



# GUARDIAN ANGEL

NEWS FROM BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST

## Notes from the Chair

**A**t this time of year, the weather can get depressingly dull but this morning, well wrapped up, I was walking the dogs through a field at Winsley; the footpath was frozen and scattered leaves were white with frost but sheltering under a low canopy of ivy was a small clump of bright yellow primroses. Birds were singing, a woodpecker bashing away hoping for a response. Among the ferns were cuckoo pints and under some trees, daffodils in bud. Along the path by the allotment a pair of pigeons are already nesting and on the riverbank, beyond the swimming pool, are countless snowdrops and even a daffodil in bloom. The dark days are nearly over.

I gave myself a choice at New Year: give up swearing or black socks. Shouting profanities at the news is a lot cheaper than smashing the radio and much tidier. So, it is jolly colourful socks for me. The best of it all is that it will be ages before we will have to endure *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* as we join the queue at Sainsbury's.

Things are happening in Bradford – the mayor has got rid of the terrible bins at the Co-op, huge hoorays for him! There are discussions about what to do with the very

boring blank wall. A new coat of render? A mural like the one on Roundstone Street in Trowbridge? My favourite is the green wall idea. A green wall is a vertical living garden; hopefully with a few flowers trailing through it.

The huge Roots Festival – like Glastonbury without the mud – was a January highlight at the Music Centre. It was a fantastic weekend of music, poetry and performance with hundreds of people. I met Steve Vick just before he went on the main stage. “Blimey, I didn’t think anyone would be listening to jazz at 11 o’clock on a Sunday morning!” he said. On Saturday afternoon, they held the annual indoor Wassail, lots of dancing, singing and shouting. Brilliant!

Our own Wassail, a week later, was a huge success. No rain, no ice – a huge brazier with a roaring fire. Hundreds of people, Morris dancers, musicians, mummers and even a choir were all outside the Tithe Barn. Everybody then followed the parade up to the caper in the orchard where there were so many children we ran out of toast. Our musketeer let off his huge gun to begin the shouty, noisy Hullabaloo, which saw off any evil spirits for sure. Well done Nick and his crew for another splendid event.

## Contents

Notes from the Chair	1	Hitting the wall	10
Letter to the Editor	2	Planning matters	13
Where we shopped in 1940	3	A watery mystery solved	13
Moving pictures: a cinematic romance	5	Here we come a-wassailing	15
Update: the station canopy project	7	Diary	16

At the same time as the Roots Festival, Christ Church was showing people its plans to make the church more of a community space. It is a wonderful building, Grade II\* listed, which Sir George Gilbert Scott worked on some 35 years after its construction. The first phase of the changes will be the installation of a kitchen area and some toilets – jolly good luck to them. I very much hope the Preservation Trust will be able to help.

Recently, a breakaway section of the CLeanUp Bradford on Avon (CLUB) group took on the green bus shelter by the library. There were five of us, two town council wardens – Simon and Stuart – Judith, Sarah and myself. We scrubbed, rubbed, swept, polished, buckets of suds, brushes, brooms, scrapers and cloths all finished with cans and cans of water. After a final polish, it looks lovely.

Everybody appreciates the work. Roy, from the Bridge Tea Rooms, bought our coffee and biscuits; Travel Options 4 U offered but we are saving them up for the stone bus shelter across the road. Luckily, nobody was under the bucket of water that fell off the signpost and Simon didn't mind too much when I misplaced another bucket so he put his foot in it as he descended the ladder – at least it was warm water. We intend to clean one bus shelter every Tuesday morning. Next time, it is the one outside The Three Horseshoes.

It is only a small thing, but it makes a big difference for people waiting to catch a bus, often in a bit of a grubby environment. This may encourage more people to take buses – only a small thing in the traffic statistics but a way forward. As an aside to this, if all of us drivers in town were to give way a bit more and stop to let pedestrians to cross at the end of the town bridge, traffic might flow a tiny bit easier and more people might walk into town. Try it. Give someone something to smile about.

Paige, our new Hon Secretary, and I had a meeting with Mervyn Harris who is looking for help with the museum.

He showed us a list of Trust's affiliated associations – the museum wasn't on it – well, since the last Council of Management meeting, it is now. He was asking us for help so I hope that we can work with them to develop the museum. That meeting led to one at The Hall where plans are being prepared to celebrate the centenary of Dr Alex Moulton, CBE. He was born 9 April 1920, and the plans are for events to take place during the course of the year.

I very much hope we can become involved with the celebrations. He was a brilliant engineer and a very important figure in Bradford on Avon. I knew him a bit – he lent me a bicycle for an exhibition I did in Bath during the first National Bike week. Later on, my shop supplied him with equipment and all sorts of bits and pieces for his new bicycle and I introduced him to a couple of chums who had a big bike shop in Covent Garden and they bought lots of the new machines. He let us use his garden for a tea party during an early Arts Festival. I had been asked not to let children run about too wildly but, of course, they did; all rolling down the steep bank from one lawn to another. I saw Alex wandering among the mayhem and thought I had better apologise. "No, no, it is quite all right," he said a bit wistfully, "they're doing exactly what I used to do."

On a closing note, I just want to mention that there is a new radio station in town. It is on-line at the moment and you can access it through [westwiltsradio.com](http://westwiltsradio.com). I am on it, playing terrible old 1960s music. I would quite like to interview people about anything. Can you make stamp collecting interesting? If yes, please get in touch with me.

Finally, I would like to welcome our two new members of the council of management – Frances Nevin and Andrew Eberlin. David Moss told me being on the council of management was easy – just three or four meetings a year, so I've told them that. Well done, Frances and Andrew.

*John Potter, Chairman*

## Letter to the editor

The question of the traffic over the bridge (*GA, Autumn 2019*) is simply symptomatic of the real problem, which is motor traffic. This small town can only look forward to ever increasing congestion and danger unless steps are taken to reduce the problem.

Commercial traffic must be restricted to early morning access and be out of the town by say 9am unless staying immobile until evening. Through traffic must find alternative routes, which are available. Private cars should be prohibited in the centre of town and modest park and ride facilities provided on the outskirts. Small town buses would enable visitors to move around town.

