



# GUARDIAN ANGEL

NEWS FROM BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST

## Notes from the Chair

Everybody knows that I like fireworks, but I hadn't seen any for ages until we went to the Glastonbury Abbey Festival on a lovely September evening. Van Morrison had left the stage to his musicians towards the end of *Gloria*, the band finished the number, left the stage and up went a massive firework show, one of the best I have seen. They were huge and loud, with impossibly complicated effects in all sorts of colours. Then came the finale: a great sky-filling extravaganza – amazing.

Then, a couple of weeks ago I saw a small piece about an event in Frome – a 'Glow in The Park' to celebrate Apple Day in the old Cheese Showground, part of which has recently been planted as an orchard. The afternoon was to be finished off at 6.15pm with a lit drone show arranged by a local firm, Celestial, and supported by the Arts Council; local schoolchildren would voice original poetry as part of a 'soaring soundtrack'. I had seen a YouTube film of Hogmanay 2020 in Edinburgh, where drones flew over the city, the Forth Bridge and some of the coast. It was a stunning work of art enjoyed by thousands at the time and millions later. I found out the the people responsible were Celestial – so off we went to Frome.

There was a huge, very expectant and excited crowd – and we weren't disappointed. A great array of white lights rose slowly from behind a bank, began to spread out and then burst into a mass of flitting colours flying in all directions against the darkening sky. They turned

into a huge apple, then an apple tree, then a giant head, all in 3D and constantly changing, against the promised soaring soundtrack with children speaking their poems. It was truly mesmerising and I think represents a huge challenge to fireworks. The possibilities of numbers, colours, patterns and effects are beyond counting. At the end they are just popped back in the boxes until they are needed again.

Coming back down to earth, it's been a bit of a bumper year on the allotment. I had a huge crop of runner beans from my sowing of Moonlight F1 – and they tasted wonderful too. The asparagus has been doing the right thing so I expect a first crop next year. A new one to me is kalettes: they are like tiny cabbages, grown and cooked in a similar way to Brussels sprouts. Sadly, it's not looking good for the horse chestnut tree: it is either going to make a recovery in spring or it will have to go – just as I am growing a Rambling Rector up it too!

I had a huge disappointment in the flower show: poor Vernon Burchell's tomatoes were struck down with blight so there was no contest with him and the prize went to my gardening chum over the road. I will be back next year for another battle.

Down at Barton Farmyard, work has been delayed by various Covid-related hold-ups, but Charlie Caffyn has now completed work on the Granary door and door

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frame. He has done a really good job: all the bad old timber has been carefully replaced in the same style as the big Tithe Barn doors. Thanks very much, Charlie.

The railway station footbridge canopy was delayed by the planning process but everything is now with Wiltshire Council planners – so fingers crossed. The good news at the station is that the extensive repairs to the platform canopies are now being carried out, under cover of night when no trains are running. It will all be very splendid soon.

We are planting wildflowers in the once-grassed area along the wall that separates Barton Farmhouse from the Tithe Barn farmyard. Kate Nicholls and a small team have cut, rolled and disposed of the turf – hard work, so many thanks to them; you can read Kate's project update on page 13.

I'm afraid that the project to restore the pennant surface to the footpath from Barton Orchard to the top of Church Street has been postponed by the contractors until February, which is a shame. However, the Trust has been asked to help with bollards on Market Street and work to the steep path that connects Belcombe Road to Winsley Road via Rickfield. Both projects will involve the Town Council and probably Wiltshire Area Board and, in the case of the bollards, Wiltshire Highways. I very much hope that we will be able to play a good and helpful part.

One thing that hasn't been delayed: the accounts are all done and waiting for approval at the AGM. This year, we'll be holding the meeting at the West Barn, which is bigger than Priory Barn, with a better airflow and

therefore safer for a group to meet. I hope to see you there at 8pm on Wednesday 8 December.

We have decided that, as last year was such a washout as far as Preservation Trust activities were concerned, we will extend everybody's membership until 1 August 2022 – so that's something we won't have to worry about during the post-Christmas rush-around time.

Brian Elliott, who has been looking after buildings and all their problems for some years now, has decided to step down from the Council of Management and we thank him for all his work. I hope he will be looking after the warming fire for the Wassail, at dusk on 29 January at Hens' Orchard.

The Preservation Trust has talked with the Town Council about joining forces for next year's Jubilee celebrations and a committee is being set up. One of the plans is for a large garden party in front of the Tithe Barn – so get your best frocks and hats ready for more tea and cakes: Save The Children have the event pencilled in already.

Our editor tells me she likes my Notes from The Chair (or Mr Potter's stream of consciousness, as she calls it). I haven't really thought about it, but now that I do I see it more as a lot of fluttering Post-it notes – some of which get lost, some are flying around in my head and some are a bit late.

Finally, as always at this time of year, I know it's rather early but I hope you have a very happy Christmas and a jolly New Year.

*John Potter, Chair*



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## Planning matters

Rosie MacGregor, chair of the Trust's Planning Committee, looks at the latest changes to planning legislation, and their potential effect on our town centres

Many people, myself included, are very uneasy about our current government's attitude to the planning process and the changes it has made to legislation. The changes are radical and in my view clearly misguided.

Members of our Planning Committee are very concerned indeed about the implications of the changes already made to the planning system and the root and branch changes proposed. These changes substantially reduce the ability of individuals and local communities to influence the decision making process.

There have been major changes to the Use Classes Order and General Permitted Development Order effectively meaning that certain forms of development that would previously have required change of use will no longer need planning permission.

Last year, from 1 September 2020, the changes included a new Class E that classified commercial, business and service uses together actually meaning that change of use was no longer required within these classifications. In other words, shops, financial and professional services, cafés, restaurants and clinics, health centres, creches, and day centres all fall within Class E.

In March of this year the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021 was made and from 1 August new Permitted Development Rights allow the change of use from commercial, business and service uses (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) without the requirement for

full planning permission. Prior approval will be required from the local planning authority, in our case Wiltshire, for the permitted change of use and they will need to consider matters such as the potential environmental impact and impact on loss of health services. The permitted development rights will be subject to certain limitations such as on the size of the building and length of time it has been vacant. A mere three months' vacancy has to be demonstrated which is frankly absurd.

Added to this there have been major changes to the Building Regulations.

