SALISBURY CIVIC SOCIETY

DECEMBER 2024

DIARY of EVENTS 2025

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

MONDAY JANUARY 27TH

AWARDS PARTY AND PRESENTATION OF 2024 AWARDS

Tim Crarer will be presenting the awards

Salisbury Arts Centre

Booking form with this magazine, and details already circulated by email

MONDAY FEBRUARY 17TH

TOUR OF THE GUILDHALL

Blue Badge Guide Margaret Smith will be leading two tours, 10.30am and 2.00pm

Costs and Booking details will be available on the website

THURSDAY MARCH 20TH

WILTSHIRE FOLLIES

A talk by Jonathan Holt

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

Free to members, non-members £5.00

Booking not required

THURSDAY APRIL 3RD

WILTSHIRE MALTINGS

A talk by Amber Patrick

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

Free to members, non-members £5.00

Booking not required

WEDNESDAY APRIL 16TH

THE STONEHENGE LANDSCAPE

A circular walk with Hadrian Cook, starting and finishing at the Woodhenge car park

Start time 2.00pm. The price will be £6.50, for members and non-members. Bookings through Eventbrite

TUESDAY MAY 20TH

BRITFORD'S WATER MANAGEMENT AND LOST MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE

A circular walk with Hadrian Cook, starting at Bridge Farm and finishing there with tea (optional)

Start time 2.00pm. The price for the walk will be £6.50, for members and non-members, with an additional £9.00 for tea if required. Bookings through Eventbrite

A Warm Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Society:

Maureen Atkinson, Richard Connell, Craft Build Ltd, Daniel Davis, David Edmonds, Ian Fader, Val and Tim Greathead, Alison Hedger and Paul Stride, Fergus Jamieson, David and Linda Welsh

WE ARE ALWAYS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Cover: *the Dovecote at Bemerton Farm, Lower Bemerton - See page 19*

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

Notes from the Chair

Peter Dunbar has kindly accepted the role of President of the Society, following the sad death of Alastair Clark earlier in the year. He is no stranger to us, having served as Chairman until 2021 and more recently as Vice President while actively developing our corporate membership. We are delighted to welcome Peter in this key position knowing he will make a significant contribution to the Society.

The Heritage Open Days programme in early September opened an exploration of the Market Place and surrounding buildings. The extensive research undertaken by Janet and Paul Draper was a great success with members, visitors and participants, all enjoying the opportunity to discover more about Salisbury past and present.

The Open Meeting in October covered the challenges of Creating Sustainable and Resilient Communities, presented by Lynn Trigwell, Wiltshire Council's Head of Climate & Environment, along with Bob Bray, a landscape architect specialising in biodiverse & sustainable landscapes. Both speakers were excellent, offering a clear insight into the challenges facing climate and environmental issues with practical and effective solutions. The evening was an eye opener and a topic that the Civic Society will continue to promote.

John Maine gave a fascinating talk describing the influences of natural landscapes on his work. The tall granite sculpture 'Turning Point' in the Guildhall Square, created by John as a link between the City and the Cathedral, was described as 'a marker of confidence in the City after a troubled period' in the hope that it would add to a sense of optimism about the City's future. 'Turning Point' marks the passage of time as its shadow encircles its base. The stability of this spire of granite, which weighs 5 tons, contrasts with the twisting form and a sense of movement. The Sir George Frampton Fund commissioned 'Turning Point' as a special gift to the City of Salisbury in 2018.

A big thank you to Nicola and Les Lipscombe for their involvement in the above two events.

Behind the scenes, the excellent and professional work of our active volunteer committee members continues to comment upon proposed developments and to monitor planning applications, alongside hosting a wide range of talks, tours and visits. Everyone involved makes a significant contribution and I owe a huge vote of thanks to Paul Stevens and Judy Howles for their work chairing the two sub-committees

Recent internal reviews identified a need for the Society to clarify how we are perceived. It was time to clear away some of the cobwebs surrounding our committees to reach a wider audience and it was agreed on a refresh of titles. The General Purposes will now be known as the Events Committee and Development will be known as the Development & Planning Committee.

Winter is here and it's time to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your continuing and enthusiastic support of the Society and our work. There is an exciting and varied programme of events in the pipeline, and I look forward to meeting everyone again in 2025.

Stephanie ***stephaniedsd@gmail.com***

Editorial

The splendid photo alongside this editorial is by our Treasurer, Adrian Harris, flagging up a very positive book review toward the end of this magazine, of a new publication on various aspects of Salisbury and Old Sarum. Later on we have another excellent photo by Adrian, but its reason for inclusion is a much more melancholy one. It shows a field which seems almost inevitably bound, given the recently increased pressure to build houses, to have a standard volume housebuilder's estate set down on it – with the result that one of the best views of Salisbury Cathedral will be devalued or obliterated, depending on the viewpoint. Page 21 carries this dismal story.

We now have a copy of the book covered by the review, which is titled 'Tales of Two Cities'. It will be circulated among interested committee members, though one of those, Hadrian Cook, won't really need to see it – as he is one of the book's two editors. Eventually, it'll be added to our modest store of publications, and will raise again the question of what the Society does with its possessions. Books, old papers of various sorts, display boards, a banner, the remaining copies of Salisbury in Detail, and even apparently a coat rack which has come our way. If anyone knows of a modest storage space, for a commensurately small amount of rent, please do let us know.

Generally this issue is a mix of standard items like coverage of visits and talks and an account of this year's very successful Heritage Open Days, along with a Salisbury-specific version of Wordle – and something about squirl patterns. If these are unfamiliar to you, page 14 will provide some enlightenment.

Richard Deane

Image left: *The spire from the south, with Old Sarum behind it. See book review on page 25.*
Photo: *Adrian Harris Photography*

Heritage Open Days 2024: Exploring the Market Place, Past & Present

The focus this year was on the original much larger Market Place itself (once more than twice the size of the open space now) and the buildings around it, and those that subsequently encroached upon it. Participants were invited to walk the original market perimeter and gauge its scale from viewpoints.

Although the Open Days officially took place from Sept 5th to 9th, some participants began exploring the market place as soon as they collected or downloaded the brochures and before many of the posters on participating buildings were displayed! This early start was fortunate in that rain fell heavily through much of the weekend. But people came out in the rain to an excellent talk by Geoff Lang, to the ticketed tours of the Odeon, to the displays mounted by the Library and Young Gallery and to follow the trail map.

Staff in the buildings were pleased by the interest in their premises and happy to share their pride in, and knowledge of, where they worked. Participants in the HODs felt welcomed. Sadly the Guildhall had to be cut from the programme by the urgent need for a venue for funeral services. However tours of the Guildhall have now been organised, on February 17th. See the events diary.

The brochure was twice the size of last year's, had more history and old photos and a fuller map. There were historical leaflets available about all the participating buildings, which like the brochure could also be downloaded. The demand for leaflets was higher this year, and the initial 500 brochures had to be augmented by a further 100.

