

The Landing Stage at Fonthill, on the eastern side of the lake



The Cromlech at Fonthill, near the western side of the lake



THURSDAY APRIL 11TH

Planning Forum

Future of the High Street/master planning for Salisbury

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

*Free to members: Non members £2.50
Further details will be sent out nearer
the date*

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

WEDNESDAY JUNE 19TH, 2PM

Visit to the award winning house Gold Hill, Tisbury

Members £5.00, non Members £6.00

To book, please contact Brenda Hunt:
brendahunt@clara.co.uk (*preferred method*)
or 01722 322657

SATURDAY JUNE 22ND

Civic Day

See p19 for further details

MONDAY AUGUST 5TH

Walk: Salisbury's Hidden Art History

led by David Richards

2.00pm

Details in June magazine

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH

Updating The Wiltshire Pevsner

by Julian Orbach

7.00pm (*note changed start time*)

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

Free to members: Non members £2.50

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

2020 – Visit to Saintes

A visit for members to Saintes
next year is under discussion

*There will be further word on this
in the June magazine*

Editorial

This edition of the magazine breaks new ground by having a cover photo taken using a drone, enabling a low horizontal building to be fitted onto a page of vertical format. The March magazine always features the outcome of the previous year's awards scheme, and when the judging panel has selected an 'award of awards' winner, which they don't always do, this is the obvious candidate for the front cover. With any luck we can always achieve this, without needing to add 'must lend itself to portrait format' to the criteria the judges apply when it comes to an overall winner.

The magazine includes the usual range of subjects, including an announcement, slightly short on details, about the annual Planning Forum in April. The details are still being worked out, but the presence at the meeting of the leader of Wiltshire Council's South Wiltshire Economic Recovery team indicates that what's covered will probably not be limited to the future of the high street and master planning for Salisbury, which is how the theme is currently described. The establishment of this team, plus the relaunch of the Salisbury neighbourhood plan, and the Salisbury 'brand repositioning' survey to which members were alerted in October, and from which some interesting ideas seem to be developing, show that quite a lot is going on currently. The Planning Forum will be an opportunity to hear about at least some of this, and further details will be sent out once they're known, by email or by post.

Three items featured in this magazine all share a common theme, that of unanswered questions about Salisbury buildings. On page 18, a photo of the front porch of the Milford Hall Hotel is included because of a hearsay relevance to the Fonthill Estate, a guide to which starts on page 14. A story, of unknown origin, but recorded in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments volume on Salisbury, relates that the rather exotic porch columns, with their palm leaf type carving, came originally from William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey. This is probably just about plausible, but likely to be unprovable. On the following two pages are photos supplied by Julian Orbach, who's currently revising the other great source of information on the city's buildings, the Wiltshire Pevsner. This is generating some building-related mysteries along the way, and two of these, concerning a fireplace and some plasterwork, are depicted in the photos. Julian's full list of queries involves missing fonts and pulpits, unknown stones, unknown architects, the survival or otherwise of once-recorded interior features, and one or two other categories. A further mystery, mentioned on page 13, concerns the former Compleat Artist building in Crane Street, and an elaborately decorated stone ceiling which is highly anomalous in what seems to have started off as a summer house.

A recent report on the building described the ceiling as plasterwork, apparently based on a piece of it which actually turned out to be a later repair. However in 1982 the newsletter of our predecessor body, the Salisbury and District Preservation Trust, identified the ceiling as being in stone, and it's nice to be able to report the vindication of this statement, 37 years on.

Richard Deane

Editorial co-ordinator

*Cover: Cabbage Cottage, Netton, winner of the 2018 Lady Radnor Award Photo: Nick Pownall
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:

Alison Craig, Robert and Pam Gordon, Sue Kenway, Heather and Tim Olsen

Chairman's Report – March 2019

Without wishing to repeat featured news elsewhere, it was a very successful Conservation Architectural Awards evening and New Year Party held earlier this year at the Arts Centre with a record attendance and a deserved number of Award and Commendation winners. Following the event, we received many messages of congratulations and support for the staging at the new venue and there can be no doubt that the quality of projected images and sound systems alone gave a much more professional presentation. Phil Harding was an excellent and entertaining Chairman of the judging panel, introducing the individual projects on screen and describing the analysis and reasoning leading to the Awards.

The use of the Arts Centre gives the Society more space and a quality environment to host this evening in future years and we will also give consideration to using the Arts Centre as a venue for other events. There is a slight cost penalty but on balance the added value is well worth the money.

The public and media outcry over the proposed relocation of the Public Library from the Market Walk building, to a new building by TH Real Estate in Malthouse Lane, is fast becoming an issue which could lead to no development at all in the Maltings area. The lobby groups are likely to promote adverse views on the development proposals to the elected Members of the Wiltshire Planning Committee and the inertia for regeneration of Salisbury could easily be lost.

The absence of a clear explanation from Wiltshire Council of how a relocated Library will operate and what space allocations are planned within it has quite naturally caused people to fear the worst and condemn the whole idea of a move. No specific policy statements either have been made about the Young Gallery and where it might be moved to, so this adds to the whole feeling of outrage. The Civic Society will continue to press for details of the new Library and make representations as necessary regarding its operational services to the community.

