



GUARDIAN ANGEL

NEWS FROM BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST

Notes from the Chair

One of Bradford on Avon's own, at least for the past 48 years, has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's birthday honours for his services to the community. So, really well done, congratulations and three cheers for Phil Courage.

Phil works with Wiltshire Children's Breakaway, a charity set up to provide holidays for disadvantaged children. Most of us will know him best, though, for his work as a performer, director, stage manager, set designer and builder for countless shows by The Bradfordians. And we should all be grateful for his successful efforts to lay on a proper electricity supply to the Tithe Barn some years ago.

I once approached Phil with an idea for an annual Bradford panto. I explained that each production could include a short scene featuring a full council meeting, with all 12 town councillors (played by themselves), sitting around the big table and discussing an agenda item which they clearly don't agree on. The meeting descends into arguing and shouting "Oh no it isn't!" "Oh yes it is", etc, etc. Then, on the cue of the timeless warning – "It's behind you!" – the audience join in the shouting and throw whatever they have been given to chuck at the

players. I'm afraid Phil declined the suggestion, which probably shows that just because you have an idea, it may not be a good one.

At the moment it's not just holidays that disadvantaged children need. The Hub operates the food bank from the old HSBC building in Church Street, where the vault now houses the store of food to be given to those in need. Demand has increased over the year, with dozens of boxes given out during half term, and over 200 Christmas boxes due to be delivered. The Hub would like to add some Christmas joy into the next lot of boxes, toys, biscuits, Christmas puddings etc – all will be very gratefully received. The Hub is open from 10am to 1pm Monday to Friday. If you can help with anything, just pop along with your gift. They will be very pleased to see you.

The Preservation Trust has been happy to help out in the community this year. Early on we matched the contribution made by the Town Council to complete the funding needed to purchase Becky Addy Woods, below Westwood. Ten acres of semi-natural woodland of mostly mature broadleaf trees, its future is now secure.

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Just down the lane from the top of the woods is Avoncliff, with its medieval weir. At over 2m high, and with the river passing under the aqueduct in a much narrower and shallower channel than at the Town Bridge, the weir is of huge importance to the town: were it to fail, there would not be much Avon in Bradford on Avon.

The weir has been getting less secure over time and it was noticed that the large hole to the south side was getting a lot bigger and could be in danger of collapse. There were difficulties of all sorts involved, initially we agreed to look after money which would be collected from all and sundry to pay for it all. We were then asked to take on the project. That was a big ask and we were about to set off on the road to discover foolproof insurance when the Town Council decided that they could get properly involved. They took on an engineer, a design engineer and Bradford on Avon Community Emergency Volunteers, including the Mayor and another group who used the project as an exercise to practise working in water. Some 55 tons of sandbags were moved by river and manhandled into place and the whole thing was done in a month. The Trust kept its feet dry but contributed a decent sum towards the costs, and we now have a secure River Avon at the Town Bridge for at least the next five years. It's another "well done" to everybody, including us.

Our treasurer, David Cowles, on one of his runs noticed a public bench that had been properly repaired. On enquiry, he found out that the work had been done by members of the Bradford on Avon Men's Shed. The Men's Shed movement creates community spaces where men connect, converse and create. They help reduce loneliness and isolation – and sound like jolly good fun. The Men's Shed in Bradford is located at the Football Club on Trowbridge Road. We gave the group a grant of £1,000 and they will help us with some new noticeboards for the Tithe Barn area and other similar projects. They meet and get on with stuff weekly and are keen to meet new people: contact the Town Council on 01225 864240 to find out more.

The work to repair and paint windows at the Guides' building at the bottom of Priory Steps has been finished and follows on from the repointing of the gable end earlier in the year. The work was part-funded by the Preservation Trust through the Historic Buildings and Conservation Committee, which is advised by architect Colin Johns. Unlike most buildings used by the Guides, which are owned and looked after by the organisation, the very unusual one in Bradford is owned by the local group and they are responsible for it. It is a unique former workspace, once linked to the cloth industry. The top room is one large open space and there is evidence of a connection with next door, which is now a house.

This year's Remembrance Service was much reduced in terms of the number of people attending. No members of the public were present and the wreath layers were socially distanced in groups of six at intervals. It was all perfectly organised by James Crawford; thank you James! Our wreath, now in its third year, was again beautifully decorated by Jo Parkes, so many thanks to her. At the wreath laying, the Mayor pointed out that the war

memorial itself, built in 1922, is in need of a general tidy up with some minor repairs here and there. He is thinking about some community funding to get the work done in readiness for its centenary. I very much hope this will be something else we can help with.

The new Government White Paper on planning is causing much consternation: we have made comments on it, as has the Town Council. It's a good thing to get as many views as possible on something as important as this, and the thoughts of Rosie MacGregor and Colin Johns are included in this issue. I wanted to ask Cllr Sarah Gibson, an architect as well as a county and town councillor, but she is very busy and I failed to get in touch with her in time. However, she has offered a quick response by email from her Spanish office. She writes: "Although concerns over the White Paper are valid, some good points in it should be welcomed. Giving more emphasis to the Local Plan by encouraging consultation and decision-making at the design stage, rather than being on the backfoot and waiting for applications to come in, would be a good thing. The aim to deliver a planning system that is simpler to understand, easier to communicate as a visual online tool is all good. If this can be done while giving equal weight to the Local Plans we could have a clearer system that would allow small developers a greater chance of competing with the volume house builders."

About 18 months ago, young Sam, working in Gilou's, asked me: "What is Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust for?" I posed the question in *Guardian Angel* but didn't get a response. The same question has recently been asked again, this time by a more mature person – a member, in fact. We can't go around buying up unused and collapsing buildings, it's not 1965 any more, nobody is going to ask us to take old, crumbling houses off their hands. As I see it, we can offer help, and sometimes financial assistance for community buildings. We have just produced the Bradford on Avon design guide which gives advice to newcomers to listed buildings when they inevitably come to make changes and carry out repairs. We help the town with our involvement, and our planning committee comments on local planning applications. If you would like to tell us what you think the Preservation Trust should be doing, please get in touch at hello@bradfordheritage.co.uk

At last, some good news: Ian Benford has spent the last few days removing the horrible pointing from the upstairs of the Priory Barn. All traces of concrete will disappear, to be replaced by the correct shade of lime mortar chosen by Rosie. It's taken a while to get here but it will be finished in a few days, ready for when it reopens in 2021.

The next bit of good news is that as I write this it seems very likely that a Covid-19 vaccine has been discovered and will start to be made available towards the end of this year. Hooray for science.

Have a jolly as possible Christmas and an even jollier New Year.

John Potter, Chairman

Planning Matters: A green light for deregulation?

Rosie MacGregor and Colin Johns consider the implications of the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper, published in August this year

These are radical reforms to the planning system and are focused on the provision of housing. The proposals would end the current system which the government claims creates delays and barriers that prevent housing development. It is my view that so-called 'land-banking' by developers, with some 1 million permissions currently unbuilt, is a far more serious problem than any delays in the existing planning process.

We are currently facing the worst housing crisis for generations, with rising house prices, fewer affordable homes and many people facing poverty, insecurity and an uncertain future in sub-standard private rented accommodation. All this exacerbated by the repercussions of the current Covid-19 pandemic and potential for even greater numbers of homeless people.