We are grateful for the excellent help with distribution of the brochures given by the Salisbury Information Centre and the Library, and associated support for the event. Salisbury Printing were very quick to respond to our printing needs. The Salisbury Journal highlighted the event. We are extremely grateful to Jamie Hobson for his tremendous help in designing the brochure, individual building posters and historical leaflets, and to Julie Smith who managed the content on the website and arranged the QR codes ensuring the leaflets were downloadable at the buildings. Two new members were recruited to the Society in response to the Heritage Open Days.

Further reflections: There were two other separate HOD events in Salisbury. St Martin's Church ran a day to encourage people to explore their beautiful building and to introduce people to bell ringing, which was great fun! Mompesson House offered an opportunity to see some normally unviewable objects.

Feedback from staff in the buildings involved in the Society programme was very positive, from both businesses and non-commercial organisations. Several asked if a heritage trail could be done on a yearly basis. They felt it had brought a good number of additional people into their premises and that this had been very helpful. The businesses felt it supported commercial activity and was good for the city. This suggests it could be helpful to have some more central co-ordination of HOD activity in the city. Given the commercial and tourism benefits of heritage trails, it might make sense if HODs came under the banner of an organisation which is committed to commercial as well as other development in the City, perhaps the Chamber of Commerce or possibly the Business Improvement District.

Janet and Paul Draper

Talk on Market Place by Geoff Lang

This year's Heritage Open Days saw lift-off with an excellent talk by Geoff Lang on Salisbury Market Place, setting the scene for the opportunities to explore the area in the next few days. Geoff was keen to emphasise just what a remarkable asset this feature was to the city, very generous in the space it covers even today, and even more so in its original extent, when it stretched significantly further to the west and to the south.

The market place was clearly fundamental to Salisbury's original foundation, a secular contribution as important in its own way as the cathedral which started to come into being at the same time. The early bishops would have seen the market's revenue-generating capabilities as key to their vision for the new city. While the 'charter market' takes its name from the royal charter of 1227, this was a making permanent of temporary market licences first granted in 1219, before construction work started on the cathedral.

Geoff vividly described how the market created not only wealth, but also diversity and connections with the outside world. The rural hinterland, extending within a ten or so mile radius from the city, was responsible for a whole range of smaller-scale activity, bringing in its products and satisfying its own needs, but the market place's influences stretched much further. It was a distribution point for the woollen trade, which was absolutely crucial for Salisbury's medieval prosperity. Exports of wool to the continent were initially important, soon overtaken by manufactured cloth, with materials like dyes coming in the opposite direction.

Equally, goods like spices, fruits and nuts were coming in from Europe, with Italian merchants playing a big part from at least the 1240s, when one was accused of selling sub-standard cloth. And in the 1370s a Venetian merchant was arrested for allegedly being a spy. Traders from the continent were a long-running market feature, with the 1851 census showing merchants from Germany, Russia, Poland and Holland staying in market place inns.

Southampton played a key role when goods were being moved abroad, and also for their import, and medieval accounts survive detailing the journeys between the two cities made by wagons carrying various products. Within Salisbury, leading merchants made their fortunes, and left their mark on the streets on the edge of the market place. In Queen Street, William Russell's house proclaims its known start of construction date, 1306, on its fascia, while disguising its historic origins through the use of mathematical tiles to create an effect of brickwork. Inside, and particularly on the first floor, extensive survival of its medieval woodwork dramatically demonstrates its true origin. In New Canal, on the southern limit of the original market place , the Hall of John Halle also hides its medieval interior behind a much later facing. In the 1440s, John Halle was a very successful and prominent merchant, being, among other things, the biggest importer of fish into Salisbury.

Accounts survive to show the names of butchers with stalls in the market, with rents for them going to the bishop up until the 1480s, when a significant change saw them going to the city Corporation instead, up until the 1680s when the stalls were pulled down. Many family names recur in those accounts, a sign of continuity which has persisted on market stalls till the present day.

The former Council House, and behind it the former Bishop's Guildhall. Image: RCHME

Salisbury livestock market, in the1850s. Image: Salisbury Museum

Geoff detailed how this major space within the city became an administrative hub as well as a commercial one. First the Bishop of Salisbury asserted his importance beyond the Close by building his own Guildhall, around 1300, and then in the 1580s the city Corporation built one of their own, known as the Council House, in front of the Bishop's. This duplication lasted until the late 18th century, when a fire rendered the secular version unusable, and the Bishop's Guildhall was then pulled down, with the Guildhall we know today being built on its site. Administration of the market itself was always a major task, with standards to be upheld, and a constant fight against the 'filth' resulting from some market activities. And the market was also the scene for public whippings, targeted at vagrants who were then sent back to their parishes.

Geoff widened out the story, showing how the market not only catered for the selling of goods, but provided locations for the making of them as well, for instance cutlery, a major product of C18th Salisbury, and hosiery. Inns flourished, catering for those coming to buy and sell at the market, and often for their horses. These were the motive power for the many carts needed to transport goods to and from the market, so played an important part in the whole picture. There were over twenty taverns and inns in the immediate vicinity of the market place in the 18th century, most offering stabling for overnight guests. There were coffee houses too, including the Parade on Blue Boar Row and the Half Moon next to the Guildhall.

From the 19th century, illustrations used by Geoff showed the market place's key function as the location for public events. A drawing depicted a big procession there occasioned by the Reform Act of 1832, while an image of 1856 showed celebrations at the end of the war in Crimea. A more recent photo showed the Queen arriving at the Guildhall in 1974, before handing out that year's Maundy Money. The backdrop was scaffolding in Queen Street, denoting major rebuilding there at that time, leading to the creation of the Cross Keys Chequer shopping centre.

At the end, a questions session indicated the audience's keen interest in what they had heard, and a desire to know more. The public executions in the market place were a topic raised, and Geoff confirmed there had been a notable one in 1483, when the Duke of Buckingham was executed for treason either openly in the market place, or in the yard of the Blue Boar Inn. In 1542 three heretics were burned in the market place. In answer to a question as to when the original very large market place space contracted, with permanent buildings taking over from stalls, Geoff told us that this started early on, with buildings on Butcher Row/Fish Row by 1300, and ones on Ox Row/Oatmeal Row by 1400. As to when market days came to be set as Tuesdays and Saturdays, Geoff explained that Salisbury was granted a weekly Tuesday market in its Royal Charter of 1227, and an additional Saturday market was added in the early 14th century.

This was a splendid starting point for this year's Heritage Open Days, much appreciated by Geoff's audience. A more detailed account of the market place by him can be found in the newly published 'Tales of Two Cities', which is reviewed on page 25.