It is currently too early to say what long-term impact this so called 'developers' charter' will have on the environment or on housing supply. There are fears that the consequence of these changes will in some circumstances result in sub-standard housing development.

Effectively this means that owners of buildings and developers can sometimes make money by selling off their property without the need for planning permission in locations where previously planning permission might not have been forthcoming.

The result will be a destructive and potentially irreversible impact on town centres – just at a time when we are trying to reinvigorate our High Streets, post pandemic.

As someone said to me "It's like putting a fox in charge of a hen house with prime commercial sites flogged and big money made by entrepreneurs seeking quick deals".



Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust



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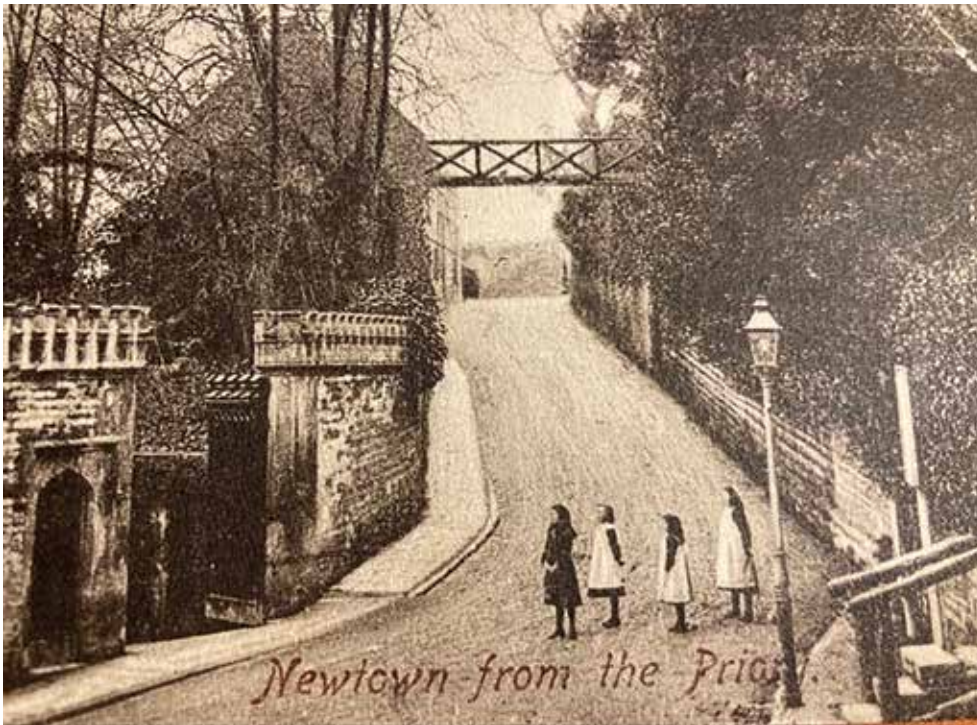


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# The housemaid's tale: a family secret uncovered

An old picture postcard prompted Geoff Andrews to search for the real story behind a life-long estrangement in the mid-19th century



Four of the Hobbs sisters outside the Priory, around 1910. They would have been looking through the gateway at the house pictured below. The bridge in the background, which crossed Newtown close to the Priory Barn, was removed in the 1930s, but had led to the gardens and woodland belonging to the Priory, which stretched up almost to Winsley Road

It's an ordinary old picture postcard, the kind of thing people sent with a brief note when the post was central to daily life – an Edwardian version of texting. This one was taken in 1910-11.

It shows the junction of Market Street, Masons Lane and Newtown, Bradford on Avon, with a row of four young women looking at the imposing gates and lodge of the Priory.

The photographer, almost certainly employed by a firm that printed and sold the postcards to local shops, had lugged his heavy glass plate camera and wooden tripod up to high ground and carefully arranged the line, untroubled by traffic it appears.

Just another old picture of old Bradford. The photographer seems to have taken a series of photos that day that became postcards.

Turn this postcard over and it gets more interesting. For a start it was not posted until 30 years later, on 13 September 1940, from Clevedon to Bradford on Avon. And there is no message, just the name and address of the recipient.

Perhaps the postcard was sent by an acquaintance living in Clevedon when they found it somewhere. Perhaps.

The date is significant. Four months earlier the calamity of Dunkirk had sent the country into an invasion panic and 10 days before the postmark, a bombing raid killed 10 people in Albert Road, Clevedon. There were anti-aircraft guns banging away most nights as bombers attacked Bristol, Avonmouth and Portishead. Two planes



had crashed nearby and a barrage balloon squad had arrived.

Portishead, the principal radio station for transatlantic calls, was a weak point in a vital link between the British and US governments, so the beach was littered with mines and barbed wire as defences against a commando attack. Not a place where anyone could feel secure. Perhaps it was time to think of moving somewhere safer? Could sending the postcard be in some way connected to those events? Part of evacuation plans?

The four girls on the postcard were sisters, half of the eight children in the Hobbs family (the same family central to the story about the last rope-makers in Bradford, published in the summer issue of *Guardian Angel*) living at the top of Coppice Hill. The addressee

was their mother, Ellen Louisa Hobbs. The sender was probably a cousin who then lived in Portishead.

In 1940 Ellen Hobbs was 72, a tall, spirited woman who didn't suffer fools. She was already receiving a state pension, hence her frequent exclamation, "God bless Lloyd George". In her mind he was solely responsible for the old age pension legislation. "Shut thee mouth and give thee ass a chance," was another of her favourite sayings.

And she is the link, the connection that the photographer unwittingly made between those sisters and events that had taken place about 30 years earlier.

In 1910 the girls' maternal grandmother Elizabeth was 66 years old and living in Church Street, a couple of hundred yards from their home. But Ellen's children had been forbidden to speak to her, and the family hardly acknowledged her existence, even though the children had to pass her doorway walking to and from school.

On one occasion at about that time two of the children, twins (probably the middle two of the group on the postcard), were passing granny's house on their way home from school. It was their birthday, and they were intercepted outside her house by granny, who gave them a paper bag. Obeying their mother's rule, they took it home unopened and gave it to Ellen. She flew into a rage and threw it, still unopened, into the fire. The contents of that bag would probably have added a lot to this story.

What the children didn't know then, or for many years, was that granny, as Elizabeth Fisher, a 23-year-old domestic servant, had allegedly been made pregnant by a son of a prominent local family. Their mother was the result.