The proposals would fast-track development and further extend deregulation that would, in my opinion, fail to deliver the wide range of housing we urgently need in this country. We need sustainable, affordable and age-friendly housing that can be adapted to individual needs. The need for affordable homes to rent for people of all ages within mixed sustainable communities has never been greater. Yet the emphasis of the proposed changes would ensure huge returns to the private-sector house builders while predictably creating costly sub-standard housing without the necessary infrastructure to sustain it. It has been described by others as a 'developers' charter'.

It isn't just social housing that is at risk, although clearly the implication is that housing associations, particularly in rural areas, which are reliant on Section 106 contributions towards social housing and Community Infrastructure Levies, would be disproportionately affected by a new flat-rate levy. Furthermore, small housing sites will be exempt from the levy.

The document is focused on increasing the quantity of housing provision rather than the quality of house design. There is a real fear that the proposals will result in even more bland speculative housing development repeated across the country and developers only interested in maximising profit by building large detached dwellings for which there is a greater market value.

The requirement for local authorities to produce Design Codes may be welcome, provided these codes respect local features and respond to the character of the area.

The main thrust of the White Paper is to create 3 land use categories or zones – Growth Areas, Renewal Areas and Protected Areas which would be identified in Local Plans prepared by the local authority.

The timescale for implementation of the proposals is far too short. In the current economic climate councils are underfunded and are currently without the necessary

financial resources and experienced staff for such a massive change in policy requiring the production of detailed plans within a very short space of time.

Substantial development with deemed outline permission would be permitted in growth areas and in renewal areas even greater density development and infilling would be automatically approved as permitted development. The likely result would be poor quality, high density and unsustainable design despite claims to the contrary. Protected Areas are those that by reason of specific characteristics would justify more stringent control including Green Belts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas, Local Wildlife Sites, areas of significant flood risk and important areas of green space. Development in these areas would require a full planning application.

The proposals would take away much of the decision making power from local councils to the detriment of local democracy and the ability of communities and members of the public to make comment on schemes.

The aim that homes should be carbon neutral by 2050, given the speed of climate change is less than impressive and should be significantly shorter.

Neighbourhood Plans will be retained and this is supported as are proposals for stronger enforcement powers.

I don't believe there is too much to fear from the White Paper in Bradford on Avon because much of our town is Conservation Area with designated green spaces and surrounded by Green Belt on the edge of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As such we would be a Protected Area. However, we still need to be wary of deregulation and dilution of the planning process and the impact of development outside protected areas on their setting.

An even greater pressure in our town will be the legislation that now allows offices and shops under permitted development rights to be converted to residential use without the need for planning permission. Apart from creating sub-standard housing, this can only have a detrimental impact on the local economy and sustainability. The government must recognise that this is not the answer to providing much-needed new housing. Members of our Preservation Trust Planning Committee have already responded to the White Paper and we are concerned that the proposals, if carried, will result in loss of local democratic control. We have also commented that we are surprised that there is virtually no reference to the historic environment.

*Rosie MacGregor,
Chair, Preservation Trust Planning Committee*

The Government tells us it intends to tear up the 1947 Town and Country rule book and start again. “Not more fiddling around the edges, not simply painting over the damp patches, but levelling the foundations and building, from the ground up, a whole new planning system for England.”

This indicates that ministers either do not understand what the Town and Country pioneers set out to do in 1947 or they deliberately seek to misrepresent their achievements. The situation before 1947 of unchecked ribbon development and desecration of the countryside is vividly portrayed by Clough Williams-Ellis in *England and the Octopus* and he was not alone. The remedy was the 1947 Act which was presented on the basis that:

The objects of town and country planning are becoming increasingly understood and accepted. Primarily, they are to secure a proper balance between the competing demands for land, so that all the land of the country is used in the best interests of the whole people. This is especially necessary in these small, densely populated islands. More than ever, there is today heavy pressure on our limited supply of land. And many of the demands on the use of our land are conflicting. Some must result in more land being brought into development; for example, the housing programme, including the clearance of slums and the rebuilding of blitzed areas, the redevelopment of obsolete and badly laid out areas; the dispersal of population and industry from our large, overcrowded cities to new towns under the New Towns Act. Then there are the re-equipment of industry, the expansion of the social services, particularly the new schools, on present day standards, the construction of new and wider roads and airfields. Again, the House is very familiar with the post-war needs of the Service Departments for land for training and experimental purposes. All these involve the use of additional land. On the other hand, town and country planning must preserve land from development. A high level of agricultural production is vital. More land must be kept for forestry. We have to see that our mineral resources – both surface and underground – are properly developed and are not unnecessarily sterilised by erecting buildings on the surface. And it is important to safeguard the beauty of the countryside and coast-line, especially now that holidays with pay will enable more people to enjoy them, and because we must develop the tourist industry as a source of foreign exchange.

All this involves sterilisation of land, and these conflicting demands for land must be dovetailed together. If each is considered in isolation, the common interest is bound to suffer. Housing must be

so located in relation to industry that workers are not compelled to make long, tiring and expensive journeys to and from work. Nor must our already large towns be permitted to sprawl, and expand, so as to eat up the adjacent rural areas and make access to the countryside and to the amenities in the centre of the town more difficult. Green belts must be left round towns, and the most fertile land must be kept for food production. The continued drift from the countryside must be arrested. Today, four-fifths of our people live in towns, and the rural population is declining. We have, in the past, neglected the planning of our villages and allowed some of the most beautiful of them to be spoiled by wholly inappropriate development. Life in the countryside must be made more convenient, and its attractiveness maintained.

House of Commons 29 January 1947
Hansard volume 432 cc947-1075

There is little doubt that the existing planning system is too complex, too difficult to understand, and wasteful of resources and that it now fails to deliver genuinely sustainable high quality development. It also provides a route for vested interests to dominate the process, especially the volume house builders. We therefore need to take a serious look at how to improve the development process and take into account the many needs of today to provide a properly sustainable future for all.

On the positive side, since 1947 we have achieved protection for much of our countryside and for the best of our historic buildings, villages, towns and cities. We have been much less successful in producing high quality development and have allowed the car to dictate the pattern of development and, for many, to dominate the way in which they are expected to live.

The White Paper tells us that “Thanks to our planning system, we have nowhere near enough homes in the right places”. It may be a good slogan but it is simply not true. Certainly we do not have enough houses, but the decline in house building started 50 years ago. Prior to that, housing was produced 50/50 by the public and private sectors but once the public sector was removed from the process the decline set in and today many live in substandard and expensive dwellings.

The question that we need to ask is: will the reforms set out in the White Paper produce a world that we can be proud to leave for future generations? Sadly, there is no evidence that it will. The White Paper is big on process but deficient in defining outcomes. In other words, it lacks vision. It may be full of fine words, but will these be translated into genuinely sustainable, attractive and efficient places to live? As yet, the evidence is not there.

Colin Johns

'To meet the spiritual needs of the the northern districts of the town'

Anne Willis adds some further notes to the history of Christ Church and its clock

Christ Church, Bradford on Avon, was built as a Chapel of Ease to Holy Trinity in 1842 'to meet the spiritual needs of the northern districts of the town'.¹ The Vicar of Holy Trinity, the Rev Henry Harvey, also felt the need for a second church in Bradford, as Holy Trinity was then in a parlous state.

As originally built, Christ Church was a rectangular building with no differentiation between nave and chancel. There was a west end gallery, and the tower – which was not in the original plan – was added during the building. It was all very plain and a photo in the church shows the building as it was at the time.