Richard Deane

Crimea War peace celebrations in Market Place, 1858. Image: *Salisbury Museum*

The Queen arriving at the Guildhall for the Maundy events, April 11th 1974.
Image: *Salisbury Museum*

Visit to Society Award Winners

Luckily July 17th was a warm and pleasant day for this visit to two prize winning properties. First we went to Kite House, Alderbury, winner of the Lord Congleton award in 2023, for that year's most outstanding building. The owner, Esther Horwood, greeted us with an interesting talk about the history of the house. Originally it had been Ferry Cottage, because here was a ferry between Alderbury and Britford. The right of way between Alderbury to Britford had stepping-stones but these did not guarantee a dry crossing, especially when the river was in flood. The Hazel family ran a punt-like ferry for generations, with the last operator, Jane Hazel, running the ferry in her 70s until her death in 1920 ended the tradition. The house retains a public right of way to the river.

Esther originally lived next door to the property and she and her husband asked if they could have first refusal if it was ever put up for sale. Ten years later they became the owners. The original idea was to retain Ferry Cottage, but a complicated planning situation ended with it being demolished and a new house designed, by AR Design Studio architects of Winchester. Kite House is very close to the river Avon, and takes full advantage of great views across it and the water meadows beyond, to the distant cathedral, and Longford Castle.

We were treated to a tour of the house and gardens by Esther. The house has three angled wings, one shorter than the others, with all the roofs sloping down to the junction point. All the materials had clearly been carefully chosen, with plenty of glass. One of the longer wings provides an undivided living area, very spacious and light, while the other has bedrooms. Falling ground levels enable a partial lower floor, for guest accommodation. The thought put into design is on display throughout, with for instance in the kitchen area a subtly tapering granite worktop, picking up on the plan form of the wings. The undulating gardens complement the house, making it an ideal setting.

A short drive to West Grimstead took us to our second property, Shoebottle Barn, award winner in 2022. Owners Hayley Clark and Ed Waters presented the buildings and gave a short talk on the history of their farm, and their aims in revitalising a slowly decaying staddle stone barn to create a modest but delightful new home, designed by Favonius Architects of Salisbury. The original oak frame was carefully repaired and the existing openings retained, with timbers left exposed. An attached modern stable block was taken down, and its footprint used to create a new wing with two further bedrooms, partly built off the original farmyard wall. The final result retains and embraces the beauty of the original barn, and ensures this is the focus around which the modern home revolves. Hayley explained the name for the barn was derived from two objects found built into walls during the work, following an old tradition aimed at warding off evil — a glass bottle, and a silver-plated lead model of a shoe, both of which were displayed to us. Sympathetic furnishings, including a 16th century chest, highlighted the historic character.

We ended with tea and cake in the gardens and an appearance by Hayley and Ed's two rescue cats who had watched the proceedings warily. Everybody was very appreciative of the day's hosts, and agreed the two visits had created a very good afternoon.

Julie Smith

Kite House, Alderbury. ***Photo:*** *Martin Gardner*

Shoebottle Barn, West Grimstead. ***Photo:*** *Ed Waters*

Latin Wordle

Jay Battle is a Salisbury stonemason and sculptor, responsible for five statues on Salisbury Cathedral's West Front. His angel sculptures, near the top of the West Front, won an award from the Society in 2004. Here he introduces a local puzzle, seen above.

Every morning, without fail, I still have a go at the New York Times Wordle [a word game, for anyone unfamiliar with it]. I say 'still' because I usually bristle at how ridiculous the choice of word is. So I move on to the NYT's other puzzles..... and things often don't get any better. Thankfully, the rest of my morning routine is less painful and sees me walking the family dog through the city's fabulous green space that is Bourne Hill Gardens. The dog knows the routine well, so my attention can drift away irresponsibly to more important things like earthen ramparts, buried ice houses and masonry.

Within the gardens sits the well-known porch that was removed from the Cathedral's main north transept and rebuilt there as a folly at the end of the 18th century (see back cover). The thing is wonderful, and I have probably spent far too much time studying its details and apologising to others as I get in the way. One of these details is a painted metal inscription above the east arch. I can make out some of the letters, but not enough to understand what they might be describing.

So my go-to-guru for this sort of curious detail is, of course, Richard Deane, who I have known for many years and has yet to demonstrate the limits of his patience with me.

Richard was able to obtain the details of a survey carried out of the porch by The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, in 1968. In their notes, however, this detail was simply described as 'a metal inscription (lead) panel with a faded painted inscription, commemorating the origin and re-erection of the porch in 1795.'

Now, I have spent the majority of my life studying carved forms, which I can read very well. I can't, however, read colour or tonality very well and as much as I enjoy puzzles, I just can't see enough contrast to make out a great deal of this inscription. So, my purpose for writing is the hope that someone reading this might be willing to look at the panel, in a magnified version, and attempt to clarify any of it.

Is this important? Maybe, maybe not. I have had the privilege of working on some exceptional memorials over the decades, often incorporating beautifully florid text, which simply translates as 'Don't forget I was fabulous'. Whatever it might say, it is a historical part of this wonderful thing, and if there is anyone who could help decipher some text, Latin or otherwise, it might lead to a better understanding of its history and could be a more worthy puzzle to bristle over.

If you are curious about the text, I can easily send a high resolution version of the photo above, for you to home in on the details. Let me know at jay.battle@btinternet.com

Jay Battle

Open Meeting: Creating Sustainable and Resilient Communities

About 50 people attended on October 17th. There were two speakers:

- **Lynn Trigwell,** Head of Climate and Environment for Wiltshire Council
- **Bob Bray,** whose landscape practice in Bristol, Robert Bray Associates, specialises in integrating Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) into development schemes.

Lynn Trigwell talked about balancing the challenges and opportunities for the natural environment in Wiltshire. Her role is to oversee ecology, landscape architects, National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), urban design, climate, archaeology and the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, without particularly specialising in any of these fields. Her input into the Wiltshire Council business plan is advising on housing and healthy communities, looking at green corridors for nature and people as part of the Council's green infrastructure strategy, community engagement, and carbon sequestration. She asked 'How do we reconcile conflicting and competing interests?'

The government is driving a fast pace of change - a local plan must be produced which has to comply with various acts and bills. For example, in Wiltshire the target was previously 1% biodiversity net gain in developments. The Environment Act of 2021 has raised this to a mandatory 10% gain, which came into force from 12.2.24 for major planning applications, and 2.4.24 for small sites. Green space required by the policy does not have to be on the development site itself. Existing legal protection for important habitats remains unchanged. There is a national register for net gain sites.

A local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) for Wiltshire and Swindon is being prepared. Its objective is to reverse loss of habitat, with priorities for habitat improvement being identified. There will be a local habitat map, plus a written document. Consultation will take place in early 2025, with the aim of the strategy going to the Full Council in July 2025. One of the drivers is a 19% decline in the number of species since 1970. Ownership of land by the council gives it an opportunity to work with tenant farmers, for instance at Crews Farm Dauntsey and Hawkstreet Farm Bromham. The Biodiversity Net Gain Levy on developers provides money for appropriate schemes. Locally, a former dairy farm has provided an opportunity to restore rare chalk grassland habitat to form a nature reserve at Roundbarrow Farm, Pitton, with the land still grazed. There were no public rights of way across the land, so the project is also creating a 5m wide permissive bridleway to link Firsdown and Pitton, and a new community orchard is planned.

