



DECEMBER 2019



## DIARY OF EVENTS 2020

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THURSDAY JANUARY 16TH

**New Year Party and  
Annual Awards Presentation**  
Salisbury Art Centre

*Application forms with this magazine*

THURSDAY MARCH 12TH

**Zero Salisbury – The Exciting  
Journey to a Clean, Green City**

by Alison Craig

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

*Free to members: Non members £2.50*

THURSDAY APRIL 30TH

**Planning Forum**

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

*Free to members: Non members £2.50*

WEDNESDAY MAY 13TH

**Visit to Wilbury House,  
Newton Tony**

*Details in March magazine*

WEDNESDAY JUNE 10TH

**AGM**, followed by a talk by Phil Harding

**Along the Line:**

**A Life in Archaeology**

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

WEDNESDAY JULY 8TH

**Visit to Melbury Vale Vineyard**

*An evening visit – details in June magazine*

THURSDAY AUGUST 6TH (WALK)

**St George, Dragons  
and Medieval Salisbury**

led by David Richards

*An evening walk – details in June magazine*

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17TH

**Stonehenge – Old Rocks,  
New Theories**

by Julian Richards

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

*Free to members: Non members £2.50*

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 19TH

**Out of the Ruins:  
Fonthill Houses Lost,  
Recovered, Rebuilt**

by Professor Caroline Dakers

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

*Free to members: Non members £2.50*

For detailed information on  
the above events visit:

[www.salisburycivicsociety.org.uk/events/](http://www.salisburycivicsociety.org.uk/events/)

## Editorial

It's a great pleasure to be able to feature, on this issue's front cover, a photo showing some of the remarkable work recently carried out on part of the nave roof in St Thomas's church in Salisbury. A photo of this scene a few months ago would just have shown an angel, and the woodwork around it, covered in a depressing brown layer. Now work led by conservator Peter Martindale, a Society member, has removed this to reveal a mixture of original medieval paint (the roof dates from the later C15th) and later repaint. In a future issue Peter will describe this work, and the cleaning and conservation of the Doom painting carried out at the same time.

A few pages in, a rather different sort of ecclesiastical story is related. Another member, Phyllis Babb, has uncovered a series of events in the late 1950s and early 1960s at Salisbury Cathedral, of a sort which couldn't happen today. Then, a wrought iron Victorian choir screen, of high-class workmanship, was deemed to be inappropriate in its setting, and unceremoniously removed. Systems now in place to scrutinise such ideas were entirely lacking then, and even if the following of proper procedures led to such a removal taking place today, it is inconceivable that the artefact concerned would simply be sold for scrap. Phyllis, with the help of local blacksmith Tony West, has identified what pieces survive, mostly in piecemeal form, from the screen. Alicia Robinson of the V&A, now home to the two most substantial surviving sections, has also been extremely helpful.

Elsewhere, there's coverage of David Richards' always eagerly-awaited annual walk, this time looking at works of art, in various materials, which can be easily seen while wandering round Salisbury. There is a wealth of such things, some reasonably conspicuous but some much less so, and such a walk is an invaluable way of highlighting city features which are all too often neglected. In a similar vein, the account of Julian Orbach's talk in September illustrates the thoroughness with which he's gone looking for historic elements in Salisbury, which the current Pevsner account felt not worth mentioning, or simply overlooked.

The June magazine this year promised a look at the 'Road to Nowhere' story of the 1970s in the next issue, but our own road towards this point, while it does have a destination in mind, has turned out to be rather circuitous. This time we're looking at Thomas Sharp's Salisbury proposals of 1949, a remarkable document which contained the seeds of some later changes, but which luckily was never itself put into practice. It's worth studying his road plan, shown on page 11. For an example of its implications, the location of 36 Milford Street, on the corner with Gigant Street, is worth searching out. The Julian Orbach article refers to the building's very interesting C17th ceiling, its ornaments including heads probably influenced by the colonisation of North America. Sharp's plan shows something very different on the site. Elements of his thinking seem to belong to another world entirely, something which might be taken as an encouragement to us, to try to predict how what we do may be viewed seventy years down the line.

**Richard Deane**

Editorial co-ordinator

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Cover: Angel in St Thomas's nave roof Photo: Adrian Harris

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

### A Warm Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Society:

Richard and Susanna Denniston, John Kirkwood and Tim Forrest, Lorna Rowlands,  
Salisbury Community Energy, Salisbury Hospice Charity, Peter Van Os



## Chairman's Report – December 2019

At this time of year we can reflect on what we have achieved during the past year, the programme ahead of us, and look forward to 2020 which will be a landmark year for Salisbury as it celebrates the 800th anniversary of the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for which construction was started in 1220, with the main body of the building completed in 1258.

The Dean and Chapter have a year-long plan for celebratory events titled 'Salisbury 2020: City on the Move' and these can be found on the website: [salisburycathedral.org.uk](http://salisburycathedral.org.uk).

Your Society has provided its usual wide range of events for members and the public to enjoy and began with the Architectural Awards ceremony in January at the new venue, the Arts Centre, which proved a great success. We are returning there on Thursday 16th January 2020 for the Awards Ceremony and New Year Party so do put the date in your diaries now. We have just held the 2019 November 'Open Meeting' at the Arts Centre instead of City Hall, due to its more comfortable space, large screen and auditorium and catering facilities.

We enjoyed visits in June to Gold Hill and The Chantry, Tisbury and in July to Embley Park, the former home of Florence Nightingale; a walk/talk lecture by David Richards in August learning about Salisbury's "Hidden Art History"; the annual Heritage Open Days in September which included guided tours of The Haunch of Venison and the Odeon Cinema; a lecture by Julian Orbach on "Updating the Wiltshire Pevsner" and a talk by our own Frogg Moody in November on the subject of "The History of Theatre and Cinema in Salisbury". If anyone has ideas about other topics or venues of interest do contact Judy Howles, Chair of the General Purposes Committee.