Once the pregnancy was discovered, Elizabeth was dismissed from her job as cook/kitchen maid, but received a generous settlement from the family of the alleged father, to provide accommodation and education for the child. According to some accounts the son was disowned and banished, maybe to New Zealand or Australia.

At this point the story becomes more confused. The midwife who had delivered their mother told the girls that during the birth Elizabeth had told her the identity

of the father and said it had happened at the Priory, where she worked.

Nothing of this was known to the girls innocently lined up by the photographer looking down the drive to the big house, the place where their mother was conceived.

The family has always thought that Elizabeth Fisher was employed by a branch of the Methuen family living at the Priory, but in the 1860s, when the deed would have occurred, the owner of the house was a QC called Thomas Saunders.

The circumstances of her birth were not, however, the cause of the rift between Ellen and her mother. Indeed, she may not have known about her illegitimacy for some years.

But the cash settlement made Elizabeth a comparatively wealthy young woman – and therefore attractively marriageable. Ellen, meanwhile, was brought up by relatives until she was 11, when she left school, started earning some money and returned to her mother's home. At around the same time, she also acquired a stepfather: a man well-known to the Bradford magistrates and even better known to local innkeepers.

By the time she was 12, Ellen Louisa had abandoned her mother's home forever, allegedly after her new stepfather spanked her and her mother did not – or could not – protect her. She had no contact with Elizabeth for the rest of her life.

The identity of Ellen's father will always be a mystery but here is one intriguing fact:

About a century after Ellen was born, the twins on that postcard were visiting Bradford on Avon from their homes in London and Bristol, and took the opportunity to visit Corsham Court, the long-time home of the Methuen family.

On the tour they were shown the grand staircase and the guide stopped by a portrait painting. She was describing the relevance of this Edwardian *belle dame* when she stopped, looked at the twins and asked if they were related to the family, because of the striking similarity of the two to the painting. Naturally, they denied anything of the sort.



Ellen Hobbs, far left, and three of the four girls pictured outside the Priory in the Edwardian postcard

# Who would live in a house like this?

In the second of two articles about the history of the Old Prebend House, Angela Moss uncovers the history of the owners, copyholders and tenants who have lived there over the centuries

In my article in the last edition of *Guardian Angel* I described our house as it now is: this article explores the owners, copyholders and tenants connected to it and the ever-shrinking land attached to it.

The land was, of course, part of the Manor of Bradford which King Ethelred granted to the Abbess of Shaftesbury in 1001. Pam and Ivor Slocombe suggested in *Bradford-on-Avon: the Medieval Town*<sup>1</sup> that our house might be on the site of Abbess Mary's grant in about 1200 to Basil, son of Bernard of Northon, at the request of Colstan, a priest, of:

“One stall in our market and [3] houses which was Colstan's and Reginald his predecessor in Bradford at the south end of the bridge and two acres every year of which one lies next to his houses and the other upon Agrip; in another year one acre lying upon Altuna and the other upon the moor.”

The land clearly reverted to the Abbey at some stage but Colstan's holding might have been the origin of an estate to support a priest just south of the bridge.

The house was originally built in the second half of the 15th century by Shaftesbury Abbey for one of their officials, perhaps the reeve, of that part of the Abbey lands which were allocated to the support of Bradford's church and rector. In 1539 all the Abbey's land went to the Crown and four years later the Rectory Manor was granted to the Dean and Chapter of Bristol's new cathedral as an investment to support one of their canons, or prebendaries.

The system of land tenure at the Reformation and for centuries afterward was like a many-layered cake, with the layers getting smaller as you went down – of course to an extent it still is. Managing the estate and securing income from it was farmed out from an early stage. In effect, the Dean and Chapter rented the manor lands to what we might think of as a head leaseholder, known as the Lord Farmer – a recognised term used in legal documents. He, through his steward and Manorial Court, dealt with the details of letting the land and getting an income from it.

The next layer down were the copyholders. The copyholder or principal tenant held a property for life and the 'title deed' received by the tenant was a copy of the relevant entry in the Manorial Court Roll, hence the term 'copyholder'. Three types of payment were made for each property: a capital sum called a 'fine', payable when a new copyholder was installed; the annual rent; and a 'heriot' – a sort of death duty paid to the lord of the manor.

According to Wikipedia:

“several (usually three) named persons held the premises for the duration of their lives. The first-

named life tenant acted as tenant and paid rent and heriots; while the other two were said to be 'in reversion and remainder' and effectively formed a queue. When the first life died, the second-named inherited the property and nominated a new third life for the end of the new queue. These were recorded in the court rolls as the 'copyhold' for this type of tenant. It was possible to exchange the reversion and remainder lives with different ones during a lifetime upon payment of a fine to the lord. However, it was not usually possible for these holdings to be sold, as there were three lives with an entitlement.”

Below the copyholder came a layer, or possibly several layers, of tenants and subtenants who actually lived or worked in the building or land. Copyhold was not finally abolished until 1925.

## 16th and 17th century

The Bradford Prebend Manor, or estate, given to the Dean and Chapter of Bristol was a large one, mostly in Bradford and Winsley. It was already divided into several copyholds or mini estates. In 1545 the Dean and Chapter granted the management of the whole estate to William Webbe of Bradford for life. In 1581, under royal pressure, the remainder of the lease was assigned to Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's spymaster, who already held the main Abbey estate in Bradford centred on Barton Farm. It was seized by the Commonwealth in 1652; in 1660, after the Restoration of Charles II, it was returned to the Dean and Chapter.

The earliest mention of the Prebend House we have traced was in 1672, when Hope Long of South Wraxall Manor became the copyholder. Pam Slocombe suggests that, as he was the copyholder of the whole Prebendal Manor following his father-in-law John Long of Haugh, he may have used it as his town house. Given later references to the Prebend House as “formerly a tenement with three cottages” it is possible that the house went down in the world during the 17th century and was in multiple occupation when Hope Long took over.

