

## Celebrating our Heritage, Enhancing our Environment, Shaping our Future

Salisbury is a vibrant cathedral city, surrounded by the beautiful countryside and villages of South Wiltshire. People visit it or decide to live here because it is a welcoming community, working and trading in a marvellous historic setting. The challenges today are to maintain those attractive qualities and yet accommodate continuing changes in population, lifestyle, and the economy.

The Salisbury Civic Society, founded in 1960, works to promote high standards of contemporary design in all aspects of the built environment within Salisbury and South Wiltshire, while safeguarding the historic buildings and landscape setting underpinning the area's special character.

Over the years, the role of the Society has expanded. Today, it is not only the principal local organisation and guardian for the built environment, but also celebrates and promotes the area's rich heritage and cultural life through a stimulating programme of activities.

Salisbury falls under two authorities, created in 2009, Salisbury City Council and Wiltshire Council. We are able to contribute effectively in many areas and are represented on several groups including the Salisbury Conservation Advisory Panel. We also have a good working relationship with Wiltshire Council, Salisbury City Council and CPRE, The Countryside Charity. As a non-political organisation, the Society maintains an independent stance on all matters.

Through a series of awards, talks, forums, open meetings, visits and our website we promote and provide information on the architecture, history and geography of the area.

#### Our aims, as set out in our constitution:

- To promote high standards of architecture and planning in South Wiltshire
- To educate the public in the architecture, history, geography and natural history of South Wiltshire
- To secure the preservation, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in South Wiltshire

#### Among the many activities of the Society we:

- Monitor and constructively comment on planning applications and development proposals
- Run an active and stimulating programme of events for members and the public
- Publish a quarterly magazine for members

- Maintain our support for the projects promoted by the former Salisbury Vision
- Protect and celebrate the traditional chequer names
- Run a prestigious new buildings and conservation awards scheme
- Organise the annual Salisbury Heritage Open Days and the Salisbury Blue Plaques scheme, celebrating our outstanding built environment and heritage
- Promote the economic vitality of the region

We are always delighted to welcome new members

Cover: Bear on the Odeon Gable, New Canal – an image from Salisbury in Detail Photos in this issue, in addition to those credited individually: Richard Deane

## **DIARY of EVENTS 2022/3**

For booking instructions (where applicable) visit: www.salisburycivicsociety.org.uk/events/

#### SATURDAY AUGUST 20TH

DINTON – A Village Story through Peace and Wartime

A walk round the village led by David Richards Start time 2pm, duration about 1.5 hours

Tickets £6-50

#### **SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 11TH**

Artefacts at Salisbury Museum from the Drainage Collection

Adrian Green, Director of the Museum, will host a talk and 'handling' session introducing the varied collection of artefacts found in the city's drainage channels

Salisbury Museum, 65 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EN

There will be two sessions at 2pm and 3pm Tickets £17-50, booking details above

#### **WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 5TH**

OPEN MEETING

Climate Change: its impact on Architecture and Historic Buildings

An event held jointly with the RIBA, with two speakers – architect Duncan Baker-Brown, and Morwenna Slade of Historic England

6.30pm at the Methodist Church, St Edmunds Church Street, Salisbury SP1 1EF

Admission is free, and all are welcome

#### **THURSDAY JANUARY 19TH 2023**

New Year Party and Annual Awards Presentation

Salisbury Arts Centre

Booking details with November magazine

#### 8 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2022

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS – Rivers & Waterways of Salisbury

Our contribution to the national Heritage Open Day scheme for 2022 will be a celebration of Salisbury's unique Rivers and Waterways, incorporating talks about the ecology and wildlife of our waterways, exploration of the courses of the original drainage channels and walks along the banks of our key rivers running into and through the city.

Chris Daniell, Senior Historic Building Advisor for the UK Government will open the week with a talk about the Medieval Drainage Channels of Salisbury followed by two guided walks exploring the course of the channels. Looking to the future of our rivers, Andy Wallis of the Environment Agency will talk about and lead a guided tour through current work on the new River Park project. We will be exploring the five local rivers, with Chris Daniell and Hadrian Cook, trustee and 'drowner' of the Harnham Water Meadows Trust, leading walks along the banks of the Ebble, the Bourne and the Avon giving an insight into these unique chalk rivers.

All events taking place under the HOD scheme will be free to Society members and the public alike. We will be circulating an email with full details of each event in August and links to Eventbrite for bookings.

## **Editorial**

As Stephanie says in her Notes from the Chair, on the following page, Charles Villiers has now stepped down from his role as magazine editor. He first took this on in 2004, switched to being membership secretary in 2015, took a bit of a breather with a slightly less onerous membership role in 2017, and then took the magazine on again at the end of 2020. We're enormously grateful to him for the immense amount of work he's put in over the last 18 years. The idea now is that designing and assembling the magazine will in future be done by former Development Committee chair Melanie Latham, who was one of the three architects who designed our book Salisbury in Detail, published in 2009. For this edition, the design work has passed back to Sue Newnham of Salisbury Printing, who did this job in exemplary fashion between 2017 and 2020.

One of the most important bits of news for Salisbury in recent times has been the announcement of government funding for it to the tune of £9,355,731, from the Future High Streets Fund, designed to counter the decline of retail, and with a particular focus on the railway station forecourt and Fisherton Street. On page 5 we describe the way this funding developed, the paucity of opportunities for early comments on how it might be spent, and the Society's reaction once actual consultation, on the details, was launched in March. Having been shown some exciting ideas for Fisherton Street, even if ones which were probably a bit on the fanciful side, back in 2019, it was slightly depressing to encounter, once the money was in place, an outcome which was worthy but rather prosaic. The funding made available was certainly less than had been hoped for, but whether this fully explains the gap between promise and actuality is unclear. No doubt future magazines will dwell further on the question of whether £9.4 million is being spent to its fullest advantage.

Blue plaques have been a key part of the Society's work ever since the first one in 1989 (even if that one, to violin maker Benjamin Banks, was actually green), and they feature twice over in this edition. We describe three recent ones, while also recounting a slightly unusual tale about one from 2004, which turned out to include wording which we struggled to explain. An innocent query from an outsider set us wondering, and a chance discovery in a pile of old Society papers indicated the way forward. With the aid of a local historian from Alderbury, and the easy online access that's now possible to C19th Ordnance Survey maps, we ended up not only answering the query, but also adding what is almost certainly a brand new piece of evidence about how Salisbury's street names came into being. That the street in question is only seven houses long may slightly diminish the achievement, but not by too much.

