

SALISBURY
CIVIC SOCIETY



DECEMBER 2018



DIARY OF EVENTS 2019

THURSDAY 17TH JANUARY

New Year Party and Annual Awards Presentation

Salisbury Arts Centre,
Bedwin Street SP1 3UT

Application forms with this magazine

THURSDAY 14TH MARCH

St Clement's Fisherton, Salisbury's Lost Medieval Church

by Steve Webster

6.30pm Methodist Church,
St Edmund's Church Street,
Salisbury SP1 1EF

Free to members: Non members £2.50

THURSDAY APRIL 11TH

Planning Forum

6.30pm Methodist Church,
St Edmund's Church Street,
Salisbury SP1 1EF

Free to members: Non members £2.50

WEDNESDAY JUNE 12TH

AGM

Followed by a talk on General Pitt-Rivers,
by Adrian Green

6.30pm Methodist Church,
St Edmund's Church Street,
Salisbury SP1 1EF

(DATE TBC)

Visit to Wilbury House, Newton Tony

Details in March magazine

WEDNESDAY JUNE 19TH

Visit to the award winning house Gold Hill, Tisbury

Details in March magazine

WALK (DATE TBC)

Salisbury's Hidden Art History

led by David Richards

Details in March magazine

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH

Updating The Wiltshire Pevsner

by Julian Orbach

7.00pm Methodist Church,
St Edmund's Church Street,
Salisbury SP1 1EF

*Free to members: Non members £2.50
(note changed start time)*

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 14TH

The History of Theatre and Cinema In Salisbury

by Frogg Moody

6.30pm Methodist Church,
St Edmund's Church Street,
Salisbury SP1 1EF

Free to members: Non members £2.50

Editorial

This issue's cover is not unusual in that it shows a building, but departs a bit from the normal format, by having one with exploding fireworks all over it. The photograph was taken, by our Treasurer Adrian Harris, at the opening event of the Lift Off! weekend organised by Wiltshire Creative in August. Co-incidentally, a firework let off from the cathedral spire top in 1992, as the culmination of a concert to mark the end of the Spire Appeal, featured in a talk on repairs to the spire, which is described later on. The only available image for that pyrotechnic device was a photo of it in spent form, so it rather lacked the élan evident in Adrian's shot.

As is traditional, the December magazine includes an application form for the New Year Party, on Thursday January 17th. As our chairman explains in his report, pressure of numbers at the 2018 event has led to a move to the Arts Centre. In other respects the format remains unchanged, and the presentation of awards for the 2018 awards scheme will occupy a prime slot. A very good, and very varied, collection of buildings will be illustrated during the ceremony, their details obviously remaining sealed until the day. It's probably not giving a lot away to mention that the traditional use of one of the winners, for the front cover of the March magazine, will present a slight problem in three months time. Since the cover went over to the use of a single image, a few years ago, there's always been a winner which lent itself to a portrait format. This time, however, all of them are stoutly landscape in shape, and it's hard to see how to get round this. The outcome will be revealed in time, but the answers to who got awards are probably more important, and will be revealed sooner. Do take advantage of the application form, and come along to find out.

This issue has the normal mix of coverage, some of it very topical, some rather wider. The Open Meeting on rivers came too late in the calendar to be featured, though at the time of writing it has just taken place, very successfully. The September magazine mentioned the possibility of including treatment of rivers within the Maltings project, but the project's phasing ruled this out. The March magazine will cover both the Open Meeting, and the now-anticipated first Maltings planning application, whose timing and content are described in our chairman's report.

The last magazine picked up a 1987 Society newsletter article on firemarks by Sidney Flavel, and updated and expanded it. A further brief update appears later in this magazine. Past editions of the Society's regular publication for members could certainly provide some interesting nuggets, like Sidney's piece, alongside material focusing on issues which by now have been resolved or superseded. Almost certainly there is other material which would deserve to be reprinted, at the risk of a certain amount of déjà vu. The very first magazine, in something like its current format, came out in December 2000, with a summary of contents on the front cover. Prominent among them is 'Maltings Development, Salisbury', rather confirming the general suspicion that there is nothing much new under the sun.

Richard Deane

Editorial co-ordinator

A Warm Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Society:

Alison Craig, Peter and Sally Fasham, Valerie Harbour, Peter and Jean Hoare,
Frogg Moody, Tim Scrace, Ted Uren, Margaret Vacha

Cover: Fireworks at Salisbury Cathedral, August 24th 2018, photo: Adrian Harris

Photos in this issue, in addition to those credited individually: Hadrian Cook, Richard Deane

Chairman's Report – December 2018

As we near the end of 2018 it is again a chance to reflect on the highlights of the Society's activities and achievements in the past months, and look forward to future engagement with the Salisbury and south Wiltshire community, celebrating our rich history and aiming to maintain its high standards by scrutinising development proposals in 2019.

Without wishing to repeat old news, it was a very successful New Year Architectural Awards evening at the Guildhall back in January, with a record attendance and a good number of Award and Commendation winners. This meant that the room was packed with people and for some it became rather uncomfortable. So, this year we are planning to change the venue to the Arts Centre in Bedwin Street where space is more generous and facilities equally as good as the Guildhall and with a sound system second to none! The 2019 Awards Ceremony and New Year Party will take place on 17th January.

The unveiling of the plaque at 49 High Street in July, commemorating the local celebrated composer John Marsh, was a most enjoyable occasion with the Salisbury Baroque performing some of John Marsh's works in the Guildhall before the plaque unveiling ceremony. The performers, Society members and guests then retired to our President's house in the Close for refreshments (thank you Dame Rosemary) and a fascinating talk about John Marsh given by Brian Robins, enabling attendees to learn about Marsh's life and career in Salisbury and the meaning of a "Catch Club", not something found these days in Salisbury.