## The Norris family

The Dean and Chapter leased out the Bradford Prebend Manor for periods of 21 years, probably to John Hall Esq until his death in 1711. The Prebend Manor passed by descent to the Duke of Kingston who was its Lord Farmer for at least 40 years. In 1811 the Dean and Chapter took back control.<sup>2</sup>

On 19 April 1692 Selfe Norris took on the copyhold with his brother William. The Norris brothers were professional middle class and well connected locally

<sup>1</sup> Bradford on Avon Museum monograph no 2, 2015, p13

<sup>2</sup> *Victoria County History of Wiltshire* vol VII, p25

– their cousins included Paul Methuen through their mother Elizabeth Selfe. Their father William Norris lived in Nonsuch House in Bromham and was a lawyer (as was Selfe) and armigerous. When William senior died in 1730 he left to Selfe “all my copyhold lands in Bradford which I hold under the Lady Kingston”.<sup>3</sup>

On 10 April 1735, the earliest relevant Prebend Manor Court Roll we have found states:

“And the said Selfe Norris came to the said court and took of the said Lord Farmer of the said Manor by the grant of the Steward of the Rod to have and to hold the same premises for the life of the said Selfe Norris, William Norris his son and the said William Norris his brother for the term of their lives and the life of the longest liver of them Yielding and paying therefore the yearly rent of sixteen shillings and ten pence and five pounds for an Heriot and all other suits custom and services out and of right accustomed and for this estate in the premises so granted the said Selfe Norris hath given to the said Lord Farmer for a fine the sum of fifty five pounds and did fealty and was admitted tenant.”

The Norrises did not live there themselves. Ivor Slocombe has found a couple of references to the Prebendal Manor in the British Library which suggest that though Selfe Norris was the copyholder, William paid the rent and received the rents from the sub-tenants<sup>4</sup>. Their sub-tenant was the clothier Edward Heylyn who had previously lived at Haugh Farm, another Prebendal property. He went bankrupt in 1737.

When Selfe Norris died in 1746 his daughter Mary became third in the queue after her brother and uncle. By 1760, she had married “Edward Lambert of the City of New Sarum in the County of Wilts Esquire” and, presumably, Mary’s brother had died because her daughter Susan “aged about five years” became third in line. In 1765 the house was let by Edward Lambert to Francis Yerbury, a clothier, and sub-let by him to Scudamore Perry, also a clothier. There were then five layers of interest in the property: Scudamore Perry, Francis Yerbury, Edward and Mary Lambert, the Duke of Kingston and the Dean and Chapter.

In 1772 Mary’s uncle William Norris died and her son Edmund Lambert (“aged about ten years”) joined the queue. On Mary’s death in 1800 both her children, Susan (with the consent, inevitably, of her husband “Mitchell Newman Gentleman”) and Edmund (“of the City of Bath Esquire”), surrendered “all the Estate Right Title and Interest ... therein.” Immediately afterwards George Head of Bradford, Clothier, took possession. Although Susan and Edmund had given up their rights

the copyhold was still for the longest of their three lives – Susan, Edmund and George.

We do not know what the connection was between George Head and the Lambert family. He may well have been a tenant as C18 additions to the house strongly suggest they were built by or for a clothier. When George died (possibly in 1783 when he made his will) his son, also George, took over. Edmund died in 1814 and his place in the queue was taken by “Thomas Gill Knight Son of Joseph Knight of Lyme in the County of Dorset Gentleman of the age of sixteen years or thereabout”. Again, we do not know what the connection was between the Lamberts and the Knights.

### The estate in the 18th century

It is not easy to work out the extent of the Prebend Manor’s estates in Bradford, let alone those attached to the copyhold of the Prebend House. A map made in 1766 shows, indistinctly, the holdings and the accompanying list shows those assigned to each of five copyholdings, of which the Norrises’ was the biggest. They are strewn higgledy-piggledy all over the place and were clearly a medieval relic. There are six within the copyholding attached to our house. The house and the land immediately behind it are not shown.



Part of the map of 1766 showing the Prebend Manor, with the Prebend House’s land outlined with black dots. Bristol Archives, Court Roll, Dean and Chapter’s Manor of Bradford on Avon

### The Tithe Map

In 1821 George Head the younger died and his sisters and co-heiresses, Elizabeth and Marianna (or Mary Anne) Head, took possession of the property. It was unusual for two people to be admitted copyholders by the manorial court, and neither sister was added to the queue: instead we have “Ezekiel Edmonds of the

<sup>3</sup> *Wiltshire notes and queries* vol 11 pp190-192

<sup>4</sup> Survey of property of John Hall from Aug 1710 (BL Egerton 3652/120-133) has a section on the Prebendal Manor 1730 and the first name is William Norris on three lives.

Duke of Kingston’s estate in Wiltshire 1755 (BL Egerton 3652/179-187) includes a section on the parsonage of Bradford with ‘William Norris, a tenement in St. Margaret’s Street and lands’, on three lives.

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- Stone's Court on land in other ownership
- Land attached to the Prebend House in 1841
- Railway and station – not to scale

age of 9 years or thereabouts Son of John Edmonds of Bradford Clothier". Presumably properties were no longer necessarily held by the person at the head of the queue and the three 'lives' had no automatic rights to the property. There would be advantages in having a healthy child as the third 'life'. Elizabeth Head died in 1842 when Marianna was described in a Post Office list as 'Mrs Head' – a signifier of being 'gentry' and not necessarily married – and listed as living in St Margaret's Street: the first copyholder we know to have done so.

The Tithe Map of 1841<sup>5</sup> gives the first clear indication of where the Heads' land immediately around the house was in relation to other people's but it is still difficult to work out just where it was in relation to the present. So I tried superimposing elements from a modern map on to the relevant part of the 1841 map, which is probably not precisely accurate. Although this exercise was inevitably a bit rough and ready, it shows that the swimming pool, fire station and health centre are all on the land which used to be Marianna Head's and that the health centre, appropriately enough, is beside the footpath to

the river from Frome Road, used ("by permission of Miss Head") by the unfortunate inmates of the almshouse for access to the river to wash themselves and their clothes: there was then no other access nearby<sup>6</sup>.

There is an oddity in that some of the Prebend Manorial lands further from the house were listed in the 1841 Tithe Map as owned by Earl Manvers (737), Thomas Wheeler (738 and 532), and Richard and John Bethel (579). This conflicts with the 1766 map and a later map of 1861, both drawn up for the Dean and Chapter, which shows them as part of the holdings attached to the Prebend House. It is implausible that these small bits of agricultural land should pass from the Norrises or Heads to someone else and that, at least 20 years later,

precisely the same bits of land should pass back to the copyholder. I suspect that the answer lies partly in the use of words: the National Archives, which houses all the original tithe maps and lists for England and Wales, defines the two categories of those responsible for paying tithes as the 'holders' and 'occupiers' of land while the Bradford list confusingly defines 'holders' as 'owners'<sup>7</sup>.