The town would be a quieter and more attractive place instead of being dominated by the infernal combustion engine. It can be done and must be done or Bradford will gradually die. It is already the case that many people think twice about visiting at busy times. There will be many objections which should only be considered if they also offer practical alternatives.

*Frank Squire*

## 'Very pleasing, exceedingly picturesque, and very healthy' ...

Roger Jones takes a look at the West Wilts Directory of 1940 to see where Bradfordians worked, played and shopped 80 years ago

A copy of this 342-page book recently came my way. It was printed and published by B Lansdown and Sons at the *Wiltshire Times* office in Trowbridge and sold for sixpence (2½p).

The Directory provides a description of the towns and villages of West Wiltshire 80 years ago. I arrived in Bradford in 1980, 40 years ago and the half-way point between 1940 and 2020. The town has changed somewhat in the 40 years since 1980 – but had clearly done so too in the previous four decades.

Bradford on Avon's population then stood at 4,735 – although that was the figure given in the 1931 census, the latest available – so around half of today's population. The male/female breakdown reveals that there were some 15% more females. Was the reason that so many men had been lost in the Great War?

A few lines from the description of Bradford are as follows: "Bradford on Avon is considered to be a very pleasing, exceedingly picturesque, and very healthy town, and is well defended from the north and east winds.... Bradford was at one time the central town in the West of England for the manufacture of superfine broadcloths. The cloth industry has died out, and the manufacture of indiarubber tyres and other rubber goods is now the staple of the town."

A list of Places of Worship is prefaced by this note: "In the present state of emergency [i.e. War], most of the Places of Worship are holding services in the afternoon. Should this emergency continue, it is likely that the Churches will revert to their normal times, in any case, during the summer months."

The Saxon Church was "open to the inspection of visitors on payment of a fee of 3d each. Free on Sundays, 2 to 6 pm." Services were held every Sunday at St Mary's Church, Tory. The Roman Catholic church of St Thomas More was preceded at this time by the Oratory of St Thomas More at Druce's Hill House. The Methodist Chapel on Coppice Hill still functioned and had yet to amalgamate with the then Congregational Church in St Margaret's Street to become the United Church we know today. The other non-conformist places of worship were as they are now, apart from the Providence Baptist Chapel in Bearfield which is no longer; nor was there a Quaker Meeting.

Banks included Lloyds and Midland (later HSBC) in Church Street, both of which have abandoned the town in recent years. The Penny Bank run by the Co-operative Society is also listed.

The police presence specifies an inspector and three constables. Special and Petty Sessions were held at the Town Hall (the grand building on the corner of Church

and Market Streets) and the Urban District Council met monthly in the Council Chamber in Westbury House. Bradford branch library, with the very restricted opening hours of 7–8 pm on Tuesdays and Fridays, was found at Church Army House in Church Street.

164 WEST WILTS DIRECTORY.

---

**Bradford-on-Avon**

**CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY**

---

Every Article Required for the Home is Supplied of First-Class Quality and Lowest Prices.		The Net Profits are Returned to Members Half-Yearly. Join the Society and Share the Benefits
--	---	--

**Over £5,800 Returned  
to Members, 1939**

---

LIST OF DEPARTMENTS.

BREAD, CAKES, PASTRY AND CONFECTIONERY ;  
GROCERY AND PROVISIONS :  
**33, Silver Street, and 1, Bath Road.**

BUTCHERY :  
**1 The Shambles, 37 Silver Street and 2 Bath Road.**

BOOTS, GENT.'S & BOYS' OUTFITTING & FURNISHING :  
**12, St. Margaret Street.**

DRAPERY AND MILLINERY : **2, The Shambles.**  
COAL AND COKE : **Station Road.**

The Co-op was a major presence in Bradford on Avon, with numerous departments housed in separate premises throughout the town

A timetable for access to the public baths (where the library is today) was available on payment of a fee to the superintendent. Regarding the UDC Fire Brigade it is noted that, 'On the outbreak of fire a maroon is fired from the rear of Westbury House, on notice being given to the Police. The fire Engines and appliances are housed at the rear of Westbury House; the keys are kept at the residence of the Captain and at the Police Station.' Spencer-Moulton and Co's rubber works maintained its own Fire Brigade consisting of workmen from the firm. There were Conservative and Liberal Clubs and a Workers' Union. The local parliamentary constituency,



Westbury, was represented by a Conservative MP, as were the neighbouring constituencies of Chippenham and Devizes. Labour trailed in third place after the Liberal candidate in Chippenham and Westbury but there was no such candidate in Devizes. Perhaps this contrast points to the fact that there was a significant cohort of industrial workers in Westbury and Chippenham.

Glancing through the Bradford General Directory, street by street, reveals a number of local surnames which make a frequent appearance, such as Bainton (and Dainton), Banks, Bigwood, Bryant, Burbage, Dagger, Gerrish, Greenland, Hillier, Hulbert, Kettlety, Maundrell, Mizen, Niblett, Powney, Raisey, Scrine, Timbrell, Uncles, Vincent and Wicheard (also spelt Witcheard).

The greatest change in Bradford's townscape today is the departure of the rubber manufactories which employed such a large proportion of the town's workforce. And it's no surprise that many businesses – shops, pubs, eating places – have come and gone. One which has made a recent return is the Co-op with its supermarket in the Lamb Building and the nearby Co-op Funeralcare.

When I came to live in Bradford there was a small Co-op mini market which occupied the shops which are now Christine's and Cloud and Cove. Indeed, the mosaic floor panel at the entrance is evidence of this. Formerly the Co-op had a much greater presence: Ex Libris Bookshop at No 1 The Shambles was the Co-op butcher – the attractive green tiles within are a survival.

No 32 Silver Street housed the Co-op Central Grocery Department and No 12 St Margaret's Street the Co-operative Boots and Outfitting Department.

Next door, at No 2 (now Dorothy House) was situated the Co-op Society Drapery Department. There was even an out of town Co-op at the corner of Bath and Winsley Roads.

**FRUIT, FISH, GAME & COMMISSION AGENTS.**  
 All kinds of Fish and Fruit fresh daily at the Lowest  
 Market Prices. 'Phone No. 2203.

**A. DAVIS & SONS**

*Shops—4, The Shambles and 17, Market Street,  
 BRADFORD-ON-AVON.*

Also 2 Church Walk, Trowbridge & Market Place, Westbury.