The Civic Society's Annual General Meeting in June was very well attended (thank you all), and the membership voted in favour of the adoption of the revised and updated Constitution which will be soon posted on the Society website, so your further interest in the details can be easily followed up.

After the formal proceedings, Hadrian Cook gave members present a most illuminating talk titled "The Suburbanisation of Salisbury", which traced the history of the City expansion and the patterns it followed, whether from geological factors or industrial development or the effect of the railway. The pressures of post war expansion in ribbon form along main routes into the City were well illustrated, such as along the Devizes Road. Fortunately, the early laying out of the grid pattern of Chequers meant that the centre kept its character and remains a celebrated feature of the City.

On the 12th September members of the Society paid a visit to Bristol where they were hosted most generously by the Bristol Civic Society who had previously been welcomed to Salisbury in 2016. These exchanges give a good opportunity to exchange information and views on priorities and activities in our respective cities as well as learn about the venue and more such exchange trips are under consideration.

Tim Tatton-Brown gave the Society a most rewarding insight into the history and development of St Thomas's Church on 20th September, with the start of his talk delayed by 10 minutes due to the queue from a very high attendance, both from members and the public. The insight Tim has into early and successive phases of development and the many historic and artistic features in the Church was admirably conveyed to the audience, and it was interesting also to learn of the tremendous impact of financial "patronage" by local wealthy folk in centuries

past who funded many improvements over the years. With a fund raising campaign by St Thomas's Church now in full swing to try and raise £2,000,000 to restore the crumbling fabric, we would welcome a return of that patronage today!

I remain in touch with the BID and Chamber of Commerce with the Salisbury Regeneration Partnership to support them in the hope they will have added impact in making overtures to central government, to support the Salisbury recovery and any campaign to publicise the excellent features and activities of the City and entice visitors and shoppers back. We learn from Visit Wiltshire that a public relations company has been commissioned by them to develop a "marketing plan", and consultations are now under way with the local community.

Development Committee members received a presentation from TH Real Estate (Henderson) and Wiltshire Council on their latest plans for the Maltings development, with a first phase planning application expected before the end of the year. The presentation covered, as will the application, a new building on the corner of Fisherton Street and Malthouse Lane, to house primarily the relocated library, plus a hotel. Further phases, including of course re-use of the current library area, will follow later. This stimulus to Salisbury is long over due and we shall support the project in its ambitions and the immediate wish to start the development process wherever possible. High quality architecture will still be something the Society will encourage at all stages, and we shall provide carefully considered responses to the architects as designs come forward.

Finally, please remember that we are still urgently looking for volunteers to assist with management of the website, and with both the General Purposes and the Development Committees. With the latter, we also need someone to take on the permanent chairing role. Do please volunteer if you can offer your time and expertise.

May I close by thanking all our committee members for their time and many contributions to organising the activities of the Society, and I wish you all the compliments of the season.

Peter Dunbar
Chairman

Planning Updates – Castle Street

Former Post Office site The March magazine reported that developers had taken on the long-empty range of buildings running north from the former post office, and were hoping to submit a planning application for mainly residential conversion in early summer 2018. However so far nothing has formally surfaced. The Society was shown early and vague ideas for one replacement new building, which looked as if it might be reasonably contemporary and promising, but a standard neo-traditional one now seems more likely. This is assuming the council accepts that the building to be replaced can go, something not yet proven.

McCarthy and Stone Further north up the street, work is very visibly well under way. The Society has been involved in commenting on a sample panel of brickwork detailing, a key element in the potentially interesting design for the street frontage here. With the conservation officers aiming to hold the developers to decent brickwork, there is at least a chance of a reasonable outcome. The Castle Street scaffolding is due to come down in July 2019, and we'll be able to judge for ourselves.

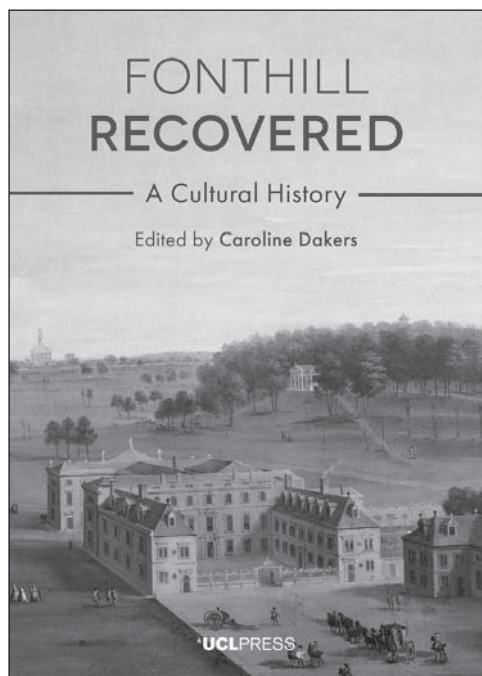
Fonthill Recovered

Fonthill Recovered: a Cultural History,
edited by Caroline Dakers
UCL Press, free download as pdf
(ISBN: 978 1 78735 045 8)
hardback £60 (ISBN: 978 1 78735 046 5)
paperback £40 (ISBN: 978 1 78735 047 2)

The Society's area is basically south Wiltshire, even if the exact boundaries are, for historical reasons, slightly quirky. Our key focus has always been the area's historic buildings, which in their number and variety are a major asset. However between the roads from Teffont to Hindon, and from Tisbury to the same place, there is a zone where buildings still predominate, but more because of their absence than their presence.