The map-maker was after all concerned only with tithe, not the ownership of land. It may also be partly due to the inflexibility of the copyhold system: Marianna Head presumably sold or leased the right to use the land and the concomitant duty to pay tithe to Earl Manvers etc while retaining the formal copyholdership.

### The coming of the railway

In 1845 an Act of Parliament authorised the compulsory purchase by the Wiltshire Somerset and Weymouth Railway Company of the land now occupied by the health centre and the fire and police stations. It was to form part of the railway goods yard which seems to have covered the area from the north eastern corner of the fire station building to the railway bridge over the river – just about the same length of riverside as that strange embankment running between the riverside path and the station car park. It must have been built to deal with the spoil from levelling land for the goods yard and perhaps from the railway tunnel. It would also have helped to appease the vicar if he disliked the prospect of a dirty, noisy goods yard just over the river from his house.

<sup>5</sup> The ancient law of tithe – a form of tax originally payable by everyone (except Anglican clergy) of a tenth of their income from agriculture, usually in kind, to the Church of England – had become a much-resented mess by the 1830s. In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act aimed to change all tithe payments to money and to resolve anomalies. All land holdings in England and Wales had to be mapped and recorded to be allocated their fair share – a massive undertaking. In the list for Greater Bradford, including Atworth, Holt, Leigh, Woolley, Cumberwell, Wraxall and Winsley, there were 3,309 holdings, some of them extended by the use of a, b, c etc. See *The Year of the Map* by Gee Langdon, Compton Russell, 1976 or *Bradford-on-Avon, The 1841 Map* by Ivor Slocombe, Bradford on Avon Museum, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Gareth Slater points out that the riverside path was not made until the late 20th century: in 1987 the then West Wiltshire District Council sought to "create a continuous and defined riverside walk from Barton Bridge to Bridge Street" along the south bank of the river.

<sup>7</sup> The holders of some Bradford plots, eg 3114, were listed as 'copyholders' but none of the plots in Marianna Head's copyhold were among them.

## Sarah Attwater and the sale of the house

In 1857 Sarah Attwater, aged 36 and Marianna's cousin and heir<sup>8</sup>, took over the copyhold (described as "formerly Self-Norris's") which then consisted of a house, garden and two tenements, a timber yard, an orchard and paddock, totalling 2.3 acres (or 0.9 hectares) and pasture, a paddock and garden further away, totalling 6.3 acres (2.6 hectares) – though much of the latter was sublet to Earl Manvers etc. The locations of all these are shown on the map of 1861, opposite.

In 1856 Sarah Attwater married David Wassell, a Baptist minister. As part of their marriage settlement she transferred all her estate to be held in trust for 99 years for her "sole and separate use" for her life and then for her children or other heirs. This was to protect her from the property becoming her husband's to spend as he wished without reference to her (the law at the time) and a standard precaution among those women who had any property to speak of. Despite this, her husband probably decided how the income she received from it was to be used: the estate was described as "Mr Wassell's" for the rest of his life.

Following a scandal about the misuse of Church property (immortalised in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*) and the subsequent inquiry, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1860 was passed, transferring most of the land held by dioceses to the Commissioners with the general brief to sort out their property. As part of this, in 1861 an indenture was made between:

"The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of the Holy and undivided Trinity of Bristol Lords of the Prebend Manor of Bradford in the County of Wilts on the first part The Right Honourable Henry Thomas Earl of Chichester and William Deedes Esquire MP two of the Church Estates Commissioners ... and Sarah Wassell, J Whitaker and J G Attwater" (Sarah's trustees)

which sold the Prebend House, along with its lands, to the copyholder for £540. It was the first time that the house had been sold since it was built some 400 years earlier.

From 1735 to 1857 the sums paid for the property by the copyholders were:

	<b>Annual rent</b>	<b>Heriot</b>	<b>Fine</b>
		paid on the death of the copyholder	paid by the next in the queue on taking over
1735	16s 10d	£5	£55
1746	16s 10d	£5	£60
1800	16s 10d	£5	£140
1814	16s 10d	£2	£210
1821	16s 10d	£5	£130
1857	16s 10d	£5	£150

Inflation between 1750 and 1857 was 86 per cent<sup>9</sup>.

The deed of sale of the Prebend House in 1861 included a map showing the remains of the land in the 1766 map, with four of the previous holdings remaining. Another

map shows one small holding shown in the 1766 map and the lands attached to the house, illustrating the loss of land to the railway. The landholding was still substantial for a property so close to the centre of the town – not only was the next-door house included but also gardens, an orchard and a timber yard. The extra piece of land was a garden, perhaps a kitchen garden, in the Strips – though a steep north-facing hill does not seem an ideal site for any sort of garden (see maps on facing page).

## Ownership and diminution

The Wassells had three children, a son born in 1859 and two daughters born in 1861 and 1864. In 1871 they had a cook and a housemaid, both aged 16, living with them. David Wassell died in 1873, when the widowed Sarah was described as "living on income derived from Lands, Houses and Dividends". Her property was not returned to her control until 1889, despite the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 which made the trust something of an anachronism. By this time the trustees had sold – presumably with Sarah's agreement – plots 701, 737 and 738 (all eastwards on or near the south bank of the river. 737 and 738 were shown as held by Earl Manvers and Thomas Wheeler respectively in the 1841 Tithe Map). The trustees retained plots 584 (the paddock near the canal) and 532 (the garden in the Strips which was also shown as held by Thomas Wheeler in 1841) as well as all the lands adjoining the house, though the sawmill was now described as a timber yard.