Your Society representatives met the architect engaged by TH Real Estate, prior to the current application being submitted, and made some suggestions about the design proposals, which led to some improvements. However further discussions among Society architects have led to a position being adopted that it is too late to consider whether a different approach to the building from the outset might have been beneficial. The Society's representation therefore focuses more on future phases of the anticipated 'cultural quarter' project, and expresses the hope that early involvement with these by the Society will have positive results all round. In line with a Society policy which has been in place for at least 12 years, we support the proposals in principle to redevelop Malthouse Lane for the library, and thereby create the opportunity to reconstruct Market Walk as a strong link and architectural feature between the Maltings and the Cheesemarket, and on into the Market Place. If Malthouse Lane is indeed to be only a temporary library location, we will take a keen interest in trying to ensure that the final library (and gallery) building is of the quality which Salisbury needs and deserves.

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

Peter Dunbar
Chairman

Open Meeting on Rivers

The open meeting was held in City Hall's Alamein Suite. Our chairman, Peter Dunbar, introduced the four speakers: our Vice-Chairman, Richard Deane, to talk about the history of rivers in their context around Salisbury; Samantha Stork from the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, on the conservation of wild life in those rivers; and Guy Parker and Aly Maxwell from the Environment Agency, to deal with flood management from two different aspects.

Richard Deane, after modestly disclaiming any particular expertise in comparison with the following speakers, said that the importance of rivers was evident from the very beginning of Salisbury, when it had been a key factor in the move down from Old Sarum. He showed how water had been crucial to the chequers pattern, leading to a somewhat exaggerated "Venice of the north" description of the city, and how economic development had been influenced by the nature of the waterways in, for example, the location of the mills and the presence of the Harnham Water Meadows, which were still used in the traditional way. Water power had been used for brewing, paper-making and flour milling and, more recently, electricity generation (in connection with which there is an exciting project by Salisbury Community Energy to put a modern turbine back into the Bishop's Mill).

Attempts in the late 17th and early 18th centuries to make the Avon navigable through to Christchurch had included the digging of new channels, particularly at Britford where the cut is still very evident, but were never really successful. Fish had been a standard part of diet during the middle ages, and rivers still contributed to food production. Examples included the trout farm north of Downton, and the watercress beds in Broad Chalke. The eel trap a few hundred yards from Churchill Gardens in Salisbury was an attractive relic of river use, and had featured electricity generation at one point. As rivers had declined in economic importance they had become

more highly regarded as objects of natural beauty, inspiring artists and leisure seekers.

At this point Samantha Stork took over with "The river Avon, an iconic chalk stream". The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, with around 70 employees and 2,000 volunteers, aimed to create living landscapes across Wiltshire and help people connect with nature and live more sustainably. Its Water Team delivered a broad range of habitat improvement, restoration and monitoring projects, and offered advice to riparian owners and river managers. She analysed why the River Avon, with its four tributaries, was so special and listed threats and pressures on the river, and the ways in which the Trust tried to tackle them. The river was internationally important for its globally rare flora and fauna. 85% of the world's chalk streams were in England, and a large portion of those were in Wiltshire. They not only shaped the landscape but how people lived in it: main roads and settlements followed the river courses.

Chalk rivers consisted predominantly of ground water fed from an aquifer, unlike clay rivers which were mostly fed from surface water. Over a wet winter the aquifer charged up with new water, which could be released into the rivers during the summer, to ensure a relatively consistent flow through the year. Chalk rivers hosted not only water voles, otters and other mammals, but also several species of fish and birds, and, less glamorously but equally importantly, much invertebrate life, hidden in the river substrate. These invertebrates formed the foundation

for other life in the river, and their sensitivity to changes in water quality enabled us to monitor pollution levels. Vegetation included spectacular water crowfoot, watercress, marsh marigolds and purple loosestrife.

She went on to talk about how the historical legacy had shaped the profile of the river system and how it had left certain problems, such as a detrimental impact on some native wildlife and barriers to sediment and gravel movement. More modern problems included the massive degradation of water quality caused by current agricultural methods and run-off from roads, as well as encroachment of urban gardens onto river banks. We could not just undo the past or the present, to some extent we had to adapt to the way people now lived to minimise adverse effects. She gave a splendidly illustrated description of how the Trust implemented its restoration projects, in a most cost-effective way, from consultation through funding, surveys, design, consents and delivery to follow-up monitoring. Natural materials, such as wood, were used wherever possible, by individual volunteers, Trust staff, corporate groups and contractors, with the help of a host of partners, including Natural England and the Environment Agency. Some dramatic improvements had been effected: increased diversity, increased salmon spawning, a jump in invertebrate abundance, increased substrate and flow variation, the trapping of countless tons of soil and silty sediment in brushwood structures.

She concluded with a description of two new projects and a summary of what the Trust could offer residents – free advice; planning and delivery of river restoration and improvement projects with the local community; work experience and training; and raising awareness of how local residents and businesses could help in the Trust's work and benefit from it, both financially and in quality of life.