This is the Fonthill estate, a remarkable region where the construction of large houses seems to have had their eventual doom built into the process. William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey is by far the best-known of them, the apogee of the late C18th's enthusiasm for the Gothick, pushed up to extravagant height without too much consideration of commensurate constructional niceties, and then crashing down again. But other lost houses haunt the landscape around, fitted into a long and complex story which seemed likely never to be properly told. Now there is a book which does tell that story, its publishing a major cause for celebration.

Fonthill Recovered, edited by Caroline Dakers, developed out of a two day symposium in 2014, comprising a day of lectures in London, and one of walks and events at Fonthill itself. The book's lengthy gestation is no doubt partly a reflection of the specific publishing process involved. UCL Press, i.e. the publishing arm of University College London, has an open access policy,



meaning that the book can be downloaded free of charge, and its 430 pages printed out if so desired. Alternatively it's available as a bound book via print on demand, at £40 for a paperback and £60 for a hardback. The print on demand process probably shows itself slightly, in an occasionally somewhat dulled quality of image, and in the absence of a dust jacket for the hardback. But for those who'd like a traditional book, those are small prices to pay.

There are two main sections, of approximately equal length. The first is a chronological survey of the history of the estate, by four authors. The second is a set of twelve essays, all by different authors, picking up on individual subjects which illuminate and extend aspects of that history. Cumulatively the essays inevitably have something of a scattershot effect, shedding light on particular areas but leaving other ones, arguably no less important, in the dark.

But with the anchorage provided by the thorough coverage of the first section, the whole approach works very well.

Much of the tale told in the historical survey will be new, even to those with a longstanding interest in the area. Fairly fragmentary evidence of Bronze Age and Roman times develops, post-Domesday, into an often somewhat complex story of land ownership and tenure which continues to the present day. The first major house is mentioned in the mid C16th, but not pictured till the late C17th. A classicised version appears in some mid C18th paintings. It was destroyed by a fire in 1755, and its site is today occupied by a cricket pitch, west of the road which runs between Fonthill Bishop and Fonthill Gifford.

The next house to come, and subsequently disappear again, was the one known as Fonthill Splendens, which introduces a key name in the whole story. There were two William Beckfords, father and son, but the first is invariably known as Alderman Beckford, a reference to his success in London politics and society, though his fortune was based on plantations in the West Indies. He constructed Splendens just to the south of the original house, using an unknown architect. His son had little interest in politics, or in managing the West Indian estates, but he had enormous interest in spending the family fortune, inspired by romantic leanings which led him to the gothick style. He engaged James Wyatt as his architect, and one of the greatest folly structures of all time rose, rather too rapidly, to a height of some 300 feet. It occupied a new site again, something over a mile south-west of Splendens and, unlike that house, far from any public road.

Beckford managed to sell the abbey, to a gunpowder manufacturer called John

Farquhar, shortly before its probably inevitable collapse in 1825. The post-Beckford story becomes quite complex, with ownership of the estate, whose area changed quite a lot over time, dividing into first two, and then three different parts. Further houses rose and fell. Part of Splendens was left standing, and was adapted and enlarged for the Morrison family, eventually being known as Fonthill House. It survived till 1920, by when its function had been taken over by a new house, Little Ridge, two thirds of a mile to its east. This incorporated the rebuilt former manor of Berwick St Leonard, west of Fonthill Bishop. Meanwhile the abbey site had come into the hands of the Marquesses of Westminster, for whom another house named Fonthill Abbey was built nearby in the mid 1850s, designed by the architect William Burn, in a 'Scottish French Baronial' style. Disturbingly ugly to many modern eyes, judging by photographic evidence, this lasted till 1955, when it was destroyed, according to a local tale by the Territorial Army as a training exercise, though the book does not confirm this.

Little Ridge managed to survive till 1971, by which time its incorporation of a C17th house, and its overall design by the very interesting architect Detmar Blow, who also trained as a stonemason, might have been thought to have made it safe. Anywhere else perhaps, but at Fonthill its built-in doom played out inexorably, aided by considerable confusion at the government department which had the power to save it. In the words of a book that accompanied a 1974 V & A exhibition on The Destruction of the Country House, 'ministerial incompetence failed to list the house, so it was demolished'. That was the end of the long destructive era, for now anyway, not least because there wasn't a lot left to destroy. A new Fonthill House replaced Little Ridge, one with a polite blandness



A remarkable survival – model made to demonstrate James Wyatt's design for Fonthill Abbey to William Beckford Photo: Beckford's Tower and Museum (Bath)



Not primarily a house, so still there – the mid C18th Fonthill gateway



Upper Lawn Pavilion

somewhat at odds with its locale, and very far from the brio of predecessor houses. The stable block of the Burn house had survived, and was acquired by the fabric designer Professor Bernard Nevill, a colourful figure who reconfigured the more usable parts of the stables into a house. Beyond the scope of the book is his avowed intention to create something remarkable out of one derelict range, to which end he assembled a very large collection of architectural salvage material, which all put together could have created something truly bizarre, and therefore fully in keeping with the genius loci of the estate. Sadly the idea never came to fruition, probably not helped by Nevill's remarkable gift for falling out with local tradespeople.

