



# GUARDIAN ANGEL

NEWS FROM BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST

## Notes from the Chair

Our editor has asked me to include more items directly concerning the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust and take out some of my usual ramblings (she didn't say silly nonsense, but I understood) – so I won't be telling you about Ruskin's Farthing and a Grateful Dead song played by a Bafta-winning record producer in a candle-lit tin church near Trowbridge. Neither will I mention being outside a motorway service station among a group of young women in full 'celeb' mode, standing around and chatting in the light drizzle, eating meat pies. Nor let you how many people die in *Macbeth*, something I tried to work out as a distraction in the chair at my new dentist. I can tell you that it all ended very painfully: the dental treatment, that is, not the murders.

I can also tell you that the Trust sponsored and helped organise the History of Bradford exhibition in St Margaret's Hall, as part of the jubilee celebrations in June. Paige Balas and Kate Larard worked with Cllr Sarah Gibson and Katie Ponsford from the Town Council, and we provided information panels to go with the specially printed banners, the wonderful Millennium Tapestry, Moulton bicycles and much more. A special thank you to all our members who volunteered to be there every day. More than 1,200 people came to visit and it was a great success – as were the whole weekend's celebrations.

You will have seen the impressive green wall at the entrance to Lamb Yard where, after many years and failed attempts, Cllr Simon McNeill-Ritchie finally had the hideous rubbish bins removed. This gave us all an uncluttered view of the most boring wall in Wiltshire, now transformed into a vertical, living, very green jungle, whose automated watering systems have been fully tested in almost record temperatures. It's another great community project, as Kate Nicholls reports in this issue.

By contrast with the verdant wall, all round the town are large brown and crispy areas; the lawn in front of the Tithe Barn is looking especially agricultural. We must hope for the best for the new mini-meadow there. All carefully worked, sown and planted by Kate Nicholls and her team, as a new meadow in a hot, dry summer it doesn't look much – but it will start to become something quite special in the future. It has already had fritillaries and some wild narcissi popping up their heads, and Doreen Ellis has donated snowdrops 'in the green' from her garden, so we have great hopes for those next spring. There have also been some buttercups and yarrow but, as Kate says, we didn't expect much this year.

Many people ask about the old golf course. It's all a bit brown, like everywhere else, but it is returning to nature wonderfully. There are lots of butterflies, moths and bats

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flying about, foxes and badgers are doing well there, and Alison heard and, later, saw a cuckoo in the fields beyond – as did numbers of lucky experts, including Rowena Quantrill.

At the moment there are small squares of roofing felt placed around the area as part of an ecological survey, which may indicate a potential change in ownership or use. The support for *not* building on this area was absolutely overwhelming during the Wiltshire survey and that support is still growing. The piece of land is now a part of the Wiltshire Green Blue infrastructure, so let's hope the planners do the right thing when they complete the survey report.

As my editor has been dragging her feet over getting this issue of *Guardian Angel* off to the printers, it won't be news to you that Secret Gardens didn't happen this year. It is a great shame as it's a wonderful event involving all sorts of people and a wide variety of gardens. There weren't quite enough willing participants this year to make it viable, but let's all hope that once we are clear of the Covid legacy that seems to still overhang much of what we do, Secret Gardens will be back with a bang in 2023.

The Flower and Produce Show will also have been and gone – but as *Guardian Angel* went to press I was getting rather worried about my entry into the heaviest tomato competition. As I had already seen one larger than mine (never mind whatever Vernon Burchell was carefully nurturing), I'd decided to try something completely different and have a go at making a winning jar of lemon

curd. You will most certainly have heard about it if I did manage to carry off the coveted first prize.

Looking ahead, we are hoping to reinstate our **programme of talks in the Priory Barn**. We are looking for suggestions and speakers, so if a brilliant idea occurs to you, please get in touch.

At the moment, our next planned event at the Priory Barn is the **Members' Open Forum, to be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 6 October**. Do try to come along, give us your thoughts and ask us your questions. We will have some suitable refreshments for the evening – and a very warm welcome to all.