At No 3 The Shambles (now Gilou's) was Davis fishmongers, whose fading sign can still be seen above the shop front. No 5 (now Strawberry Blue) housed 'Electric Light Showrooms'. In the days before privatisation I recall it was occupied by Southern Electricity, where I paid my electricity bills.

One significant loss after 1940 was Knee's store (Ironmongers and Furnishers), found in a building beside Cobb Farr estate agents which was demolished in an attempt to ease congestion at this pinch-point. Knee's was an offshoot of the much lamented Knee's store in the centre of Trowbridge. At least the name lives on: this location is still known as Knee's Corner.

## NICHOLS & BUSHELL, LTD.

35, MARKET STREET, BRADFORD-ON-AVON.

*The Finest Shop for—*

**HIGH-CLASS GROCERIES. PROVISIONS.  
 WINES & SPIRITS. PATENT MEDICINES.  
 BRUSHES, BROOMS, &c,  
 HIGHEST QUALITY AT LOWEST PRICES.**

Regular Deliveries to Bradford Leigh, Holt, Broughton Gifford, Atworth, Chalfield, South Wraxall, Monkton Farleigh, Farleigh Wick, Warleigh, Cumberwell, Westwood, Winsley, Corshamside, Freshford and Limpley Stoke. 'PHONE 2226.

Nichols & Bushell describing its wares as 'High Class' is perhaps an attempt to distance itself from the Co-op

Nearby, at 1 and 2 Silver Street (now Bread and Butter and the Barber shop) was Ward's bookseller and newsagent. I can just recall this business which had branches in Trowbridge and even one in Bristol. One treasured survivor from 1940, then 1980 and now 2020, is J Alex Brown, then described as 'Ironmonger and House Furnisher'. It's still an ironmonger – and much else besides.

'PHONE 2388.

**R. W. H. DYER,**  
**CYCLE AGENT, RADIO and ELECTRICAL  
 ENGINEER,**  
**16 Market St., BRADFORD-on-AVON**

AGENTS FOR <b>SUNBEAM</b> <b>RALEIGH</b> <b>B.S.A.</b> <b>RUDGE-WHITWORTH</b> <b>NEW HUDSON</b> <b>ELSWICK</b> <b>ROYAL ENFIELD</b> <b>COVENTRY-EAGLE</b> <b>HERCULES</b>	AGENTS FOR <b>PHILIPS</b> <b>MARCONIPHONE</b> <b>PHILCO</b> <b>MULLARD</b> <b>COSSOR</b> <b>PYE</b> ETC.
--	---

**EXPERT REPAIRS.**

A useful emporium in uphill Market Street, where Oak Hair is now located, more recently remembered as Stan Green's cycle and toy shop. How many of those British makes of cycles and radios do you recall?

The Midland Railway goods depot, public weighbridge and the coal merchant were found at the station. All these are no longer, and neither are the many rail sidings which are now asphalted over to provide car parking. The station itself is surely as busy as at any time in its 160-plus years history. What will Bradford look like in another 40 years, in 2060?

# Sundays at The Alexander

During the golden age of cinema, Geoff Andrews' parents were the projectionists at the Alexander Picture Palace – housed in the old dye works that eventually became St Margaret's Hall

If you weren't a practising Christian, Sundays in Bradford on Avon must have been very boring a hundred years ago. Especially in the winter. But my dad was happy.

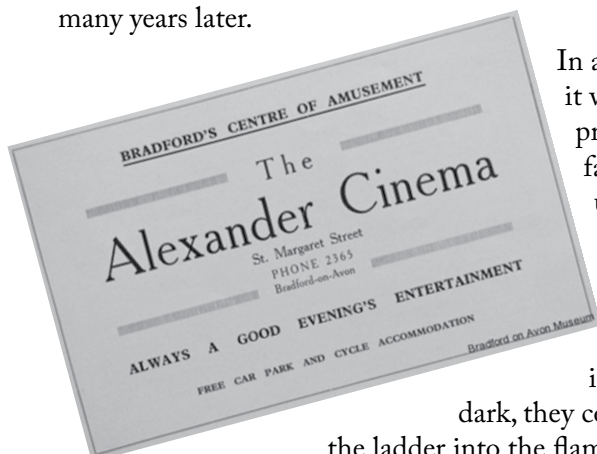
Actually little had changed when I was a child 20-odd years later; trains were running on Sundays by then, but crucially to me the swings and roundabout in the Poulton playing field were padlocked sunrise to sunset by the grumpy caretaker, a Mr Churchill.

Even in summer the nearest to a highlight happened on a fine Sunday evening. Then respectable people put on their Sunday best for an after-tea walk. A hat was obligatory, with the men tipping or raising their cap or trilby to everyone they passed, and polite words were exchanged. The most popular walk was down the canal from Frome Road to the swing bridge and back along by the river.

But back to the 1920s, and why was my father, Bill Andrews, happy as he walked through the town on the probably dreary, certainly joyless, Sunday morning of 26 November 1926? Because he was going to spend the morning more or less alone in the dark with his soon-to-be fiancée, locked in at the pictures. Cinemas only opened Monday to Saturday then, and for many years after.

My mum and dad could excuse themselves from the usual Sunday tedium only because they were working. For the rest of the morning they would be running through the three reels of Mary Miles Minter in *Judy of Rogues Harbour*, the silent film that would be shown from Monday to Wednesday. Frame by frame, they had to check that it was not damaged, to cut out and splice any imperfections, and then to run the film so that the three-person orchestra down in the pit could synchronise their music to the action, often having to master the sheet music that went with the film too.

That trio, probably piano, drums and violin, plus assorted whistles, coconut shells and a slapstick for sound effects, would be playing for every performance that week. "We always had good houses," my father remembered, many years later.



In a time when it was still probably a bit fast for an unmarried couple to spend hours together in the dark, they could climb the ladder into the flame-proof



Picture this: Bet and Bill Andrews, co-projectionists at Bradford's popular cinema, the Alexander Picture Palace

projection box at the back of the Alexander Picture Palace (or sometimes it was called a Picture Theatre) and be safe from prying eyes.