Now new owners have taken on the stable block, and the Fonthill tide has turned. A new house is rising on that site, one that should fit the Fonthill ethos quite nicely. At Beckford's old abbey site, not that far away, another new house has been created by different owners, linked to what remains of the great folly, which is principally the Lancaster Tower – not the 300' foot tower which collapsed, but a lesser but still quite impressive structure. The book briefly sketches these final parts of the tale, but its last main focus, chronologically speaking, is



Gateway detail

on Upper Lawn Pavilion, constructed in the years after 1959, and a listed building, though this might surprise casual passers-by, who get only a partial view, and don't learn who designed it. This was the noted architects Peter and Alison Smithson, usually described as being of the Brutalist persuasion, and an unexpected addition to the Fonthill story. The pavilion's story is told in one of the essays, rather than in the historical survey. These form an interesting and very varied selection, with personal preferences dictating which add most to the whole picture. The essays deal with, inter alia, the early paintings of Fonthill, the source of the Beckford's wealth, the assemblage of grottoes and the like on the estate, William's gothic novel 'Vathek', and the subsequent histories of works of art formerly at the various Fonthill houses. The final one is on video games related to Fonthill Abbey, confirming that the book is indeed, as its subtitle says, a 'cultural history', in quite a wide sense.

Some of the information contained in this part of the book is fairly specialist, or indeed slightly rarefied. In the book as a whole there are occasionally non-Fonthill facts conveyed in passing, but with the ability to stick in the mind. For instance, being daughter of a marquess and sister of a duke apparently

outranks being a countess, something we learn when a minor figure in the story turns down an earldom, at the insistence of his wife who saw no benefit to herself from the title. Meanwhile below the level of the aristocracy, who play a major part in the story, a great mass of tradespeople and labourers toil away to put all the buildings and landscapes together, and maintain them, their stories generally remaining untold. There is an welcome exception in the essay on Blow's Little Ridge (by Michael Drury), which does go into details about who actually worked on the construction of the house. That such details are lacking elsewhere is no surprise in a book of this nature, but what should perhaps be nagging away is a layer further down again in the series of strata which underpinned the whole estate. The essay on the Beckford wealth tells us that the Alderman's grandfather owned some 1,200 slaves to work his Caribbean plantations, while his father owned 1,669. Later figures are not given, but are hardly likely to have diminished. While judging the past by the standards of the present can be a dubious practice, the timeless evil of slavery and the slave trade arguably transcends that doctrine. It's probably understandable that the book states a few figures and leaves it at that, but the baleful light cast on a major portion of the story by its foundation in slavery is still there, in the background.

For those not very familiar with the area, one or two maps are obviously helpful. The main one in the book is near the start, less than a page in size, and described as from the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 series. This is recognisably the case, except that the map has had to be shrunk to fit, so the true scale is significantly smaller. This limits what can be annotated on it to not much more than the five major houses. Other features appearing in the text may have clues as to

their general location, but there is no way of saying exactly where they are (apart from grottoes and the like, which have their own very useful hand-drawn plan). It would be nice, for instance, to know the course of Beckford's Barrier, a three mile long 12' high wall William constructed, or the different route of Cottington's wall (the Cottingtons were earlier owners of the estate). Things like the Alpine Garden remain features mentioned in passing, their exact locations unclear, and placing the paintings of lost houses in context is difficult. With the ideal answer, a fold-out map, probably ruled out by the publishing process, perhaps a double page spread might have helped, the inevitable uncomfortable zone down the middle a price worth paying.

However this is not something to be dwelled on too much. The book doesn't offer itself as a guide to the Fonthill estate, which can be used to navigate round it (many of the key locations are not publicly accessible anyway). It sets out a fairly complex historical tale, very well, and adds in details about particular elements within that story. The achievement of this is in itself remarkable, given the low profile of all those elements apart from William Beckford's abbey, and is way beyond the expectations, till recently, of anyone with a long-term interest in the area. To have achieved it so well is even more remarkable, and something of enormous credit to all those involved. This is a book which anyone with an interest in the history and buildings of South Wiltshire really ought to own, in whichever of the various forms available they choose.

Richard Deane

The March magazine will include a summary of those features of the estate's history which are now publicly visible, with a guide to how they can be reached.

Repairing the Cathedral Spire

On 8 November 2018 Richard Deane and Rod Baillie-Grohman gave an illustrated talk about repairing the Spire. The talk was in 3 parts: – Richard's account of his early work in 1977, when he was technically a glaziers' labourer, followed by Rod relaying extracts from his diary during his period of working on the Spire between 1986 and 1989, and showing photos, and Richard wrapping up with what has happened since.

Richard gave a quick history of the spire which was described as 'ruinous' within 70 years of being built. There is no documentary record of when construction took place, but it must have been in the first 30 years of the C14th. An indication of frequent subsequent intervention was illustrated by a detailed RCHM drawing, which shows all the added metal reinforcement.

In 1949-50 the top 30 ft was rebuilt. This was carried out in Clipsham stone as Chilmark was not being mined at the time. We were shown a picture of people on precarious scaffolding undertaking this work. In 1968 the ironwork binding the top of the tower together was replaced by steel and concrete.

Richard showed a 1977 picture of himself undertaking first aid repairs from a bosun's chair, when he was a glazier's labourer. The experienced masons were not keen on this idea, and left the work to two labourers and a first year apprentice mason. The bosun's chair, which suspends a person on a rope, is dependent on a secure knot. You move the chair by sliding the knot up and down, and all the rope the other side of the pulley acts as a counterbalance. As a result, when near the top of the spire you feel almost weightless, and can move both up and down with great speed. The bosun's chairs were rigged up by steeplejacks who then left, without much training being given. The Dean and Chapter made those working on the spire sign a disclaimer, of doubtful legal force.

Access to the outside of the spire is via the Weather Door on the north side, at the point

where access inside ends. The most common problem on the spire dealt with in 1977 was rusting iron cramps causing the stone to break up (photo p.11). Some previous repairs to projecting stones had just been glued on with no additional safeguards, so there was a risk of them dropping off. Despite the 'white knuckle' photos of work to the exterior, it is the inside of the spire that can actually be the more difficult to access. Views differ as to whether the cat's cradle of timberwork within the spire is original and built to enable construction to take place, or put in later in the C14th, when major repairs were needed after a storm.