#### **Richard Deane**

Editorial co-ordinator

### A Warm Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Society: Barclay + Phillips Architects, Hilary Bottomley, Sara Crook, Ann Dawes, Gabriel and Sara Denvir, Paul and Janet Draper, Gay and David Edwards, Arnold and Jo Harrison, Kate and Jamie Maisey, Katie McGraghan-Hall, Mike Pearce, Mike Rooney, Susie Slade, Barbara Smith

## **Notes from the Chair**

How refreshing to be back actively involved in local initiatives and live events! I'm delighted to report we have had a flurry of interest from new members interested in taking up volunteer roles. Heidi Poole representing CPRE, and Mike Lyons of Michael Lyons Architecture are new recruits to the Development team and Janet and Paul Draper have joined the GP team. It's great to have so many new faces on board.

The long-delayed Awards Evening and Spring Party in April opened our 2022 calendar with a bang, resulting in a hugely successful evening! It was a pleasure to be back hosting our key event, after the last awards presentation in January 2020. John Walsh, Susanna Denniston and Pauline Church announced the winners from 2021, 2020 and one late winner from 2019, with Alastair Clark, our President, handing out nearly 50 awards. All the chairs of the judging panels commented on the remarkably high standard of design, build, and skilled craftmanship, something we are proud to celebrate.

The new Awards booklet has been a great success. We were lucky to have the layout and presentation created by Jamie Hobson, who did a brilliant job on this project. Many thanks to the joint skills of Jamie and Richard Deane, who provided the content. This has meant three issues of the regular magazine through the year. The decision as to whether this will be a standard for the future is not just a matter for committee members but should reflect opinion from the membership. We will, therefore, be including a short questionnaire in the autumn edition of the magazine to canvas your thoughts and views on what you would like to see from the Society. If you want to tell me beforehand, my email address is at the end of this article!

I joined the first meeting of the Community Art Initiative for Fisherton Gateway. Proposals were discussed as how to identify, create and fund an artwork initiative in and around the station that is badly needed to bring some vibrancy to one of the main entrances to the city.

We were invited by Dorchester Civic Society to talk about our perspective of Civic Pride and Place Making, everyone made us feel incredibly welcome and the Q&As that followed developed into an interesting and lively discussion. Reaching out to other Civic Societies is an instructive way of finding out how they operate, we have had visits to and from Winchester and Bristol, any suggestions of further places would be welcome.

Sadly, there are farewells. Lis Woods and Charles Villiers have stepped down from their respective roles after many years actively supporting the Society. It has been a privilege to get to know and work with Lis, her minutes for the GPC are unrivalled in their accuracy and straightforward reporting, and her open and generous personality will be greatly missed. Charles has edited the magazine, for many years, with an enviable degree of imagination, skill and patience (it is no easy task gathering content and images!). His perceptive comments and observations at committee meetings have been considered and constructive, always leading to stimulating discussion!

**Stephanie Siddons Deighton** stephaniedsd@gmail.com

# Churches in South Wiltshire in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust

## St Mary and St Lawrence, Stratford Tony

Stratford Tony church (SP5 4AU) takes a bit of finding, but is well worth the effort. With a scatter of houses around it, rather than anything recognisable as a village, it's down a short continuation of the road from Salisbury race course to the Chalke valley, southwards from the crossroads where this meets the valley road. After two or three hundred yards, a signpost saying 'Historic Church' points the way to a footpath. This crosses the Ebble, and then rises up to a slight hill on which the church stands.

The entrance is round on the north side, through a C13th doorway in a post-medieval porch, above a fairly steep drop towards the Ebble. The chancel is consistently C14th, while the nave walls have been rebuilt or refaced in the C18th. The C15th tower has some sturdy medieval gargoyles, and a nice weather vane. The interior is quite unspoilt, and very light due to the only stained glass being some of 1884 by Kempe, in the east window. The pews, chancel stalls and screens are of late C17th origin, very sympathetically altered in the early 1880s, with some delightful small scale colonnading. A C13th piscina is in Purbeck marble, decorated with two fishes which are now slightly blurred.

Like all CCT churches, St Mary's and St Lawrence's is generally open, and both the building and its location will fully justify a visit.



## **Response to Future High Streets Fund consultation**

The government's Future High Street Fund was launched in October 2018, with £675 million behind it, aimed at countering the impact on high streets of the increasing strength of online retailers. An initial bid by Wiltshire Council for money for Salisbury seemed to have come to nothing in mid 2019, but within a couple of months the situation had changed, possibly though not certainly because of arguments being made that the Novichok attack made Salisbury a special case. However vagueness ruled throughout 2020, and it was not till the start of 2021 that it became known that just under £9.4 million was being made available. There was no process of public consultation about the exact way this was to be spent, though there had been earlier indications of the general thrust of Wiltshire Council thinking. These made it clear that Fisherton Street and the railway station forecourt would get the bulk of the funding. Wiltshire Council's bid had been based on specific proposals aimed at ticking the 'revitalising high streets' box, which determined whether FHSF money was likely to be forthcoming, leaving little scope for any independent thinking about how Salisbury would best benefit from the £9.4 million.

Attempts to make contact with relevant Wiltshire Council officers made slow progress, and it was not till the middle of 2021, when thinking began about an open meeting to be held jointly with the local group of the Royal Society of Arts, on the subject (at their suggestion) of Salisbury recovery, that meaningful contact with the council was achieved. The project manager for most of the Salisbury FHSF work was identified as highways engineer Carli Van Niekerk, and she accepted an invitation to speak at the event, in September. Her talk set out the division of the money as being £5.3 million for the railway station forecourt, £3.2 million for Fisherton Street, under the title the Fisherton Gateway, and the remaining £0.8 million for 'Heritage Living', which in practice meant doing up some at least of No 47 Blue Boar Row, owned by the City Council. This is potentially a very interesting project, but it's separate from the two larger ones, and no details have yet emerged. We hope to expand on it in the November magazine.