Guy Parker began his talk about understanding flood risk in Salisbury with a statement on the importance of topography. Hills were needed to provide the hydrostatic pressure to force water up through the valley bottom. Chalk, being fine-grained and very fractured, was both porous and highly permeable. Saturated chalk had a great capacity to hold water and release it slowly through capillary action, so that flooding might not occur till days after rainfall. Each cubic metre of chalk could hold up to 450 litres of water, and the aquifer could be up to 400 metres thick and 70 miles wide in this region – big enough to provide most of southern England with its drinking water. In summer vegetation picked up any rainwater and returned it to the atmosphere by transpiration; but when the vegetation disappeared in late autumn the rainfall went into the ground and drained downwards through the chalk. He showed examples of how an aquifer worked: as the water table rose hydrostatic pressure increased and forced water up through the valley floor. Thus, as the drainage was predominantly vertical, on the chalk there were very few water courses.

Four of the five rivers through (or in the case of the Ebble, near) Salisbury flowed mainly on chalk, and were quite dry during the summer months. The exception is the Nadder, which for most of its length was on greensand and responded directly to rainfall. In terms of managing the flood risk what we did was add together the flow from the rivers upstream from Salisbury (measured at Amesbury, South Newton and Wilton), estimate the total volume of water coming down, and from those data predict the likely level of water in Salisbury. This gave us 10-11 hours notice of any serious flooding. This didn't happen often. We know that the cathedral had flooded at least six times during the 800-odd years that the Dean &



Flooded cathedral nave, 1915

Chapter have been recording such events. During the very wet year of 1915 not only was the cathedral inundated, as the photo of its nave shows, but Fisherton Street was under as much as two feet of water. A one in ten year flood map of the centre of Salisbury showed us how resilient it was – during the floods of 2014, for example, only 15-20 properties in the area had been flooded, out of about 850 at risk.

Our ability to handle the one in a hundred year risk – such as the one in 1915 – had improved, despite the lack of significant defences, such as protective walls, by balancing the flow between the various different channels. The Environment Agency did not actually need to take more extreme measures of control, such as digging the channels clear. During a flood the water rose

quickly, then tailed off; and what we could do was stretch the time it took the water to go through, using storage capacity, pushing the water into the flood plain to give it more time to go down the river.

Aly Maxwell, the Wessex Natural Flood Management Coordinator, now took over. A main concern of his team was to improve understanding of natural processes, especially by his engineering colleagues. The principal aim of natural flood management was to use the natural function of landscape to slow down water flow and so reduce both flood risk and the impact of flooding, and enhance the environment by improving water quality, reducing sedimentation of rivers, increasing bio-diversity, and changing how we used open green spaces, particularly in urban areas, to enable them to store water in times of need. Bad land management, such as improper use of big farm machinery or poor cropping, could lead to compacted soil and erosion. Good soils could store water through extensive root networks.

There were various techniques and measures that could be used to improve the impact of particularly heavy rainfall, mostly small in themselves but cumulatively effective. These included increasing infiltration, deflecting flow, slowing surface runoff by increasing surface roughness (through, for example, contour ploughing, cover cropping, creating buffer strips), planting trees and hedges, re-meandering rivers, creating woody structures within channels, and – particularly relevant to Salisbury – improving urban drainage and holding water within open green spaces and individual properties. Such measures are particularly effective for mitigating the small floods that occur every two or three years, provided that they are properly maintained, with the cooperation of landowners, farmers and communities. He concluded by emphasising that the benefits of flood



The eel trap on the Avon, also known as Britford Mill
Photo: South Wilts Industrial Archaeology Society



Artificial Avon channel at Britford, constructed late C17th or early C18th

management went beyond just managing water flow, with beneficial health and social consequences too.

Richard wound up the proceedings by taking us on a conducted tour of Salisbury along the Avon and Water Lane, with plentiful illustrations of the main objects of interest. He concluded with an appeal for more coherent strategic thinking to do justice to the Maltings and the river system through Salisbury – the currently stalled Neighbourhood Plan should provide an opportunity to do this.

The final 15 minutes were taken up with questions and answers.

Hadrian Cook of the Harnham Water Meadows Trust raised two points: given that the infrastructure created during the 17th and 18th centuries in the water meadows was decaying, and that land drainage legislation in the 1930s had empowered people to remove control structures on the rivers, was there any contemporary policy making that would improve matters? Aly had no quick and easy answer: much of what he talked about needed landowner engagement, and restoring infrastructure needed resources of manpower and funding that were not available – we had to do the best we could with existing infrastructure. Guy Parker added that the water meadows had been created to make money, and any investment undertaken which did not have a payback would be very hard to justify. Hadrian pointed out that there were sources of funding available that were not necessarily being targeted at the right places.

Another questioner wondered if the Environment had considered putting beavers to work, at minimal cost, as on the river Otter in Devon? Aly said that the Agency was awaiting the results of two trial projects in Devon, as well as other trials elsewhere, before committing itself. At some point DEFRA

would make the decision on how to proceed.

Then vanished hydro stations on the Avon were mentioned, 10 of them in the 1920s with a total output of one megawatt. Were there any plans to rebuild them? Guy said that there were no such plans, but there were much more efficient ways nowadays to use water for generating energy, like Archimedes screws.