Copper bands were placed around the outside of the spire in 1902. Their bolts proved to be in the way when the time came to add steel frames inside the spire, for the Spire Appeal work. The purpose of these was to transfer the load in areas where a lot of stones had to be removed and replaced. This meant that Richard rigged a bosun's chair again, so that the bolts could be reversed, with their heads on the inside, set into recesses cut in the stonework.

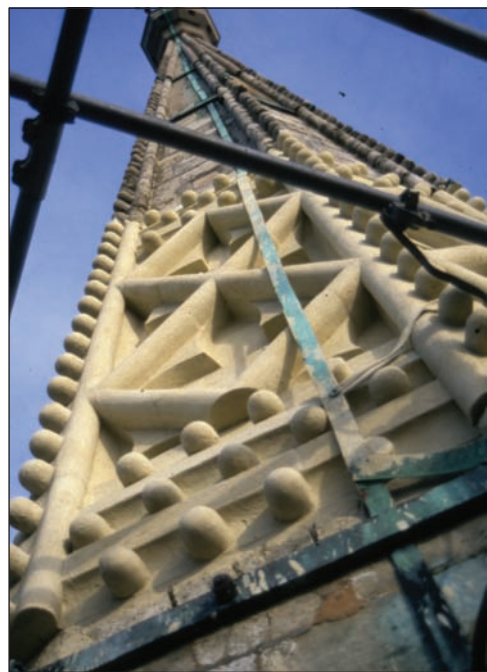
Rod worked on the spire for 3 years from 1986 when he moved from Wells Cathedral. He read us extracts from his very detailed diary, an invaluable record. He was mostly involved in repairs to the upper of the three decorated bands which punctuate the spire. Initial work on them started before the Spire appeal had got under way. There was very little in the way of 'health and safety' – not even an accident book. On 9 October 1986,



Spire upper decorated band, 180 degrees of stonework removed for replacement



Looking down from spire top in 1992, Spire Appeal work in progress below



Upper decorated band, before and after repair work *All photos on this page: Rod Baillie-Grohman*



Rusted iron cramp, showing the expansion that can rip stones apart



Medieval mason's chisel, as would have been used on the spire. This one was found inside stonework at the Bishop's Palace, where it had been pressed into service as a dowel.

he started work on the internal steel frameworks. His diary entry noted there was lots of stone lying around the works yard for repairs, but not always of high quality or great size. It was insufficient for the full repairs and the re-opening of Chicks Grove quarry came to the rescue half way through the project.

Rod told us of an episode when he was climbing the external ladder up to the scaffold he was working on, and eventually discovered he had put the wrong hook on the safety belt, having used one only suitable for tools. The steeplejack involved with the project had noticed this when he started off, but didn't tell him until he was back down. One major discovery had been that the hoist used for the work could not take the load of new stones if they were cut to the same size as original ones. This meant using stones half the size of those the medieval masons were able to get up there which weighed up to 350kg, and the original jointing pattern had to be altered.

Outside, temperatures could fall below freezing point and the wind could blow the grout out of the buckets. At one time there was a 180 degree hole through the spire where defective stone had been removed (photo p.10).

Rod kept a detailed record of repairs to the upper decorated band, showing who worked and fixed every stone. Taking all the rubble down was a major task. Once work moved to the middle decorated band Rod left and

returned to the Somerset levels, where he lives and still works as a stonemason. He had spent a very enjoyable three years involvement with repairing the spire.

Richard made the transition from glazier's labourer to stonemason and spent much of his 20 years at the cathedral working on outside projects, returning occasionally to the spire for particular purposes. July 1992 saw the end of the Spire Appeal, and a concert, with it being Richard's job to fix a holder for the celebratory spire-top firework. He left in 1997. During his final phase at the cathedral he used the occasional trips to the top of the spire to give a chance to others to get up there. A photo showed him there with an apprentice stonemason, Sarah Pennal, who later became an expert on the construction of domes, vaults and arches, and designed and built a bridge for Terry Pratchett, which won an award from the Society. To access the top of the spire you have to climb outwards over projecting stonework. The photos of this were quite vertigo inducing. Peregrines are now nesting at '8 doors' level.

What shone through this whole talk was Richard's and Rod's love of the job, precarious though it could be. Testament to their workmanship is that since completion of the Spire Appeal work very little has needed to be done, or will need to be done in the immediate future.

Judy Howles

Tower tour opportunity

Tower tours at the Cathedral are a wonderful chance to get much closer to the spire than is normally possible, and see it from its base, with a very interesting journey up there. The cost per adult is £13.50, but if 12 people (the maximum number) signed up for a group tour, this would reduce the cost to £10 each. If any members would be interested in the Society organising such a tour, next year, please contact Brenda Hunt, preferably by email: brendahunt@clara.co.uk, or phone 01722 322657.

Britain on film: Rural Life

34 people, mostly members of the Civic Society, attended a special screening of *Britain on film: rural life* in St John's Place, Lower Bemerton, on Wednesday 7 November. At least two people from the Harnham Water Meadows Trust came along, hoping for some inspiration on how to spend grants from the Heritage Lottery and Wiltshire Council to promote, record and conserve the rural crafts of South Wiltshire. What they saw was a compilation of a dozen short films covering a wide range of rural activities from 1904 to 1984 – a blacksmith shoeing horses in 1941; a midsummer 1904 day in the hayfields; the Great Hucklow Jubilee of 1935; the doomed attempt in 1978 by Eardisland Village to resist conservation status; some remarkably civilised Cumberland wrestling at Bellingham Fair...