By the 1870s the need was felt for something more elaborate, and an extension to the chancel area, together with a vestry, was proposed. In 1877 the *Trowbridge & North Wilts Advertiser* (A Weekly Newspaper for the Million)² reported on the progress of the proposed chancel and the vestry:

24 February 1877: Tenders are being invited from several builders for the erection of a new chancel at Christ Church. Sir Gilbert Scott is the architect of the proposed work, and estimates are to be sent in shortly.

17 March 1877: CHURCH ALTERATIONS – The following are the tenders sent in for the proposed new chancel and vestry for Christ Church:- Messrs. Mullings (Devizes) £1,794; Bladwell (Bath) £1,950; Smith (Trowbridge) £1,943 16s 8d; Long (Bradford) £1,877. The result is not at present known.

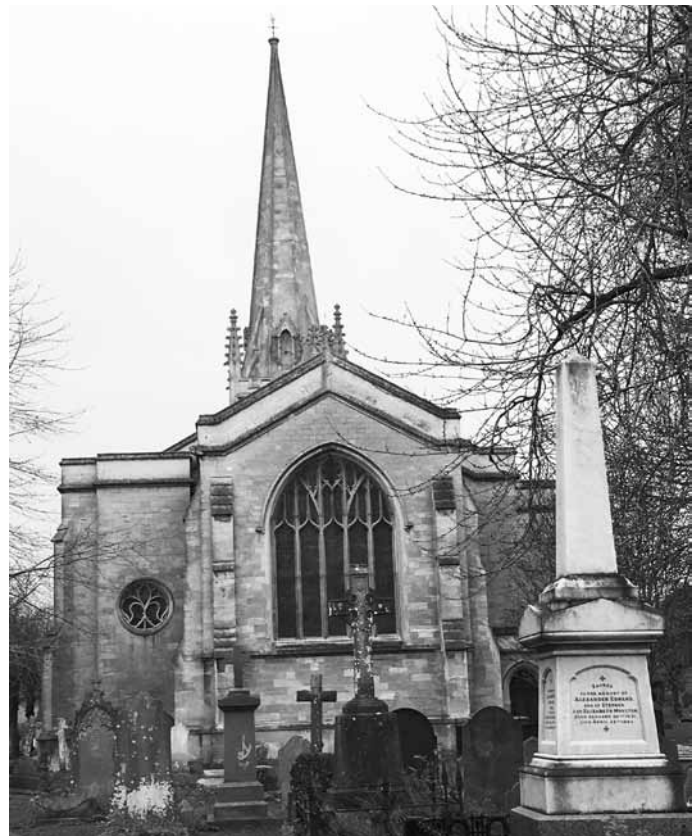
2 March 1878: OPENING OF THE NEW CHANCEL AT CHRIST CHURCH

On Thursday (Feb 28th) ... opened with a public service. ... The old east window ... divided and placed in north and east chancel walls. The new east window was provided at the expense of the Bailward family. The work was done by F&G Brown of Frome at a cost of around £1,800³ of which £1,700 was already raised.

The organ is by William Sweetland – 'the eminent organ builder of Bath' – and was installed in 1878, apparently at the west end of the church, perhaps where the ringing gallery now is. It was moved to an organ chamber on the north side which was added in 1891. It was not the only Sweetland organ in the area. He built others for the Congregational Church (now the URC), Farleigh Hungerford and Freshford. Sweetland's 1870 organ for Holy Trinity was replaced by the current Henry Willis III organ in 1926.

Further research at the Record Office uncovered the following anecdote concerning the alterations:

Canon Harvey [Vicar of Bradford] also was the means of building the new Church of Christ Church; that is now, through the genius of Sir Gilbert Scott, and the generosity of its Vicar and his parishioners, so beautiful



Christ Church from Mount Pleasant, showing the first clock dial, installed in the late 1850s

a sanctuary. Originally it was built on the oblong type, a small projection at the east end, unroofed, formed a quasi-chancel; and immediately behind the altar was a lavatory. Bishop Hamilton told me that he preached in the church at its consecration by Bishop Denison, whose chaplain he then was; but the echo was so great, that hardly a word of his sermon was distinctly heard.

Reminiscences of thirty-five years
Canon WH Rich Jones

The clock was installed by the late 1850s, and the *Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser* tells the story.

CHRIST CHURCH:- In October 1857, a few working men met together to consider how they might devise a plan to furnish the locality with a good church clock, then a great want as the parish church clock [Holy Trinity] had ceased to go, and there being no church rate out of which funds could be procured to repair it, the time was a perfect blank to the inhabitants. This want was mentioned to the Rev H Harvey, the late incumbent who built the church, and he willingly added £2 to the £10 2s 6d which was then in hand towards a clock. This became the nucleus of the fund which has since been gathered towards the object. The matter was afterward taken up by the succeeding incumbent, the Rev R W Popham. The committee has since laboured strenuously and raised

£147 11s 1d up to the present time. The original sum at which a clock was estimated was £100 but it was found that a good clock could not be obtained at that sum. When a sufficient sum was collected, the order was given to Mr Waite, of Malmesbury, and the clock was erected. The good service it has done to the inhabitants of the locality is known and valued by them. It now only remains to wipe off the balance. The clock has cost £177 13s 5d [nearly £17,000] the balance due is £30 2s 4d. The committee appeal to the gentry and public of Bradford for subscriptions to discharge the debt. Subscriptions will be received by Mr Charles Wallis. We might enlarge on the merits of the clock, but we would rather it would speak for itself.

The following verses appear at the end of the report:

CHRIST CHURCH CLOCK

THE CLOCK'S ADDRESS TO ITS FRIENDS

My thanks are due my friends to you
 For pointers box and dial;
 And let me thank the maker too,
 For I am done in style.
 And when the midnight shades shall fall,
 And all around is still;
 From Christ Church tower, I'll strike the hour,
 And sound it o'er the hill.
 And when the fiery king of day,
 Ascends his golden car,
 I'll strike the hour, be what it may,
 And send the sounds afar.
 And as heaven's charioteer ascends
 The burning noonday height,
 I'll point the hour with both my hands
 And strike the numbers right.
 And as he rides through golden clouds
 The western line to gain;
 I'll point the moment that he shrouds,
 His glories in the main.
 So life declines and mortals find
 Their resting place - the tomb,
 Then let me warn you all to turn
 And flee the wrath to come.
 The Bible tells you where to flee
 And bids you not delay;
 Tomorrow's in eternity,
 Along with yesterday.

By 9 June 1860 a second dial had been added to the clock of this church on the east side towards Woolley, "which will prove to be of much convenience to persons on that side." [*Trowbridge Advertiser*]

When installed, the clock face would have been a novelty in Bradford, as the only other public clock at the time, at Holy Trinity, has never had a face: an indication of its very old installation, certainly before it was shattered in a lightning strike on 16 January 1610/11.

From the *Wiltshire Times & Trowbridge Advertiser: A Weekly Newspaper for The Western Counties*:

26 July 1879: Christ Church clock out of order for want of cleaning.

17 February 1883: Christ Church clock was being ruined by the wet. A 'Church Mouse' respectfully requested something should be done.

The rain and snow still get into the belfry and are blown into the bells. Cold water coming through the rope hole and on to the ringer is no fun!

On 3 February 1961 the *Wiltshire Times* reported that "Christ Church clock may strike no more [as an] electric mechanism proposed", and a month later reported an "Anonymous gift towards the clock".