We look forward in 2020 to lectures on topics such as 'Zero Salisbury – the Exciting Journey to a Clean, Green City' by Alison Craig, the Fonthill Estate by Caroline Dakers, and by Julian Richards on 'Stonehenge – Old Rocks, New Theories', as well as visits to various venues which will include Melbury Vale Vineyard and Wilbury House, Newton Tony.

I wish to record our appreciation of the time, energy and creative talent of the General Purposes Committee, now chaired by Judy Howles, who work to provide this range of interesting and educational events. We welcome Frogg Moody, Jamie Hobson and Deanna Dykes who have agreed to serve on the GP Committee. We also thank James Woods for his considerable service in the past as Chairman.

Development activities in the Maltings, Salisbury are now getting some traction at last with the planning permission now granted for the Phase 1 Maltings development in Malthouse Lane/Fisherton Street. Demolition will be completed by Christmas and the new development will include an 85 bedroom hotel, gymnasium and new library facilities and should lead to emergence of Phase 2 development plans for the Market Walk buildings, after the library has relocated to Malthouse Lane. The published Maltings Masterplan by Wiltshire Council was well received but without sufficient detail to be able to understand how its ideas can be turned into real development schemes or how they might be funded. The River Park with enlarged green space is particularly welcome.

The announced plans by Wiltshire Council to purchase the property interests of all others they do not already own in the Maltings area is a challenging one, with questions about how negotiations will be undertaken, timescale and costs involved and whether a local authority

is equipped with the development skills and commercial awareness to enable successful development to be undertaken. Only time will tell!

We keep in close contact with Wiltshire Council about the Central Area Framework plans, further consultations on which are due in January and February, and also their deliberations for the "Arts Quarter" but despite many enquiries concerning their policy and ideas for the latter, nothing tangible has yet been forthcoming for us to debate. It is hoped that imaginative and world class concepts can evolve that create a new concert hall, galleries and possibly a multi-screen cinema with up to date technology and facilities for users.

The Society is represented on the Steering Group of the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan which has carried out a series of consultations with community groups and is now preparing for research activity to support priority policies that might be promoted in the future Plan. A key part of the NDP will be to include a "Design Forum" with design guidelines set out which aim to enhance build and design quality in Salisbury. Further public and community consultations will take place early in 2020.

The Development Committee continues to meet monthly under acting Chair Paul Stevens, and scrutinises Salisbury and south Wiltshire planning applications in great detail, sifting through to assess which are likely to have a significant impact on the architectural context of the location. If a comment or objection by the Society is warranted, it will be put in by an individual committee member, or in particularly important cases after discussion by the whole committee. On some occasions the promoter of the development will also be informed of the Society's views.

The scaffolding and protective wraps around the McCarthy & Stone retirement development in Castle Street will soon be removed and we can then judge how successful the developers have been in executing brickwork detailing to improve the elevations, the incorporation of which was encouraged by the Development Committee on behalf of the Society. It also had some involvement in the choice of bricks.

We are active in many fields, but there's always scope for doing more. If any member not currently involved in the work of our committees might be interested in seeing how they could contribute, I'd be delighted to hear from them.

I wish all a very happy Christmas and a healthy peaceful New Year.

**Peter Dunbar**

Chairman

### Don Cross

We are sad to have to report that Don Cross died on September 10th. Many members will remember him for the excellent work he did for the Society between 2007 and 2013, organising Heritage Open Days. Don was a noted local figure, who founded and ran a tourist guiding company called Wessexplore. He had a wide range of interests, typified by his being a founder member of the South Wiltshire Industrial Archaeology Society. He wrote extensively, with his 2004 book 'Salisbury – a History and Exploration' being a fitting tribute to his contributions in the field of local history, and local tourism.

# Salisbury Cathedral Choir Screen

The 1950s and 60s at Salisbury Cathedral were a very different epoch to today, with different tastes at work, and a Dean & Chapter subject to very little formal control. This only really arrived with the introduction of the Care of Cathedrals Measure, in 1991. Prior to that there were several episodes when artefacts within the building were deemed to be unsuitable, and unceremoniously removed without the outside world having much prior notice. One of the most notable of these was the choir screen, whose story is introduced here by Phyllis Babb, a long-term Society member.

While I was visiting Mary Dickson, a former Civic Society committee member, in the Matrons' College I enquired about an attractive piece of iron filigree on her wall. Apparently it came from a huge Victorian choir screen in Salisbury Cathedral. Pieces were dumped in a cottage she bought in 1973 in Guilder Lane owned by Bert Shergold who had the ironworks next door. Later she asked if she could buy a bit. She thought a large part of it was now in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. As I was visiting the V&A the following week I decided to do a little research. In the Ironwork Galleries on the first floor I found the gates from the centre of the screen, and the huge partly gilded cross which once topped the whole structure. The plaque told me:

*"These gates and cross were once part of a huge screen in Salisbury Cathedral. The screen was designed by the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott and made by the metal worker Francis Skidmore. The pair collaborated on several projects in the Gothic Revival style, including the Hereford Screen displayed nearby, and the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. By the mid-20th century this ornate style had become unpopular and in 1959 the screen was dismantled. Most of it was sold, but the cathedral kept the cross and presented it to the V&A in 2015. The cross and gates are the last surviving parts of the screen."*

On relating this to Jean Lunn (another former committee member) on my return she suggested I write it up for the Civic Society magazine, which prompted me to find out more. Why was the cross kept until 2015? Who bought other pieces? Where did they go?

I discovered that the author Henrietta Louisa Lear, widow of Mr Sydney Lear, gave the screen in memory of her husband, to cost no more than £1000 as that was the cost of a new screen at Lichfield Cathedral. However, it actually cost between £3000 and £3500 as Skidmore was a perfectionist. Scott thought Skidmore did his utmost and subsidised it himself. The work was done between 1869 and 1872, the exact date being disputed. Mary suggested I talk to Tony West who worked for Bert Shergold, so I gave him a ring. How fortunate I did! Tony is passionate to preserve the memory of this most important work of art. As an ironworker himself he fully appreciates the tremendous amount of time given and the very fine workmanship carried out in its construction.