My favourite films featured a revelation of just how magnificently unprepared the Rutland village of Morcott was in 1981 to face up to the responsibilities imposed upon it to act as Britain's early warning frontier in the Cold War; and an investigation into the respective merits of living in two contrasting adjacent villages in Co Armagh. Bessbrook was a model village founded in 1845 as a social experiment by a Quaker family which banned public houses, pawnshops and police (for what would police do if there were no pubs to generate work for them?). Their absence did not, as it happens, cause any lasting distress to the inhabitants, for, less than a mile away, the neighbouring village of Camlough (with a population of 98 at the time the film was made), boasted six thriving pubs facing each other across the village square. One could argue, indeed, that the health and morale of the good people of Bessbrook benefitted from the exercise in striding briskly to and swaying unsteadily back from these pubs. Certainly most of the inhabitants interviewed from both communities seemed to be happy with their lot.

I was far from the only person to enjoy these films – there was a general air of appreciation as I packed the film away to return to its owner, the Independent Cinema Office, which lent it to the Civic Society on very favourable terms.

James Woods

Civic Day 2019

After its inaugural Civic Day event in June 2017, the Society is organising another one, on June 22nd 2019, with a different format.

The 2019 event will be held at the Methodist Church in St Edmunds Church Street, and will explore ways in which the area's historic heritage can be best promoted, with talks followed by the audience dividing into groups to discuss specific aspects of the subject. Because of this format, attenders will be limited to a specific number, with Society members and representatives from key potential partners across South Wiltshire having priority.

We particularly hope to focus on Heritage Open Days both in Salisbury and elsewhere, the Salisbury chequers, the Salisbury History Festival, and innovative ways of promoting historic heritage in our district. Further details will appear in the March magazine.

Exotic Winterbourne Gunner

The title for this item is probably a fairly rare conjunction of words – exoticism and our local Winterbourne villages are not obvious bedfellows. But for a period, its extent hard now to establish, the Brooklands gateway pictured opposite added an unexpected roadside flourish to that part of the world, specifically to the top end of the villages, very close to Winterbourne Gunner church. The photo was probably taken in the early 1980s, and by the end of the century the gateway had gone, along with all the trees.



The house behind has been replaced as well. What's there now is, as shown, rather a comedown by comparison. Very little seems to be known about the genesis of the wrought ironwork, apart from the name of the family responsible, and nothing at all

about what happened to it. The Bourne Valley Historical Society has, at our request, asked its members if they know anything about the gateway, and if any Civic Society members have any information, we'd be delighted to hear about it.

Visit to Bristol

On Tuesday 11th September, 14 intrepid SCS members were hosted by the Bristol Civic Society. This was a return visit, their members having come to Salisbury in June last year. The programme provided for us was fascinating, although the weather could have been better! We were met at Temple Meads station where we paid our respects to Isambard Kingdom Brunel inside his 1834 Engine Shed before taking the ferry to Castle Park, where we disembarked. These Bristol river ferries give a sense of the importance of water to the former port which has since moved to Avonmouth.

Modern Bristol is the outcome of a long and often traumatic history. Its population is around 460,000, and it's a centre of specialist aeronautical engineering, tourism, media, culture, higher education, information technology and financial services. The present form of the city is the outcome of post WWII development following extensive bombing 1940-41, and the earlier mercantile city.

At Castle Park, by the bombed shell of St Peter's church, we learned the early history

before taking a tour. The Bristol area had prehistoric activity and Romans constructed settlements and roads. The modern place-name 'Bristol' probably contains an Old English element meaning 'bridge', marking the city as an Anglo-Saxon foundation.

By the eleventh century Bristol was an important port, trading mainly with Ireland, Portugal, Spain and later Iceland and Gascony. The Normans set to work developing the city, including a castle (there is little left today,



Former gateway at Brooklands, Winterbourne Gunner



Waterfront at Bristol, the city's characteristic coloured terraces behind

thanks to Oliver Cromwell) and outer defences have now vanished. Bristol played a role in the C12th wars of Stephen and Matilda, however the City continued to develop, and by the C17th it had a complex of streets reflecting its successful commerce, a street layout still evident into the C20th.

Bristol became a centre of exploration, most notably in 1497 when, from there, John Cabot (a Genoese merchant) sailed across the Atlantic. He is said to be the first European to set foot on the American mainland since the Vikings. Following this voyage, fishermen from Bristol were to settle Newfoundland.

Like Liverpool, Bristol was poised to grow with colonisation of the New World. Ordinary trade is one thing, but much wealth was gained as the Atlantic Slave Trade developed through manufactures to Africa that were traded for Africans taken to the Americas and on the return trip to Bristol, plantation goods such as sugar, tobacco, rum, rice, cotton and originally a few slaves (destined to be house servants) returned across the Atlantic, although officially slavery was not recognised in England. The tobacco industry was especially important: we learned that one of our leading universities was endowed by profits from fags, remembered in the neo-gothic Wills Memorial Building at Bristol University. Ironically the Wills (father and two sons) seem to have enjoyed reasonably long lives for their day!

Our guides took us from the waterfront, along King Street and on to the Georgian Queen Square. The Llandoger Trow pub, like many buildings here, dates from the C17th. Tradition has it that Daniel Defoe met Alexander Selkirk (the inspiration for Robinson Crusoe) here, and it was Robert Louis Stevenson's inspiration for the Admiral Benbow in Treasure Island. No Black Spots in sight, we also admired the brick-built 'Bristol Byzantine style' granary (actually incorporating

Moorish features) constructed in 1869. Here, as elsewhere, merchants liked to gain respectability by copying the style of older mercantile cities of the Mediterranean region.