The panel was asked to enlarge on the legal obligations of riparian owners. Samantha said that the permission of Natural England would be required before you could undertake certain activities on SSSIs like the Hampshire Avon; and an environmental permit would usually be needed to allow you to make modifications to a river channel, banks or bridges. Guy added that any works on a main river within 8 metres of the water course would require at very minimum a land drainage consent, and could require more. The application process was, however, quite straightforward and the Environment Agency would be willing to help with it. Their purpose was to ensure that no action by one riparian owner should impact adversely on any other.

Other questions included how to volunteer for river restoration, with Samantha pointing to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust website for information, and how a 'main river' was defined. Guy said these were distinguished by their greater flood risk.

Finally, the panel was asked why a river that flowed mainly through Wiltshire was called the Hampshire Avon. Answer? It had been named after its mouth, which had been in Hampshire at the time – although it was now in Dorset!

So ended a most entertaining and instructive presentation.

James Woods

2018 Conservation Awards Scheme – Judges’ Report

Lady Radnor Award

Extension at Cabbage Cottage, Netton

Cabbage Cottage is an attractive single story thatched cottage, listed, and prominently located by a road junction in the Woodford Valley. It is partially shielded by a roadside cob wall, which had hidden from public view a previous small extension, of no merit at all. The judges had no hesitation in agreeing that a new extension which sought to match the original building, with its ‘cottage orné’ character, was unlikely to have worked, and that the modern approach chosen, with timber cladding and a barrel roof in copper, had been entirely the right choice. This still required high quality design and execution, and the judges saw this everywhere they looked. The original building remains fully readable, with a modest link section between it and the extension, tucked under the thatch. Inside the link, the rough cob walls of the cottage retain their character, around a new doorway. The new copper roof was seen as an outstanding achievement, both visually and because of the skill with which it had been created, with full attention paid to every detail. Glimpses of it over the top of the roadside wall create interest in what the full picture may show. The interiors of the extension are simple and well planned, with maximum advantage taken of the view down the valley. The judges felt that the whole project was an object lesson in how to add successfully to a listed building, with a completely different stylistic approach having enhanced the cottage, while creating a new building of high quality in its own right. It seemed only proper to recognise the project with the Lady Radnor Award, as the most outstanding of all this year’s award winners.

Architects: Favonius Architects, Salisbury

Awards

1) St Francis Church extension, Salisbury

St Francis is a church built in 1939, of a very distinctive non-Gothic appearance, and prominently located on Castle Road. A need for additional space had led to a decision to create this extension on the very visible south side of the building, rather than trying to tuck it away round the back. The judges were extremely impressed by the care which had been taken to make this choice successful, typified above all by the sourcing of bricks extremely similar to the original ones. By itself this could have been compromised if the workmanship had fallen short, but in fact similar care had been taken in the laying of the bricks, resulting in an addition which blends in with the original building in a remarkably seamless way. The principal impact of the extension is to convert a closed-off south aisle elevation, with almost no windows, to a much more open one, including a very welcoming new entrance, which the church previously lacked. The wrap-around windows at each end of the new building were felt to be particularly successful, not least in terms of the views out. The interiors had been well fitted-out, and the very obvious improvements to the church achieved by the scheme made the decision to give an award an easy one.

Architects: Saunders Architects, Romsey

2) St John’s Place, Lower Bemerton

Redundancy for church buildings, when they have architectural merit, can create serious problems, with appropriate new uses often hard to find. St John’s in Lower Bemerton clearly had that merit, both in its contribution to the street scene and in its characteristic C19th interior, with some fine stone carving. Conversion of the nave to a community venue, with associated use by the school just over the road, had clearly been the sort of solution the church needed, and the judges were delighted to find that it had been carried out with commitment and due attention to detail. The continuation of an existing moulding, round new timber structures neatly inserted into the north aisle, was a very good indication that a lot of trouble had been taken to effect the change without compromising the building’s essential merits. A modest extension at the west end, to add further facilities, had been well-handled, with brick seen as an appropriate choice for material, particularly as care had been taken to select one with a mottled appearance which picked up on adjacent stonework. The contrast between the unchanged chancel, with its busy and varied decoration, and the simple uncluttered feel of the nave was a particularly effective one, emphasising the success of the whole project. The fact that it had only been achieved with a great deal of community involvement further added to its merits.

Architects: Paul Stevens Architecture, Salisbury

3) The Sawmill Bridge, Wilton House

The early C19th Sawmill Bridge is one of a remarkable collection of historic structures within the grounds of Wilton House. It had been sorely treated at some point, with a 6’ high wall built along the carriageway over it, to screen traffic from the house. This left a pedestrian way on the east side, where the parapet had been replaced by a metal fence. Recent work has reversed this process, with the spine wall and metal fence removed, and the east side of the bridge given a stone parapet, matching the surviving one on the west side. Comparing photos of the previous state with what they saw when they visited, the judges had no difficulty in deciding that the project had been firmly in the award-winning class. The work carried out, which had included repairs and repointing to existing stonework, and reinstatement of flanking walls, had clearly been done with a high level of skill, and removal of an unsightly water pipe across the outside of the bridge, which had previously compromised the western elevation, was a major bonus. Touches like new bollard-like guard stones along the inner face of the new eastern parapet, matching ones on the other side, showed a high level of commitment, and the introduction of C19th iron gates from elsewhere on the estate added to the whole picture. The project was felt to reflect great credit on those involved with it.