## Tony's story

I feel it is important to keep alive the fragments of this wonderful piece of work, that took many hundreds of hours of skill and toil to make, and was cast aside through ignorance and changes in fashion. Many of the parts are forged from several pieces of wrought iron and would have taken a very experienced metal smith a considerable amount of time to make. Pieces can be seen which taper in both directions. The 'leaves' are cut from plate and individually shaped. The small anthemion, a Classical Greek decoration, is made from five separate pieces of metal, all forged before being forge-welded together. Very difficult work. Before the scroll form could be shaped all the parts would need to

be in the right place but all positioned along the central spine. Both sides of the screen were gilded, and the returns were painted deep red. More details of the work are also described by Alicia Robinson in an abstract on Gilbert and Skidmore's collaboration in: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-5/scott-skidmore>. She is the V&A senior curator responsible for Ironwork. In her article in the Journal of the Antique Metalware Society Vol 23 2015 there is Scott's drawing of the gates. It is quite crude, probably the draft idea for the customer, the cathedral authority, to consider. It was then worked up into a full design drawing, now in the RIBA collections. Scott says Skidmore took liberties with his design but I think he interpreted and enhanced as he directed his craftsmen to make this exceptional piece of work. Gilbert and Skidmore made the Hereford, Lichfield and Salisbury screens as well as the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park all in the space of a decade.

## Dismantling it

The Chapter Minutes record accepting advice from Mr Foreman, an architect, on how to remove the screen. It was taken down between January and April 1959. By May parishioners were writing to congratulate the Dean and even donating as much as £100 in appreciation of its removal.

## Finding it a home

In June a Mr Shaw-Porter asked if it was for sale as he would like the Clerk of the Works to erect it in his home or garden. The Chapter were dubious about selling to an individual. In August Washington Cathedral in the USA showed an interest but this does not seem to have been followed up. Come November the Vicar of Andover wanted it, for free, and would send a surveyor to inspect it. It was proposed it should go inside Andover church (which has considerable similarities to the cathedral) but had to be kept in good order, though nothing definite was settled. By February 1960 Andover had declined and Mr Shergold was



The choir screen in situ Photo: Salisbury Museum





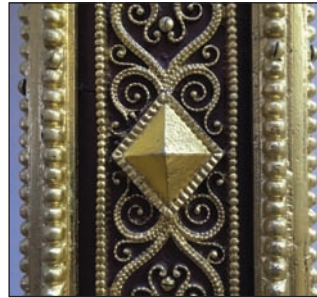
Screen cross, part of screen gate visible on right ➕



Screen cross base ➕



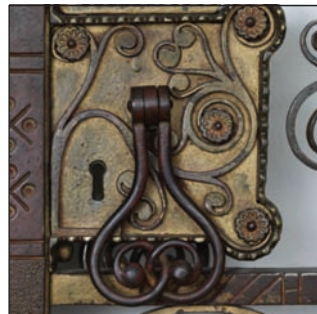
Anthemion-type ornament from screen ●



Detail of cross ➕



Part of screen, re-used in Alderbury Church altar rails



Lock from screen gates ●

Photography credits: ➕ Alicia Robinson, V&A ● Tony West

asked if he would buy part or whole of the screen, any remaining to be sold for scrap.

Bert started work at the Sarum Wrought Ironworks at 45 New Canal in the early 1920s. One of his first jobs was to assist with the making, and to deliver as they were finished, the first electric lights for the Cathedral. This, I believe, was his first introduction to the screen. He told me he stood in awe, as a newly apprenticed blacksmith, at the complexity of the work and the fine quality of the craftsmanship.

In 1959 Bert Shergold was delivering some newly sharpened mason's chisels when he came across the screen in pieces piled up in the cloisters. He was unaware of discussions that had led to this situation, thinking it had been dismantled for some repairs or cleaning. After a few enquiries he was told the screen with the brass altar rail would be sold for scrap. He, it would appear, was the only person who appreciated this massive loss and was prepared to act. Chapter Minutes say he offered £140 for the gates but I think it was for the whole screen, which the Dean & Chapter were selling as scrap metal. It was delivered and housed in his forge which had moved to 13 Guilder Lane, and in some neighbouring houses. It remained fully intact. The cross was just inside the front doors of the forge and put to use as the hat and coat rack, not kept by the Cathedral as reported by the V&A.

The Countess of Radnor of Longford Castle [who played an important part in setting up the Salisbury and District Preservation Trust, the Society's predecessor body] appreciated the value of the screen and tried to find a home for it, without success. Bert Shergold used some decorative scrollwork on projects like the Alderbury church altar rail, and some other parts survived.

### The Vesica

A Vesica, a pointed oval formed where two circles overlap, one of two from either side of

the central gables of the screen, was lent to an exhibition at the V&A in 1971. It was described as, "Wrought iron, its surface painted red with stencilled decorations in gold. It also has foil-backed glass." I remember it being returned. I don't know what happened to it eventually. It has not been found in the Cathedral store.

### The gates

The gates were sold to an antiques dealer who wanted them 'glitized up'. They were sprayed with gold paint to give a rather garish look. They apparently moved around a bit in London until the V&A purchased them in 1979. The gates have now been cleaned, but removing the gold paint would tend to remove everything under it as well, so the V&A are discussing what to do next.

### The cross

At some point around 1976, when Bert Shergold died, the cross was returned to the Cathedral. For some years it was displayed in the cloisters near its starting point, before being put into store in Old Sarum. Possibly prompted by an enquiry by me, the cross was rediscovered in 2013/14 and sent to the V&A in 2015.

There is a delightful short video on YouTube of the curators opening the box, discovering a disintegrating cross and, at some considerable cost, lovingly restoring it. Go to [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for '5soso\_da4g'.