By 1901 Sarah, then aged 79, was living in the Prebend House with her daughter Marian and Marian's husband Benjamin Lewis (another Baptist minister), four grandchildren aged three to eight, a servant and a nurse. She died in 1904 and her son sold "Nos 49 and 50 St Margaret Street<sup>10</sup> with gardens Orchard and Stables adjoining at the rear" to Harriette Adye, wife of local doctor John Adye, for £1,350. There is no mention of the timber yard or the remaining detached land so presumably they were sold separately. In 1921 Mrs Adye sold the property to her husband for £1,200. The conveyance notes that 47 and 48 were "now in the occupation of the Purchaser and Walter Frederick Hulbert and A B Norris Ltd". Dr Adye must have been the popular "Dr John" who died in 1928 and was the subject of a long, adulatory (and rather cloying) obituary in the *Wiltshire Times*<sup>11</sup>. Here is a small sample:

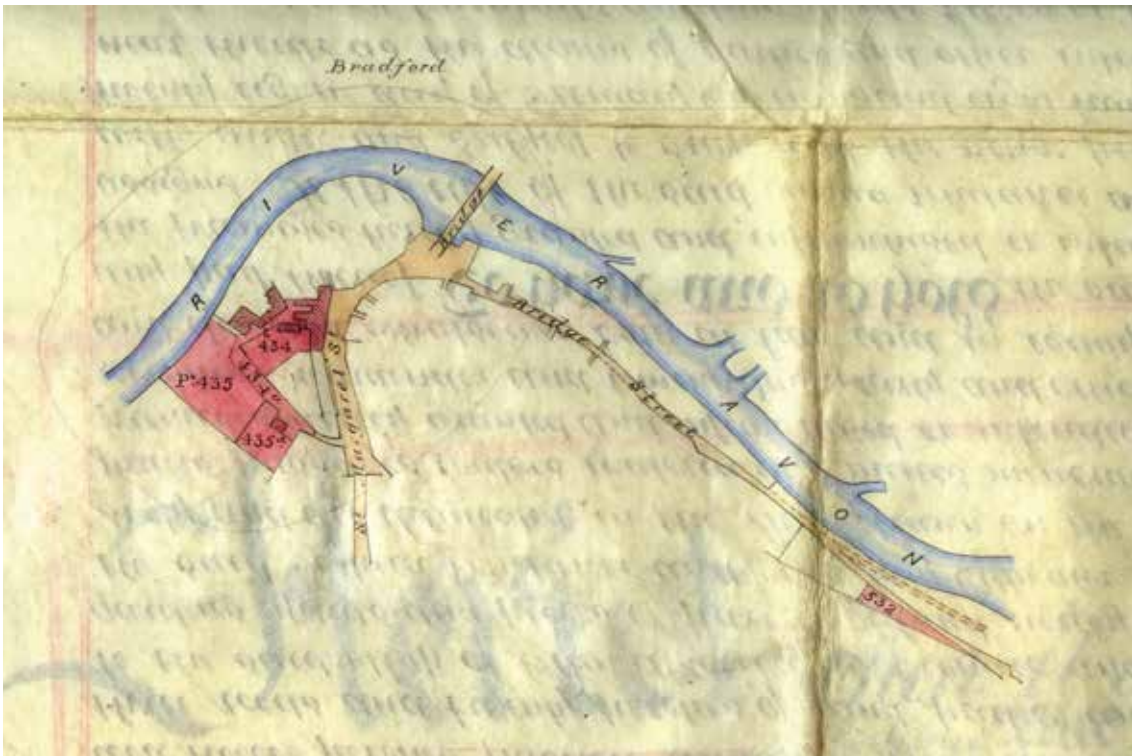
"He was never old, yet he seemed to be part and parcel of the little old town. Seeking for words to describe his attitude, I can only say that he "fathered" us. There was nothing about him that was priestly, and yet we might have been a little flock with him for a shepherd, or perhaps, rather a little clan with him for the head of it. He knew us so well that even his speech had at times a smack of the true Wiltshireman. He could scold us, poke fun at us, lay down the law to us, while all the time his hands

<sup>8</sup> Marianna Head's mother was an Attwater.

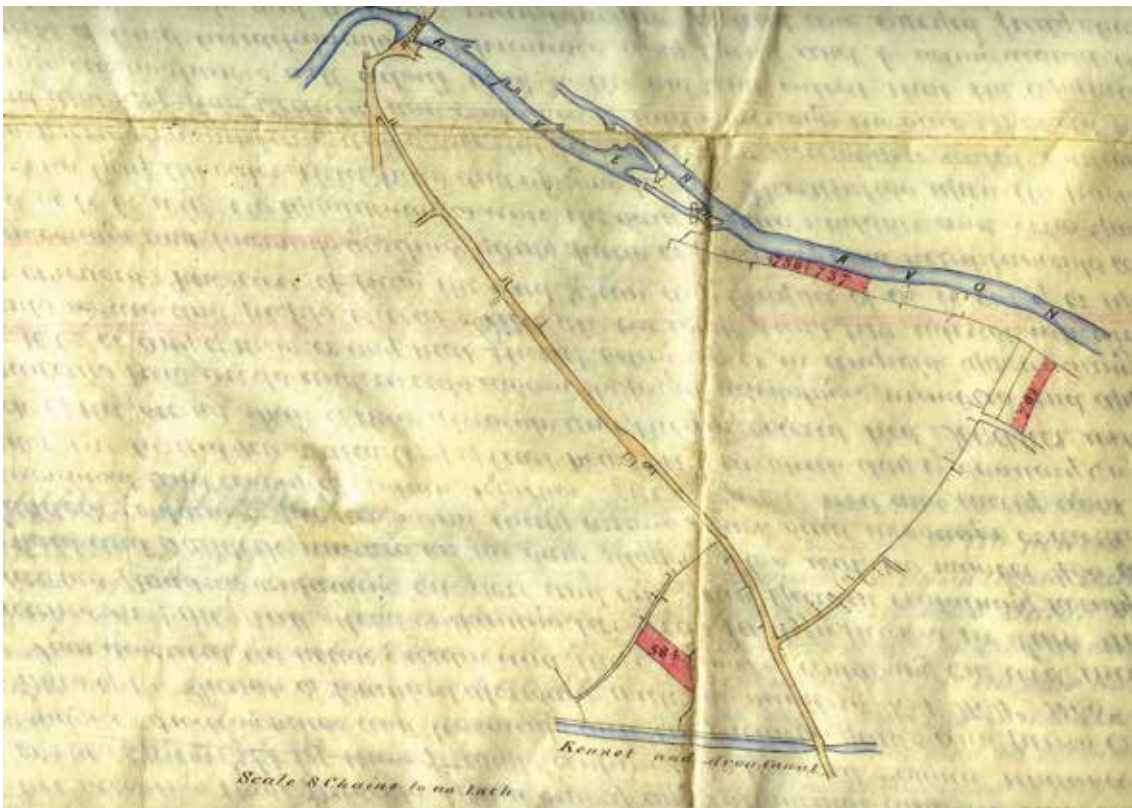
<sup>9</sup> Official Data Foundation. Figures before 1750 not available.