The River Avon is a Special Area of Conservation which has statutory protection and there is now a government requirement for new development to be nutrient neutral in terms of phosphate levels. Wiltshire Council is also running a household septic tank replacement scheme to support the water quality in our rivers. Other projects include bat mitigation in Trowbridge, a New Forest recreation strategy, a Salisbury Plain mitigation strategy, and other nature based solutions to reduce flooding, with a pilot project in Marlborough. If this works, it will be rolled out elsewhere. There can be a need for co-operation with other bodies, e.g. adjoining authorities such as Swindon Council, sometimes in partnership with Natural England.

Bob Bray gave a talk titled 'Celebrating rainfall through design.' His practice has a particular focus on integrating Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SuDS) into the design of new development and provides training for other professionals in the form of masterclasses on this subject.

The early days of SuDs were in the USA, where Clean Water Acts were produced between 1969-72. SuDS was introduced into the UK in 1996. Pollution together with a predominance of impermeable hard surfaces in urban areas contributes to flooding, erosion and poor river water quality. The SuDS concept is based on life before the water pipe, aiming to recreate more attractive environments 'where silver streams do gently glide'. An early slide in his talk showed the benefits of a natural stream – pipes are to be avoided wherever possible.

Much ground level pollution is from motor vehicles. This can be reduced via permeable blacktop and French drains, which provide a controlled flow and some filtration. Planted roadside areas can provide water capture when it rains, with filtered slow release from attenuation in ponds, lakes, swales, planted rain gardens, tree pit systems and other features. These can be designed to look beautiful as part of new landscapes and green infrastructure. Bob showed several examples in the UK, and innovative schemes in Portland Oregon, where the SuDS concept has been widely applied, and also in Malmo in Sweden.

The first full SuDS scheme at a motorway service was on the M40 in Oxfordshire in 1996. At Horwood services on the M42 a pond collects roof water. Water is cleaned by filtration before it leaves the site. The concept is managing quality of water by landscape mimicking nature. While the design approach may be initially more costly, it can lead to the creation of beautiful spaces, i.e. be part of urban design, and it can also be seen as public art. It is also more sustainable in the longer term, delivering many more benefits for people, wildlife and the wider environment.

The talks were followed by a lively Q and A session, which established that the local project at Roundbarrow Farm, Pitton, is well on the way to being up and running. The need to ensure that SuDS schemes were properly maintained, long-term, was also raised as a key issue.

Images below: *Robert Bray Associates* ***Judy Howles***

Left: *Attractive rain garden retrofitted at Victoria Crescent, London Borough of Haringey designed to take roof water via a chain feature and surface water from the surrounding hard paving.*

Right: *Raised pond fed from roof water and a rain garden taking surface water with an edging of low stone filled gabions in the courtyard at Moulscoomb Primary School, Brighton.*

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

St Mary's, Maddington

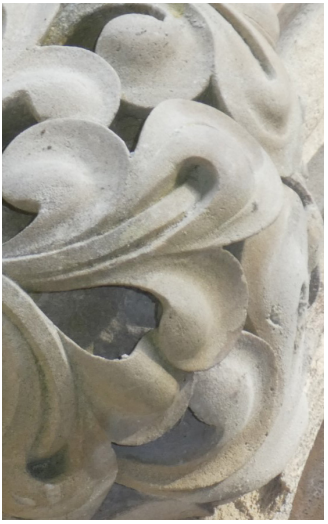
Maddington is a survivor of what were once eight separate hamlets, now all absorbed into Shrewton. Rollestone, whose church we covered in August 2023, is another such, more peripheral to the village than Maddington is. The latter's church is up a long footpath, accessed from the main village street. Some medieval fabric survives, including windows and a blocked doorway of the 15th or C16 century, but there were significant interventions in the 17th century, when the nave N wall was rebuilt further out with a new porch, and in the 19th century when the chancel was rebuilt. The exterior still retains a lot of character, with walling in the flint and stone chequerwork so characteristic of the area. The modest tower is medieval in its lower stage.

Inside, the Victorian chancel has some quite elaborate woodwork on its east wall, framing the Ten Commandments, but overall its character is less overbearing than is sometimes the case with that period, with whitewashed walls, some pleasant stained glass but not enough to reduce light levels too much, and a nicely done timber roof. The chancel arch has some painted decoration towards the nave, including the words 'Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest', from St Matthew's Gospel. In the nave, the roof of 1603 has some unusual decorative pendants, and on the west wall is a plaster cartouche with strapwork, showing the date 1637, which is probably when the upper stage of the tower was rebuilt.

St Mary's is open daily, and is well worth a visit.

Squirl patterns

'Probably a blend of squirm and twirl', says one dictionary, giving the meaning of 'squirl' as 'flourish, twist, curlicue'. How it became part of the name of a phenomenon in the world of historic buildings, known at least in recent times as 'squirl patterns', is unclear, and it's a feature probably better illustrated than described. The photos opposite show what these patterns can amount to. At the top, unusually extensive ones are found in a rendered outside wall at the church at Farley Chamberlayne, midway between Romsey and Winchester but with a remarkably remote feel to it. No village, and the road to it just goes a bit further on to a farm, and peters out. It's a place you have to go looking for. Farley Chamberlayne's only claim to fame is its part in the story of popular music in the 1960s – it was in one of the very few houses here that Fairport Convention lived for three months, rehearsing their groundbreaking Liege and Lief album.



If the band members visited the church, they would probably have seen the squirl patterns, which develop only slowly. The process by which they form is described by Shropshire architect Tim Ratcliffe, developing a very short piece by him in a 2015 publication by the SPAB:

> *'Squirl patterns appear when free lime (uncarbonated material) is drawn across the face of pointing of mixed depth or a render coating, and then deposits around the shallower edge of a patch which has dried more quickly. This lime-rich ring or line becomes harder as it carbonates and forms a ridge, when subjected to weathering, and the lime-lean area next to it becomes an indent. The indent then encourages evaporation, drawing free lime across to form the next ring or line. The layers of squirls that form over decades show us where there are shallower and deeper features behind. This phenomenon can be beautiful'.*

The bottom photograph opposite shows the phenomenon locally. Occasionally it produces shapes a bit like the 13th century carving form known as 'stiff leaf', something which the two photos on this page bear witness to. To the right is a piece of lime mortar, while above is some stiff leaf from the west front of Salisbury Cathedral – the Chapter House has a lot of it, but the main building, with the wonderful exception of the original choir screen, now in the Morning Chapel, has surprisingly little, typical of the cathedral's very austere character internally . Compare Wells Cathedral, rich in stiff leaf inside, or from a later (and non-stiff leaf) period the superb interior of Exeter Cathedral, which has individual chapels almost as rich in carving as the whole of Salisbury.