### Where did other pieces go?

**Tony West** retained some parts when he volunteered to find homes for the contents of the forge for Bert's widow. He started his own forge in 1978 and used many smaller pieces in his own ironwork. **Rosemary Allen**, widow of a past chairman of the Salisbury Civic Society, is another proud owner of a piece.

Are there any other lucky owners out there?

**Phyllis Babb and Tony West**

## Salisbury hidden art history walk

It is rare for a walk with David Richards not to reveal a surprising fact. On Monday 5 August, when he led 20 Civic Society members on a tour of Salisbury's hidden art treasures, he took us to the Market Place where he showed us a picture of the old Guildhall, a fine gothic stone building that was demolished in the 18th century. It was where the Bishop controlled the town and punished people, often quite severely, who infringed the laws that he administered. He particularly disapproved of people who didn't pay his tax for coming into the Market Place and tried to sell their goods in the side streets. He found them guilty of "forestalling" – selling goods before getting to their proper stall. That is how the word "forestall" got into our language. Wasn't it, David said, worth going on one of his tours just to pick up such nuggets of information! In medieval Salisbury, an episcopal city, the Bishop had great power. The building was replaced by a wooden council house which got burnt down in the course of a drunken party in 1780; and that building was in turn replaced by the present Guildhall in 1788, designed in classical style by a London architect, Sir Robert Taylor, who died before it was completed. David showed us several distinctive features of the structure, including a wonderful image, over the door, of two double-headed golden eagles. The same image is repeated at various places inside the building – for example, on the doormat; on a 1580 fireplace saved from the original council house; and on the fireplace in the banqueting hall, where he asked us to admire one of the country's great collections of civic portraits. This included a fine portrait of King James I, who issued a charter in 1612 – shown in another of the portraits – which greatly curtailed the Bishop's power. John Seymour, 4th Duke of Somerset, was the subject of the best painting in the collection, by Sir Peter Lely.

David then took us to the very unusual war memorial in the Market Place – unusual in that it was fundamentally horizontal instead of vertical and had no reference to religion. He drew our attention to the beautifully executed bronze group on top of the memorial and the solid bronze fence around it which was a work of art in its own right. It was made in 1922 by a Cheltenham company, H H Martyn, which also fitted out prestigious ocean liners and made fighter aircraft. It set up the Gloster Aircraft Company, which went on to produce England's first operational jet fighter aircraft, the Meteor.

He moved on to Cross Keys House, which started life in 1878 as a bank, pretending to be a medieval half-timbered building with Tudor windows, with carvings by a sculptor and woodworker who cropped up again and again in David's tour, Harry Hems. Of particular note were its gates, proclaiming Victorian iron work at its best.

Another fine example of Victorian art was the statue of Henry Fawcett by a friend of his, Henry Hope-Pinker, in the Market Place. It is a rare example of a public sculpture where the subject is carrying a hat and a stick in the same hand. Fawcett was so popular that on the day his statue was unveiled the Market Place was swamped by thousands of onlookers. David then showed us, across the road, Lloyds Bank, shrouded in scaffolding – the first building in Salisbury since the construction of the Kings House in the Close to be made of Ham stone, the price of which had become affordable because of the coming of the railways. At the top of the building – so high up that few people ever notice them – there is a sculpture, this time in Portland stone, of two luscious ladies dressed like Greek gods, one of them holding a lamb, the other a cornucopia.



Bacchus, welcoming visitors to Barclays Bank *Photo: James Woods*

A little further along, in the Cheesemarket, we came to the first secular building of any size in Salisbury built of stone – in this case Bath stone – in 1858. But what most enthused David were its iron gates, the most magnificent in Salisbury, decorated with acanthus leaves and lions' heads, in front of Market Walk.

Passing the charnel house at one side of St Thomas's Church we went inside to admire, not the ever popular but sadly Victorianised Doom painting, but original frescos of around 1450, untouched by Victorian restorers, at the back of the church, vividly portraying the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Nativity. David paused briefly to talk about the 19th and 20th century stained glass windows before lingering somewhat longer at the font, with its Harry Hems carving of 1902, and the modern glass doors at the entrance, which allow the church interior to be seen when they were shut.

Having left St Thomas's, we proceeded to Salisbury's only Venetian palazzo, the third building on our tour designed by the London architect, Henry Hall, in response to a commission from a very wealthy wine merchant for a wine vault. How many of the customers entering what is now Barclays Bank in Bridge Street realise that above their heads Bacchus, flanked by vine leaves and grapes, is looking down upon them?

Looking down is what we should be doing as we walk down the High Street towards the Wiltshire Horn sheep over the shop at No. 51 – for embedded in the pavement are five stone plaques commissioned from a young sculptor, Paul Wilson, when the road was pedestrianised in 1998: a map of Salisbury; a milepost to Old Sarum with an image of the old cathedral; a decidedly abstract view from inside the cathedral spire; a milepost to Stonehenge with an image of when the site was intact; and one outside the Boston Tea Party that we couldn't see because it was covered up.

The tour concluded with a walk, past a lion whose carver had never seen a lion before, to the cathedral boot scrapers and a final contribution from Harry Hems on the West Front.

As always, David over-ran his scheduled time (but only by a few minutes) and left us hungry for more, as every good meal should.