Architects: Michael Lyons Architecture, Salisbury

4) The Kings Arms, Downton

The loss of a village pub can of course be a very contentious affair, but with Downton still having three other pubs surviving, the judges were able to focus on whether the conversion of the former King’s Arms to private houses had been an appropriate treatment of the listed building. This has a C18th exterior, but an interior which retains considerable parts of the original C15th structure, and clearly needed great care taken over the transition to domestic use. The judges felt that two new extensions were largely successful in not compromising original character, but their chief praise for the project focused on its achievements inside.



The Sawmill Bridge at Wilton House
Photo courtesy of: Lord Pembroke and the Trustees of Wilton House Trust

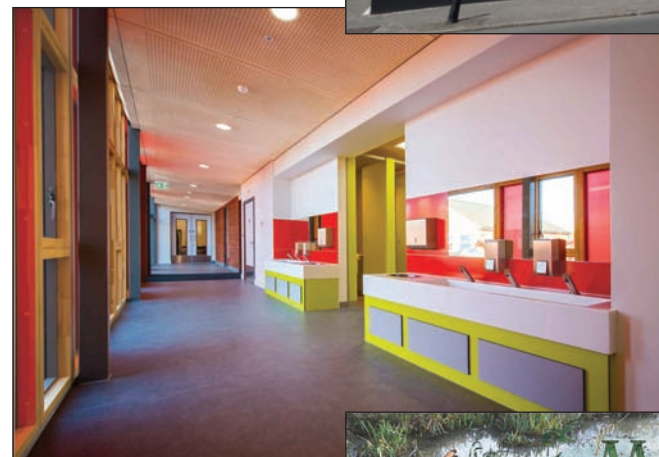


St John's Place, Lower Bemerton *Photo: Paul Stevens*



New South aisle at
 St Francis Church, Salisbury

The King's Arms, Downton
Photo: Paul Stevens



Downton Primary School
Photo: Footprint Architects

Marsh Chequer artwork
Photo: Barbara Evans



All signs of pub use had been carefully removed, and surviving features treated with great respect, to create domestic interiors which would clearly be a pleasure to live in. No more had been done than was necessary, with minor fittings from the original use left in place, when it would have been easier just to clear them all away. The exterior brickwork had all been repointed, work which can sometimes have unfortunate results, but which here had been carefully carried out. The outcome was a pair of houses which made excellent use of the historic building, and represented another interesting phase in its story.

Architects: Paul Stevens Architecture, Salisbury

Commendations

1) New Classrooms and Hall Extension at Downton CE Primary School

The school had already been extended significantly beyond its original late Victorian core, a building of great distinction. Responding to ever-increasing pressures on space, this further extension was seen by the judges as a sensible continuation of the now-established approach, which does not attempt to match the decoration of the core building, but uses mainly low-key vernacular materials, in keeping with the overall feel of the village. In this latest phase, the addition of some coloured modern plastic provided an effective new accent. The judges' main focus was on the interiors, where the advantage gained by significantly expanding the school hall was immediately apparent. New classrooms and connecting corridors had been designed with a keen eye for the needs of young children, and the general impression was that a calming and supporting environment had been created, which would be beneficial to staff and parents as well as children. Expanded space had created the potential for greater community use of the school, and the overall impression was of a very worthwhile project, designed and carried out with great care.

Architects: Footprint Architects, Bournemouth

2) The Marsh Chequer Community Art Project

The Civic Society had previously been involved in publicising and judging a competition to reuse fascia boards at a former antique shop, on the corner of Brown Street and Trinity Street. The owners had decided to take the boards as an opportunity to mark and celebrate the Marsh chequer, which as well as those two streets is bounded by Love Lane and St Ann Street, and is the only example of a city chequer which survives intact. The judges were delighted to find that the resulting art work fully justified the Society's support for the competition, with the winning artist coming up with a splendid mix of features representing aspects of the chequer's long history, assembled and painted with great skill. The boards are both attractive as a feature seen in passing, and fascinating if someone has the time to stop and examine them in more detail. In some cases they will hopefully encourage the passer-by to seek to find out more about the chequer's past. Making everyone, both residents and visitors, more aware of the city chequers, and in the process uncover elements of lost history, has been one of the Society's aims for a long time, and being able to recognise this project with a commendation is a great pleasure.

Artist: Nancy Tolford, Salisbury

The Compleat Artist, Salisbury

During its lifetime as a shop selling art materials, the Compleat Artist in Crane Street was a well-known Salisbury building, verging on the notorious on some occasions when its owner decided on another change of colour scheme, and selected a particularly lurid hue. Since the building was never listed, this was something he could do with impunity, and almost certainly he quite enjoyed the resultant fuss. The shop closed in 2015, and remained empty till an application was submitted early last year to repair and alter it, with a new oak structure with brick infill panels, and a new oak roof. The Society saw no reason to object to the proposals.

Work started in the autumn, but quite quickly hoardings had to be erected which blocked off the riverside footpath running from Crane Street to Bridge Street. The work had revealed extreme instability caused by a culvert underneath the site, and a danger of collapse to the footpath area between the building and the Avon. This necessitated taking down more of the building than was originally intended, though any features which deserved to be retained have clearly been carefully treated, and will be built back into the structure. Visually, the final outcome should not differ from what was intended at the outset.