Squirl patterns on wall at St John's, Farley Chamberlayne

Squirls within wall on the Wilton Estate

Visit to Norrington Manor

On August 22nd, 25 members had the privilege of visiting the medieval Grade 1 listed Norrington Manor to the west of Alvediston, the home of Jonathan and Liliana Sykes who hosted the group with a tour of the house and garden.

The earliest central core of the house dates from the late 14th century in the reign of Richard II, and was built by John Gawen, a prominent local politician , magistrate and wealthy sheep farmer, whose family were able to trace their origins back to the 5th century and the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Entry to the house is through a newly restored south entrance porch that is offset to the east end of the Hall. It was built in 1400 to commemorate a visit by Henry IV (1399-1413) and contains magnificent stone arched vaulting with the carved head of the King in one corner, a bishop and a lawyer in others. The central feature of the vaulting is the strange face of the 'Green Man' with his tongue hanging out to provide a warding off of evil. Small witching marks of inverted Ws, representing Mary Magdalene, could be seen.

The porch leads into the Great Hall (38.6 x 23 feet) which features very fine tall stone trefoiled arched windows, not only fitted to the south front but to the rear as well – a sign of real wealth. One window contains the only small piece of stained glass in the house – the Gawen coat of arms. Originally provided with a central fire and roof smoke hole through the roof, a conventional open fire place was added in the Elizabethan period. Jonathan told us that the sizeable Hall, only heated by the large log burner, is still used for family gatherings sitting around a very long dining table bought by his grandmother from Exchange & Mart!

A noteworthy plan by Drinkwater hangs in the hall passageway, illustrating the various stages of construction and alteration of the house. Medieval stone steps lead from the west end of the Hall to the particularly fine stone vaulted crypt above which was once an ornate Catholic chapel used by John Gawen and his family before Thomas Gawen, a loyal Catholic, was locked in the Tower of London in 1601 for refusal to pay a huge fine of £1500 for failing to attend the church, now of course Protestant. Subsequently the chapel was destroyed by the Wyndham family in the 17th century. The crypt would once have provided safe storage and there is a water source beneath its stone flagged floor, as demonstrated by Jonathan's water divining abilities. The stone vaulting has been recently carefully restored by the Sykes.

The Gawens owned and lived in the Manor, despite many turbulent occurrences and persecutions due to their Catholic faith, until Norrington was sold to Wadham Wyndham in 1658. The surrounding farmland was the site of a much earlier abandoned Saxon settlement to the south and west of the Manor, with evidence still visible of its layout at times of drought.

Wyndham was a wealthy barrister shortly to be knighted by King Charles II upon the restoration of the monarchy, and was installed as a High Court Judge. He and his wife Barbara considerably altered the house with the Solar, a more private room for the family, being replaced by a magnificent banqueting hall with a grand fireplace above the undercroft.

The Civic Society group at Norrington Manor. ***Photo:*** *Di Verdon-Smith*

St Mary's Church, Alvediston. ***Photo:*** *Di Verdon-Smith*

Access to this is now by a ladder, so unfortunately we weren't able to see it. New east and west ranges were added transforming the house into a country mansion with landscaped gardens. Theirs was a remarkable and long marriage, managing the estate with great efficiency. Following Sir Wadham's death in 1668 Barbara moved into St Edmund's College in Salisbury, and that area of the city still bears witness to the family with streets and a park named Wyndham.

Successive generations of Wyndhams lived at Norrington, notably Sir Wadham and Barbara's second son William who bought the Dinton estate in 1689, shifting the focus of life to Dinton. So Norrington and the farmland was let to a series of tenant farmers, during which time the house became unoccupied for long periods and fell into a sad state of disrepair by the 1830s. Pressure was brought to bear on William Wyndham to restore the house which he did. It was then let to the Parham family throughout the 19th century and up to the 1950s, by which time it had again fallen into a serious state of disrepair with cows occupying the Great Hall.

Faced with crippling death duties following the death of the eighth William Wyndham, the house was sold in 1952 to Frank Sykes, the son of Brigadier General Sir Percy Sykes who led a fascinating, eventful life as a soldier, scholar, author and diplomat. He was an avid traveller and collector with many of his artefacts residing in the house today. Frank's son Tristram inherited in 1955 and was responsible for greatly improving the house and farm. Over many decades the Sykes family past and present have lovingly cared for and gradually restored this beautiful historic house and gardens.

Some members went on to visit nearby St Mary's Church, warmly welcomed by Biddy and Pen who were on hand to tell us about the much loved church and its contents. They had kindly arranged a display of the Elizabethan Communion cup, which was made in Salisbury, and a slightly later paten also made in Salisbury.

The church is approached through a field and delightfully set above the banks of the winterbourne which runs into the river Ebble. The tomb of the Rt Hon Earl of Avon KG (formerly Prime Minster Sir Anthony Eden) lies in the churchyard. He retired to Alvediston from political life, and died there in 1977. A fine Portland stone memorial to him by sculptor Martin Jennings hangs on the north wall of the church. The font and nave are 12th century with the chancel added in the 13th century. The tower is 17th century with 3 bells dated 1630, 1640 & 1811.

An appeal is underway to restore the bells and bellchamber. The 'crusader' tomb is thought to be that of John Gawen with his little dog at his feet. The church contains some fine stained glass windows, in particular the west window (1881) depicting the Sermon on the Mount in memory of Revd Philip Soulieu Deprez, who oversaw work on the church and built both the school and the vicarage.

The Civic Society thanks Jonathan and Liliana for their warm welcome at Norrington, and to St Mary's churchwardens.

William & Di Verdon-Smith

The Pillbox at Bemerton Farm

This edition's cover photo reflects a current planning issue, sparked by a building very close to the cover's dovecote, but entirely different in function. Bemerton Farm, on the north side of the road between Lower Bemerton and Quidhampton, is a model farm, i.e. one designed to demonstrate up-to-date methods and buildings, constructed in 1863 by the Wilton Estate. It is Grade II listed, described as 'an important group for agricultural and sociological reasons, as well as architectural'. In the latter department, crazy-paving type facing to much of the stonework has particular attention drawn to it, and indeed it is quite unusual, if not necessarily all that beautiful.

Also in the listings description is a reference to the World War II pillbox in the south-western corner of the farmyard, right up against the boundary wall (photo on next page). Such structures tend not to be listed in their own right, as is evidenced by unlisted pillboxes locally on the Portway, east of the Old Sarum development, and between Great Durnford and High Post. However the siting of the Bemerton Farm one, within a complex listed in its own right, does confer a degree of protection for it, and a guarantee of scrutiny of any proposals for it. A recent application covers repairs to the dovecote, and to the farm's boundary walls, neither of them particularly contentious, provided their execution is in the right hands.