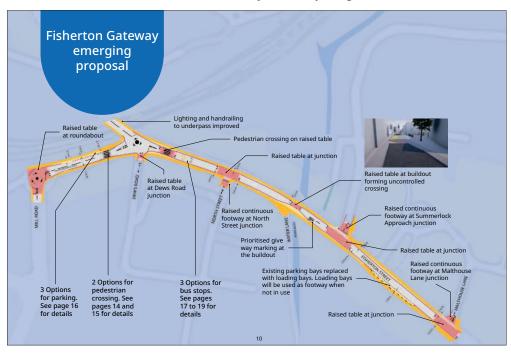
Having failed to gain much in the way of early insights into what the spending on the railway station and Fisherton Street was

actually aimed at achieving, the Society had to wait until the announcement of a general consultation by Wiltshire Council, from early March to mid April this year, before it could start to get to grips with any details. An impromptu Development Committee meeting took place in the Guildhall's Banqueting Hall during an exhibition of the proposals there, followed by a final discussion on the Society's position at the next committee meeting proper. One of the first things this had to decide was whether the Society was 'disappointed' by the proposals' lack of ambition, or 'very disappointed', and committee members had little difficulty in deciding that the more severe wording would be appropriate.

The background to this reaction needs some explanation, because to a certain extent Wiltshire Council had itself encouraged, by earlier actions, such an unenthusiastic response. In April 2019 that year's Planning Forum had had the title 'Staging a Recovery: Current Initiatives towards Revitalising Salisbury', and among the subjects covered by the two speakers from Wiltshire Council had been current ideas about what the



Idea for street market from 2019 - conjectural only. Image: Wiltshire Council.



The prosaic reality – street layout, from the consultation document.

bid to the Future High Streets Fund would cover, if it made it through the first stage. Thinking about Fisherton Street received a particular focus, and the image opposite is one of many similar ones from the Powerpoint used at that April 2019 meeting. They conveyed an intention to fundamentally transform the street, and make it a vibrant and exciting link between the railway station and the city centre. Not necessarily to be taken too literally - the idea of a street market, with no motorised vehicle traffic visible, was always going to be rather optimistic in the form shown – but displaying an exciting attitude to what a successful bid to the Fund might make achievable.

To find, when the 2022 consultation took place, something very far removed from the 2019 indications was therefore bound to be disappointing. The scheme presented was essentially a highways engineering one, with undeniable improvements to the usability of the street for non-motorised vehicle traffic, but with nothing at all of the fizz and zip of the 2019 illustrations. And even the highways improvements were felt to be unnecessarily cautious, with for instance only minimal widening of pavements. A brief summary of the Society's formal response to the consultation will indicate some of the specific aspects where the scheme was felt to fall short.

Traffic in Fisherton Street: The Society lamented the lack of any recognition of the need to remove any traffic which had no essential reason to be in the street.

A better balance for street users: The scheme involves some modest increases in pavement widths, and five 'raised tables' at junctions, which will create consistent level walkways across at those points only. The Society advocated a 'shared space' approach to the whole street, creating one

level surface and no priority for motorised vehicles. The success of this principle has been shown in previous talks to the Society.

A focus on the Water Lane junction: The ideas illustrated in 2019 included decking over the river immediately south of the Water Lane bridge, to create a sitting out area. Above, the blank end wall of a building creates a marvellous opportunity for some imaginative artwork (photos page 8). The Society regretted the failure to make anything of this key point in this street, with the decking over abandoned because of objections from Natural England about the impact on wildlife in the river of reduced light levels, something the Environment Agency did not find problematic. The use of glass ought to remove this problem, while being potentially very attractive in itself.

Art in the street: Wiltshire Council's own Core Policy 57 refers to the desirability of 'the integration of art and design in the public realm', and this policy needs to be carried through into the current proposals, which just refer to possibly dressing up utility cabinets.

Railway station forecourt: This wasn't covered much in the 2019 talks, and it was felt to be a less controversial area. Apart from asking for additional planting, and more evidence of high quality design and materials for the reworked forecourt, the Society focused on the unsatisfactory access from South Western Road. Its submission included a plan by committee member architect James Salman, proposing a new way in for pedestrians in Mill Road, through a green 'parklet', with seating, trees and perhaps play equipment. Potential problems with levels at this point need to be addressed anyway, as the scheme shows a new pedestrian route coming out into Mill Road, at a lower point than James's proposed entrance. The implications of

this route are not properly considered, and access to the station across the miniroundabout remains unresolved in the scheme. South Western Road, from the station to Fisherton Street, is always going to be problematic, given that it's the major link between Churchfields and the wider road system.

Conclusion: We've said we'd be delighted to discuss our suggestions with the officers involved, and hope that they'll take the offer up. To be fair to Wiltshire Council, they received less than 70% of the funding they bid for, which was always going to limit what could be achieved in Fisherton Street. A transformed City Hall, as depicted in one of the 2019 talk images, was simply outside the scope of Future High Streets Fund work, and would need money from elsewhere. But even within these constraints, the Society expressed doubt as to whether the proposals, as detailed, matched the aims set out for them. The consultation document listed four strategic objectives:



Art opportunity in Water Lane, by area proposed for decking.

- Ensure a great experience on the high street
- Tourist destination
- Bring young people into the city
- Support business growth

Railway station improvements certainly ought to foster the second of these, but will the other three really be properly advanced? Will the wider high street within the city, accessed from Fisherton Street, actually see much effect once the proposals are implemented? Expenditure of £8.5 million on improvements to Salisbury doesn't happen very often, and it would have been nice if the Society could have been given a chance earlier in the process to discuss how it would be best targeted. A frustrating sense remains, that the Future High Streets Fund grant may in the end be a bit of a missed opportunity.



Trompe l'oeil artwork in Fougères, Brittany.

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## **Annual Report 2021 - General Purposes Committee**

The General Purposes Committee (GPC) is responsible for organising lectures, visits, blue plaques, Heritage Open Days and publicity for these on behalf of the Salisbury Civic Society. It also contributes articles to the quarterly magazine. One member of the committee usually leads on each of these subjects, but all members contribute to their choice and discussion.