My father was a painter and decorator, having served most of a four-year apprenticeship with Alexander's, an old Bradford company that had recently been bankrupted. "Not by me," he insisted. He was now decorating with another firm and in his spare time playing French horn in the Bradford town band. He dropped that in the mid-20s – either when he was invited to be assistant projectionist at the Alexander, or when he was promoted to the top job a little while later.

That promotion meant he needed an assistant, so why not invite Bet Hobbs, the attractive young woman he fancied who ran the ticket office? Or did she make the first move?

As the youngest of eight children, she was expected to stay at home and be an unpaid servant to her parents, but she had kicked over the traces, had her long hair cut into a fashionable bob, and got herself the cinema job. Both acts outraged her father.

Back at the Picture Palace, she got the assistant projectionist job too. Bill and Bet worked together for some time until work took him to Manchester and she became the first and only woman head projectionist in the West Country. In April 1928 they married (in a snowstorm).

In December 1930, a few weeks before Christmas, the Alexander showed its first talkie, a special matinee in aid of the nurse fund. It was a Harold Lloyd film, *Feet First*: his first talkie too. It had minimal dialogue, not only because he was alone on the screen most of the time, re-enacting his amazing climbing antics of the silent *Safety Last*. Lucky for her it was mainly background sound because it came from records being played to synchronise,



as near as possible, with the action. You can still watch that film by Googling 'YouTube Feet First'.

I'd love to be able to ask her how she worked that system, (changed the records, adjusted the speed, etc) but we left it too late. This was the cheaper version of the talkies, because many cinema owners thought the very expensive equipment necessary for synchronised voice wouldn't pay, and that sound was just a flash in the pan.\*

The projection box was flame-proof, probably with asbestos, because the projector used a very intense, and hot, carbon rod arc lamp, and the film was nitrate-based and extremely flammable. It passed very close in front of

the light source, so if the film snagged even for a second going through the projector gate, it was liable to catch fire fast and disastrously.

In that year alone there were at least three significant projection box fires that killed or seriously injured projectionists and patrons. My parents had scar tissue on their hands and arms from frequent smaller fires that they had doused with a bucket of sand or an asbestos blanket.

The dramatic and devastating nitrate-fuelled fire in the lovely film *Cinema Paradiso* is a graphic example of how easy it was for things to go wrong.

My mother's career as a projectionist did not last long. After they married my parents bought a house in Westbury and my sister was born (Gill Bowden, who volunteered for many years in the tourist information shop in Bradford).

The big slump arrived, my father was unemployed, the house was repossessed and they scraped a living back in Bradford, renting a house from my grandfather.


Many years later, as a councillor and mayor, dad was a prime mover in the council taking over the now derelict cinema and converting it to St Margaret's Hall.

*\* The idea of electrically amplifying sound, via a Panatrope, was still quite new and very expensive. A typical price for a cinema to convert to have the full synchronised sound system ('the orchestra that draws no salary' declared the adverts) would at this time be about £1,500 – the cost of a couple of houses. Presumably the trio were given their marching orders.*

Photo: Bradford on Avon Museum



St Margaret's Hall today – the old projection box was sited immediately above the foyer



**DOWNSIDE**  
NURSERIES  
*at Westwood*

A family nursery with a wide range of unusual and interesting plants

*Open daily 9-5pm all year inc weekends*

**UPPER WESTWOOD,  
BRADFORD-ON-AVON, BA15 2DE**  
*(Follow the brown signs from the B3109)*

***www.downsidenurseries.co.uk***  
**TEL: 01225 862 392**



*Mr Salvats Coffee Room*  
*Open Thur - Sun 10-2*  
*St Margarets Street*



*Full menu*  
*all day or*  
*a drink at*  
*any time*

## Restoration at the station

Graham Findley provides an update on progress and development of the Bradford on Avon railway station Footbridge Canopy Project



Bradford on Avon station in 1921, with the footbridge canopy in place

### FOOTBRIDGE CANOPY PROJECT

The Priory Barn was the venue on 29 January for a meeting of those interested in hearing how the Bradford on Avon Station Footbridge Canopy Project was progressing. There were a number of people present including the mayor, Cllr Simon McNeill-Ritchie, as well as representatives from the station and others interested in hearing of the progress made, and meeting those involved in the project. David Moss, chairman of the Footbridge Canopy trustees, gave a briefing on the project's progress to date. For those who are not familiar with what the project is all about, here is a brief recap of the original idea, the aims and background.

Bradford on Avon's beautiful listed railway station was built to the most elaborate of the standard designs used by Brunel, resembling a lodge or estate house of the period, but built with local Bath stone rather than the more commonly used bricks and mortar. Our station is a rare reminder of the heyday of one of the Great Western Railway's 19th century railway routes, when people's lives were transformed by being able to easily leave their town for distant parts, or simply being able to travel to Bristol and back in a day for the first time in their lives. A few years ago the station was restored to Great Western traditional colours of Light Stone and Dark Stone but

although the footbridge was repaired and refurbished, it still lacks the original canopy, which was removed in the mid sixties to reduce maintenance costs. The project aims to replace the canopy in order to restore the station to its historical and original appearance. This will also improve the experience of using the footbridge, especially in inclement weather.

A professional engineering report confirmed that the refurbished footbridge can easily take the weight of a new canopy, which would be constructed from materials that although looking identical to the original will be much lighter and require less maintenance than its predecessor. Network Rail supports our project, and will take on the long-term maintenance once the canopy is back in place. A committee of interested people, formed from local railway enthusiasts and members of the Preservation Trust, has been working to take the project forward and recently we've seen considerable progress.



The station was built to the most elaborate of Brunel's standard designs, and constructed from Bath stone

## Charitable status

We decided some time ago that it would be favourable to constitute ourselves as a charity. There are some important advantages associated with this: an increased level of trust, with many people being more inclined to give their money or time to a registered charity than to an unregulated organisation. Similarly, many suppliers and other organisations will give preferential treatment to registered charities. Registered charities also enjoy a range of tax benefits, and can make use of the Gift Aid system which enables us to increase the value of donations made by UK taxpayers.

