



# The 1907 Pageant

*The 1907 Pageant resulted from the revival of interest in Bury St Edmunds' history.*

The previous year, the town had celebrated the 300th anniversary of its Charter. The town council invited the famous 'Pageant Master' Louis Napoleon Parker to run the event. To benefit the town's businesses and boost community spirit, he insisted that everything used in the pageant be made in the town itself.

Thousands of local people were involved. Local artist Rose Mead designed the costumes. More than 700 people helped to make them. There were over 2,000 actors, with many of the leading roles taken by prominent citizens. The pageant depicted various episodes from Roman times to the Dissolution of the Monastery. Daily performances were held in the Abbey Gardens during the second week in July.

Cheap railway fares drew crowds from towns up to 150 miles away. Members of the British and Danish Royal Families also attended. A rare film by local cinema owner Ronald Bates preserved scenes from the pageant for posterity.



1907 Pageant souvenir



1907 Pageant souvenir



Pageant showing the barons



Commemorative medal based on Edward penny

## Did you Know?

- Pageants began in the Middle Ages as a way of telling Bible stories to people who could not read or write. There was fierce competition to mount the most lavish production.
- Leading performers provided their own outfits. The organisers set a spending limit to prevent competition for the grandest costume.
- Despite drenching rain which flooded part of the Abbey Gardens, not a single performance was cancelled.
- Local jeweller Thurlow Champness sold bronze, silver and gold medallions to commemorate the event. They were based on a 9th century St Edmunds memorial penny.

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