The pillbox elements of the proposals are a slightly different matter, not because they aim for anything obviously damaging, but because they fall short of doing justice to the structure's particular problems. Any listed building application ought to be accompanied by a heritage statement, giving a description of the building or buildings involved, explaining their significance, and giving an account of how the proposals involved have been arrived at, and what impact they are likely to have. The Bemerton application lacks anything meeting this description, confining itself to brief statements of what's intended, not always fully informative. The brick cladding is to be removed, which is fair enough as some parts of it have been reduced to not much more than a network of pointing, with the bricks themselves having decayed away almost completely. Then reclaimed bricks are to be used to reclad. But as the photo shows, the cladding is currently only partial, and there's no indication whether the replacement will repeat that, or whether the entire walling will be covered.

The latter would seem more logical, but it would be very handy to have some information provided on the pillbox's original state when it was built in 1940 or 1941. The two other local pillboxes, on the Portway and near Great Durnford, are just concrete structures, with no brickwork. The pioneer in recording WWII defences in this country was actually a local man, Henry Wills, who worked as a photographer for the Salisbury Journal, and published 'Pillboxes' in 1985. Later a more comprehensive survey was carried out between 1995 and 2001, by the Heritage Lottery funded Defence of Britain Project. The information this provides clearly shows that the brickwork must originally have extended across the whole pillbox, as shortage of materials sometimes meant that rather than using timber shuttering and ending up with a wholly concrete structure, brickwork formed the external shuttering and was left in place afterwards.

An early photo would almost certainly prove this, but nothing has yet emerged earlier than two of 2011 accompanying the Defence of Britain Project entry. They show the same amount of brickwork as now, but they also show that the concrete has significantly deteriorated since then, with iron reinforcing bars now being increasingly exposed. As well as querying the brickwork treatment, the Society's representation on the application therefore asked why this problem wasn't even mentioned.

The architects for the proposals subsequently asked us if we could point to any historic information or photos about the pillbox, indicating that they now appreciated they needed to do a bit more to put their proposed repairs in context. In or around 2008, the Salisbury Conservation Advisory Panel (for information on which see the next magazine) was asked to come up with ideas on how to spend a pot of money in the District Council coffers, the residue from a former grants scheme for historic buildings. The council's suspicion was that if the money was left till the replacement of the District Council by Wiltshire Council in 2009, it might get used for some completely non-conservation purpose. The pillbox was considered then as a possible target for the money, but it was decided its condition was fairly stable and it probably didn't need anything spent on it. This is far from the case now, showing that decline has been fairly rapid. In the end, an unfortunate chain of events led to the money being spent by the District Council on non-conservation purposes anyway, but that's another story.

The Pillbox at Bemerton Farm

Wiltshire Local Plan

Wiltshire Council's draft local plan has now been submitted to the government, with a public examination of it to follow. As far as new land for housing goes, there will then be an immediate need to find another set of sites, dictated by an 81% increase in such land in the county now imposed by the government, and not catered for in the draft plan. The Society has always seen the site seen in this photo as being the most objectionable of those in that plan, whose Policy 26 aims for 220 dwellings here. In a 2021 consultation phase we told the council 'The Society sees building houses here as fundamentally unacceptable, principally because of their impact on views of the cathedral, and it does not believe the impact could be removed or mitigated to an acceptable degree through the scale or layout of any detailed scheme.' In 2023 we repeated this objection.

Wiltshire Council's words on the field are ***'Sensitive site due to its location on a key approach to the city, with important views of the spire. Development should seek to preserve, and where possible enhance, the setting of the spire'.*** How on earth any housing development here could possibly enhance views of the spire is a total mystery, and what's actually proposed is a 50 metre wide 'view corridor', allowing the spire to be briefly seen from one viewpoint only. Elsewhere, it'll just be standard estate houses.

The public examination of the draft plan could in theory see Policy 26 removed, only no doubt to see it reinstated when the 81% increase has to be incorporated. Given the destruction of spire views that's already taking place along the Netherhampton road, it would seem that the system is hell bent on minimising Salisbury's most wonderful feature, at every depressing opportunity.

Salisbury Cathedral from the Downton Road, across a field likely to be built on.
Photo: *Adrian Harris Photography*

Against Ye Rules of Good Architecture

Another cathedral Thomasson

The photograph above shows the SW corner of the base level of Salisbury Cathedral tower, highly visible from several viewpoints. But what many observers will not have focused on, given that they're not very conspicuous from the ground, are the two vertical masonry structures either side of the corner, with their lower halves encased by cream-coloured ironwork. Even less obvious are the two horizontal pieces of masonry running outwards from the tower, one along the nave roof parapet and one along that of the south transept.

At the tops of each vertical member are shapes of unclear purpose, too small to draw much attention. What helps mark the whole ensemble as a part of a building which appears to have no function, i.e. a Thomasson as featured in the last two magazines, and a more visible one than the lost cathedral staircase in the last issue, is the fact that none of the other three corners of the base of the tower show anything similar. There must be some reason why the SW corner alone shows this feature, but it's far from an obvious one.

To find it, one has to go back to quite an important year in the history of the cathedral – 1668. It was then that Christopher Wren, 35 at the time and fairly early on in his career as an architect (among other skills), came to the cathedral at the invitation of its new bishop, Seth Ward, who knew Wren from Oxford University, where they were successive professors of astronomy.

Ward saw Wren as just the person to give advice on many aspects of the cathedral, in particular the spire. The report he produced is in the cathedral archives, and is a very early instance, perhaps the first, of a document appraising the constructional aspects of an English cathedral, by a highly talented observer. He noticed systems of medieval iron bars in the tower and spire, writing:

> ***'Besides those that appear I have Reason to believe, that there are divers other braces concealed within the thickness of the Walls; and they are essential to ye standing of ye Works, that if they were dissolved, the Spire would spread open the Walls of ye Tower, nor could it stand one minute'.***

Would the spire fall down if all its built-in metalwork suddenly vanished? The answer is probably that it would stay up for more than Wren's one minute, but that it would be folly to give any long-term guarantee. And there's much more metal there now than there was in his time. On his way up to the tower top he will have seen a network of iron bars in the lowest part of the tower interior, joining the walls together, and added to the original low tower of the 13th century as work on the great new tower and spire started in the early 14th century (exact date unknown).

Since Wren's time, more substantial ironwork was added. Below the 14th century bars are four levels of canvas-covered iron beams, installed in 1866, and running from each corner to the one opposite. Externally, a grid of flat beams connects the ends together on each corner – this is the cream-coloured ironwork seen in the photo, partially encasing our Thomasson. Other interventions in metal, of various dates, can be found throughout the whole structure.