Of course, this also legally obliges us to operate solely within the parameters established in our governing document, but this presents no problems for us. Our registered objects are:

*The restoration and preservation for the public benefit of the canopy to the footbridge at Bradford on Avon railway station, a Grade II listed railway heritage site designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.*

Since registration as a charity, we have opened a bank account in our name, instead of relying on the goodwill of the Preservation Trust's treasurer. We have also developed a risk register, as recommended by the Charity Commission to help ensure the project runs smoothly.

## Our patron

Another important step that followed on from our desire

to escalate our profile was to seek a patron to help lend credibility to our cause and get us noticed in the media. We wanted someone well-known and respected in the field in which we are working, so were delighted when Lord Faulkner of Worcester expressed his willingness to act as our patron. Lord Faulkner is an active member and Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, where he serves on a number of parliamentary committees. He is also vice-chairman of the All-Party Group on Industrial Heritage and has a lifelong interest in railways and railway heritage – he came to our attention particularly because many of us knew of his work as the president of the Heritage Railway Association. We could not have found a more suitable person to be our patron, and look forward to welcoming him to Bradford on Avon when his busy schedule permits.

## Fundraising

There has been a great deal of preparatory work done during the past five years, including meeting and negotiating with Network Rail and First Great Western (latterly Great Western Railways) to obtain the assurances that money spent on design work would not be wasted. We have subsequently received a grant of £15,000 from Great Western Railway Ltd to conduct the feasibility design work. This grant – provided under the GWR Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) – is in two tranches of £7,500. We've already had the first but the second is dependent on a

## IFORD MANOR GARDENS

The Cartwright-Hignett family welcomes you to Iford's Grade-I Italian-style gardens, famous for their tranquil beauty. Home of the Edwardian designer Harold Peto from 1899-1933, the unique and romantic hillside landscape is characterised by terraces, ponds, sculpture & spectacular views.

**Open:** 11am – 4pm (last entry 3.30pm)

April to September: Wednesday to Sunday (& BH Mon)

October: Sundays only

Homemade cakes and a selection of drinks available.

Cream teas also served at weekends.

**Admission:** Adults £6; Concessions £5.20

Children under 2 are free

**Groups:** Welcome by appointment only.

WINNER – 2017 Group Travel Awards – Little Treasure of Britain

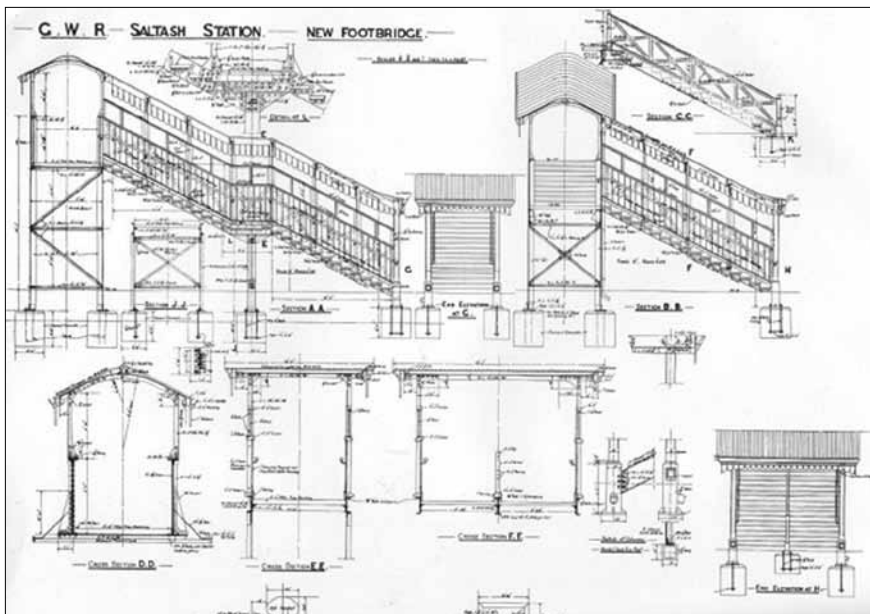
**Location:** 2 miles SW of Bradford-on-Avon  
BA15 2BA

Tel: 01225 863146 - Email: [info@ifordmanor.co.uk](mailto:info@ifordmanor.co.uk)

[www.ifordmanor.co.uk](http://www.ifordmanor.co.uk) Instagram: @ifordmanor







The 1907 drawings for the footbridge at Saltash, Cornwall, showing the canopy in place; right, the Bradford on Avon footbridge has been repainted in the traditional Great Western Railway colours, Dark Stone and Light Stone

successfully completed report from Oxford Architects, an accredited company experienced in this sort of heritage work on Network Rail. They have now completed design work to the Network Rail GRIP 3 concept design stage. This will deliver, among other things, a completed listed building planning permission application. (GRIP stands for Governance for Railway Investment Projects; it is the Network Rail project management process for when third parties work on Network Rail assets). We have also received a significant donation from a local supporter, plus valuable grants from the Secret Gardens committee, all of which we are grateful for and which will help us move on to GRIP 6, which is the mobilisation stage – getting ready to start once we have selected a fabricator.

## The design

As well as retaining Oxford Architects, we are fortunate in receiving the assistance of independent engineering expert David Redfern, who has a track record on both national and heritage railways. Before moving on to detailed design work, it was necessary to commission a topographical survey, and the report was delivered at the end of last year. This came with many detailed graphical images of the site and the footbridge.

One of the key aspects is how the canopy is going to be built. There are two ways we might be able to erect the canopy; one is to obtain a series of possessions overnight between the hours of midnight and 4am when trains don't normally run, and installing the structure in stages. However, this would be very complex to plan and operate, it would extend the installation process and it would be expensive in terms of the installation cost.

The alternative would be to have everything ready and waiting for a time when Network Rail themselves took possession of the line, as they did recently for a week, and install the canopy in one go. This, of course, is our favoured option.

## The final cost

We don't yet know what the total project will cost as we need to finalise the design before we can get it fully costed. This will be the first time a new canopy has been installed over part of the Network Rail network (though it has been done over heritage railways) and it will be interesting to see what prices are tendered. Producing the design to the GRIP 6 stage will cost getting on for £45,000, of which we have already raised about £37,000, so in the short term we need to raise a further £8,000.