**James Woods**

*(Please see additional illustrations on pages 10 and 11)*





Guildhall fireplace of 1580



Salisbury city crest



Cross Keys House gate



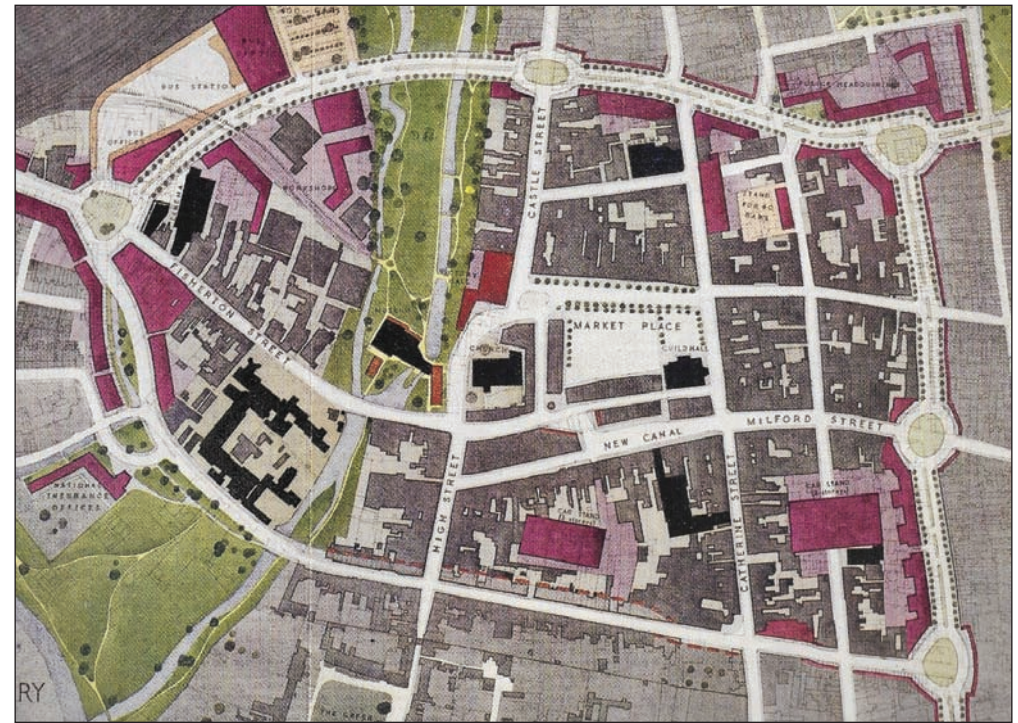
Cathedral boot scraper



'Lion whose carver had never seen a lion'  
- Matrons' College, The Close



Lion from Market Walk gates



Thomas Sharp's road proposals of 1949 – see next two pages



## Thomas Sharp's Plan for Salisbury, 1949

The last magazine promised to restructure a previous commitment to describing Salisbury's Road to Nowhere of the 1970s, by going back earlier, to the start of the story of ideas for replanning Salisbury in the second half of the C20th. It is of course a planned city anyway, as its chequers testify, arguably the most notable such case in the country, so there was therefore nothing inherently new in the concept behind a slim book which came out in 1949. This was titled 'Newer Sarum: a Plan for Salisbury', and was 'published for Salisbury City Council'. The author must have been commissioned and paid by the council, though quite what led to their invitation is not clear from the book.

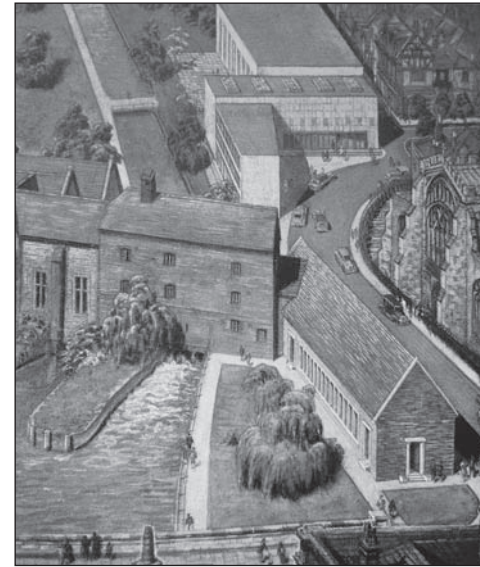
That author was Thomas Sharp, a noted town planner of his time, responsible for major reports on several historic cities, including Exeter, where his 'Exeter Phoenix' set out a scheme for reconstructing the city after devastating wartime bomb damage. Those familiar with Exeter's sad tale, and the oft-repeated comment to the effect that 'what the bombers started, the City Fathers finished off, will not find Sharp's connection with the city much of a recommendation for him, though to be fair he can't be blamed for all the destruction of surviving historic buildings there. Salisbury of course escaped wartime bombing, but 'replanning and modernising the city' seems to have been much in vogue at the time.

Sharp's approach to Salisbury is a curious one. He starts off by appearing to appreciate all that we value now about the historic town, and waxes lyrical about 'a city wonderfully rich and varied in colour'. But then, in an abrupt gear change, 'the times have overtaken the city', and 'vehicles crowd the ancient streets till they are all but impassable'. Furthermore, 'many of the small old buildings that have survived in such great numbers [which a page earlier he had seen as one of Salisbury's great merits], especially on the eastern chequers, are outworn at last and are now too old and too primitive to have any further usefulness.' Building up a head of steam, he ploughs on 'After seven hundred years New Sarum must be planned again'. He cites various difficulties

which stand in the way, but concludes 'with as little damage to the old-new Sarum as ingenuity can contrive, a new Sarum must now be planned and built'.

One of the proposals he came up with to deal with Salisbury's perceived shortcomings illustrates his approach well. Sharp takes it for granted, as not worthy of further justification, that the circuitous route that connects the High Street with Castle Street is unacceptable, and that the answer is clearly to join the two by effectively destroying St Thomas's Square. And moreover 'this short new road... will have the added advantage of opening out St Thomas's Church, a building which is now almost completely hidden from public view.' His illustration shows the outcome, alongside a Town Mill being used as the city's museum, an idea given serious consideration 20 years later.

The most telling ingredient of the depiction is perhaps the new road sweeping right past the west front of St Thomas's, most handily placed for what looks like access by a wedding couple. From our viewpoint 70 years on, that particular advantage may not seem to compensate for the other consequences of the road. It is salutary to note, however, the extent to which perceptions shift over time. Newer Sarum was reviewed in the Wiltshire Archaeological Society's magazine in 1950, and the reviewer observes that Mr Sharp displays 'economy of change' in resolving



St Thomas's Square area, as envisaged by Sharp

market day traffic jams, with his new road round St Thomas's. The attendant loss of historic buildings was not apparently any cause for concern.