Queen Square dates from the early 1700s, the time of Queen Anne. Beautiful though it is, the Square has seen hard times. Originally occupied by wealthy merchants and others, former residents include the 'privateer' (a kind of state-sanctioned pirate) Woodes Rogers. He circumnavigated the World 1707-1711, rescuing Alexander Selkirk from an island. Selkirk was another privateer. The Square was in a poor condition in the C19th, declining after a major riot in 1831 concerned with the forthcoming Reform Bill. Plans to locate a railway station were not carried out, but in the 1930s a dual carriageway was constructed across the square. This proved unpopular and plans started to restore the square in the 1960s. Finally, since 1992 it has been restored to a high standard.

The Docks, including the preserved Brunel's SS Great Britain, were developed in their present form in the C19th. The Floating Harbour (actually an impounded harbour using lock gates) permitted ever larger ships to be docked at high tide. From the centre we took the ferry towards Hotwells.

All this rubber-necking caused us to feel hungry, we enjoyed lunch at the Pump House pub, aptly named as it is next to the hydraulically operated gates to the Floating Harbour. Around here are preserved the Victorian buildings that housed the pumping equipment that operated the gates that controlled the water levels in the harbour. Also preserved – and operating – are shipyards that today service mainly pleasure craft. We enjoyed views of the outskirts and the famous 'colour terraces', vividly painted houses above the harbour area, learning much more from our guide.

From Wapping Wharf we returned, by ferry, and saw the Cathedral, Lloyds Building and M-Shed, with its exhibits on the city, before ending back at the station where we talked about current plans for the city centre. A good time was had by all!

SCS wishes to thank our Bristolian guides: Eugene Byrne, Ed Hall and Richard Guise for their time, knowledge and enthusiasm.

Hadrian Cook

Walk, October 1st: Pilgrimage in medieval Salisbury

Most people are probably unaware that Salisbury was once a destination for Christian pilgrims. On a sunny October afternoon David Richards, a distinguished Blue Badge guide for over 20 years, took 19 of us on an illuminating walk round city centre sites that had once been on the pilgrim trail. He told us that the Cathedral has a magnificent collection of medieval indulgences which tells us a great deal about pilgrims to and from Salisbury and also has a record from the 1530s of all its many relics – over 100 – including a tooth of Jesus Christ's grandmother, St Anne. Other evidence includes a collection of pilgrim badges in the Salisbury Museum and a 1901 book by A.R. Malden describing the canonisation of Bishop Osmund, which includes details of dozens of miracles that took place in Salisbury. In those days the people of Salisbury were living under constant threat of poverty, disease and accidents, and, above all, the fear that upon dying they would roast in a fiery pit through all eternity. To reduce your chances of going to hell, the Church (the Roman Catholic Church in those days) stressed the importance of relics, the intercession of saints, the purchase of indulgences and the undertaking of pilgrimages.

So who were these pilgrims? David described them as individuals who went to local or distant shrines in search of a cure from their sufferings or a reduction in their term in purgatory, the unpleasant intermediate stage between death and heaven through which repentant sinners had to pass to purify themselves. As a rule the reduction would be 40 days, but could extend to 10,000 years. However, even to get 40 days could involve some sacrifice: that was, for example, all you got for making an offering in the chapel of the leper Hospital of St John the Baptist and St Anthony that used to grace what is now a field near Old Sarum.



15th Pilgrim badge showing the Blessed Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Tombelaine, in France
Photo: The Salisbury Museum

The first stop for weary pilgrims to Salisbury would normally be the Cathedral, where they would make an offering at the tomb of St Osmund, who was renowned for having miraculously cured a woman of severe pains in her legs. Then they might go to the market place to renew their clothing, which had often been damaged by long journeys on foot from distant parts of the kingdom – the surviving house of John APort (now the Crew Clothing Company) would have been a favoured port of call. They would also refresh themselves in a hostelry such as The Red Lion or The Old George Inn, now The Boston Tea Party.

We went to all these places. The highlight of our walk was probably St Thomas's Church, where David gave us a detailed analysis of what was going on in its remarkable Doom Painting of the last judgment, and showed us a neglected pilgrim's crucifix (in great need of cleaning and conservation) attached to the outside of the church. And the most unexpected was our visit to the site of the 13th century Dominican Priory which offered an indulgence to pilgrims. It didn't survive the attentions of Henry VIII, and 450 years later it was reborn – as Sainsbury's supermarket! Clues to its history are to be seen in the supermarket's unusual design (such as its church-like tower and cloisters) which have been incorporated in the building as a homage to its predecessor.

David enriched our walk with anecdotes; a history of the badges worn by pilgrims and an account of their role; views of the pilgrim routes; the story of the protracted canonisation of St Osmund over a period of 358 years following his death in 1099; and much else of interest. He over-ran his allotted time of 90 minutes, but no-one was complaining.

James Woods

More Firemarks

The piece in the September magazine on fire insurance company badges, generally known as firemarks, ended with a suggestion that it would be interesting to hear of any additional ones, not included in the list we printed. A member responded by pointing out one we weren't aware of, in Wilton, and subsequently another one came to light in the same place.

They both belong to the same insurer, the Royal Insurance Company, not one previously known to have any marks in the area. Founded in 1854, it was Liverpool based, and includes the Liver Bird at the bottom of its badge. It may just be a matter of chance that it's not represented in Salisbury, but appears twice nearby, or possibly it had some local salesman based in Wilton. The discoveries



show that the list given in the last magazine was certainly not exhaustive, and quite possibly there are further firemarks in the area, yet to be identified.