In the meantime, the Town Council is arranging another **Great Big Green Week from 24 September to 2 October**. All sorts of things will be taking place, including films, talks and demonstrations. Saturday 1 October will see the Biodiversity Eco Fair in Westbury Gardens from 10am until 3pm. The Trust will have a stall there, and will focus on the meadows and the Hens' Orchard areas. Hopefully, there will also be a showing of Oneminnutetomidnightmovies' prize-winning film, *On The Wild Side*, featuring botanist and person behind the wild areas at Holy Trinity, Dave Green. With any luck, the new film, all about phosphates, may also be ready – 12 minutes of science, politics, agriculture, Ramsars (wetland sites) and sewage works. Oh, and a large wooden statue of the Virgin Mary being paddled down the River Wye. Well, why not?

*John Potter*

*Chair, Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust*

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## Planning matters

### Rosie MacGregor, chair of the Trust's Planning Committee, reports on recent planning issues – and wishes for a crystal ball

I fear this article may be more negative in tone than usual. An appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against the refusal of Wiltshire Council to grant planning permission and listed building consent for a two-storey building incorporating ground floor parking and an apartment above at the corner of Mill Lane and Kingston Road was allowed. This despite strong representations from both ourselves and Wiltshire Council. We were very disappointed by this decision as we are of the view that it will harm the setting of nearby listed buildings, not least The Hall, and the character and appearance of the conservation area, given its prominent location at the bottom of Mill Lane.

We have also received numerous queries and complaints about the quality of works carried out to listed buildings, unauthorised development within the town and proposals for new development.

However, on a more positive note we have been thanked by most of those who contacted us for raising these issues with Wiltshire Council's Development Management and for giving our advice. Queries have ranged from advice

on types of guttering to noise nuisance. Our *Design Guide* continues to be well received

Local residents in the Woolley area have raised concerns that Woolley Grange has for a second year set up its glamping site without permission in a field adjacent to the hotel. This has been referred to the Enforcement Team. Added to which is their frustration and ours that no decision has yet been made on the application for the major extension and refurbishment works to the hotel. It is hoped that it will be refused as the proposals are clearly contrary to policy. I suppose it could be argued that no news is good news! We'll just have to wait and see – but I suspect if it is refused there is likely to be a lengthy Public Inquiry.

We have also received numerous negative observations about the Town Council's proposed Community Pavilion in Culver Close. While we support the need for a new pavilion, we have raised our own concerns with the Town Council on grounds of policy, siting and traffic. Once again, we'll just have to wait and see. I'm beginning to think we need a crystal ball!

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## Finding inspiration in the industrial village on our doorstep

Roger Jones's latest book, a portrait of Holt, is raising money for the UNHCR's Ukraine appeal

One of the added attractions of living in Bradford on Avon since 1980 has been visiting the surrounding villages – nine in total – within the old Bradford Hundred, including Holt.

I have sometimes visited The Courts with its gorgeous gardens and always enjoyed walking along The Midlands with its unusual mix of buildings, both industrial and domestic, before carrying on across the fields to Great Chalfield. The formerly redundant structures of the glove factory and their current redevelopment and repurposing as workplaces for a host of enterprises is an inspiring prospect.

So it was that I determined to find out more about the village – its picturesque Ham Green, its pubs, its churches and other places of worship, its schools, its famous spa and, of course, its former industries.

I've enjoyed exploring the village on foot and spent many productive hours at the Wiltshire History Centre in Chippenham. There I browsed through past editions of *The Holt Magazine*, a fascinating resource which, remarkably, has been published every month since 1961.

I began to assemble a modest booklet which I simply intended as a personal project. It was when I witnessed the flag of Ukraine hoisted above Ham Green in March this year that the notion struck that I might produce a limited print run and that, in doing so, I could raise funds for the UNHCR appeal for refugees. Thus it is that I am aiming to raise the sum of at least £500 by the end of the year from sales of this portrait of Holt – an industrial village.

*Copies of the 36-page booklet, illustrated in colour throughout, are on sale at Ex Libris in The Shambles, priced at £4.50, a minimum of £2.50 of which will be donated to the Ukraine appeal.*



## Unlocking the K&A:

A scheme to do away with the locks on the Kennet and Avon Canal is one of the more outlandish stories unearthed from the news archives by Geoff Andrews

Bradford builder's refusal to accept £10,000 for his novel idea might have changed the course of history, as well as depriving him of a nest egg that would have made him a millionaire in today's terms.