Getting the canopy made and installed will cost much more. We will be seeking grant aid for that, but before we can obtain these grants we need to get to that crucial GRIP 6 stage. The Railway Heritage Trust remain very supportive of the project and are committed in principle to offering a major grant towards build and installation costs. The remainder of the cost will be up to us to raise in a variety of ways.

## Keeping people informed

We have launched a website – [footbridgecanopyproject.org](http://footbridgecanopyproject.org) – designed to raise awareness of our project and to keep people informed of progress. It also allows supporters to donate online. Once we have an accurate estimate of the final cost we will launch our public appeal for funds and pursue match-funding from various grant bodies. In the meantime, supporters can donate via our website, which will allow us to raise the initial funding needed to complete the design. Once this is done we can then determine the overall cost and move onto the construction and installation.

Any support you can give us will be very gratefully received; in addition to financial support, we are looking for people who can help provide our team with skills such as technical project management, those with Network Rail experience, and anyone with fundraising expertise.

## Talk: 'All those weeds in the river'

The prolific plant life on the banks of the River Avon was the subject of Dave Green's coffee morning talk to the Preservation Trust

Local botanist, Dave Green, returned to the Priory Barn for an enlightening talk – this time about our river, the Bristol Avon and the wealth of life in and alongside it.

In past times, the Avon was an important resource for agriculture and industry – everything was poured into it, and the river just took it away (for others to deal with).

For its 75-mile journey to Bristol it is a glorious, clean wildlife corridor, providing a home and source of food to kingfishers, otters (both seen regularly in and around the Bradford stretch) and a host of other creatures. Sea trout, barbel, chubb and eels are all present, and the river also supports internationally important bat populations. The Avon is vital for their survival – whether in, above or beside it.

The talk illustrated the huge variety of plants, some indigenous and some introduced, that provide habitat and food for wildlife and many that have historically had important medicinal uses.

The roots of the **reedmace** or **bulrush** have had a rich variety of uses. They could be cooked as a vegetable, rather like a potato, and used medicinally to treat kidney stones, abscesses, and cancer in the lymphatic system. The leaves were used for making paper, while the downy hairs of the fruit, after soaking, were used for stuffing pillows and lining babies' nappies.

The rare **Loddon pondweed**, a red data list plant, is found in the Bristol Avon.

One plant that does grow readily along our waterways is the **hemlock water dropwort** – the most poisonous plant in the UK, in that it has poisoned more people than any other plant. It is quite an attractive plant with a sweet parsley-like smell – but don't be deceived, it is deadly. The term 'sardonic grin', a rictus reaction, relates to this plant's effect when used as a poison; it was coined from its use in Sardinia to kill off criminals and the old!

A number of botanical 'thugs' – problem non-native



Pretty deadly: hemlock water dropwort has poisoned more people in the UK than any other plant

plants – also grow readily by the river. Most prolific is the **Himalayan balsam**. First recorded in Wiltshire in 1931 (it was brought to Europe in 1835), the plant has spread tremendously in recent years. Dave told us the species is classified as a noxious weed and included under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act; it is therefore an offence to plant or otherwise cause the species to grow in the wild. It's easy to pull up (before it comes into flower) because it has shallow roots.

A recent invasion along the canal is the **orange balsam** – uncommon for a long time, now expanding dramatically.

**Giant hogweed**, classified similarly to the Himalayan balsam, was introduced from Russia in the 19th century.

To sum up – Dave stressed that the value of the Avon, in ecological terms, is a huge corridor that funnels wildlife through our town. We must support, preserve and improve that important resource by retaining these diverse habitats throughout the urban area, and not allow them to be cut.

*Kate Nicholls*



Commonly found along the banks of the River Avon, from left, the bullrush or reedmace; meadowsweet, and the increasingly common – and invasive – orange balsam



## Going green? A solution to a town centre eyesore

The Preservation Trust attempted unsuccessfully to get a number of unsightly refuse bins opposite the Co-op removed several years ago having received numerous complaints from residents and visitors about them.

These bins were visually intrusive and of unpleasant appearance in this sensitive area. Wiltshire Council's Highways department told us they were not on public land and not their responsibility. Wiltshire's Enforcement Team were unable to assist as this area of the Kingston Mill site was not covered by any planning condition. The developer appeared uninterested but told us some of the bins belonged to businesses unrelated to the development! So why didn't they tell them to remove them?

I'm pleased to report that some local residents and businesses, with the support of the management company, have at last secured the removal of these bins and their replacement with planters.

It is important that this area becomes an attractive and uncluttered space and that perhaps something can be done to combat traffic fumes. A green living wall (plants fixed vertically to form a dense mat) attached to the building adjacent to this area is now proposed. The end wall of this unlisted building is itself not especially attractive, being of a cement rendered finish. The living wall in this location could potentially enhance the visual amenity, provide thermal insulation to the building and even help combat CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Preservation Trust has tentatively offered its support subject to seeing the detail to ensure the character of the historic environment is preserved. The proposals will require planning permission, are costly to install and there will be an on-going maintenance requirement. However,

we have said we will consider a financial contribution towards the costs in the event of planning permission being granted.

There are reservations though due to the high cost both of installation and maintenance – a suggested £40,000 plus an annual maintenance fee of 10 per cent. Furthermore, if the plants are not properly maintained they could look untidy and create even greater problems. The green credentials for living walls are also questionable.

A more permanent solution requiring less maintenance might be to consider replacement of the cement render on this elevation with the insertion of windows and a shopfront at ground floor. Another alternative might be 'trompe l'oeil' with doors and windows painted on the facade, similar to the building in Roundstone Street, Trowbridge, which won a design award from West Wiltshire District Council. Or dare I even suggest some street art, such as a mural? Food for thought!