In 2021 Covid 19 restrictions meant that no further 'live' activities could be run until 21 June. GPC meetings took place by Zoom until September, after which they took place alternately by Zoom and in person. Deanna Dykes ceased to be a member of the committee. At the 2021 AGM Stephanie Siddons Deighton was elected Chair of the Society, and therefore her former role as committee member for Communications and Outreach ceased. No replacement has yet come forward for the role. Cathy Chalk, from Mere, joined the committee in November 2021. At the end of 2021 all other offices and roles remained as before; Judy Howles Chair, Brenda Hunt Visits, Jamie Hobson Lectures, Lis Woods Secretary and Janet Patch Blue Plaques. Brenda had advised of her intention to resign from the visits role in 2020, but has nobly continued during 2021, the role becoming less onerous by managing the bookings online via Eventbrite. A new visits secretary is still sought. All our officers have worked hard to rearrange the dates or format of programmed events in such uncertain times; sadly this meant restricted and reduced numbers attending some visits.

**Note:** There have been new members join the committee in 2022 and GPC is looking for a secretary following Lis Woods' retirement.

#### Lectures

Following the initiative of a virtual lecture by Frogg Moody in March 2021, a second took place on 29 September 2021 in association with the AGM by Zoom, when Andy Altmann spoke about his artworks. The ideas this generated are being taken forward by a team led by Jamie Hobson on the theme of 'Rivers', which also includes ideas for 2022 Heritage Open Day walks and talks. The planned 'live' lectures for September and the 2021 AGM were postponed to March 2022 and the 2022 AGM respectively.

The first 'live' lecture in the Sanctuary of Salisbury Methodist Church took place in November 2021 with Caroline Dakers speaking about the fascinating subject of Fonthill.

## **Blue Plaques**

Much hard work was undertaken by Janet Patch in putting together a list of all current and future plaques and by Stephanie in putting them on the website. Two plaques were unveiled in 2021: Rex Whistler in the Close on 19 August and to Wolfe Frank in Mere on 1 October which generated much local interest.

Stephanie Siddons Deighton has been working with Fox Productions on the making of a film about a selection of the Blue Plaques.

#### Visits

Most of the visits planned for 2020 were able to take place in 2021, with the exception of Wilbury House. Visits must generally now be booked via the website and Eventbrite. Visits to Melbury vineyard on 7 July, Norrington on 17 August, and two evening walks and talks by Richard Deane on oriel windows sold out

quickly. A member of GPC, Hadrian Cook, led a guided walk of Britford on 22 July. In August David Richards gave an afternoon and evening walk/talk on St George, Dragons and Medieval Beasts in Salisbury.

All visits and walks were fully booked and well received.

## **Magazine and Publicity**

GPC members have contributed to the magazine which has been edited by Charles Villiers who has now retired from that role. Events are publicized on the society's

website and reminders of lectures etc are sent out by email to members.

## **Heritage Open Days**

As the post remained vacant in 2021 no events took place.

### **Films**

The Great White Silence Film, which had been programmed to coincide with the unveiling of the plaque to Herbert Ponting in 2020, had to be postponed until October 2021.

**Judy Howles** 

# Derelict sites, eyesores, and other updates on melancholy cases in Salisbury

## Part 2 of a series started in the March magazine

## 1) The Old Manor site

The desperately sad story of the former Old Manor mental hospital site is heading into its final stages, though still some way short of a conclusion. A propped wall, and an almost freestanding turret (original state shown on page 12), were until recently visible from the Wilton Road, the melancholy remnants of the Grade II listed Finch House. formerly the principal hospital building, and of somewhat unclear origins. The 'old manor' name seems to relate to no actual manor house, and experts disagree as to when the building dates from. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments says 'much altered, but has as its nucleus a C19th house shown on the Reform Act map of 1833', whereas the official listing description says 'completely rebuilt circa 1840-1850'. Clearly demonstrable rebuilding work is now well advanced, and once the scaffold comes down what is mostly a replica

should emerge. Finch House was never very substantially built in the first place, and years of neglect after the hospital was closed in 2000 haven't helped. After a poor start, the developers did ultimately engage conservation accredited engineers, and the council planners are reasonably happy with how they're now handling things.

The final shape of things should see a quite grand doorway (featured in Salisbury in Detail, and seen here on page 12) reinstated on the Wilton Road in rebuilt walling, even if it resumes its former role of not actually leading anywhere. Quite a lot of trouble seems to have been taken over new red brickwork, which seems a bit curious since if it's going to match the previous form, it will presumably be rendered and painted white. In a reconstructed forecourt east of Finch House, a separately listed fountain and associated bronze sculpture of c.1900, currently missing, should return and be

visible again, after many years of being boarded over before it left. Flats will fill a completely new interior to Finch House, an almost inevitable consequence of the decaying rabbit warren of rooms it had become. Further west, and close to the Wilton Road, is the other listed building on the developers' part of the site, which constitutes the majority of it.

This is Avon House, a villa of either early or mid C19th date, depending again which expert you prefer, and whether its porch tower was added to an earlier building (RCHM), or whether the whole thing is of c.1850-60 (listings authorities). This difference of opinion would have been entirely academic had the developers been able to do what early indications suggested they had in mind, and prove it to be in such poor condition that it would all have to come down. Similarly, a very attractive unlisted terrace to the south of Avon House, a bit later in date and probably built for healthcare use rather than being former railway cottages as is sometimes suggested, was definitely due to go under an early scheme. Thanks to the stance taken by Wiltshire Council planners it survives, very respectably done up, and so does Avon House (photo page 12), though the latter is now hemmed in by new housing with vaguely neo-Georgian aspirations, which are entirely defeated by totally inappropriate windows.

These survivors from the original hospital can be seen as they once were on the left-hand side in the aerial photo, perhaps of c.1930 (page 15). What the photo demonstrates best, however, is the character the site once had, with low density buildings scattered around among lawns and trees. The last lawn to survive was that associated with the ballroom, a building of 1868/9 but still, until recently,

of remarkably pure Georgian character in its exterior. The Society tried to have it listed but failed, and it became part of the doctors' surgery development of some ten years ago, its lawn becoming a car park in the process. Its interior retains some hints of its original character, but the sprung dance floor, and the rifle range once in its basement, are almost certainly no more, and the entertainments it provided are only a dim memory. Elsewhere on the site, the amount of new housing which was necessitated by the developers paying £4 million for it, after Wiltshire Council had offered £1 to take it over from the NHS and use it for elderly care, has left photos as the only indication of what the whole hospital area was once like.