When it comes to the design of the new buildings which he sees the city as needing, some of Sharp's comments do bear consideration. He laments the fact that 'as everywhere in Britain, for many years past it has generally been thought necessary in Salisbury for new buildings to ape those of former times, particularly in the 'romantic and quaint' style known as 'half-timbering'. The result is rarely successful.' In Sharp's view, imitation buildings just 'contaminate all with the suspicion of falseness'. And 'all that matters in Salisbury's new buildings is that they should be good buildings, well-sited, and in scale with the rest of the city'. His illustrations of future street scenes may however leave us unconvinced. The flat-roofed new buildings to the north of St Thomas's, shown here, do not immediately look like particularly welcome additions.

The question of how to make ones which genuinely do succeed has in fact never really been resolved.

It is a fold-out plan in Sharp's book which speaks most eloquently of what post-war thinking could come up for somewhere like Salisbury. The central part of the plan, shown on page 11, depicts the road scheme which he was confident would bring the city fully up to date. Starting from a new roundabout near the western end of Fisherton Street, it ploughs its way through the Maltings area, crosses Castle Street roughly where Scots Lane joins it, and then ignores Bedwin Street in favour of another roundabout on the Salt Lane/St Edmunds Church Street junction. Via three more roundabouts it then heads south, to an eventual connection with the Southampton Road and, presumably, the bottom end of Exeter Street, somewhere off the plan. In the process, St Edmunds Church Street, Pennyfarthing Street and Gigant Street all become dual carriageways, a hole is blasted through St Ann Street, and Parsons Chequer is effectively removed from the map by having a road driven diagonally across it. However Sharp has already said that historic buildings of less than the first grade are fair game, because their retention would make the 'necessary rebuilding' of the eastern chequers impossibly difficult. So a few conversions of historic streets into dual carriageways is unlikely to bother him too much.

Not all his proposals are so at odds with modern attitudes. He says of the River Avon that 'its possible contribution to the amenities of the city has been shockingly neglected', and has a section headed 'A riverside park' which is entirely in line with some very sensible recent proposals from Wiltshire Council. But in the field of road planning, despite all his claims to understanding of Salisbury's particular qualities, Sharp still seems prone to a characteristic often attributed by the



public to the more formulaic of planners, that of drawing a logical line on a map and pursuing it regardless of actual visual and other consequences.

In the end, of course, Sharp's plan was never acted on as such, a situation repeated with most of the plans he came up with. Exeter was clearly something of an exception, but in Salisbury the local Town Planning Committee no doubt nodded sagely, said what an excellent report it was, and did nothing, for which on the whole we may probably be grateful. However that's not to say that

Sharp's thinking may not have had a more subtle influence, below the surface. The 1970s ring road has echoes of his inner city road proposals, shifted slightly further out, and the ring road's gestation prompted the creation of other schemes, whose execution would have changed some parts of Salisbury quite drastically. Next time we'll look at a 1968 model, which indicates how the post-Sharp generation of planners saw the city as best responding to one of that era's key mantras, 'you can't stand in the way of progress'.

**Richard Deane**

## Puzzle Corner

The back cover shows a double coat of arms from St Thomas's Church in Salisbury, of painted and gilded wood. It's on the wall of the north nave aisle, and is almost four feet high. There are two mysteries associated with it. The first is the exact nature of the journey which brought it here, starting from the year 1748 which is marked on it. Nothing is known about it till the 1920s, when it appeared in an antique shop. Its Salisbury coat of arms identified it as being of local interest, and it was purchased by the city council. It was then given to Salisbury Maryland, for reasons which are not now clear, and remained there till the early 1980s when it was given back to our Salisbury. With no obvious civic home for it, it went to its current refuge in St Thomas's.

The other mystery is why there are two coats of arms depicted – the royal one above, and the Salisbury one below it, in an architectural surround. So the two double-headed eagles, already referred to in the account of David Richards' walk, reappear here. In fact there is yet another coat of arms at the bottom, small and nondescript. One quite plausible theory is that the duality refers to national and local power in a judicial context, and that the carving was originally in a court room in the old Elizabethan council house, burned down in 1780 and replaced by the present Guildhall. But there's no certainty of this. It's a high quality piece, and it would be interesting to hear any other ideas about what its purpose might have been.

Thirty or so feet east of the coat of arms is another puzzle, though not one we're covering this time. Some information for visitors, mounted on a small lectern, refers to an 'alchemist', who apparently lived in a now vanished part of St Thomas's, and at one time had to make a rapid escape from 'the noxious fumes of his experiments'. This inconspicuous notice deserves some study, despite the somewhat fanciful description it contains. It will receive such study in the next issue of this magazine.



Cathedral Boer War memorial

(See page 17)



Hammerbeam at 9 Queen Street (See page 17)



'So much in it which is perversely unbeautiful' (Sir Nikolaus Pevsner): Discuss

(See page 17)

## Julian Orbach: Revisiting Pevsner's Salisbury

We welcomed a return visit of Julian Orbach to keep us abreast of his research on the revision of the Pevsner Buildings of England series volume on Wiltshire, this time to talk specifically about Salisbury. His new draft amounts to some 47,000 words which is far more than for any other Wiltshire town, there being 7500 words in the Devizes draft and 9500 words in the Swindon one. The current volume, published in 1975, has about 31,000 words on Salisbury. He gave a fascinating talk which started down the High Street, to show what sort of changes we might expect in the new entry. Where Pevsner had started his High Street at the Assembly Rooms, now Waterstones, Julian started on the opposite corner with New Canal, with what was originally the Boots of 1933. That shop's current location was first built as the city's Marks & Spencer store. The Assembly Rooms are much changed from the building of 1802-3, altered in 1924 for WH Smith.

