

Alastair Clark had a distinguished career in the army, before becoming chairman of the Salisbury Civic Society from 2004 to 2013, and subsequently its president. During his military days, he became a Brigadier, and Commandant of the Royal School of Artillery at Larkhill. After leaving the army he held the post of Administration Officer in Black Rod's Department at the House of Lords for 10 years.

With his wide range of experience, he was well suited to taking on the Civic Society role. He also had exactly the right temperament and personality to be the lead figure, but certainly not one with absolute power, in an organisation run entirely by volunteers. He respected everyone with posts in the Society and took account of their views. Alastair had a gift for achieving consensus, without creating any impression of his own thinking predominating.

He started his chairmanship by taking two three-day 'Partnership' courses run by Civic Voice, the umbrella group for civic societies, thus demonstrating how serious he was about the new role. One of the great achievements of the Society during his tenure was the preparation and publication of its largely photographic book 'Salisbury in Detail', which came out in 2009, enthusiastically supported by Alastair. While only one of the half dozen strong group behind it, his common sense and shrewdness was well displayed during the quite lengthy gestation period, with him always ready to chip in with 'the perfect is the enemy of the good'. This gentle guidance towards viewing the whole picture, rather than getting too bogged down in the minutiae of images and words, proved to be extremely sound advice.

He took on practical matters such as obtaining an ISBN number, his postal address appears at the front (the Society having no address of its own), and he enthusiastically promoted the book. Meanwhile there were plenty of other tasks to occupy him. One key one, which alas did not survive the 2009 transition from Salisbury District Council to Wiltshire Council, was his membership of the Salisbury Design Forum. This provided advice, usually before the planning application stage, to those producing a scheme in the district council area with a significant element of architectural design in it. Run by the council, it was staffed on a voluntary basis by local architects, with every session also including one lay member chosen from a roster of four Civic Society committee members. Alastair was one of these, and he is remembered by the Forum's organiser as 'a keen member and a good and regular contributor'.

A more publically prominent role, which stretched across many years, was his involvement with the Salisbury Vision, an enterprise which finally took forward an idea which had seen a number of false starts across a long period. Taking an interest for the Society from the outset, he joined the Vision board when this was set up, and continued to report back to the Society as the Vision's work slowly developed. After some initial achievements, it eventually ran aground on its proposals to clear Salisbury Market Place of car parking and improve it as the major public space which it should be seen as. Ideas about tree replacements aroused too much opposition, and the Vision had to withdraw its planning application. The ideas lived on, however, and the Market Place as now seen, a vast improvement on its previous vehicle-littered state, is mostly thanks to the Vision initiative, even if the means of achieving it took a different form.

Alastair clearly found the difficulties encountered by the Salisbury Vision in this, and some of its other schemes, frustrating. He is remembered by a Society member who knew him well as someone who was 'insistent that good ideas should be acted on and not left hanging in the air. He was a doer!' This is something amply borne out by his record across his nine years of chairmanship, and his subsequent continuing and full involvement in the Society's work. He regularly attended meetings of the Society's Executive Committee as an observer, he played an important part in the yearly presentations of the Society's buildings awards, and he, together with his wife Margaret, provided invaluable help in proofreading the Society's magazine.

He was a major figure in the life of the Civic Society, and he will be missed by all those who knew him. The Society has conveyed its condolences to his family, and a fuller version of this appreciation will appear in the May magazine.