The 'electric mechanism' was installed by Smiths of Derby who regularly maintained the clock until some years ago. Access to the clock is by ladders through the bells, so the ringers had to ensure the clock man's safety by making sure the bells were safe, letting him in and remaining during any work. The ringers also had the task of putting the clock forward for summer time, and back again in October, and restarting the clock when it stopped after power cuts. This was slightly hazardous as the mechanism could be flipped the wrong way so the clock went backwards! It is a sadness to the ringers that the clock has been so neglected of recent years, and suggestions have been made concerning funding for its restoration.

The clock presumably originally struck on the single bell that was hung in the tower when the church was built. The architect specified that this bell, which weighed 600lb (272kg), be supplied by the Smith and hung by the Carpenter. In 1923 the *Wiltshire News* reported:

CHRIST CHURCH PEAL – The magnificent peal of bells and ringing gallery, the generous gift of Brig-Gen G LI Palmer to Christ Church has been installed and, with the exception of the Westminster Chimes is now complete. It was hoped the bells would have been dedicated by Christmas when they would have pealed forth their joyful Yuletide message, but unfortunately this has not been found possible and the ceremony will be performed by the Dean of wells (sic) on December 27th.

The bells are a memorial to the Llewellyn-Palmers' sons George, who died in 1911, and Allen, killed in 1916, and their nephew Felix Hanbury-Tracey, killed in action in 1914. The chiming hammers still lie on the belfry floor.

● *A History of the Parish and Church of Christ Church* by Ann D Chapman is available in the reference section of Bradford Library and gives many more details.

¹ Wiltshire VCH, VOL VII

² The *Trowbridge & North Wilts Advertiser*, established 3 May 1854, was incorporated with the *Wiltshire Times* on 1 May 1880. The *Wiltshire Independent*, established 13 November 1836, was incorporated with the newly established *Wiltshire Times* on 28 September 1876.

³ The cost of the building in today's terms is difficult to estimate. <https://www.measuringworth.com> suggests values of projects thus: real cost of the project is £192,700.00; labour cost of the project is £856,700.00; economic cost of the project is £3,332,000.00.

The day that the wall came down

In an ancient town half built on a hillside, collapsing walls are a hazard – and the fallout can be unexpectedly contentious, as Geoff Andrews recalls

Until 1971 there were two seats of power in Bradford on Avon, and they were barely a hundred metres apart as the crow flew (no doubt in yards in those days). They co-existed comfortably and co-operatively – almost all the time.

But there were a few weeks in the autumn of 1958 that tested that relationship seriously. It was all my fault, and it was embarrassing for the three people caught up in it.

The two seats of power were Bradford Urban District Council, with its offices in Westbury House, and the Bradford and Melksham Rural District Council, just across the river in Abbey House, Church Street.

The UDC dealt with everything Bradford, essentially the old parishes of Trinity and Christ churches. The RDC area stretched from Hilperton and Monkton Farleigh to Freshford.

The three people were the chairman of the RDC, Mr A R Gifford, to a lesser extent my father W J (Bill) Andrews, a UDC councillor, and me, as the apprentice *Wiltshire Times* reporter given the job of covering whatever news happened in Bradford (not much).

There are a couple of surveyors in the mix as well, only as walk-on parts, but it was they who started it all.

The contention began with the surveyor of the UDC noticing that the Grade II listed retaining wall of the RDC office, fronting on to Church Street, was bulging, and writing to his opposite number to advise him of this

and ask if they had noticed and what they planned to do about it.

It would at this stage be helpful to refer to the files of the *Wiltshire Times* as an *aide memoire* because I believe I wrote about it this early in the saga. But the bound volumes for 1958 and 1959 seem to have been lost from the Wiltshire Archives so, short of a visit to the British Library master archive in Lincolnshire, my word is the best you can expect.

The first sign of strain appeared with the RDC surveyor's reply, to the effect that there was nothing wrong with the wall, that the bulge was imaginary, and that they intended to do nothing.

Stalemate.

Two weeks later, on a Tuesday morning, I had been doing my rounds of the town, picking up fag ends of news, and as I was walking along Church Street, I found the road partly blocked by a significant part of the listed wall and many tons of the garden that it had been retaining. It had happened very recently.

My story of the collapse, after the initial exchange of views, was supposed to be satirical and dripping with irony. It is perhaps fortunate that those volumes were lost because it was probably just unfunny and would embarrass me to see it now.

Back then it was getting embarrassing for everyone involved.



The wall in question – and no trace of the repair, 60 years on



Mr Gifford was one of the nicest people I have ever met. He had become a family friend since my father established the Friends of Winsley Chest Hospital in about 1952, having seen the conditions at the hospital – then a TB sanatorium – when taking patients there as an

ambulance driver. Mr Gifford was

a great supporter, partly because his son had been treated at the hospital. Together they were working with others to raise enough money to build a hall and theatre at the hospital, an effort that won them plaudits from Lord Beveridge and Ian McLeod, then Health Secretary.

The catalyst, I believe was the Clerk of the RDC (what would now be the chief executive) who was deeply affronted by my story. There was no politics in the RDC; there didn't need to be because everyone was a shade of blue, including the officers (chosen by the Clerk), and here was this lefty pip-squeak of 18 poking fun at them in the local paper that all their supporters would have read (the *Wiltshire Times* had nearly saturation sales in the area in those days).

So the councillors ganged up on Mr Gifford, insisting that he should give me a dressing down in public at the next meeting, and, from the sound of it, probably wrote the words he was to say.

At the next meeting of the council the issue of the wall was prominent on the agenda. I had no warning that when they reached that item, as chairman, Mr Gifford said that it had been decided that the *Wiltshire Times* reporter would take down and print, verbatim, the following statement, which went on to reel off the excuses why they had no reason to doubt the integrity of the wall; that freak rainfall was the real cause, and so on and on.

Mr Gifford and I did not make eye contact throughout. My colleagues on the *Bath Chronicle* and the *Bristol Evening World* pointedly put down their pencils, and the meeting ended.

Needless to say the *Wiltshire Times* did print the statement. I have forgotten whether anything was published to balance their statement. Life went on.

Through my father, Mr Gifford said that he was deeply sorry and embarrassed to have had to read the statement, but explained that he had no choice, as the democratically elected leader of the council, but to reflect their views.

In January, the month my indentures ended, I left Bradford for a job on another local paper, in Stevenage new town – a place where absolutely no-one knew me. Bliss.

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As Wiltshire towns go, quite a shock ...

As he and his family prepare to leave Bradford on Avon, Gerald Milward-Oliver reflects on more than a quarter of a century in the town – and looks forward to a future of continuing non-conformity

“HERE’S TO THE MISFITS. THE REBELS. THE TROUBLEMAKERS. HERE’S TO THE ONES WHO SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY.”¹

I crossed the Somerset border into Wiltshire and dipped into a little town that lies beside the ubiquitous Avon. It was, as Wiltshire towns go, quite a shock. The small, white stone houses clung close to the hill-side; narrow flagged lanes twisted this way and that, with lamp-posts planted about, at the direction, it seemed, of distinguished artists.

In the old inn they give you tea in the room where Judge Jeffreys did his bloody work... ‘When I came here 19 years ago,’ said the innkeeper, ‘I thought how foreign the place looked. I discovered that Bradford was rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries by Flemish immigrants, who came to spin cloth. They brought with them an un-English idea of architecture; the hills make it look like Italy’.