Mr Albert Long patented his idea for a wheeled narrowboat for the Kennet and Avon Canal in the early 1900s. His inspiration came from watching traffic on the canal from a family member's builders' yard next to the canal. The yard is now built up, but occupied a triangle of land adjoining the Canal Tavern in Frome Road. From there you could see the bridge and, beyond that, the deep lock at the Wharf.

Called the Amphibian, his idea involved a motor-driven barge which would do away with the need for locks and lock-keepers – but would have involved re-engineering every waterway.

The lock would have been replaced or augmented by a concrete slope on to which the boat would have hauled itself when going upstream. The slope would end at the water level of the upper reach. Apparently the boat would have used brakes when travelling downstream.

It all sounds fraught with danger, and when Mr Long submitted his proposal the government sent him packing. When World War I broke out in 1914 he submitted it again as “a contribution to the war effort”, but the idea was once more rejected.

However, a few years after the war ended he was approached by a German company offering that £10,000 for the patent and specifications. He refused – because he was still convinced the invention “would be of inestimable value” to his country.

After a description of his venture appeared in the *Wiltshire Times* in December 1944, Mr Long, by then retired and living in Weymouth, wrote to the paper saying that he had been motivated by the decline of the canals more than 30 years before and his initial idea was to save the waterways.

He added that the plan could have been implemented by installing slipways beside the existing locks, which would have given employment to thousands of men including, although he didn't specifically mention them, builders.

“I dread to think what would have happened to this country if I had accepted the German firm's offer and thousands of these boats would have been built secretly for invasion,” he wrote.

So Mr Long's invention might indeed have changed the course of history – if it had worked, and as long as nobody noticed hundreds of canal locks being replaced with concrete slipways.



Bradford Lock would have disappeared from the landscape long ago if Albert Long's novel idea for saving the canal system had been adopted



## When the Harlem Renaissance came to Ivy Terrace

Rosie MacGregor considers the life and career of acclaimed Guyanan writer Eric D Walrond, who made his home in Bradford on Avon during the 1940s

The name of Eric Walrond was completely unknown to me until a left-wing historian friend, Dave Chapple, who lives in Bridgwater, mentioned his name to me, together with the fact that Eric had once lived in Bradford on Avon. This impelled me to find out more.

Eric Derwent Walrond was born in Georgetown, Guyana, then known as British Guiana, on 18 December 1898. His father left when he was just eight years old and Eric returned with his mother to her home country of Barbados – travelling from there to Panama in 1910, when the family was reunited. His career as a writer began as a reporter with the *Panama Star-Herald* from 1916 – 1918 until he emigrated, via Ellis Island, to New York City to study at the City College and later Columbia University. He married Edith Cadogan in 1920 when he was only 22 years old. Edith was a Jamaican who he had met in Panama, but they were divorced within three years and his family abandoned.

It was in New York that Eric began writing literary reviews, essays, short stories, poems and his acclaimed, award winning book of short stories, *Tropic Death*, published in 1926 when he was only 28 years old. He was awarded the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, after which he travelled widely throughout the Caribbean and subsequently Europe, including France, Ireland and England. He lived for a time in Paris and then, from the mid-1930s, in London.

His lyrical narrative style is in sharp contrast to the often harsh subject matter: migration, prejudice, racism, class division, social exclusion and cultural conflict. He is now becoming recognised as having been a major literary figure in the Harlem Renaissance and his writings are at last being rediscovered. The Harlem Renaissance saw a massive explosion of Black African American culture and creativity establish itself through music, dance, art and literature during the early part of the 20th century.

Eric moved to Bradford on Avon in 1939 and lived here at 9 Ivy Terrace – where he lodged with a couple of artists – until 1952. Curiously the photo of his home in *In Search of Asylum* shows Ivy Terrace itself, whereas 9 Ivy Terrace is a detached cottage situated at the end of the group of dwellings.