Wren himself, having discerned the importance of metal reinforcement, advised that more should be added. In a particular area of the upper spire: ***'Let a curbe of Iron made of eight pieces be fixed cleane round on ye outside and Joynted at ye corners after this manner … '*** and a sketch shows what he had in mind. His report adds that: ***'If this way of bandage were used in more places than towards the Top, it would prove a great Security to ye Spire but I shall not insist on more expense than is necessary'.***

It's sometimes said that Wren 'carried out repairs' to the cathedral spire, but his role was never to oversee such work. The actual extent to which his recommendations were adopted is somewhat unclear. No ironwork which is identifiably of the 17th century can now be seen on the spire, and nor has it any reinforcements which were obviously inspired by the Wren report. Iron bands previously round the spire, which may have owed something to his recommendations, disappeared in the early 20th century, to be replaced by copper ones. Having previously stated that the spire 'would not stand for one minute' without its original ironwork, and having then proposed the addition of more, Wren suddenly changes tack and says that he objects to:

> ***'… this way of tying Walls together with Iron, instead of making them of that substance and forme, that they shall naturally poyse themselves upon their butment. [It] is against ye Rules of good Architecture not only because Iron is corruptible by rust but because it is fallacious, having unequal veins in ye Metal'.***

Rusting is a universal threat from iron, valid in all ages, while the 'unequal veins' are more related to methods of iron manufacture in Wren's time. This change of approach is rather startling, and indeed on future occasions, Wren was to happily ignore his own advice. His great dome at St Paul's Cathedral was secured by a massive iron chain, running round its base in a position where it is well out of sight. Another chain held together the tower at his London church of St Mary-le-Bow.

Wren did not confine himself to arguably inconsistent recommendations for metal additions to the spire. It can clearly be seen, to the naked eye, to be out of perpendicular, and he ascertained by the use of plumb lines that the apex was about 27 ½" south and 17" west of its true position. He advised that further tests be made:

> ***'If the foundation settle no further (as possible it will not) it is undoubtedly secure enough. But if it move, the remedy will be to build eight bows from the walls of the Nave...a chargeable, but I fear the only cure.'***

And this is where we come to our Thomasson. The four anomalous pieces of masonry on the SW corner of the tower base are without any doubt the start of one of Wren's 'bows', added where it would most resist the lean to the SW he'd identified. The shapes at the top of each of the vertical members are 'stoolings', which provide a fixing point for what would have been the actual stone bows, connecting vertical and horizontal members together. On the latter are further connecting points, one of them here hidden by a pinnacle.

Study by Tim Tatton-Brown of the types of stone involved has confirmed a post-medieval date. So these features clearly represent a start at implementing one of Wren's recommendations, never seen through. Perhaps the intended 'cure' proved to be too 'chargeable', and the cathedral authorities decided to spend their money elsewhere. This may have been quite sensible - given the distance between here and spire top, it's hard to see how his bows could have been very effective.

In fact the spire's lean has barely increased since 1668, and subsequent ideas for reinforcement have focused elsewhere. These include a proposal which was initially part of the 1980s 'Save our Spire' campaign, to strengthen the four great crossing piers under the tower, with their remarkable bends, by pinning their polished Purbeck Marble shafts back to the main drum stones, and filling between them with epoxy resin. It was eventually decided that the spire was in good enough shape not to need what would inevitably had a somewhat disfiguring effect visually, quite apart from possible future degradation of the resin.

So Wren's bows take their place in this long history of concern about the spire, and ideas for helping to support it. Nothing now indicates the epoxy resin theory for the crossing piers, apart from some written records, but Wren's theory has left its visual mark, to be read if the observer knows what to look for.

Richard Deane

Now seems the right time to acknowledge a debt to Alastair Clark (right), when it comes to Thomassons. Two or three years ago he sent over a cutting on them from the Oldie magazine, which opened up a concept completely unfamiliar to the rest of us at that stage. By a happy coincidence, we can also record a revelation about the Thomasson on the back cover of the May Civic Society magazine, thanks to his wife Margaret. A short flight of steps at Larkhill, leading nowhere, seemed unlikely to trigger any memories from readers, but Margaret, while proof reading the magazine, immediately recognised the steps as having once provided access to an old Nissen hut, converted into a nursery school. In the winter of 1970, recalled by Margaret as a very cold one, Alastair and family moved to Larkhill when he was posted there, following two years in a rather warmer Cyprus. Their daughter Alex was only a few weeks old, but their son Stephen was old enough to go to nursery school – and the one at the top of the still surviving steps was the one to which he briefly went.

Book Review

Tales of Two Cities: Settlement and Suburb in Old Sarum and Salisbury

edited by Hadrian Cook and Alex Langlands

Archaeopress Publishing 2024, paperback, £35

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Tales of Two Cities is a handsome volume comprising thirteen chapters (each a 'tale') of most up-to-date research, extensively footnoted yet written in an engaging manner by a galaxy of scholars. There is much eye-opening content to challenge what we thought we knew and pointers towards avenues that demand further research. We sometimes forget that the story of Sarum, its relocation from hill to valley, represents, we are told in the joint editors' introduction, 'An English city through time: Old Sarum to Salisbury', uniquely "one of the largest settlement shifts in British history". I guarantee within there will be something new to learn for every reader.

Tales brings together archaeological evidence for both medieval cities (interestingly few today think of the first Salisbury as a city), and through analysis of documentary records charts development in their settlements and dependent suburbs. For the first time, archaeological evidence for Old Sarum is brought together in synthesis, exploring its rise in the 11th century, heyday in the 12th and decline in the 13th; it then analyses the new visionary city from the 13th century and its medieval and later suburbs. The volume is based largely on papers given at a Society for Landscape Studies conference held at Salisbury Museum in 2022, publication admirably making new research findings promptly accessible to all interested in Salisbury's urban past.

Chapter 1, Old Sarum, new perspectives, by Alex Langlands, comprises a reappraisal of the archaeological evidence about the character and occupation of Old Sarum up to its 14th century demise.

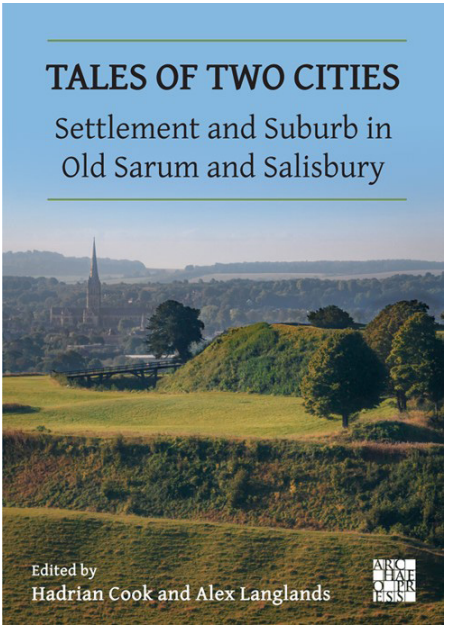
Chapters 2, 'Kingsbridge Mead: A medieval bridge and settlement and its pre-Conquest origins' and 4, "Withoute eche of these gates was a fair suburbe': The west and east suburbs of Old Sarum in the eleventh to fifteenth centuries', also by Langlands, focus on his exciting recent exploration of the little-known western suburb, including canons' closes, followed by a synthesis of evidence for settlement in the east suburb, including, with Lorraine Mepham, a masterly interpretation of a highly important hitherto unpublished section cut in 1967 through the east gate (published here as an appendix).