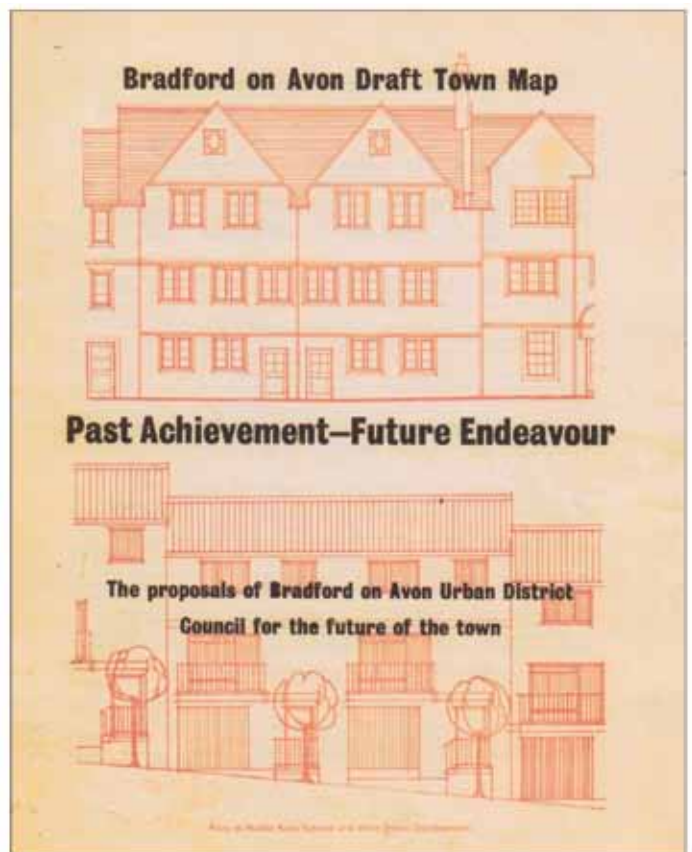
That account by HV Morton of his first encounter with Bradford on Avon was written in 1927². In the 93 years since, much has changed but the essence of Bradford on Avon remains. To me, this can be summed up in one phrase – non-conformity. It can be seen in the number

of 18th century non-conformist chapels – and I read somewhere that Bradford on Avon was at one time second only to the founding town of Rochdale in the number of active co-operative businesses.

Non-conformity has been equally apparent in reactions to some of the initiatives that have (or have not) been attempted in the past 20 years. Often it is based on a rejection of what are considered to be badly thought out proposals. Although sometimes it’s a bolshy unwillingness to either understand what is being proposed or to grasp the bigger picture!

As our family prepares to leave the town after 26 years, the traits of non-conformity, strong community, impatience with cant and a wide, internationalist outlook will remain long in the memory. And, I hope, will remain a core strength of the town.

I have been profoundly involved in town activities for most of our time here, enjoying robust argument with people across the political spectrum. But much of the past quarter-century was taken up with the consequences of the closure of Avon Rubber. For some who are new to the area, it must seem extraordinary to think of hundreds of workers pouring out of the town-centre rubber works just 30 or so years ago. It’s easy to forget



that, as a result of the closure, the town was blighted for the first 15 years or more of this century – with almost zero population growth (*see below*), pubs closing, a lack of cafés and restaurants, and with some stalwart retailers hanging on almost by their fingernails. Today, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the town is strong. Of course retail is a struggle, as it is in so many towns across the country. But as soon as one retailer moves on, there has soon been another. And the community base is stronger than ever.

JUST A THOUGHT (OR TWO) ...

As a parting shot, a couple of observations and a couple of suggestions.

First, contrary to what some people think, we have had very little **housing growth** over the past half century. In the mid-1960s, when the town's population was less than 6,000, town plan proposals envisaged a maximum by the mid-1970s of 11,450³. The reality has been very different: the latest ONS population estimate (mid-1919) is 10,010, still 14 per cent below the figure anticipated 45 years ago. This is partly accounted for by the fact that between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the town's population increased by just 73 – a clear indicator of the blight mentioned above.

It is rightly said that a town standing still ultimately moves backwards. The problem for the future is how Bradford on Avon can handle the demand for housing – particularly housing that is of high quality and generously proportioned, suitable and affordable for young people – while staying within the constraints of geography and Green Belt. The next 10 years promise to be critical for the future evolution of the town, and central to that will be resolving the housing conundrum.

Second, I hope that rapid progress can be made with the masterplan for the **station car park** site. I and a couple of colleagues first introduced the idea of working with Wiltshire Council (which owns most of the land) to develop a strong masterplan for the 'station quarter' back in 2014.

We saw it as critical that those parts ripe for development that are currently in non-residential use – such as the car park, surgery, fire/police station etc – should remain non-residential. If the masterplan starts from a base of 100 per cent non-residential, then there's a greater chance of being able to do something that benefits everyone, and not just a developer and some private homeowners.

A way also has to be found to increase the area of car parking than exists today. So put it all underground. That won't be cheap, but it can be done – and it would release so much more land for community, social and commercial development, to the benefit of everyone.

Third, the town could benefit from an overarching **movement strategy** – a plan that addresses how people and goods move into, out of and around the town and embracing walking, cycling, motor cars, buses, trains etc. Ambitious ideas need to be considered and discussed that go beyond the cycle of town, county and national elections – but set a path for the next 10 or even 20 years. Ideas that directly address the climate emergency.

Fourth, in 2016 I had to give up proposals to turn **Kingston House** – facing the river in the middle of the Kingston Mill site – into a co-working and innovation hub for creatives and technology startups. It's sad that four years on, the building is still empty. Hopefully, as we begin recovery from the impact of Covid-19, the current owner will be able to resolve the future of this iconic and beautiful building.

AND YES, FINALLY ...

Finally, some thoughts and ideas that never quite made it off my desk.

Bradford on Avon 'en fête'. Think of any number of European towns in the summer, particularly those in the south: many celebrate the summer holidays with brightly coloured flags flying from buildings and lamp posts. So how about the schools run a design competition for a set of large flags (about 1.5m square) to hang, say, from May



Flags flying to celebrate Siena's Palio town centre horse race

to September – using the Christmas tree brackets already fixed around the town centre. Maybe a new set every couple of years. The cost is not substantial: the impact will be dramatic, colourful and uplifting for town residents and visitors alike.

A living town museum. How about a series of numbered interpretation panels (discreetly fixed so as to not create clutter or hinder movement), located across the town telling the story of the cloth and rubber industries, as well as celebrating Alex Moulton’s achievements – recognised globally but scarcely in his own town. This would mean having panels around the Kingston Mill site, for example, explaining what was previously located there (Kingston Mill, the Grist Mill, the Carpenters’ Workshop and so on) as well as panels outside Abbey Mill, around Greenland Mills, explaining the fulling mill that is now St Margaret’s Hall, and even the Bull Pit. Together with a leaflet and a section on the Explore BoA website, this would give meaning to our industrial history, while encouraging people to walk around the town.

This could become a joint project involving a number of town community groups, as well as the strong creative minds that work and live across the town.

Plant pavement trees to help clear the air. Apparently some species of tree absolutely love car pollution such

as nitrous oxides. It would add greatly to the look of the town centre if a number of small, columnar trees were planted wherever the pavement is wide, particularly if the trial one-way system becomes permanent post-Covid. I’ve seen some that are less than a metre wide and maybe four metres high.

Of course there are issues to address such as planting, utility pipes and cables, animal fouling, but it is surely worth exploring as a terrific option of helping with pollution, while adding to the conviviality of the town centre.

So there you are. It’s been a great joy living and working in Bradford on Avon for the past quarter of a century. Twenty years ago, people used to say, “why can’t we be like Totnes, or Ludlow, or Frome?”. We never could be. We’re Bradford on Avon and we don’t need to be a clone of some other town. We need to be ourselves. Seeing the world differently and making it happen. My final word.