The 2017 Sarum Chronicle carried a fascinating piece detailing the fabric and history of the building, based on surveys and research carried out by the Wiltshire Buildings Record. One of the most remarkable features is a ceiling above a former bay window, with a design resembling flat fan vaulting. The Sarum Chronicle article describes this as being plasterwork, but the recent dismantling of the building has revealed that it is in fact constructed in Portland stone. The building seems to have started life, probably in the early C19th, as something like a summer house to an adjacent house which has now disappeared, with the Masonic Hall occupying its site. If the ceiling was purpose made for its position, it was clearly a summer house which was a cut above the average. Other elements of it seem to have been brought in from elsewhere.

In 1982 the newsletter of the Salisbury and District Preservation Trust, the Civic Society's predecessor body, carried a piece on the Compleat Artist by Trust stalwart Gerald Steer, still very active and in fact the architect for the current work there. This piece correctly identified the ceiling as stone, though the quoted attribution of it, by the then Salisbury Museum curator, to an original position in the cathedral's Beauchamp Chantry (demolished by Wyatt) seems unlikely. Apart from this very recent correction on materials, the Sarum Chronicle article gives a very full picture of this unusual and fascinating building, and is highly recommended.

AGM & Talk by Adrian Green about General Pitt-Rivers

The Society's 2019 AGM will be held on Wednesday June 12th, at the Methodist Church in St Edmunds Church Street, starting at 6.30 pm. The draft agenda and supporting papers will be distributed by email in accordance with the Society's Constitution, or by post where necessary. These papers will include details of how to nominate candidates for election as officers of the Society and how to propose items for inclusion in the final agenda. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Adrian Green, Director of Salisbury Museum, about General Pitt-Rivers, one of the great founding figures of British archaeology.

Guide to Fonthill

The December magazine included a review of the recently published 'Fonthill Recovered', which ended with a pledge to provide a guide to the visible parts of the Fonthill estate in this issue. This takes the form of a route round the estate which picks up on pretty well all the major features which are now reasonably easy to see, starting from the gateway at Fonthill Bishop (SP3 5SE). Structures which are visible from public viewpoints (though not necessarily from close up) are shown in **bold**.

The imposing **gateway**, a photo of which appeared in the December magazine, leads to the area where the estate first developed. The gateway used to be attributed to Inigo Jones, who died in 1652, but is in fact probably work commissioned by Alderman Beckford around 1756, though a design by Jones may have influenced it. The **flanking walls** on its village side, with their giant urns, are of the mid C19th.

Just east of the gateway, at the northern end of Fonthill Lake, is the **Georgian Boathouse**. The rear of this is just visible from the road inside the gateway, but only shows itself as an earthen mound. The photo on p.15, taken from private land during the Fonthill symposium of 2014 which was the starting point for Fonthill Recovered, reveals its classical form. Again commissioned by Alderman Beckford, it is part of the estate's extensive collection of folly structures, extant or otherwise.

On the western side of the road at this point, between here and the road which leads off westwards a bit further on, is the site of the first major house on the estate, nothing of which survives. There are no clear signs of it in the field (bumps in which probably relate to something else), with it being left to magnetometry and resistivity surveys to provide some scanty evidence from the land itself. Knowledge of the house is really from maps and paintings.

Beyond the road leading off is a cricket pitch, and this was the site of Alderman Beckford's

Fonthill Splendens, the last surviving part of which was demolished in 1920. Again, no trace of it is visible in the surface of the land. Continuing on the road which runs alongside the lake, there's a modern bridge leading to the current **Fonthill House**, and beyond that point the view opens out eastwards and, the house itself, of the early 1970s and not very exciting, can be seen in the distance, backed by woodland. Little Ridge, the early C20th house demolished in somewhat contentious circumstances to make way for it, would have shown itself as something rather more interesting.

A bit further along the road is the spot which gives access to the most scenic part of the estate. From a small lay-by, a footpath runs close to the western side of the lake, and gives a good view of the **Landing Stage** on the far side of the lake, probably further work commissioned by the Alderman (*photo back cover*). To the south of it, not visible from the west side of the lake, and completely inaccessible to the public, are some fine grottoes of the late C18th.

It's worth pursuing the footpath right to the end of the lake, whose wholly artificial nature here becomes apparent. The steep fall beyond the dam which created it has been harnessed to power a small turbine, with an information board indicating that it provides enough electricity to power 13 houses. What can no longer be seen here is a five storey woollen mill and six storey weaving factory, employing some 200 people and powered by



The Georgian Boathouse at Fonthill



The remains of Beckford's Barrier, Fonthill

three water wheels. Set up in the early 1800s, this complex was financially unsuccessful and soon shut down again.

Returning to the lay-by, and continuing along the road towards Fonthill Gifford, a brief incline gives no clue as to the major feature of the estate which lies to either side, and underneath. On the east side a firmly barred entrance once gave access to a very substantial rock-lined tunnel under the road, called the Dark Walk, which emerges next to an exotic rockwork grotto known as the Hermitage. Despite its closeness to the road this is invisible, and there is no public access. What can be glimpsed, as the road starts to level off, is an ivy-topped small structure picturesquely assembled from knobbly rocks full of holes, sited just into the field beside the road. This is **the Cromlech**, which can also be seen from the lakeside footpath (*photo back cover*). The Hermitage is nearby in a wooded dip. All these grottoes and similar constructions are listed, with the listing authorities referring to 'this group of fantasy structures, either side of Fonthill lake'.

