

BURY ST EDMUNDS

Magna Carta 800



# The 1959 Pageant

*In 1959 another pageant was held to celebrate Bury St Edmund's connection with the Magna Carta.*

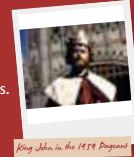
The 1959 pageant involved a cast of thousands from all over West Suffolk. The twelve performances were sold out weeks before the opening night. There were 10 episodes, staged in the Abbey Gardens in front of elaborate scenery.

Some of them covered the same events as in 1907. However, the emphasis was on the freedoms which began with the signing of the Magna Carta.



## Did you know?

- Americans from Lakenheath airbase performed in the episode about John Winthrop of Haverhill, first governor of Massachusetts.
- Famous composer Benjamin Britten wrote a 'Fanfare for St Edmundsbury'.
- To save on expensive false hair, many of the male actors grew their beards.
- The pageant made a surplus of over £2,000 which paid for a pool, flowerbeds and a shelter by the bowling green in the Abbey Gardens.



The 1970 Pageant Play coincided with the completion of the Cathedral extension. It had a different emphasis from the earlier pageants, the scenery was equally grand, but the action focused on a single episode - the Life and Martyrdom of St Edmund.



Colour films made of both the later productions followed the example set in 1907. The involvement of so many local people in these events ensured that they are fondly remembered even to this day.



In 1959 Benjamin Britten wrote the Fanfare for St Edmundsbury for a "Pageant of Magna Carta" held in the cathedral grounds.

[www.burymagnacarta.org](http://www.burymagnacarta.org)



Magna Carta is owned and loaned by Lincoln Cathedral.

