limited and the car park can often be full at peak times.

You will also find a large car park at Ram Meadow off Cotton Lane (IP33 1XP) which has 794 spaces. This car park is a two minute walk from the gardens. Please refer to the Council's web page for the current carparking charges.

[westsuffolk.gov.uk/parking](http://westsuffolk.gov.uk/parking)

## CONTACT US

**Tel: 01284 757490**

**Email: [parks@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:parks@westsuffolk.gov.uk)**

**[www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/  
parks/abbey-gardens/](http://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/parks/abbey-gardens/)**



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Council