In chapter 3, 'Salisbury in Domesday Book', Chris Lewis explores the Book's enigmatic references to Salisbury to suggest Old Sarum's urban status in the late 11th century landscape, a large ecclesiastical manor and borough. The maps, as elsewhere in this volume, greatly enhance the understanding of subject matter possibly less familiar to readers. Chapter 5 covers 'Zooarchaeology in the 'Two Cities' and their hinterlands, AD 800-1400: Current Knowledge and Future Directions', by Matilda Holmes; chapter 6 is on 'Archaeobotanical and archaeoentomological insights into agriculture, diet and the urban transition from Old Sarum to Salisbury: research potential for environmental archaeology', by Inés López-Dóriga, with a contribution by Sander Aert. Chapter 7, 'The supply and use of pottery at Old and New Sarum – A time of transition', by Lorraine Mepham, though somewhat more esoteric, should spark interest in the curious about subjects often overlooked in conventional histories of Salisbury.

Phil Harding's *"Joining the Dots: uniting Salisbury's past through holes in the ground"* was reviewed in a Society magazine last year. Here, in chapter 8, 'Salisbury's medieval city: a summary of the archaeological evidence of this planned settlement and the foundation of St Thomas's Church', he is joined by Brett Howard summarising thoughts on the spiritual and practical development of Salisbury. Figures showing Salisbury's chequers, watercourses, results of ground-penetrating radar in St Thomas's Church and street property layouts are noteworthy.

Chapter 9, 'The early development of New Sarum, 1086 – 1269', by Christopher Daniell, after discussing early roads, Domesday mills and the significance of St Martin's parish, plausibly proposes the distinct phasing of New Sarum's planned development: 1221-28 and 1228-69. The role played by the earliest market in that development is further pursued by Geoff Lang in chapter 10, 'Salisbury Marketplace: From a medieval economic vision to the city's central public and social space' where its layout and multifunctional purpose is traced through to today.

The final three chapters focus on suburbs which grew in distinctly different ways, and here masterly texts packed at length with fascinating detail allow us better to appreciate more fully their extent, development and unique attributes (I for one discovering ignorance of much that Fisherton and Britford have to tell): 'Fisherton Anger: From Domesday settlement to medieval suburb' by Jamie Wright; 'Chalk, cheese, and urban growth: Britford parish in Wiltshire 1620 to 1960'; and 'Something old, something new: Suburban Salisbury since 1800', both by Hadrian Cook, deliver exactly what they say on the tin. The visuals are many, instructive and thoughtful enhancements to the texts.



Apart from being a treasure chest of truly up-to-date research highlighting fresh aspects and interpretation of the urban landscape of the two Sarums, with something for everyone, Archaeopress is to be congratulated on producing a substantial, informative, delightful, brilliantly illustrated tome. Both editors, Hadrian Cook and Alex Langlands, have delivered exemplary reads based on intimate knowledge of, and one suspects affection for, Salisbury.

I thoroughly recommend Tales as a purchase to own but equally there is no excuse not to sample it: it is available free, published open access online.

Peter Saunders
Curator Emeritus, Salisbury Museum

The Cathedral Hotel and the Forty Foot Rule

> ***'This policy has been remarkably successful over the years, consistently applied by the local planning authority and upheld by Inspectors and Secretary of State at appeals. The result has been to sustain the traditional scale, character and townscape in the city centre, and to set off the soaring scale of the Cathedral from both near and distant viewpoints.'***

This was the verdict on what tends to be colloquially known as Salisbury's 'Forty Foot Rule', in a 2014 report on 'The sustainable growth of cathedral cities and historic towns', commissioned by the then English Heritage (now Historic England). The policy was certainly in force in 1986, and quite possibly much earlier, and appears in Wiltshire Council's current local plan as the Salisbury Skyline Policy. Forty foot has been translated into 12.2 metres, but the policy remains as strong as ever.

It is not an absolute block on anything above that height level, with an exception for 'decorative architectural features' if they can be shown to have merit, and, more critically, for development which 'would be essential for the long-term economic viability of the city' – as long as damage to the roofscape or views of the cathedral is avoided.

A planning application, submitted in early November, seeks to turn the empty Cathedral Hotel, in Milford Street, into a '13 suite luxury 5-star luxury hotel'. The projected spend on the achievement of this, and the prospect of revitalising a wasting asset with some historic merit (it's Grade II listed), make this an attractive prospect, the only fly in the ointment being what perhaps caps the whole picture – a glazed rooftop bar.

The hotel's main roofline already breaches the 12.2m line, so the bar will take the whole building well above that mark. Currently there is a small cluster of structures, including a plant room and stair access, in the middle of the roof. The bar would actually be lower than this cluster, but by coming much closer to the edge of the roof, it would be more visible from some ground level viewpoints.

The rooftop bar proposal was discussed at the September meeting of the Development and Planning Committee (which establishes Society policy on planning matters), after a preview of the proposals. The position reached was that the Society should support the bar, as a valuable addition to city centre vibrancy, and the creator of some great views outwards from the hotel roof. The question of whether it was 'essential for the long-term economic vibrancy of the city', as per the exception in the Skyline Policy, was not looked at in any detail – 'essential' would be a difficult thing to prove, anyway. Wiltshire Council Conservation may well oppose the breach of the policy, whereas those in the council looking for economic gains will undoubtedly support the proposal.

The application has many photos showing the hotel building from various viewpoints, near and far, but unfortunately fails to do what would seem fairly obvious, and superimpose on them the outline of the bar, and thereby make it much easier to visualise the latter's impact.

The Society has always strongly supported the Forty Foot Rule, as an essential aid to maintaining the primacy of the cathedral spire in views around the city, and will continue to do so. It would be hard to claim that the bar will challenge the spire in any meaningful way, and whether it will cause any lesser level of visual damage can probably only be properly tested once it is in place – if the application gets approved and implemented, of course.

Image above right:
Near view of the Cathedral Hotel front elevation.
More distant views (including the side view of the building looking down Milford Street - see back cover) show more of the rooftop where the rooftop bar is likely to be more visible.

Image bottom right:
Artist's impression of the proposed rooftop bar.
Image: *Corstorphine and Wright (architects)*

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The Porch at Bourne Hill, formerly part of the cathedral (see p.10)

The Cathedral Hotel, showing rooftop structures (see p.27)