Tim Tatton-Brown talk

The 20th September lecture was unusually held in St Thomas's Church, where a large audience heard Tim Tatton-Brown talk about its History and Architecture. He related the building of the church to contemporary historical events so that we better understood the context of its development. He advised that the gist of his talk can be found in the *Wiltshire Natural History and Archaeological Magazine* 1997.

He is convinced that the current edifice dates from the 14th and 15th centuries, not the 13th century as stated in both the Victoria County History and RCHM volume. There may be evidence of the earlier church of the 1220s beneath the floor. The original church was contemporary with the cathedral and developed rapidly to serve the needs of its large number of workers. It was the bishop's church and he was wealthy from his control of the market and his income from the Bishop's Mill. The church was dedicated to Thomas Becket, an English saint.

In 1363 the Dean and Chapter appropriated income from St Thomas's to repair the Cathedral. After this St Thomas's was rebuilt with both a north and south porch to provide a through route for procession. Only the south porch with its leaning bell tower remains but the site of the north porch door is clearly visible in the fabric. The side walls of part of the chancel also date from this time and some early tracery windows survive.

During the Black Death, in 1348-9, 50% of the populace died. However, the town was quickly repopulated and was the 7th richest town in Britain in the later 14th century owing to the wool trade. Southampton was its port. At the time 26 chaplains and 11 unbeneficed clergy were attached to the church.

In 1400 the will of Thomas de Boynham gave 20 marks for the south side of St Thomas, with the Dean and Chapter lending 12 marks for the bell tower, which formed the south porch. In 1447 the east end of the chancel collapsed. In 1448 the Dean and Chapter

paid for it to be rebuilt to the former length of just over 40ft, but rich parishioners added the money for an extra 19 feet, plus two chantry chapels at the sides. These were paid for by rival merchants – William Swayne and the Hungerford family. The pillars are later and bear inscriptions. There is one pillar which actually says it was paid for by John Nicol. William Ludlow of Hill Deverill paid for the whole of the lead roof.

There could be major wall paintings on the upper part of the chancel walls. They were designed to have them but are currently plain white. The corbels show musical instruments. The main nave has delicate stonework and large windows and a 15th century Angel roof. There are shields (coats of arms of local wealthy families) on the north chapel ceiling. All these ceilings need cleaning. Dendrochronology should enable the roofs to be dated.

In 1450 the bishop, William Ayscough, was murdered. The new bishop (Bishop Beauchamp) came from Hereford. William Swayne became patron of the tailors' guild so the guild had 2 altars in the south Chapel. He was a favourite of Bishop Beauchamp who gave him land for his priests' houses on the NE side of the church.

John Halle (who was mayor) sent people by night to pull them down. For this he was jailed in London and lost his mayoralty, but the people of Salisbury wished to keep him as mayor. The houses were rebuilt and this part of the church is now the vestry. The irregular shape of the building was

predetermined by an existing perimeter path. When Edward IV gained the throne in 1471 after the Wars of the Roses Bishop Beauchamp gained in importance. He built St. George's Chapel at Windsor for him in 1473. Bishop Osmund was canonised in 1457 and a shrine was built to him in the cathedral.

St Thomas' most famous feature, the Doom Painting, was found in 1819 under whitewash. It shows Bishop Osmund on the right. The painting has been retouched a lot. It invites comparison with a restored doom painting in Holy Trinity Coventry. In the 15th century rood screens were important. This feature would have been sited under the doom painting, but is now missing.

The organ is now gutted. It was originally in the Cathedral and personally paid for by George III when on his way to Weymouth and is shown in Turners' watercolour of the cathedral. It was given to St Thomas's by the Dean and Chapter. The church was restored in the 19th century and the pews date from that era. Legerstones were used for paving.

After the talk the Vestry was open to the public, where the engraving of the original plan of the church and external views could be seen. This shows pews plus galleries and shows who sat where in the stratified society of 18th century Salisbury. In those days the Mayoress had to sit behind the Mayor!

Judy Howles

St Ann Street Tree

The March magazine covered the loss of a fine Copper Beech tree in Avon Approach, in Salisbury. Its disappearance was a slow but inexorable process, with an application for its removal duly submitted, but no real chance for Wiltshire Council to oppose the idea. Now another fine tree has gone, this time almost literally overnight. It was one of a pair of Siberian Elms (resistant to Dutch Elm Disease) at the top of St Ann Street, about 30 years old, and shielding the road from the adjacent dual carriageway (photo on back cover). Viewed from the dual carriageway, it was the right-hand one of the pair. A severe split in the trunk was spotted and perceived as hazardous, and Highways England rapidly engaged tree surgeons to fell it, with just a few feet of trunk remaining.

Its conservation area location would normally mean an application to fell was needed, but the agency invoked an emergency procedure which bypassed this. Telling the Wiltshire Council tree officer of its intentions would have been nice, but it doesn't seem to have tried very hard on this front. Technically it did nothing wrong. There was no Tree Preservation Order in place, meaning no obligation for a replacement, had the full procedure been gone through. However the emergency one does require a new tree, very sensibly. Highways England probably would have planted one anyway, and the only question now is whether more than one might go in. The tree officer's view is that the two trees were quite important, as rare examples of Elms in the city, and that something of similar species should go back, though probably a variant less prone to the kind of splitting that led to the loss.

In the end the city's tree cover, so important to its character, should be restored in this part of town, but inevitably there will be a period where the green screen at the top of Salisbury's finest street, architecturally speaking, is significantly diminished.

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C16th Doom Painting at St Thomas's *Photo: Adrian Harris*



Two Siberian Elms formerly at the top of St Ann Street, the right-hand one now gone
(*Google street view image*)