We don't know what brought him to our town – most probably as an escape from London's Blitz – but he had been accused at that time of stabbing a man in London, although the charges were later dropped. Bradford on Avon has over the years been an appealing home to many writers and artists – perhaps because of its striking beauty, history, easy access to the surrounding countryside



Eric Walrond's Bradford home – 9 Ivy Terrace

and good connections to Bristol, Bath, Salisbury and London. It must have been a pleasant haven for a writer and someone variously described as charming, congenial, good-looking and energetic. He worked during these years at the Avon Rubber Company in Melksham and continued to write, including his short story set in Bradford on Avon, *By the River Avon*, which describes the impact made by Black GIs stationed in the area during World War II.

In 1952 Eric became a voluntary patient at Roundway Hospital in Devizes, a psychiatric hospital originally built as an asylum for paupers. He remained there until September 1957. No records survive of why he chose to admit himself, or of the treatment he received, but he may have been suffering from anxiety or depression and disillusioned with a society that marginalised and discriminated against black people.

He described the hospital as “a compact, almost self-

contained community set in surroundings of rare beauty”. He was equally impressed by our National Health Service.

Many of his writings from that period were published in the *Roundway Review*, which he edited. Some of these appear in *In Search of Asylum – The later writings of Eric Walrond* (a double-edged title, if ever there was one), published in 2011. I can thoroughly recommend this collection, edited by Louis J Parascandola and Carl A Wade with a foreword by Eric's granddaughter Joan Stewart, as well as his trademark stories in *Tropic Death*.

*Eric Walrond: A Life in the Harlem Renaissance*, a definitive biography by James C Davis, was published in 2015. His writings have also been included in various anthologies, including *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, published in 1996, but they aren't always easy to locate. Much of his writing is available through Amazon – but I suggest you try Ex Libris or the Library first!

After leaving Roundway Hospital, Eric returned to London where he was involved in a poetry recital – Black and Unknown Bards – at the Royal Court Theatre, a response to the Notting Hill Race Riots of 1958.

However, he was living in straitened circumstances when he suffered a heart attack in 1965, and he died suddenly



Eric Walrond: “charming, congenial, good-looking and energetic”

the following year after collapsing in the street.

He is buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, in an unmarked common grave. A fine hand-carved stone memorial in Art Deco style, depicting him holding a book, was subsequently erected close to the burial place in 2009. It simply reads: “Eric D Walrond: Author of *Tropic Death*: 1898 – 1966”.

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## Are there lilac blooms in the heart of town? Maybe not, but the living green wall has transformed an eyesore

Kate Nicholls has been watching with interest as one of the largest green walls outside London has taken shape in the town centre

By the time you read this, you will almost certainly have seen the new addition to Lamb Yard. The living green wall is an initiative of the Town Council, which has funded the project along with a number of donations from residents and an £8,000 contribution from the Arts Festival group, which kicked off the fund raising.

The wall has been built by ANS Global, a specialist company who design and integrate living green walls and roofs.

The project has been talked about for some time – and with the clearance of the bins that were a blight at the entrance to Lamb Yard, the time was right to get the wall under way. Work began on 18 July and was completed 10 days later.

Stephanie Edwards (project leader for the Kingston Mill estate) and Cllr Alex Kay (chair of the town council's environment and green spaces committee) worked really tenaciously to make the project happen. Stephanie said: "This community-led living wall project, launched in December 2019, has brought together people throughout the community: residents, business owners, environmental groups and the town council."

The wall is owned by Alison Abbot and architect Ray Winrow; Ray worked with ANS Global to design the formal structure. A new box alongside the wall holds the computerised electronics that manage the plants' watering system.

A town council spokesperson said: "Bradford on Avon is one of the few towns of its size to host such a unique community project, delivered by its town council. The project will have a massive impact, not only adding to the beauty of the area, but also contributing to our goal of being a more environmentally friendly town."

ANS Global uses natural soil as a growing medium for the



plants. The company said: "Using a natural substrate means we have greater flexibility in plant selection, allowing for native species, pollinator planting and sources of nectar. This creates a habitat for bees, burrowing insects and encourages natural colonisation. Our organic soil substrate also includes green waste, furthering the sustainability of the project."