<sup>10</sup> Now 47 and 48

<sup>11</sup> 14 April 1928. Many thanks to Glenys Lunt for this.



Map of the house and immediate surroundings sold with the Prebend House in 1861, from the title deeds. This appears to show the older part of what is now Timbrell's Yard as included in the sale, though the 1841 map shows it as separately owned by Charles Timbrell and its title map number, 431, is not included in the deed of sale. This must have been an attempt at clarity (or possibly the draftsman's mistake) rather than an indication of ownership.



Map of more distant land sold with the Prebend House in 1861, from the title deeds

were handling us so kindly that when he was gone he always left a laugh behind him.”

In 1931 nos 47 and 48 were sold to Dr Janet Burnett, who occupied the premises with “her subtenants and Walter Frederick Hulbert”. In 1939 the centuries-long

process of disposing of parts of the property speeded up when no 48 was sold and in 1945 some more land was sold. In 1960 land forming the orchard and paddock (and on which the swimming pool and part of Stone’s Court now stand) was sold to E W Stone Ltd. In 1961

Dr Burnett sold the Prebend House, and the process of carving off bits of land went on till now there is only the one house and a fairly modest garden.

There remains the question: what features of the house as it now stands (and as described in my earlier article) can be attributed to a particular occupant – to which the short answer is “very little”. There are the traces of Dr Burnett and probably Dr Adye in the line of a partition wall in the ‘parlour’ (or southernmost room on the ground floor) separating the consulting room and waiting room, the extra gate outside for patients’ use and the ‘day’ and ‘night’ bellpushes outside the front door. There is the probability that the copyholder or tenant who built the workshop on the first floor of the back wing was an 18th century clothier, perhaps George Head, Francis Yerbury or his subtenant Scudamore Perry, or even the unfortunate Edward Heylyn who went bankrupt. Could the extra handrail in varnished wood on the lower flight of the main stairs – which looks late Victorian/Edwardian and is certainly more graspable than the early 18th century toad back rail it is attached to - have been added for the benefit of Sarah Wassell, who died in her eighties in 1904? Speculation, but interesting. And of course there are the railings, gates and paving stones at the front and the conservatory at the back which we have added.

I am very grateful to all those mentioned, including Wikipedia, to Roger Mawby and David Moss who investigated the history of the house with such

enthusiasm, to Pam and Ivor Slocombe, Gareth Slater and Mary Ashton who provided material and constructive comments, and to Margaret Dobson whose curiosity and enthusiasm led me into further research on the land and its current use, including superimposing parts of a modern map on to the 1841 map. If it were not grossly pretentious to do so, I would dedicate this whole exercise to her.

### THE 1841 MAP

Gee Langdon’s book on the Tithe Map of 1841, the essential source of information for so many students of mid-19th century Bradford, has been out of print for many years. In the latest in the excellent series of publications from Bradford on Avon Museum, Ivor Slocombe fills this gap by republishing the map of Bradford itself, leaving out the surrounding villages, and including both the areas of each individual plot and an alphabetical index of owners and occupiers. Both are likely to be invaluable to local historians at whom this booklet is chiefly aimed. There is also a new Introduction, concentrating on the map, on what it tells us about the town at that time and on the owners and occupiers.

*Bradford-on-Avon The 1841 Map* by Ivor Slocombe, published by Bradford on Avon Museum in association with Ex Libris Press  
ISBN 978-1-912020-79-9

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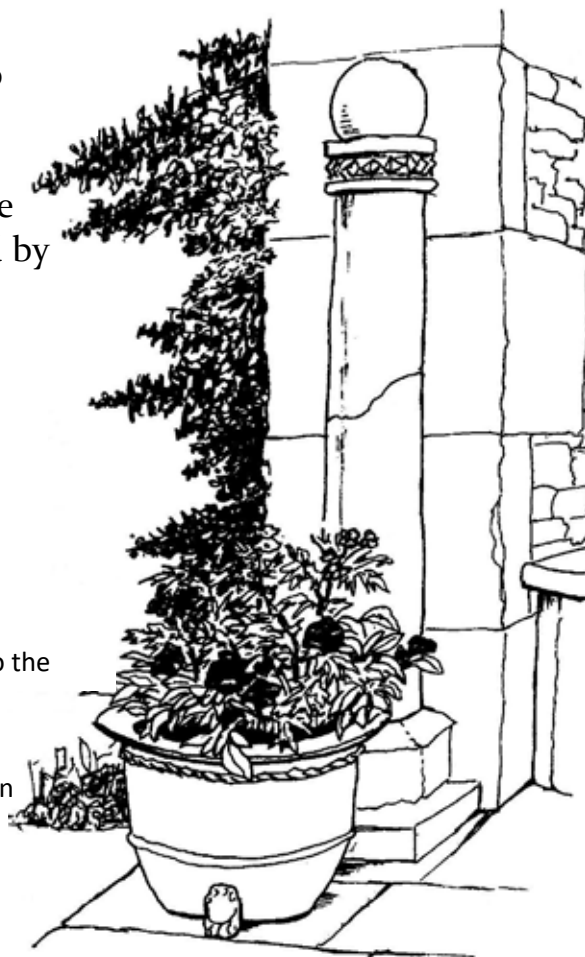
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## A fresh flowering in the Stackyard

Kate Nicholls brings us up to date with the latest news from the planned wildflower area near the Tithe Barn

Back in the springtime Kate Larard shared the idea of creating a wildflower area in the Stackyard, opposite the Tithe Barn. After some discussion, the Council of Management, who were all in favour, made plans to go ahead with the scheme.

We had to get planning permission to alter the area from Historic England and Wiltshire Council. In the meantime I sought advice from Tim Evans at Meadowmania (wildflower seed providers based in Calne), about preparation and what to sow there. Also, we discussed the plan with our groundsman, Anthony Knight. He agreed to cut the turf ready for removal.

The planning permission from Historic England took some time and then agreement had to be obtained from Wiltshire Council – which took us to October: far longer than we expected. However, the turf was cut and a small band of volunteers removed it (to a number of allotments and raised beds) – but by this time it was too late in the season to sow the seed.