*Rosie MacGregor*



Low-maintenance alternatives to a green wall: award-winning trompe l'oeil in Roundstone Street, Trowbridge (above), and Bath Conservation Architects' shopfront and windows solution (left)



1-2 Moat Rd,  
West Wilts  
Trading Est,  
Westbury  
BA13 4JS

**OAKTREE**  
JOINERY LTD

sales@oaktreejoinery.co.uk  
Tel: 01373 858054  
Fax: 01373 610008

TIMBER  
DOORS

GARDEN ROOMS  
AND  
CONSERVATORIES

TIMBER  
WINDOWS



Visit our gallery of works and find out more on  
 [www.facebook.com/oaktreejoinery](http://www.facebook.com/oaktreejoinery)  
 OR [www.oaktreejoinery.co.uk](http://www.oaktreejoinery.co.uk)

## The Church Street Practice

15a Church Street, Bradford on Avon

*Qualified, registered and experienced  
practitioners of  
Complementary Healthcare*

Acupuncture  
 Massage Therapy  
 Osteopathy/Cranial Osteopathy  
 Counselling Psychotherapy  
 Shiatsu

**Telephone 01225 868282**

[www.churchstreetpractice.co.uk](http://www.churchstreetpractice.co.uk)

*Each of our practitioners offers an initial  
15 minute appointment, free of charge, should  
you wish to discuss whether a particular  
approach might be of help.*

## EX LIBRIS

- ◆ We stock a wide range of new books, including children's.
- ◆ Most books ordered before midday can be obtained the following day.
- ◆ Discounts for book groups and schools.
- ◆ Our Book Barn has thousands of second-hand books for sale, and we can conduct print searches for out-of-print items.
- ◆ We also stock Naxos CDs and greetings cards.

1 The Shambles  
 Bradford on Avon  
 Wiltshire  
 BA15 1JS  
 tel/fax: 01225 863595

## Geoffrey M. Saxty

Estate Agent, Lettings & Property Management



- Free, confidential, no obligation valuation service
- Residential sales and lettings
- Strategic marketing
- Large database of applicants
- Family firm
- Detailed local knowledge
- Member of NAEA and ARLA

Bradford on Avon's longest established independent estate agent

[info@geoffreysaxty.co.uk](mailto:info@geoffreysaxty.co.uk)

[www.geoffreysaxty.co.uk](http://www.geoffreysaxty.co.uk)

01225 864880

Georgian House 14 St Margaret's Street Bradford on Avon  
 Wiltshire BA15 1DA

## Planning matters: A speculative development

It was a worrying case of déjà vu when Redcliffe Homes submitted an outline planning application last autumn for a new development of up to 42 houses at Woolley, erroneously described as being at Cemetery Lane but with a new access road off Woolley Street. This speculative development would be on the same land as a previously withdrawn application. Our in-box, in something akin to an infestation of wood boring insects, was soon alive with emails from worried residents. The Preservation Trust shared their concerns.

The proposals were clearly contrary to planning policy for the area and unsustainable. We objected in the strongest possible terms to Wiltshire Council and received the perfect Christmas present when the council refused the application on 23 December for reasons that we fully support. However, we expect the applicants will Appeal this decision.

The entire site lies outside the established settlement boundary for the town in open countryside of which part is designated as a Local Green Space and would be harmed by construction of a roadway diagonally bisecting it. The development as a whole would have a significant urbanising impact, harmful to the character of the countryside and rural amenity with potential to harm wildlife resulting from loss of habitat and nuisance from street lighting and vehicle movements.

The town does not have the necessary infrastructure to support these additional dwellings and the proposals would result in severe traffic congestion and harm to highway safety. The highway network in the Woolley area is sub-standard and already under pressure. Woolley Street is inherently unsuitable for the additional traffic that would arise from additional dwellings.

As you would expect of the Preservation Trust we object to any proposals likely to harm the historic environment. The harm to the setting of the adjoining Conservation Area and buildings listed as of local interest such as those in Crown Court should not be underestimated. These cottages form the backdrop to the adjoining fields and mark the extent of historic development in the town and their setting as well as the rural setting of the town must be maintained.

### Bellway Homes

We had invested a considerable amount of time raising our concerns with Wiltshire Council about potential harm to the ecology during building works. We have now received confirmation from the council that they are taking steps to ensure that all matters are adequately addressed.

*Rosie MacGregor*

*Chair, Preservation Trust Planning Committee*

## A mystery solved

The abundance of springs and underground watercourses in and around Bradford on Avon has always been a bit of a mystery as they have never been accurately plotted. I did undertake a project on this back in the 1980s but it proved, contrary to the direction of water flow, something of an uphill struggle! My results were reported in a previous edition of *Guardian Angel* (No 14) back then and were instrumental in the decision to restore the Newtown Spout.

Given that we live in a limestone area it is hardly surprising that water will disappear and re-emerge in different places as it erodes the permeable rock. However, something very strange occurred last summer when the unfailing natural water supply to some ponds, garden taps, troughs, waterfalls and streams in properties below Newtown suddenly ceased as if a valve had been turned off. The Preservation Trust was consulted as these are so much an historic feature of the townscape. A gradual loss of water might have been expected during the hot weather – after all, the river was particularly low – but not such a sudden stop.

What we did know was that water to these properties comes from tanks in the Conduit House on Newtown, the site of the original Lady Well, via a network of pipes



and conduits installed by the Methuen family in the 17th century. It is even suggested that some of this pipework dates back to Roman times.

The mystery was finally solved after heavy rainfall when one of the tanks overflowed. It transpired that there was a temporary blockage in the Conduit House preventing water from entering the system. The blockage was removed and flow successfully restored!

*Rosie MacGregor*



## Free and confidential valuation service

To arrange an appointment, with no obligation, telephone **01225 867591** or call in to our **Silver Street offices** - we would be delighted to meet you.

### BRADFORD ON AVON

The Old Printing Office, 28 Silver Street,  
Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire BA15 1JY

T: 01225 867591 F: 01225 867449  
[bradford@kingstons.biz](mailto:bradford@kingstons.biz)

[www.kingstons.biz](http://www.kingstons.biz)

Opening doors since 1994



# A HISTORIC SETTING FOR YOUR SPECIAL EVENT

meetings • parties • receptions  
exhibitions • recitals

WEST BARN, Barton Farm  
(also licensed for civil weddings)

PRIORY BARN, Newtown

[www.bradfordheritage.co.uk/venuehire.html](http://www.bradfordheritage.co.uk/venuehire.html)



## Hens' Orchard wassail 2020

A large crowd gathered by the Tithe Barn for our fourth annual Wassail ceremony on 25 January. A warm and lively atmosphere was created by a blazing fire-basket on the green, a group of local musicians performed traditional English tunes, mulled cider was served from the stall of our neighbours at Iford Cider and spiced apple cake was given to all-comers in the West Barn.