On the Old George Mall, Julian had amended the previous entry, which in 1975 called the new shopping centre 'a welcome lesson that with imaginative planning such developments need not wreck the intimate scale of older streets'. 'Not wrecking' seems a rather less ambitious aim now, and time and later facelifts have not left the mall especially notable. The Boston Tea Party combines two historic interiors, and is well worth the price of a coffee. One half, known to have been built in 1476, has a first-floor 17th century plaster ceiling, typical of the 'high quality bits' that he found turning up so often in Salisbury. The other half has the remains of the Old George Inn, with roofs now known, from tree-ring dating, to be of 1366-71 and 1356-81. The 17th century main staircase has been relocated from the rear. Further up the High Street Julian noted the timber-framed buildings covered in 'mathematical' tiles designed to look like bricks, detectable from a slightly rippled effect, plus one or two other clues. These elements mean that so much of Salisbury 'comes in layers', so that many additions to Pevsner's text have been to show much older buildings behind the fronts.

Julian moved into Salisbury interiors and showed examples of high quality early to mid 18th century plasterwork in a variety of buildings including Close Gate House just outside the Close, and inside it Mompesson and Malmesbury Houses, clearly undertaken by expert artisans such as Francis Cartwright of Blandford Forum whose name is linked to the Bishop's Palace plaster of 1739. There are 17th century ceilings in King's House, now Salisbury Museum, and No 36 Milford Street with interesting motifs, the back-to-back moon-men in King's house reappearing elsewhere, as far away as South Wraxall Manor, and the heads with head-dresses of 36 Milford Street also found elsewhere. These may possibly reflect early European settlement in America. Amid the very fine work, there were examples of poorer quality plasterwork. Julian mentioned the stair hall in The Wardrobe, in the Close, where the motifs looked as if applied by 'a teenager loaned a set of moulds.'



Plasterwork at 45 Castle Street  
*Photo: Julian Orbach*

He then went on to Salisbury timber work where tree-ring dating has helped greatly since Pevsner's day. Salisbury has some very remarkable roofs, the crown-post roof in the room above the N porch of the Cathedral now dated to 1251. Other notable crown-posts are in the Old Deanery and No. 91 Crane Street. Particularly fine examples of hammerbeam roofs are in the Boston Tea Party and in Cotswold Outdoor (No. 9 Queen Street) dated to 1310. A 15th century hammerbeam roof from the Maidenhead Inn on the site of the Market House, now the Library, found its present home in the former St Edmunds School, built in 1860 immediately west of St Edmund's Church. Also in the school is the 15th century fireplace from the same inn.

Many architectural gems are not in their original locations, and Julian gave the example of a 15th century fireplace in the former County Hotel, now Wetherspoons, and several fireplaces from elsewhere in Wiltshire gathered into Church House in Crane Street. Conversely bits of Salisbury have travelled the world and Julian told the story of Mr Weeks, American cosmetics manufacturer, who acquired several fireplaces from 91 Crane St for his own house, Salisbury House, Des Moines, Iowa, itself based on King's House in the Close. Two 17th century fonts, one from Salisbury Cathedral and the other from Britford church, even found their way to South Australia.

Julian spoke of the assistance that he has received from so many in Salisbury that had allowed him access to many special places. He spoke of the opportunity afforded by the conservators working off scaffolding in St Thomas church who had allowed him to view close up the Doom painting, and to see the lovely colours which are being liberated from the chocolate brown paint used to cover the panels and carvings of the nave roof during the 18th century.

Lastly he spoke about the Cathedral, for which Pevsner's description is 'one of the great set pieces of the Buildings of England series'. A great deal of work has been done since Pevsner's time and much discovered, in particular allowing more accurate dating of the roofs, the cloisters and Chapter House, and the spire. Julian has followed Tim Tatton-Brown in suggesting the two Bishops, de Ghent and Martival, as prime movers in spire construction between 1310 and 1330. Pevsner had been unhappy with the West Front which he considered a 'headache' with 'so much in it which is perversely unbeautiful' and found that 'there are far too many motifs, and they are distributed without a comprehensible system'. Julian made comparisons with Wells and Amiens Cathedrals to consider the details and proportions and what could be described as anomalies of Salisbury. He did not however feel that it was the disaster that Pevsner thought. The monuments inside the Cathedral Julian thought had been undervalued by Pevsner, particularly some of the post-medieval ones such as that of Sir Thomas Gorges of 1635, with its twisted columns, a particularly early reference to Bernini's baldacchino in St Peter's in Rome. He finished with the Arts-and-Crafts style Boer War memorial in copper, brass and enamel, of 1904, a work of the little-known Alexander Fisher. Julian had failed to find the artist's name but it was brought to him by Emily Naish, the cathedral archivist, from the notes for cathedral guides compiled by Major-General Roy Dixon (a former Civic Society chairman). Julian was full of praise of those architects, historians, archaeologists and Salisbury residents who had assisted him in his expansion and amendment of Pevsner's original work.

A fascinating talk, which clearly revealed the speaker's enthusiasm and enjoyment at uncovering the puzzles of the town, combined with serious scholarship. The new volume will be well worth waiting for.

**Jamie Hobson**



## Britain on film: Protest!

The special screening of *Britain on film: Protest!* in St John's Place, Lower Bemerton, on Wednesday 16 October saw rather a low turnout, which was disappointing, particularly as the film was well up to the standard of the previous two Independent Cinema Office films we have screened – on railways and on rural life – both of which were well attended and much appreciated. No doubt we are all mightily fed up with protesting these days – there is so much to protest about: MPs and Brexit, just for starters. So perhaps it should not be surprising that there was little interest in the protests of the past: suffragettes, the CND, striking miners, revolting tenants, fascist marches, road safety, exclusive landowners, gay rights and hunger strikes...

Those people who did show up saw a compilation of fifteen short films covering a wide range of controversial activities from 1910 to 1986 – of which the highlights for me were analyses of the 1980 H Block hunger strike in Northern Ireland and Coventry's response to the gay rights movement in 1986. I say analyses advisedly, as these films were mostly not just videos of marching people waving banners (though there was quite a lot of that in some of the 15 films), but informed comment on the issues involved, passionate speeches, and interviews with some of the leading participants. From the compilation as a whole I learnt much that was unfamiliar to me about the murkier and more distressing aspects of life in Britain during and just before my lifetime. And there was evidence to suggest that, despite much recent experience to the contrary, protesting can work: the Stepney tenants did see their rents controlled and their conditions improved; the residents of Brownhills did get their children safely across Watling Street; the walkers up Winnats Pass in Derbyshire did eventually see the countryside open to the public... Take heart: protesting isn't always in vain!