## 2) Grosvenor House and Riverside House

These long-empty properties in Churchfields Road, opposite the railway station car park and owned by Wiltshire Council, were last featured in any detail in the magazine in September 2018 (photo from then re-used on page 13). This recorded an already quite lengthy tale of dereliction, including an episode in which the City Council suggested to Wiltshire Council that it should consider serving on the owner of the buildings (i.e. themselves) a Section 215 Notice, which is a means by which offensive eyesores can be countered. This had the intended effect and vegetation along the Churchfields Road frontage was cleared without a notice needing to be served, but nothing more fundamental was done to the decaying buildings.

According to the 2018 piece, 'in the last few months a 'sale agreed' sign has appeared, and an end to the long-running story may be in sight.' The 'may' was sadly overstating the actuality. No sale took place at that point, and matters were further complicated when



Avon House, now restored.



Old Manor doorway on the Wilton Road, 2008.



Old Manor turret, 2008.



Grosvenor House and Riverside House, 2019.



Air raid shelter at Riverside House.





Grosvenor House door hood in 2008 (top) and again in 2022 (below) – still hanging on.

the buildings were declared to be Assets of Community Value in the spring of last year. This was a consequence of an idea worked up by an organisation called Rise Resound Rebuild, who wanted to redevelop the two buildings not as flats, which was the previous assumption and the aim of commercial bidders, but as a community hub. Rise Resound later reduced their ambition to one of converting Grosvenor House into flats, and devoting just Riverside House to community use, but having failed to convince Wiltshire Council that there were special reasons for favouring them, they lost out in a commercial bidding process earlier this year, and the community use idea came to nothing. The Rise Resound Rebuild website is still functioning, and gives a good, if now academic, indication of what they were hoping to achieve.

The successful bidders for the site were the Clydesdale Group of Southampton, developers whose projects include a mix of conversion and newbuild, generally aimed at residential use. Their main focus tends to be on Southampton and Winchester, and this is the first time they've got involved in Salisbury. They've put in two 'prior approval' applications, to establish the principle of a return to residential use for the two properties, without going into any detail. The applications show both Grosvenor and Riverside divided into four houses each, but this isn't necessarily to be taken too literally. Subdivision of Grosvenor into houses, each with its own garden, is certainly intended, but the situation seems to be more flexible with Riverside. Here a wooden hut at the western edge of the site has no reason for being left in situ, behind it is a tennis court, and the western part of Riverside House is a modern addition of no great beauty. This end of the site may well see proposals

for an element of newbuild, and possibly a focus on flats rather than individual houses.

It's certainly encouraging that Clydesdale have taken on the Radley House Partnership, a long established and well respected Winchester practice, as their architects. A full-scale planning application is likely before the end of the year, and will tell us much more about the detail of proposals. Meanwhile site huts are in place, and hoarding has gone up along Churchfields Road. There will be a lot to do, to overcome the effects of years of neglect, but the potential is enormous. As well as the contribution to the street scene, recognised in the Salisbury conservation area's official appraisal, the gardens running down to the River Nadder, with some fine trees, are a major asset. A comment on the site four years ago, by Wiltshire Council's Senior Ecologist, referred to the importance of a 'layout that can accommodate the safe and secluded movement of a wide range of wildlife, including otter, water vole, bats, fish and birds, by retaining an undisturbed buffer strip at this edge of the site'.

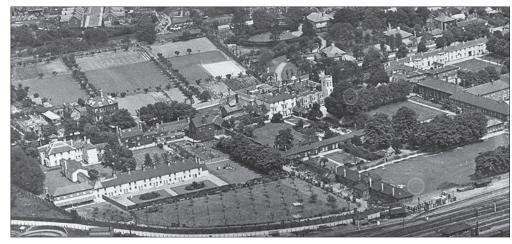
There is likely to be less official support for one of the site's less obvious assets, a World War 2 air shelter in its SW corner (photo page 13). With no obvious potential for being converted to anything useful, this may well go, but it will at least deserve to be recorded. The Society will be taking a keen interest in proposals for the site as they emerge, and will join in a general sense of relief that at long last these prominent and long-neglected buildings seem now to have a much brighter future.

## 3) Steynings

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Steynings in Crane Street, Salisbury is a Grade II\* listed house of the early C18th. It's also a totem of notoriety for the length

of time it's been empty and in some respects visibly neglected. Rather than carrying on telling its mournful tale now, we're going to defer consideration of it till the November magazine, in the hope that current indications are borne out, and that there may actually be something positive to report by then.



Aerial photo of the Old Manor Hospital, c.1930.

## Formerly proposed library site, Fisherton Street – update

The March magazine illustrated the approved design for a combined library and Travelodge hotel building, on the corner of Fisherton Street and Malthouse Lane, and explained how the library idea was no more, and the design might never be built. No sooner had it done this, than another application for the site came in, with essentially the same design.

The building is now due to house a slightly bigger Travelodge hotel, with the former library area on the ground floor now just shown as 'retail', unspecified. The application uses the same CGI visualisations of the main elevations as the previous one did, to the extent of having a ground floor full of books. Rather more importantly, the CGIs, if you zoom in on them, also reveal a level of detailing which simply isn't there in the actual application drawings. And it's the latter which will determine what's given consent, not the computer graphics. Contact between the Society and the original architects made it clear the latter had taken some trouble to select interesting materials, and interesting ways of using them. Now those architects have disappeared from the scene, and there's no guarantee that those paying for a new hotel will want to spent the extra that achieving the original level of detailing will require.

Keeping the proposals to the standards they originally displayed is a subject the Society is currently pursuing. In principle, Salisbury would be better off with the currently empty site having a building on it, but unless the original workings out of the design can be maintained, there's a risk the city will end up, as our letter to the planners says, with just another mundane addition to its streetscape.

## Members' Riverside Walk, May 21st 2022

On a glorious May afternoon Civic Society members met their guide, Hadrian Cook, on an inauspicious corner of Lower Road in Lower Bemerton. The theme of the walk was the interplay between rivers and the development of the surrounding areas. Hadrian noted that the local landscape divided into three areas: chalkland that was once considered unsuitable for building but contributes an even river flow and also prolific water supply that can be utilised more easily, gravels that had been deposited by the rivers many thousands of years ago with river terraces formed by them now at a slightly higher level, (such as the road we were standing on), and the alluvium of the floodplain used to construct floated watermeadows. There were limited areas for building and commercial activity – such as the river terraces that are typically covered by fertile soils providing horticulture, agriculture and local brickworks.