¹ From Think Different advert introducing the Apple Macintosh, 1997

² *In search of England*, HV Morton, Methuen 1927

³ ‘Bradford on Avon Draft Town Map’. I have given a copy of this plan, together with other documents of historical interest from the past 40 years, to the Preservation Trust for its new archive collection.



Bradford on Avon today: “... we don’t need to be a clone of some other town”

The North Meadow: creating a wildflower haven – 10 years on

Barton Farm Country Park is due to be transferred from Wiltshire Council to the Town Council. In preparation for this transfer, the Town Council commissioned an ecological survey by the Bath-based nature recovery specialists Ecosulis. This seemed to be an appropriate time to look back on our 10 years of involvement with the meadow. Kate Nicholls reports

The story of the North Meadow project begins in 2009, when the then Wiltshire Council senior ranger Leo Wirtz suggested that our Landscape Group might help to improve the meadow that originally belonged to Barton Farm. Since the 1970s, when the land was no longer farmed and the county council became the owners, North Meadow – the area beyond Barton Bridge, along by the river from Bradford on Avon Rowing Club to the path over the railway to Belcombe Road – was left to become a tussocky grass area that was cut twice a year. We took on the task of turning it into a wildflower meadow. With Leo to advise us and our group of enthusiastic volunteers we got underway. In January 2009, I wrote in *Guardian Angel*:

This is a long-term project and it was very exciting to have made a start in the late autumn. Our efforts now will take some time to be rewarded but we hope that we'll see some improvement in two or three years.

The plan is to improve the bio-diversity of the North Meadow. Because grazing is not possible this area has deteriorated and become overgrown with rank grass.”



Preparing the ground: the early stages of work on the North Meadow; inset, 22 species of butterfly were recorded in the meadow



At about the same time, Climate Friendly Bradford planted a range of native trees along the northern edge alongside the railway line (as well as many more on the other side of the river along the riverside path). Those trees have flourished and provide a rich habitat for birds and other wildlife.

That first autumn, after preparing the ground, we sowed Yellow Rattle, an annual plant that parasitises the roots of grass, depleting it over time and allowing flowers to take root.

The following spring we sowed a variety of wildflowers after preparing 140 square metres of ground, by scarifying and raking.

In the spring of 2012, we had a wildflower walk in the meadow for members, led by Gwyneth Yerrington. We recorded over 30 species of wildflowers, including Lady's Bedstraw, Agrimony and Black Medick.

During the following years we sowed more seeds of different varieties – some succeeding and others failing. A critical factor we had to depend on was the cutting of the grass and removing the arisings. For this we relied on the Wiltshire Council contractors. The council staff were very supportive but for several years it was not a reliable service. It seemed a difficult task to get the cutting done at the right time (in the autumn), and – more importantly – for the arisings to be removed. In 2014 our

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Members recorded more than 30 species of wildflowers on the 2012 walk led by Gwneth Yerrington

disappointment with the contractors resulted in an article – with photo – in the *Wiltshire Times*.

Since then the service has improved and for the past two or three years I have not had to contact the Council regarding the cutting – only to thank them for the work.

By 2017 we were recording over 45 species of wildflowers – I wrote this in *Guardian Angel* that autumn:

“The meadow is looking probably the best I’ve ever seen it – an abundance of Lady’s Bedstraw and Meadow Cranesbill gradually spreading – certainly more than last year. Purple Loosestrife, Chicory and Scabious adding splashes of purply blue here and there. We also recorded 12 species of butterfly.”

One of our local butterfly experts, Sarah Gregory, accompanied our wildflower walks and she has been recording butterflies in the meadow annually over the summer months for many years. That year Sarah recorded 19 different species, including Marbled White, Small Copper and Small Skipper. In 2019, 22 species were recorded.

As I said back in 2009, this is a long-term project. The Yellow Rattle has spread and it’s certainly noticeable how the grass has weakened. Of course, we continue to work in North Meadow – and in recent years the Barton Farm Volunteers group (of which several of us in the Trust Landscape Group are members) also help with managing the surrounding hedgerows and trees and litter picking.



Chris Hogg, the Town Council Green Spaces Officer, has also become an important advisor to our work, taking over from the Wiltshire Council team.

The ecologists at Ecosulis have commented favourably on our work and the town council will be releasing their report when finalised in the near future. They have several suggestions for further improvement of the meadow and, hopefully, over the next few years those improvements will be realised.

I would like to say thank you to the Countryside Officers at Wiltshire Council – Alison Rasey, Vicky Roscoe and Paul Millard, the Council of Management for their support over the years and to the Landscape Group volunteers. And perhaps especially to Gwyneth Yerrington, who has always generously shared her vast botanical knowledge and from whom I have learnt so much.

Ghost doors of Bradford on Avon

Roger Jones took a walk around the town earlier this year, and photographed some of the blocked up 'ghost doors' that can be seen on many town centre buildings, walls and alleyways. How many can you identify? The answers can be found on page 19



Suffragette stories – with a local twist

My attention was belatedly drawn to BBC Radio 4's Book of the Week at the beginning of June, about two amazing women doctors who are the subject of a very readable and informative book that I had just finished reading and reviewing for another publication. If, like me, you missed the radio programme, I can thoroughly recommend the book.

You may ask whether there is any connection to Bradford on Avon? Well, only that we are now in the grip of another pandemic and I was part of an inspirational community project in the town in 2018. Bradford on Avon Women's 100 was established to celebrate 100 years since women were given the vote in 1918. We held various events and raised funds for two charities: the local Splitz Support Service and the worldwide Malala Fund.

Endell Street: The Trailblazing Women who Ran World War One's Most Remarkable Military Hospital is a fascinating book written by Wendy Moore and well worth reading. It's about Flora Murray and Louisa Garrett Anderson, daughter of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and niece of Millicent Fawcett, who was a regular visitor to Eagle House, Batheaston – but more of that later. Louisa's mother was the first woman to qualify in Britain as a physician and surgeon. UNISON's offices in Euston are on the site of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital where there is a museum in a retained part of the former hospital dedicated to her life and work.

Both Flora and Louisa were qualified doctors, suffragettes, social reformers and partners who initially went to France to look after injured soldiers. There, in a luxury Paris hotel under the ornate crystal chandeliers, they treated the wounded with such success that they came to the attention of the military establishment. In 1915, at the request of the War Ministry, they set up a military hospital in Covent Garden employing only women doctors and nurses. The building was a former workhouse but they transformed it into a cutting-edge medical facility where they pioneered new methods of care and where Louisa was chief surgeon. Sadly, after the Spanish flu pandemic the hospital was closed and the two women were pretty much ignored by a male-dominated medical profession. The book is a testament to their bravery in the face of adversity and defiance in a world that chose to ignore their ability in peacetime.

There are two buildings locally linked to militancy and the suffragettes. The first of these is Granby House at Elms Cross. Formerly known as Elms Cross House, it



The military hospital in Endell Street, Covent Garden, run during World War I by Drs Murray and Garrett Anderson was commissioned by local quarry owner Isaac Jones in 1908, but remained unoccupied and was gutted by fire in 1913 with only the external walls left standing. Described in the *Wiltshire Times* at the time under the headline 'Westwood Mansion Gutted' as an "alleged wanton suffragette outrage". The only evidence linking the fire to the suffragettes was a bundle of pamphlets found nearby, following local meetings and their campaign to target homes of those opposed to votes for women. No arsonists were ever found. The property was rebuilt and largely reconstructed a second time after another fire in 1947.