We had already ordered the seeds on the advice of Tim at Meadowmania and he generously provided the seeds free of charge – a very kind gift, and much appreciated.

Unfortunately we won't be sowing the seeds until late March. With that in mind – and also to hopefully enhance the area – I have now bought native wildflower bulbs (snake's head fritillary, snow drops and wild narcissi) which will by now be planted. We're hoping for some spring colour and interest.

Of course it will be some time before a wildflower meadow is established but we hope that it will provide interest for visitors and a much-needed habitat and food source for birds and insects.



The turf was removed in October – too late to sow the wildflower seeds, but snakeshead fritillary, snowdrop and wild narcissus bulbs have been planted, which should provide a lovely display of spring colour



## Obituary: Adrian Dark – A Bradford Boy

We are sad to report that Adrian Dark, a longstanding Preservation Trust member, died on 13 August 2021. In 2005, the Trust organised an exhibition of his measured drawings, and 10 years later published *Bradford Facades*, a handsome selection of these drawings. The book included a detailed account of Adrian's life by fellow Trust member Godfrey Marks. This we reproduce below.

Adrian was born in Bradford on Avon in 1939, and has lived here all his life, except for four years as a student in London. His father had been a coal miner in Somerset until the 1926 General Strike when he moved to Spencer Moulton's rubber works (and came home even blacker from carbon powder!). Having failed the Eleven Plus exam while at Trowbridge Road Junior School, Adrian applied successfully to Adcroft County Secondary Technical School of Building in Trowbridge, as one of the handful of local day-boys among all the boarders. There he learned basic trade skills, specialising in painting and decorating, acquired five GCE O-Levels, played in the soccer first XI, captained the rugby first XV, and became the Day Boy Prefect.

Then he served a four-year apprenticeship in painting, decorating and signwriting with R. J. Austin, whose workshop was in the 1718 Quaker Meeting House in Bradford (demolished in 1965 to make way for St Margaret's Hall car park). After studying at night school he gained passes in City & Guilds Painters & Decorators Work and Industrial & Commercial Decorating. In 1961 he was accepted for a four-year course in Interior Design at the Northern Polytechnic, Holloway Road, London.

From 1964 to 1982 he worked as architectural technician with the partnership Thurlow, Lucas & Janes, Architects, at Melksham, and was involved in shopfitting projects all over the south west. He did the initial survey for the conversion by Avon Rubber of Abbey Mill in Church Street to four storeys of newly fashionable open-plan offices, with kitchen and directors' dining room on the top floor; and he was entrusted with supervising the construction work. After 18 years at the partnership, his family was struck by tragedy. The loss in 1982 of his schoolboy son Matthew in a local traffic accident persuaded him to work independently nearer home. So he became a high-class painter and decorator, and was much in demand until his retirement in 2004. To this change of career we owe his 1:50-scale drawings of buildings which interested him, based on measurements and sketches made while at work on them, and completed at home during winter months. One Christmas his family paid tribute with a surprise gift of his first 27 drawings, secretly copied, reduced in scale, and arranged in groups.



Adrian and Sue Dark outside their home at Woolley Green

Modest to a fault, and shy of publicity, (he says sketching in graveyards is best for avoiding attention!), Adrian's drawings express with considerable expertise and artistry his devotion to the old buildings, plain or fancy, of his home town. Without foliage, which he avoids, some of his facades look a little bare; dating is sometimes unclear; and many of the occupants so elegantly inscribed on the drawings have since changed. However, this collection is not an historical record; rather, as his pencil notes testify, a very personal accumulation of local images and memories from three decades of plying his trade, up ladders with tape measure as well as paint-brushes. And his sketchbooks are glimpses of subjects large and small, captured during weekend cycle trips further afield.

Adrian is a sporting man too, having mountaineered in UK and the Alps, played rugby for Trowbridge for 20 years, and twice completed the 125-mile Devizes to Westminster canoe race (his other son Simon has represented Britain in canoeing events around the world). His wife Sue, a skilled upholsterer and curtain maker, is also a notable plantswoman and gardener, well known from the Secret Gardens open days initiated by the Preservation Trust. Their daughter Emily crafts decorative artefacts in coloured glass and other materials. Their cottage, outbuildings, garden and paddock, behind that remarkable gothic arch in Woolley Green, are shared with a variety of pet animals and birds.

*Godfrey Marks*

- Copies of both Adrian's books are available to Trust members at a reduced price: they will be on sale at our Christmas event at the West Barn on 4-5 December.

## Obituary: Dr Trevor Tees

**D**r Trevor Tees, a popular member of the Preservation Trust, died peacefully at home near Thornbury on 1 November, aged 92.

On retiring from Porton Down, after a distinguished career as a senior military scientist, Trevor moved with his wife, Barbara, to Bradford on Avon where one of their daughters had just joined the Station Approach health centre as a GP.

Barbara and Trevor always put family and friends at the top of their life agenda. They continued to keep closely in touch with their many friends in and around Salisbury and also quickly built up a wide circle of friends in and

around Bradford, drawn mainly from the Preservation Trust, the Museum and the local Conservative Association. Their phone was seldom out of use. And their home in Frome Road hummed with events for guests.

Trevor played a big role in running the house. He could repair almost anything and for several years participated in the annual river clean-up. And he made an excellent Madras curry. He is survived by his wife, their two daughters, five grandsons and one very new great-grandchild.

*John Seekings*

## Obituary: Gillian King

**G**illian King, a long-standing member of both the Preservation Trust and Bradford on Avon Museum, passed away peacefully on 3 September, in her 90th year. She had chosen to have some respite care in Wiltshire Heights Care Home after lockdown, and had wisely continued living there, rather than return to her flat in Abbey Mill. Some weeks later she suffered a stroke, but was able to receive the necessary care at Wiltshire Heights.

Gillian was never daunted by any challenge. After she suffered serious pelvic injuries in a car accident, she spent

four months in hospital and used the time to write her memoirs. She embraced technology and, when unable to carry out stewarding duties at the Museum, organised the stewards' rota and recruited new volunteers. She remained determined to keep her independence and her mobility.

Her friends variously described her as intelligent, a realist, principled, reliable and capable. Gillian was unquestionably a remarkable person, and will be greatly missed by all of us who knew her.

*Mervyn Harris*

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