They are indeed testament to a period when romance often took precedence over practicality in the design of buildings, a phase which reached its apogee with Beckford's Fonthill Abbey.

The road continues to the crossroads at Fonthill Gifford, where opposite the Beckford Arms is another **gateway to the estate**, highly vermiculated (i.e. carved to represent the burrowings of worms), but less grandiose than the 'Inigo Jones' one. It's now worth backtracking for a mile or so, and heading along the road which branches off the lakeside one by the cricket pitch. Up a slope to the left, a single storey house quickly becomes visible, its gothic form leading to the conclusion that this is probably another work by William Beckford. In fact it's a twenty year old rebuild of some nondescript farm buildings, hence its name of **Cowpens**, and it was given an award by the Society in 2000, with its echoing of the folly spirit of the area approvingly referred to in the citation.

Soon after, a **partial walled garden** appears on the right, with beyond it a former



Cowpens

gardener's cottage to the estate, originating in the 1830s but later aggrandised with significant extensions, with in recent times the front-on view obscured by tree planting, a practice which has to a greater or lesser extent removed other historic buildings from the landscape in our part of the world. However the side view of the house, together with the stone and brick garden walls, is an attractive one. The stonework of the northern wall has flues built in, to enable it to be heated to facilitate the growing of fruits such as apricots.

The road ends at a junction with the Tisbury-Hindon road. Heading towards Hindon, a no through road soon branches off on the right and leads down to a very nice small group of mid C19th estate cottages known as **Greenwich**, quite rightly listed in 2013. Opposite this turning can be seen the first signs of **Beckford's Barrier**, a wall some seven miles long and originally 12 foot high, constructed by William Beckford round his part of the estate, apparently in part at least to keep out fox hunters. A much reduced section runs alongside the public road here, then heads away into the woods, in varying degrees of ruin (*photo p.15*).

Continuing along the road to Hindon, at its highest point it passes through another work by Beckford – a **tunnel**, quite an orthodox one for once, which takes it under a ridge known as the Terraces. Clearly no actual tunnelling took place, it's a cut and cover job, and as the road must have existed long before it was built, its function was presumably to continue the route along the Terraces seamlessly over the road. Having reached Hindon, a turning to the left at the bottom of the village street takes one past the area which held two of the great Fonthill houses, neither of them surviving. No footpath exists across the area, and neither house site is in any way publicly visible. The most one

sees, about halfway between Hindon and Newtown, is a building on the left known as **Stone Gate Lodge**, put up in 1860 in connection with the Marquess of Westminster's mansion, but probably by what was also the main entrance to Beckford's Fonthill Abbey. Just beyond this point, and completely undetectable from the road, is a tunnel under it, constructed this time in picturesque rockwork and no doubt part of Beckford's landscaping. However it is no longer clear what route may have passed through it.

Beckford's Barrier, as usual reduced to only a few feet high, reappears on the left hand side of the road, not far from Hindon, and is there, first continuously and then in its final stretch intermittently, till the edge of Newtown. A rough calculation, allowing for an average thickness of at least two feet for its 12' height and seven mile length, shows that something in the area of 60 thousand tons of stone might have gone into it. Unsurprisingly, this prodigious effort of quarrying and shaping (for the facing stones anyway) used the local greensand, as well as the Chilmark from which the major houses were built. Locals must have been grateful for generations after, for the largesse with which Beckford provided a stock of plunderable building material.

Following the road from Newtown to the Beckford Arms takes one along the other side of the Fonthill Abbey area (the first one is now known as Old Fonthill Abbey, to distinguish it from the later Marquess of Westminster house, and its successor habitations). Another **lodge**, of 1860 and echoing in a small way the 'Scottish French Baronial' style of the Marquess's house, is encountered, not far from the Beckford Arms. Before that, a very fine and large brick walled garden, of similar age, is actually not far from the road, but completely obscured by trees.

There are other, more scattered, remnants of the complex Fonthill story. Some are internal features, mostly re-used in private houses, though a section of plaster cornice from Splendens is in the Beckford's Tower museum in Bath. In the grounds of New Wardour Castle is a limestone statue of William Beckford's favourite saint, St Anthony of Padua, formerly in a niche at Beckford's abbey. One remnant may even have made its way to Salisbury. The Milford Hall Hotel, in Castle Street, has a front porch which the current Pevsner describes as having 'oddly shaped, no doubt recent, columns' (*see photo*). However the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments says of these that they are 'carved to represent palm trees and reputedly come from Fonthill Abbey'. There's probably no way of establishing this for sure, but it is at least plausible.