Grade II* listed Eagle House at Batheaston has well documented connections to women's suffrage. The Pankhurst family were close friends of the Blathways of Eagle House and regular visitors to their home. Mary Blathwayt was a friend of both Annie Kenney and Cristabel Pankhurst, leading figures in the radical suffrage movement. The house became a haven for women recuperating after release from being force fed on hunger strike in prison. The 'Cat and Mouse Act', the name given to the Prisoners, Temporary Discharge for Health Act 1913, was introduced to weaken the resolve of suffragettes on hunger strike by sending them home to recover then taking them back to gaol once they had recuperated. Each one of the suffragettes who stayed at Eagle House planted a tree (about 50 trees in total) in an arboretum dedicated to the memory of their fight. Sadly the arboretum – known as Annie's Arboretum, after Annie Kenney – was uprooted in 1965 to make way for a housing development. Whatever were the planners thinking of when they allowed such an important part of our heritage to be destroyed? Note that I comment as a retired town planner!


Rosie MacGregor

Membership renewals 2021 – a reminder

Dear all

A quick reminder that membership renewals are due by 1 January 2021. If you aren't a Life Member and haven't set up a standing order, please find your membership renewal form in this issue of Guardian Angel. Please note, as a small charity, it really helps us if you can get your renewals in on time and saves us sending out pesky reminders! Many thanks.

Ann Dix, Membership Secretary



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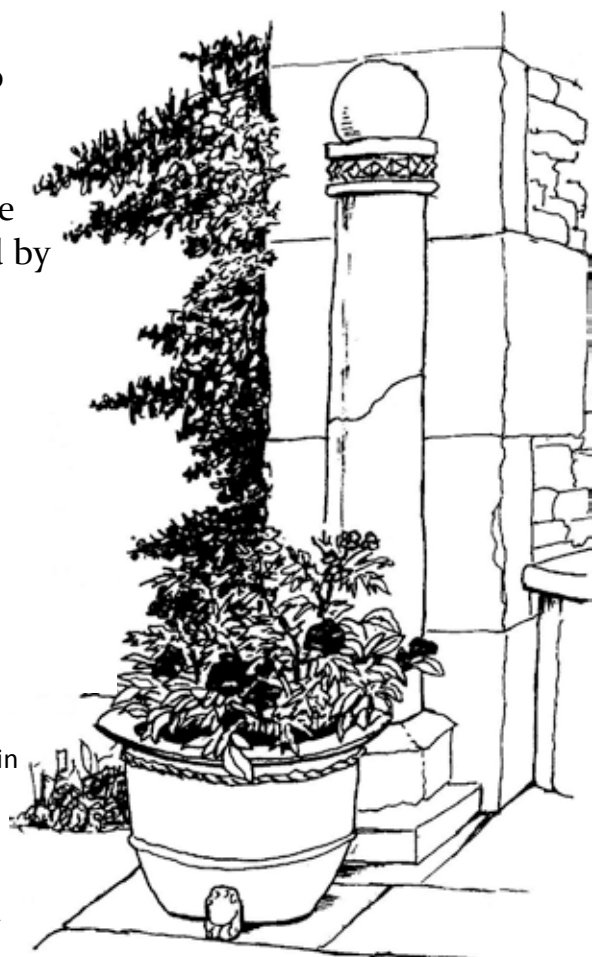
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Historic Buildings Conservation Grants

The Preservation Trust has over many years provided grant aid for works to the exterior of listed and historic buildings within a specified area of conservation.

The current Historic Buildings Conservation Scheme has been in operation since 2008 based on an initiative of our former chairman, David Moss. Applications for grants are assessed by our Historic Buildings Conservation Committee, who have specialist knowledge of the built environment with guidance from an expert technical advisor, the highly respected architect Colin Johns. The final decision on whether to offer a grant rests with our Council of Management.

Not all applications are successful and the award is only a small percentage of the total cost – this varies depending on the extent of the works and importance of the building and can range from 10 per cent and up to, but very rarely, 50 per cent.

The works must be carried out to a high specification using traditional materials. Very often the award of a grant proves to be the difference between whether necessary and appropriate repair work can be carried out or the further deterioration of a building. Many historic buildings fall into disrepair due to lack of funding and our scheme ensures that appropriate essential maintenance and repair can be carried out to prevent further decline. The need for continued maintenance is fundamental to the preservation of historic buildings.

Although it represents only a small part of the various

projects we undertake, this is an important part of our work as a buildings preservation trust and ensures the maintenance of historic buildings for current and future generations.

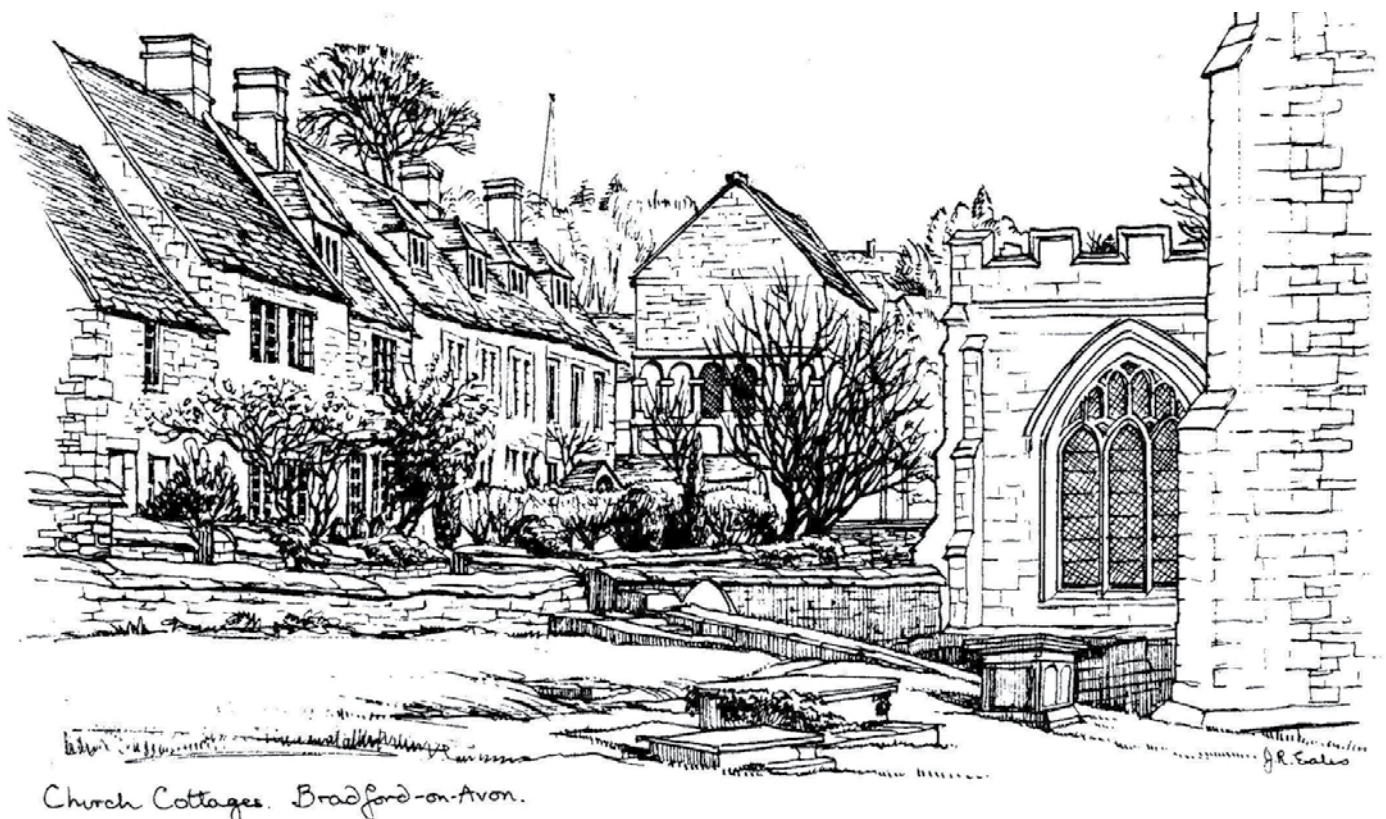
Grants have been provided in the past to both private, public and community buildings, including restoration works at the Baptist Chapel in St Margaret's Street, St Laurence Church, St Mary Tury and Hall's Charity Almshouses on Frome Road.