Setting off, we found ourselves almost immediately enveloped by dramatic willows and traversing small footbridges over the branches of the Nadder River. These are known as 'Broken Bridges' (the reason for this name is obscure ). We passed a meadow that appeared to be full of yellow flag irises about to flower. What a sight that would be in a few days' time!

These watermeadows had been abandoned about a hundred years ago and now were returning to a more bio-diverse environment. Hadrian told us that we were passing through Fitzgerald farm, one of four farming establishments that grew up in West Harnham, also on the river terrace gravels. Though we were walking in a southerly direction, alongside the Churchfields Industrial Estate, no development was visible due to tree growth.

We then encountered part of the engineering constructions for the Harnham Flood Alleviation scheme to protect the houses built there in the interwar years. We turned west along Middle Street Harnham, but very shortly entered Middle Street Meadows, another beautiful area with magnificent trees lining the opposite side of the river again hiding the Churchfield estate. Here is a flood relief channel

alongside the original river that includes an artificial weir constructed to reduce flow in the new channel, and is used by the local canoe club. Also nearby is a 'detention pond' built to deal with groundwater from potentially harmful industrial waste which is piped underneath the river.

The Nadder then splits again, one section going north where it was utilised by Fisherton Mill and the other going south to serve Harnham Mill. At Harnham Mill Hadrian pointed out the construction on the east side of the building including mullioned windows and use of Chilmark and Hurdcott stone, dated to about 1500. It was principally an industrial mill and was possibly the oldest recorded papermill in England (photo on back cover).

As a Trustee and Drowner of the Harnham Watermeadows Trust, Hadrian was able to lead us through their farmland, which had been grazed by cattle until the mid-1960's. Here we saw a lone fox exploring the landscape. Hadrian explained how the old fields had been divided up with pollarded willow gapped up with shrubs including hawthorn in this lower section, and the ridges had become diminished. Crossing the southern section of the Nadder, we emerged onto Harnham Road, close to the

boundary of West and East Harnham. East Harnham contains some medieval buildings and, like West Harnham and Britford, had its own manor and originally was a part of the parish of Britford.

East Harnham developed its urban characteristics in C18th. Many trades were here including a whiting works, where chalk was ground up for use for instance in putty. Walking northwest down Harnham Road we noted thatched cottages and Victorian villas as well as the ancient timbers of the Rose and Crown Inn thought to date from C14th and C16th. This had no doubt served travellers crossing the now combined Avon and Nadder rivers via Ayleswade bridge (on the site of a ford), built in1244 by Bishop Bingham. This used to have a chapel on the central island and later a toll house. We passed St Nicholas's ancient almshouse, and De Vaux House, originally built in C13th as a college of priests and sometimes referred to as the university that Salisbury never had.

We used the underpass to reach the Churchill recreational gardens, opened in 1972. In the past this had been part of the Bishop's meadowland becoming known as Bugmore. On to it drained several of the old city water channels bearing waste water. In 1874 the city bought the area and built a sewage works on it, which eventually moved to Petersfinger.

Our walk ended with a splendid view of the Avon on its way to Britford, a swan enhancing the prospect with the eel trap housing visible beyond. We had walked west to east along the southern boundary of the city and learned how the rivers had both contributed to and limited development through the centuries.

Thank you to Hadrian for increasing our knowledge of this aspect of our beautiful city.

**Rosemary Pemberton** 



## **Three recent Civic Society plaques**

#### **Rex and Laurence Whistler**

1905 - 1944; 1912 - 2000. A plague to the Whistler brothers was unveiled by Laurence Whistler's eldest daughter, Robin Ravilious, on 19 August 2021 at the Walton Canonry, 69 The Close (photo on back cover). Rex was an outstanding artist and designer, who lived in the Walton Canonry for a number of years. Despite his age, he was determined to serve in the war, and managed to join the Welsh Guards in 1940. He was killed in Normandy four years later by a mortar bomb. His younger brother Laurence, a nationally celebrated glass engraver, was married in Salisbury Cathedral with Rex acting as his best man. One of Laurence's glass engravings (a three-sided prism revolving on a small turntable so that the prism's internal reflections completed the image) is housed in the Cathedral's Morning Chapel as a memorial to Rex. In 2013, Salisbury Museum acquired an extensive archive, compiled by Laurence Whistler, of drawings, book illustrations, stage and mural designs and other material by Rex.

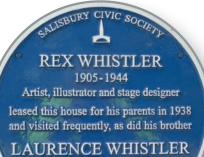
## **Herbert Ponting**

1870 - 1935. Ponting embarked on a career as a photographer in 1900 and quickly became well recognised. He reported on the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, after which he travelled extensively in the Far East, making stereographs and working as a freelance photographer for English-speaking periodicals. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society and selected as the official photographer and cinematographer for Captain Scott's Terra Nova Expedition to the Antarctic (1910–1913). Ponting filmed almost every aspect of this expedition - the scientific work, life in camp, the local wildlife, the preparations for the assault on the Pole... In this role, he captured some of the most enduring images of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration, both as stills and as a classic film, The Great White Silence, which brought the alien beauty of the landscape dramatically to life and revealed the challenges facing the expedition in brilliant detail. He was born in 21 Oatmeal Row, Salisbury, where a plaque was put up on 25 November 2020.

## **Dorothy Brooke**

1883 - 1955. A plaque to Dorothy Brooke and her husband, the distinguished Olympic equestrian, Major-General Geoffrey Brooke DSO, was installed at Malmesbury House on 15 October 2020. Dorothy Gibson-Craig (Brooke) was born in the Cathedral Close in Salisbury. She married her second husband, Geoffrey Brooke (1884-1966), in 1926, and moved with him to Malmesbury House in 1939. By then Dorothy, distressed by the years of deprivation and suffering experienced by the thousands of surviving war horses that had been sent to the Middle East during World War I, had already set up the precursor of the charity that bears her name. The legacy of the Old War Horse Memorial Hospital that Dorothy founded in Egypt in 1934 endures today in the dozens of international Brooke animal-welfare facilities dedicated to improving the lives of working horses, donkeys and mules across Africa, Asia and Latin America. By the time Dorothy died her charity was famed worldwide by all who had equestrian interests at heart.