There are actually two opportunities a year, in early summer, to gain access to the grounds of Beckford's Fonthill Abbey, and to see, but not visit, the limited but still very interesting remains of his house, plus the new one now constructed alongside them. The owners organise open days, with proceeds going to Parkinsons UK and local



Porch at the Milford Hall Hotel

charities, and the walks this enables round in particular Beckford's Bitham Lake, half a mile from the abbey, are highly recommended. This year the open days are on Sunday May 5th and Sunday May 19th. To avoid the risk of too much pressure from numbers, we can't give full details of them, but publicity can be found locally, for instance in parish magazines and on posters. The owners have kindly offered to welcome a group visit from the Society at some point, and this is certainly something we will be following up.

Richard Deane

Lectures Secretary Wanted

Every year the Civic Society hosts four talks covering the area's history, environment and culture, given by experts in the subjects. For nearly six years now these talks have been organised by Judy Howles; but she is stepping down later this year.

Would you like to join the Society's General Purposes Committee to undertake Judy's role in the future? Judy already has two of the 2020 lectures agreed in principle and would be happy to provide help and support to her successor. Other members of the Committee would also support you, and help to identify suitable people to approach. In addition, our sister sub-committee, the Development Committee, usually provides one speaker each year on a buildings-related topic. However, you would have a pretty free hand to suggest and follow up your own ideas.

For further information please contact **James Woods** on 01722 422169 or **Judy Howles** on 01722 502056 if you are interested.

Civic Day 2019 – Promoting our Heritage

As mentioned in the December magazine, the Society is organising another Civic Day event this year, with a different format to the one in the Guildhall in June 2017. This time the event will be on Saturday June 22nd, at the Methodist Church in St Edmunds Church Street, from 9.45am to around 1.15pm. It will have the title 'Promoting our Heritage', and it will comprise talks followed by workshop sessions, with the purpose being to explore ways in which the area's historic heritage can be best promoted. There will be three main talks, covering lessons from Heritage Open Days in Winchester (City of Winchester Trust), the Salisbury History Festival (Frogg Moody, Fisherton History Society), and using technology for public access to Salisbury's heritage (Chris Brayne, Wessex Archaeology). Shorter talks will then cover other aspects of the theme.

Because of the workshop format of the second half of the event, those attending will need to register beforehand, and the number will be limited to 50, plus speakers. Invitations have gone out to a wide range of local groups who are potential partners with the Civic Society in promoting and extending appreciation of the area's extensive heritage. However, we anticipate a significant number of places still being available once their replies are all in, and Society members will have first pick of these. If you're interested in coming (there's no charge), please email development@salisburycivicsociety.org.uk, or phone **Richard Deane** on 07974 140888. It'll be a week or two before we know how many of the invitees are coming, so you won't get an instant response, but we'll be in touch as soon as we know how many places can be made available to members.

Pevsner Puzzles in Salisbury

Julian Orbach's revision of the Wiltshire Pevsner has been focusing on Salisbury in recent weeks, with assistance given by several Society members, and has thrown up various unanswered questions about buildings in the city, some of which may never be resolved. Two of Julian's queries are shown in his photos, one below and one on the following page.



1) Fireplace at the King's Head in Bridge Street, previously the County Hotel. The building is partly of the late C19th and partly of the early C20th, but the fireplace appears to be a genuine late medieval one, or slightly after. Since there was an inn on the site since at least the C15th, it is just conceivable that the fireplace is a survival from the medieval building, but it's just as likely that it started life elsewhere. Pinning down its history now may not be possible.

King's Head fireplace

2) Plasterwork at 45 Castle Street. The street frontage of the building is early C18th, but the very fine plasterwork in question is in a garden room at the back, dated to 1792 or thereabouts. The style of the plaster rules out any chance of it dating to that period, a problem which the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, in its Salisbury volume of 1980, gets round by saying it is 'probably of c.1900'. Julian thinks this unlikely – he suspects that it is genuine work of the 1730s or 1740s. There has to be a firm answer to this question, but it's currently rather elusive.



45 Castle Street plasterwork

Julian was initially quite puzzled by the impressive stone building on the corner of St John Street and New Street, formerly known as Alexandra House and used by the Crown Court and the local tax office, before becoming solicitors' offices. However it started life, in the early 1950s, as the NAAFI club, i.e. a provider of recreational facilities and accommodation for service people, run by the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes. Julian wondered why a building with that use was so grand. The answer appears to be that the construction of eight NAAFI clubs at that time was a project into which considerable resources were put, with the intention of creating prominent well-designed buildings.

So there's nothing particularly anomalous about the Salisbury NAAFI. All designed by an architect called EM Joseph, the buildings were generally contemporary in style, but at Salisbury, and similarly in Lincoln, a neo-Georgian style was adopted, as it was thought to suit the setting. It's quite notable that though that description of the style is accurate enough, Alexandra House doesn't in fact look remotely like a genuine Georgian building.

Julian will be talking to Society members about his work revising the Wiltshire Pevsner on September 19th. His current expectation is that the new book should get published in early 2020.

Planning Forum, April 11th

This year's Planning Forum has not yet taken full shape, but in general terms it will have a dual focus, on 'future of the High Street' issues, and on master planning for Salisbury.

These two subjects are connected, by both coming within the remit of a South Wiltshire Economic Recovery team set up by Wiltshire Council. The team's leader, Tom Dobrashian, will speak at the Forum.

The identity of other speakers, and the precise balance between the two themes, remain uncertain at the time of going to press. Once all the details are in place, they will be notified to members, by email or by post.

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