**James Woods**

### Heritage Open Days

After a period of shared responsibilities for the Society's annual Heritage Open Days, we've been fortunate to gain a new GP Committee member, Deanna Dykes, who has volunteered to take on the HOD role. Nothing is in place yet for 2020, but a theme of 'hidden places', which is very much in tune with the core concept behind HODs, may well be in the mix. We hope it may be possible in the future to revisit the normally inaccessible centre of Marsh Chequer, the one city chequer which retains its original interior unspoiled, basically as gardens. A previous opportunity to see it is remembered by those who participated as being a particular successful HOD weekend.

We'd be delighted to hear from any Society members with ideas for other similar 'hidden place' visits, or indeed anything which might come within the general Heritage Open Day theme. This year the Society became part of the national HOD scheme, and will continue to be so in order to raise the profile of our events.

**Judy Howles**

## Future Society plaques

In a previous issue we said the plaque to **Dorothy Brooke** (founder of the Old Warhorse Hospital in Cairo in the 1930s, later renamed as the Brooke Hospital for Animals) would be installed this year. However, due to unforeseen circumstances the plaque has had to be rescheduled to 2020, when it will be placed on the wall of her home, Malmesbury House in the Close, which became the headquarters of the charity.

On or around 21 March 2020, a plaque will be unveiled to **Herbert George Ponting** at 21 Oatmeal Row in the Market Place, where he was born in 1870. The son of a bank manager, Herbert had several careers. After working in a bank for four years, he decided it wasn't for him and moved to California, where he first worked in mining then bought a fruit ranch. A few years later he sold the ranch and moved back to England with his American wife, Mary and their daughter Mildred. His long-standing hobby had been photography and this became his career. His stereoscopic photographs were published by several magazines. He photographed and reported on the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5, and travelled extensively round the far east. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society and selected as the official photographer for what was to become Captain Scott's last expedition. In Antarctica his photographs and short video films depicted not only members of the ill-fated Scott expedition but also pictures of killer whales, seals and penguins. After the deaths of Scott and his companions Ponting's photographs became a memorial to the expedition. In the 1920s and 30s he made two films, 'The Great White Silence' and 'Ninety Degrees South' and lectured on the Antarctic. He died in 1935.

In November we shall be installing a blue plaque to **Wolfe Frank** (1913-1988) on a house in Castle Street, Mere. Frank was Chief Interpreter at the Nuremberg Trials. The unveiling ceremony will take place on 20 November 2020 which will be the 75th

anniversary of the start of both the Nuremberg Trials and the introduction of simultaneous interpretation. Now routinely used all over the world, the pioneering and revolutionary technique of simultaneous translation Wolfe Frank launched that day was a triumph beyond all expectations. Due to his exceptional skills he was the only interpreter who could be used in both the English and the German booths, and he was the lead translator throughout the pre-trial investigations and interrogations, during which time he drew many confessions from the Nazi war criminals that were used as evidence during the proceedings.

Prior to the war he had been a playboy turned resistance worker and was forced to flee Germany for England in 1937 having been branded an 'enemy of the state – to be shot on sight'. Initially interned as an enemy alien, he was later released and allowed to join the British Army – where he rose to the rank of Captain. Unable to speak English when he arrived in this country, by the time of the trials he was considered to be the finest interpreter in the world.

Frank was born on St Valentine's Day in 1913. A strikingly handsome man, irresistible to women – he was married five times and had a multitude of affairs – and in a packed lifetime, other than being a gifted linguist, he was also at various times a businessman, racing driver, skier, theatre impresario, actor, television and radio presenter, journalist, salesman, financier, restaurateur, and property developer.

**Janet Patch**

## Lost Windows and a Local Legend

The photos show Nos 7 and 9 Butts Road in Salisbury, as the houses were c.1990 and as they are today. Back then, No 9 had very distinctive Art Deco style steel framed windows, as its neighbour no doubt did when first constructed in the 1920s or 30s. Since the photo was taken, the replacement window industry has been active, and converted this part of the pair to something purely mundane. In such ways do elements of local distinctiveness perish.



7-9 Butts Road, then...



...and now

What the photos say nothing about is a local legend, current thirty years ago anyway, which claimed that there was something distinctive about the interiors as well. Apparently at the time of construction, the person lined up to buy No 9 happened to be a chum of the builder. Visiting the site just as the party wall was about to be started, he suggested that the bricklayer might like to switch the wall to the other side of the line he had set up, into territory supposedly allotted to No 7. The builder had no objections, either on moral grounds or ones of constructional practicality, and the change was made. The party wall was no doubt the customary 9" width of the period, meaning that the main rooms, both upstairs and downstairs were, and of course still are, 18" wider in No 9 than they are in No 7.

Only a spoilsport would consider entering both houses to check whether this discrepancy in dimensions is actually present. Much better to go past the pair and believe that even if the windows are a lost cause, a bit of unusual local history persists inside.

### Visits Secretary Post

One of the benefits of Civic Society membership is the programme of visits to places of interest, and guided walks, that members can enjoy. This magazine has an account of an art walk in August, and the events diary shows two visits and a walk already organised for next year.

Our current Visits Secretary, Brenda Hunt, will be relinquishing the role in 2020 and so we are looking for someone to take on this important and enjoyable role to organise three or four visits per year. Brenda will be happy to provide full back-up in the first year, if needed.

Interested? Then please contact **Judy Howles**, Chair, General Purposes Committee at [howles@ntlworld.com](mailto:howles@ntlworld.com)

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Double coat of arms at St Thomas's Church, Salisbury *Photo: Peter Marsh*