## James Woods



1912-2000

Writer, poet and glass engraver

Birthplace of Herbert George Ponting FRGS 1870-1935 Photographer and film-maker

Official photographer on Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition 1910-1913 The first professional photographer to film the Antarctic and its wildlife

Three recent plaques, and an old one to Charles Frv (for which, see next page)

## DOROTHY BROOKE

1883-1955

Founder of the Old War Horse Hospital in Cairo (later the Brooke Hospital for Animals)

and her husband

Major-General Geoffrey Brooke 1884-1966

Olympic equestrian

Lived here 1939-1955

Charles William FRY 1838-1882

Builder & Musician of Charles Street FIRST NATIONAL BANDMASTER

for The SALVATION ARMY is commemorated here



Name plaque at Charles Fry's former house, no longer in pristine state.

# A Blue Plaque to Charles Fry - more than just a Salvation Army Bandsman?

In October 2020 the Society was contacted by Gordon Lewis of Southampton, who said 'I am currently researching the Fry family of Alderbury who became the first Salvation Army band in 1878. Being aware of the blue plaque that commemorates Charles William Fry, I am contacting you for any evidence concerning Fry's connection with Charles Street, Salisbury. The address is on the plaque, but I can't find any confirmation that he lived in Salisbury.'

20

This request for evidence of a connection with Charles Street seemed straightforward enough - presumably the plaque, at the Salisbury Salvation Army building in Salt Lane, would have had good reason for its wording. However it dates from October 2004, and no-one now with any responsibility for Society plaques had been involved back then. The December 2004 magazine had covered the unveiling, with a photo and a description of those present. An attendant article by Simon Theobalds of the Salvation Army was titled 'Salvation Army Music'. It had some interesting information about that subject, but no reference to the Charles Street address.

We might not have been able to help Gordon Lewis at all, had it not been for the chance discovery of a file passed down from Ann Curry, a former Society stalwart who is alas no longer with us. She was responsible for converting, in the year 2000, an unillustrated newsletter into a magazine format still recognisable today, and for a while she also had responsibility for plaques. The file included some information on the Charles Fry one, including email correspondence dated 2003 with an Alderbury local historian called Brian Johnson, with a phone number for him. The phone number was still valid, and Brian proved to be extremely helpful, lending us his own file on Charles Fry. With a bit of additional research, the Charles Street story took shape.

A primary source of information for Brian had been a Salvation Army archivist called Gordon Taylor, who found some reminiscences by Charles's son Fred. These reveal that 'My father, who was a bricklayer, plasterer, slater etc, heard that a large tract of land at Fisherton, a suburb of Salisbury, was being opened up as a building estate so he decided to start building on his own account. He brought his three sons into the business and with the assistance of a carpenter and a labourer we erected 16 houses in the two years that we were engaged in that work. We built one for ourselves.'

The family moved to London in 1880, but Brian Johnson saw that Fred Fry referred to their house being sold to a grocer, and used the 1881 census to identify this as Thomas Cox, of Ebenezer Cottage, Charles Street. The Ebenezer name had already been linked to the Fry's home, but under the mistaken impression that this was in Alderbury. Once Brian found it in the Fisherton area, everything fell into place.

This part of town is east of the southern end of Devizes Road, with Gas Lane running through it, indicating the area's former industrial focus. Charles Street is about as short as streets come, with seven numbered houses, only five of which date to Charles Fry's time. One of these is No 3, which has on it a stone plaque, greatly decayed, or possibly deliberately defaced, but almost certainly saying Ebenezer Cottage (photo on previous page).

The house is bigger than average for that area and it has a carriage entrance, which no doubt gave access to Charles Fry's builders yard at the back. Plastic windows for once replicate the original timber form, and much of the exterior character of the house as Fry and sons would have built it has been maintained.

Judy Howles, GP Committee Chair, looked up the 1881 25" OS map, and found that while No 3 is clearly shown, there are no houses opposite, and no street as such. However the survey for that map was done in 1879, and it's perfectly possible that by the time Charles left for London the following year, the street, such as it is, had been included in his house-building venture. Even if the Charles Street name doesn't occur on an OS map till 1926, the 1881 census confirms its early origin.

Putting up 16 houses no doubt gave some measure of naming rights in those days, so it seems quite likely that Charles Fry gave his name to the street he was living in. There's a chance that the adjacent Sidney Street and James Street might have a family connection too, but besides Fred his other two sons were called Ernest and Bertram, so that has to be conjecture.

Gordon Lewis's query not only pinned down why the Salt Lane plaque is worded why it is, but also shed some light on a hitherto obscure road name. Not quite the same level of achievement as the plaque dedicatee's main focus perhaps, but it's still nice to know that Charles Fry almost certainly added to his pioneering work in the field of Salvation Army music by creating the name of a Salisbury street, if a somewhat modest one, along the way.



Ebenezer Cottage, Charles Street.

## **Annual Report 2021 – Development Committee**

## 1. Planning Applications

329 applications were selected for examination during the year, resulting in 24 letters of objection or comment being sent in by the Society, both figures slightly above the recent average. The Wiltshire Council system continued to decline in its ease of use for the Society, the most serious feature being a long-term failure to identify proposals which affect conservation areas. Promised improvements have not yet materialised.

#### 2. Local Plan Review

2021 saw consultation specifically on how housing needs are met locally. The Society objected to a site on the Downton Road, principally because of impact on views of the cathedral, and said the 220 houses proposed there should be found within the existing built-up area. It also objected to the failure to pursue the idea of a new settlement, as an alternative to endlessly seeking less and less satisfactory sites on the edge of Salisbury. A draft plan is due to be published towards the end of 2022.

## 3. Grosvenor House and Riverside House, Churchfields Road

These two Wiltshire Council owned properties near the railway station, unlisted but an asset to the conservation area, have been in a scandalous condition for years. A saga of commercial developers considering residential conversion, but apparently taking fright when they looked closer, saw a new variation, with a project to turn the whole site into a community centre. By the end of the year no application had been seen, for this or any other use.

## 4. Post Office site, Castle Road

Another case of long-term disuse, this time with two listed buildings involved. After two

previous schemes had been considered by the Society, but then been abandoned, Osman Homes of Southampton took an interest, and the committee made initial contact with them, hoping there will finally be some progress on this prominent site.