Starting at 4pm – an hour earlier than usual – and blessed with good weather, we saw probably our biggest gathering to date, with numbers estimated at 200 or more.

It was extremely gratifying to see among an audience of widely varying ages, a large number of families with young children who displayed obvious enjoyment of the entertainments on offer, especially the Morris dancing and the lively Mummers' Play.

New this year was the inclusion of the local Birch Tree traditional folk choir, led by Emily Heuvel, who boosted our communal singing with their fine harmonies and gave us several special songs as well. We were also fortunate in having Ren Osmond, a young local girl, to act as joint Wassail Princess alongside Juno from the Widcombe Mummers' Group.

Another first was the surprising and amusing creature that joined the merry-making in the form of a traditional horned beast, or 'Broad', created and operated by Keith Leighton; the children were especially entertained by its naughty antics. Its ox-like appearance, made from bicycle handlebars and saddle with flashing lamp eyeballs, suggested a link with Bradford's Moulton cycle works as well as giving a nod to the well-known Picasso sculpture.



The horned figure of the Broad was a mischievous presence at this year's Wassail celebrations outside the Tithe Barn



Children enthusiastically poured cider on the apple tree roots and hung toast from the branches

This year we again welcomed the impressive Musket Man, John Martin, from the English Civil War Society to start and end, with loud shots, the Hullabaloo in the Orchard to ward off evil spirits and harmful bugs. Our stewards invited many eager children to pour cider on the tree roots and hang toast in the branches to feed the robins, traditional guardians of orchards. The assembled crowd joined the entertainers to perform the usual traditional chants to encourage the trees to fruit well next season.

It was heart-warming to see Amanda Relph among the crowd, linking the Orchard with its origins, as it was her late husband Simon whose idea it was to plant the community orchard here seven years ago.

Making the organisation easier this year, we enjoyed our own LED floodlights sourced and mounted by the industrious and inventive Brian Elliott. Also, we had our own magnificent fire-basket sourced by our ever-supportive chairman, John Potter. We were delighted to have good coverage by the *Wiltshire Times* – with a great set of photos.

Finally, thanks are due to Paige Balas, Frances Nevin, Rosie McGregor, Kate Nicholls, Kate Larard, David Cowles and the stalwart volunteer stewards, helpers and cake-makers, including members and non-members of the Trust, without whom the event could not take place. Thanks also to David Parsons for the photos used on this page.

Waes Hael – until next year – Saturday 23 January!

*Nick Nicholls (Organiser and MC)*

**"Thank heaven! You organised everything. I could not have managed without you."**

If you're thinking of moving house, winter is a great time to get the ball rolling – because a successful move is all about the planning and preparation.

We provide a friendly, local & practical home finding and move management service, including:

- decluttering
- selling/disposing of unwanted goods
- organising utilities
- renovation project management
- house clearance ... and much more!

Call Sara Milward-Oliver today for a free consultation.

Telephone: 01225 868692 / 07968 213510

sara@tailormaderelocation.co.uk

www.tailormaderelocation.co.uk/testimonials

  
**tailormaderelocation**  
taking the stress out of moving home

## SECRET GARDENS 2020

Don't forget that Bradford on Avon's Secret Gardens will be open on Sunday 31 May and Sunday 28 June. This long-standing event supports local good causes that aim to beautify the town; last year, among other things, we have made a healthy donation toward replanting bulbs on the grass verges

## Diary

### Trust Meetings

Wednesday 18 March – Priory Barn

Dementia Friend Awareness Session with Jennie Parker

This talk is free and for Trust members only.

The Dementia Action Alliance for BoA want the town to be dementia friendly but there is a lot of work to be done. Once members have completed a session, the Trust can join this alliance. This is an interesting, thought-provoking and interactive session. We hope you can join us.

Coffee and biscuits at 10.30am; session starts at 11.00

### Other Trust Events

Sunday 7 June: Trust Members' Afternoon Party  
3.00 – 6.00pm at the West Barn

Trust Community Garden Party in Barton Farmyard

More details about these two events will be available at a later date

### Non-Trust Events

Bradford on Avon Arts Association

Meetings held at Wallington Hall, Church Street,  
7.30pm, £3-£5

Sunday 5 April: Paul Chapman – Sorolla and his Contemporaries

Sunday 3 May: Peter Hayes – A Globe-Trotting Potter

*Guardian Angel* is published three times a year. It is distributed free to member households, to Wiltshire Council, Bradford on Avon Town Council and to local and national conservation bodies. Copies are also for sale at Ex Libris bookshop, The Shambles, Bradford on Avon. Back copies can be found at [www.bradfordheritage.co.uk/guardianangel.php](http://www.bradfordheritage.co.uk/guardianangel.php)

We are glad to receive contributions from Trust members and from non-members. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policies of the Trust's Council of Management. **Please send typed, drawn or photographic contributions, in electronic form, to [guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk](mailto:guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk), by 29 May 2020** for inclusion in the summer issue of *Guardian Angel*.

Advertisements are accepted from reputable concerns in good faith: members should satisfy themselves of the advertisers' competence. For details of advertising contact [guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk](mailto:guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk)

Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust welcomes new members. Please contact Ann Dix, Membership Secretary, Silver Street House, Silver Street, Bradford on Avon BA15 1JY (01225 865733 – this is an answerphone) or go to the membership page on the Trust's website: [www.bradfordheritage.co.uk](http://www.bradfordheritage.co.uk)

This edition of *Guardian Angel* was edited by Joceline Bury. We are grateful to her, to David and Jo Parkes who arrange distribution, to all those in Bradford on Avon who deliver copies and, above all, to our contributors, without whom *Guardian Angel* could not exist.

BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST LTD. SILVER STREET HOUSE, SILVER STREET, BRADFORD ON AVON  
[www.bradfordheritage.co.uk](http://www.bradfordheritage.co.uk)

Founded to maintain, foster and encourage the particular character and scenic, historic and architectural value of buildings and lands in the town of Bradford on Avon.

Registered at Companies House, Cardiff, under the Companies Act 1985. Registered company No. 787389. Registered Charity No. 245611.  
Printed by TPM Ltd, Farrington Gurney, Somerset