We also provide grants outside this scheme for important buildings that would not be eligible for the above grant aid. Such projects include the recent restoration of two historic monuments, to Ann Bailward and Edward Bailly, a hatchment and the remains of the rood screen in the interior of Holy Trinity Church.

We receive many grateful and heartfelt thanks for these works and we would like to share with you part of a recent letter from the recipient of a grant: "We are sure that everyone who treasures the wonderful historic buildings in Bradford on Avon will be delighted by this valuable restoration project in the conservation area and, like us, appreciate the generous support of the Trust". And another stating: "Without the Trust's financial help we could not have undertaken these works". Their names and the addresses of these private properties for various reasons must remain confidential.

Full details of the grant scheme can be found on our website.

Rosie MacGregor





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Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust – Autumn Appeal 2020

Many of you will have made use of the Victoria County History, the bedrock to English local history, in exploring the background of something that interest you. Each volume in the series, stretching so far to 18 volumes for Wiltshire and eventually to be 25, is rigorously researched to provide the factual framework for all local historical research. Nearly all our volumes to date are available online free of charge as well as in libraries. We are currently working on three of the remaining volumes: the full picture is given on the new website just launched by Wiltshire VCH. You can see it at wiltshirehistory.org

Our work is expensive, requiring exhaustive research from primary sources, and each volume costs around £150,000

GHOST DOORS

1 5 St Margaret's Street; 2 Mill Lane; 3 Wallington Hall, Church Street; 4 Rosemary Walk; 5 Barton Orchard; 6 The Three Horseshoes, Frome Road; 7 Barton Orchard; 8 St Margaret's Street, adjacent to the railway bridge; 9 Kingston Road; 10 Dutch Barton, opposite No 20; 11 Rosemary Walk; 12 Former Lloyd's Bank building, now Team Eleven – The Bank of Brilliant Ideas, Church Street; 13 5 Coppice Hill; 12 The Plough Inn, Trowbridge Road

to produce. Since 2014 we have had to go it alone without external funding. This means we have to generate all our own income, through a combination of talks, walks, a summer garden party, a Friends organisation and applications for grants from charitable trusts and others.

We are very keen to keep momentum up, and our researchers have been making good progress this year despite the limitations of lock-down. However, unless we can gain more income soon we shall have to face the difficult prospect of bringing our work to a halt and leaving our researchers without employment from us.

Our income, usually around £6,000, has been reduced to zero by this summer's restrictions. Our reserves are modest and unless we can raise more funds our work will inevitably be severely disrupted. That is why we have launched an autumn appeal. It is an ambitious target, but we do hope to replace the £6,000 which has been lost.

Donations can be made via our website – wiltshirehistory.org

Alternatively, bank transfers can be made direct to the account of the Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust at CAF Bank, sort code 40-52-40, account number 00033115. Please be generous.

David Moss

Chairman, Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust

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AGM POSTPONED

Dear Members,

We had hoped to hold our Annual General Meeting on 9 December at 8pm, as scheduled, via Zoom. We made this decision after much deliberation: taking into consideration our concern for the health and safety of our members plus the ongoing uncertainty of the sort of Covid-19 restrictions we may be facing.

However, a large part of the AGM is the approval of the past year's finances, which requires input from our accountants. As with many businesses, Covid-19 has presented a challenge to our accounting firm and the financial material will not be ready in time for the December AGM. For this reason, the AGM has been postponed until 10 February 2021 at 8pm. For the reasons stated earlier, this rescheduled meeting will also be held via Zoom.

Instructions on how to participate in a Zoom meeting will be included in the AGM papers you will be receiving

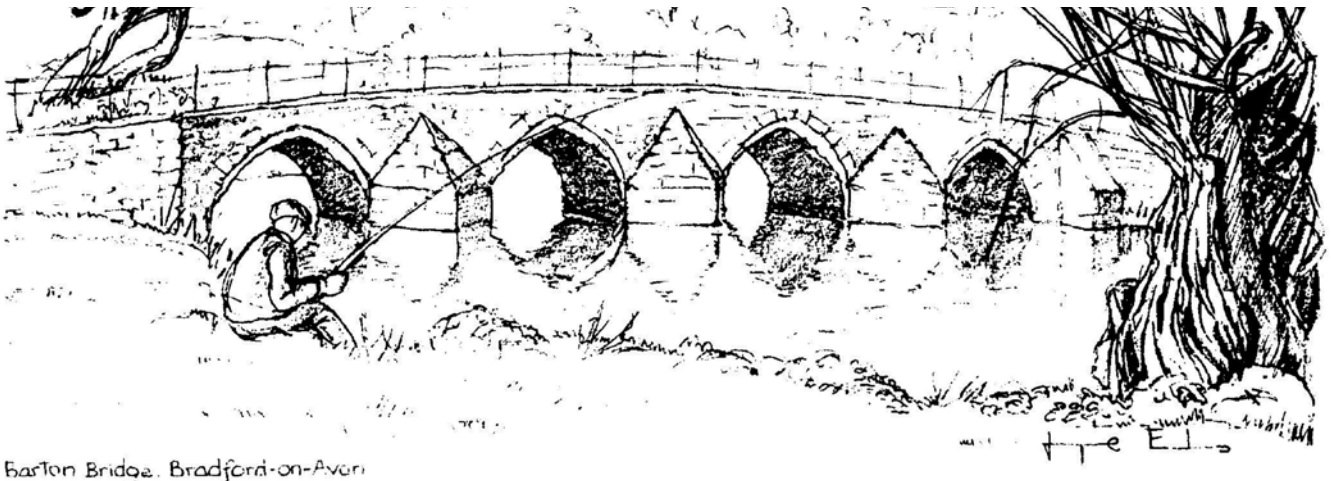
in due course. While we encourage all members to participate, we do understand this may not be possible. Included in the AGM documents will be a Form of Proxy. Forms of proxy allow the whole membership to participate in the decisions taken and the Council of Management urges you to take advantage of these facilities.

Additionally, at the end of the meeting, the floor is open to members for discussion. To help facilitate this part of the meeting, you will be able submit your issues/questions in advance of the AGM, whether you are planning to attend or not. Details on how to submit your questions will be provided in the AGM package.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and we hope you will participate in the meeting. Until then, please stay safe.

All the best,

John Potter, Chair



Barton Bridge. Bradford-on-Avon

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

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 the editor, Joceline Bury, at guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk, by Friday 26 February** for inclusion in the spring issue of *Guardian Angel*.

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We are grateful 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.

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