## 5. Planning Forum and Open Meeting

Covid prevented an April Planning Forum, as it had in 2020, but by late September it was possible to hold a physical Open Meeting, and one was jointly organised with the local group of the Royal Society of Arts, on the subject, suggested by the RSA, of Salisbury Recovery. Held, very successfully, in the new lecture theatre of Wiltshire College Salisbury, this had five varied speakers including John Glen MP, though following up the various themes put forward did not prove to be easy.

## 6. Salisbury Neighbourhood Plan

The Development Committee is not directly involved in the plan's preparation, though several Society members were on the steering group, including for the first half of the year its chairman. The committee took a particular interest in the development of the plan's design chapter, aimed at promoting the better design of buildings in the city.

## 7. Turning Point sculpture, Guildhall Square

The committee welcomed the addition of John Maine's sculpture to the square, but had concerns from the outset about how it was to be fitted in among benches, planters and bins. The eventual setting proved to be very cluttered, a feeling known to be shared by John Maine himself. Attempts to improve the situation, with which the Society was involved, continued into 2022.

#### 8. Awards Scheme

2021 saw new buildings being looked at by the awards scheme, with a judging panel chaired by John Walsh, until recently Mayor of Salisbury. Awards went to a shelter at the new Avenue Cemetery in Salisbury, to the Little Manor Care Centre in Salisbury, and to Parsonage Farm House in Stratford sub Castle. Commendations went to a studio at Farthing Cottage again in Stratford, Appleby's Bakery in Castle Street Salisbury, Field House in Stapleford, and two houses in Winterslow.

The Lord Congleton Award, for a particularly outstanding project, went to the Old Brewery behind Milford Street in Salisbury. A delayed decision saw the 2019 Lord Congleton Award also being given, for the former Compleat Artist building in Salisbury.

#### 9. Involvement with Other Bodies

The Society continued to be represented on the Salisbury Conservation Advisory Panel, and to be linked to the Salisbury Area Greenspace Partnership, and to the CPRE.

## **Marguerite Scott**

An email to members in November last year conveyed the sad news that former Society secretary Marguerite Scott had recently died. Here Alastair Clark, who knew her well, remembers his association with her.

When I took over as Chairman in March 2004 I was fortunate to inherit Marguerite as Secretary. She had been in post since 1994, having been secretary of the General Purposes Committee, and was a tower of strength. As I was new to the Society I needed as much guidance as I could get. She, amongst others, was not slow to help but was the major source of forthright and thoughtful advice.

She was a lively, loyal, delightful and determined person, a constant member of St Thomas's Church and a fount of knowledge. She was on top of detail, totally reliable and supportive. She did not need to be told things twice and expected you to be the same. I visited her fairly often to benefit from her experience and she frequently had a clear view as to what should be done. In season I usually left with a bag of Bramley apples!

We both stood down at the AGM on 19 June 2013 and left at the end of the year but she then took on the role of Membership Secretary for a few months. She and I then continued to act as proof readers for the magazine with Marguerite invariably spotting far more errors than I did. She moved to Shropshire to be near her family in 2020, and died on 23rd October 2021. A memorial service was held for her in St Thomas's Church on Thursday 25th November.

Here I have a confession to make. I consulted my diary and went to St Thomas's at the appointed hour only to find a lavish funeral to a local policeman taking place! I thought that Marguerite's memorial would start after that and checked the time with an usher. She consulted her iPad and said: "That was yesterday!" I was ashamed at my mistake and immediately apologised to the family. I was slightly gratified to be told that she would have laughed heartily at the error. It wouldn't have happened if she had been my secretary.

A remarkable lady!

## **Stonehenge: Old Rocks, New Theories**

### **Julian Richards**

Salisbury and its locality is extremely fortunate to be the home of so many archaeologists and authorities on our history who can be called on to speak, and we were particularly grateful to welcome Julian Richards on March 17th to present 'Stonehenge: Old Rocks, New Theories'. Julian is a renowned award winning archaeologist, author and media presenter famous for programmes such as Meet the Ancestors and Blood of the Vikings. His particular interest is in Stonehenge and its landscape which he has studied for some 40 years.

Julian's talk addressed the latest research and some of the speculative theories relating to the difficult questions of 'who' and 'why' in regard to it construction. Modern science, DNA, genetic science and isotopes mean that our understanding of it has moved on from the theories of early antiquarians such as John Aubrey and William Stukeley, who were the first to identify Stonehenge as one of Britain's earliest pieces of architecture albeit built by the Romans or Druids. (Although as this is being written on 21 June, the longest day, there will undoubtedly have been 'druids' marking the summer solstice last night, despite the fact that Stonehenge had fallen out of its designed use by the time of the Druids). As Julian however explained, all those revellers were celebrating the wrong solstice and they should be at the site on 21 December, the winter solstice.

Theories such as that propounded by fellow archaeologist and friend, Mike Parker Pearson, that the stones of Stonehenge represented death and that the wood of Woodhenge, life, and that there was a processional way from the monument to the river Avon were possible, although chronology doesn't necessarily support the hypothesis.

Julian took us on a tour of the Mesolithic period, its hunter gatherer population, Neolithic farmers and the contentious displacement theories associated with European migration. Julian described how isotope analysis had identified the Chalcolithic period Amesbury Archer as being an immigrant from central Europe, or as the Daily Mail described it, Germany. Despite being an important individual the Amesbury Archer was buried some miles from the monument and was probably not, as the press described, the 'King of Stonehenge'. To Julian a more important character was the Stonehenge Archer, who was buried on the site itself having been shot and killed, as evidenced by five arrowheads in his body.

Returning to the structure, research has identified a site close to Marlborough as the source of the giant sarsen stones. The celebrated bluestones clearly come from the Preseli Hills in Wales and there is a suggestion, not yet proved, of a complete stone circle having been exported from the area. Julian's research into movement of the stones suggests they could have been moved on sledges over grass, rather than using wooden rollers.

The subject is endlessly fascinating and continuing research is expanding our knowledge not only of the stones themselves but also of the builders, our ancestors. At the end of the talk I felt more knowledgeable of the 'building' and a great deal closer to the builders.

## Jamie Hobson

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The Old Mill, Harnham (see page 16). Photo: Adrian Harris Photography.



The Walton Canonry (see page 18).