So, here in Bradford on Avon, we're hopefully contributing to a greener landscape right in the heart of the town.

The finished wall, above; work in progress, and the ANS Global team, below, who built the structure and installed the plants



## News from the North Meadow

The North Meadow at Barton Farm – the area between the river and the railway – has had a beautiful display of wildflowers this year. In particular the chicory looked very striking.

The yellow rattle, knapweed and field scabious have spread, providing an improved habitat and food source for the butterflies, bees and other insects.

I've collected some of the yellow rattle seeds, which I will sow in the orchard in the autumn. Over the years it has certainly made a difference to the grass in North Meadow. Yellow rattle is partially parasitic on grasses and some legume herbs such as clovers, reducing the vigour of the grasses and hopefully opening space for more wildflowers.

*Kate Nicholls, Landscape Group  
kateboa38@gmail.com*



Knapweed, above, and chicory, below, have put on a wonderful show of colour this summer



## News in Brief

The Preservation Trust's programme of talks, interrupted, like so much else, by two years of lockdowns, restrictions and uncertainty, is planned to start up again at the Priory Barn this winter – more details will be shared as they become available. If you have a suggestion – speaker, topic or both – please get in touch at [hello@bradfordheritage.co.uk](mailto:hello@bradfordheritage.co.uk) or leave a message on 01225 865733.



The 2022 Members' Open Forum will be held at the Priory Barn, Newtown, at 7.30pm on Thursday 6 October. Do come along, armed with questions and suggestions – we look forward to welcoming a full house of Trust members.



The start of work on replacing the railway bridge at St Margaret's Street (A363) has been delayed by

a month. The work on removing the original bridge, associated roadworks on and around the bridge area, and construction of the new bridge will now begin in the first week of October, with a scheduled completion date of May 2023. The road at the bridge, along with part of the footway at St Margaret's Place, will be closed for 30 weeks. Access will be maintained to homes and businesses, with the one-way restriction lifted so motorists are able to drive up to and away from the bridge on both sides.



It has been interesting to watch the progress of repairs to the river wall next to the Library car park on the Trowbridge side of the Town Bridge (pictured right). Wiltshire Council contractors painstakingly removed the mass of tree trunk and roots that had grown into the stonework, putting the wall at risk of collapse.



The repaired wall, above; below, the trunk and roots of the tree that had grown into the structure



## Behind the scenes at the museum

Bradford on Avon Museum holds many stories of the people who have lived and worked in the town over past centuries – and the museum stewards often hear new tales from visitors

After a long break from museum stewarding – necessitated by successive lockdowns and other Covid-related restrictions – I returned to my favourite Sunday afternoon slot a couple of months ago, ready to welcome visitors and do my best to answer questions and supply helpful information about both the museum and the town as a whole.

Sunday afternoons almost always seem to attract interested and interesting visitors. Numbers vary, but we usually see at least a dozen people coming through the door, and on a good day that can rise to about 25 or 30 visitors. Many of them are tourists, but a pleasingly large number are local residents bringing children and grandchildren to see how Bradford used to be in 'the olden days'.

My recent stint was fairly typical. First in were an American couple, living in California. His surname was Hall, and he had traced his family back to the third John Hall, who immigrated to Rhode Island from Bradford on Avon in the early 1700s. He was very interested to look at the church records, and much appreciated all the Hall family information available in the museum, including books.

Another visitor – a Bristolian now living in Cornwall – was intrigued by the photos and artefacts relating to the Avon rubber works. He used to deliver carbon black to the factory in the 1970s and '80s, working for BRS out of Avonmouth, and particularly recalled the enormous

difficulty of negotiating an articulated truck into the Avon site via Kingston Road.

Explaining to a Ukrainian family the significance of the carboys filled with coloured water in the chemist shop window proved tricky. I hope they didn't leave the museum completely confused by the weirdness of English folk. They were on much more familiar ground with the display about mushroom cultivation, although rather disappointed that we no longer grow mushrooms in the stone quarry tunnels off Frome Road.

The museum typically welcomes about 6,000 visitors a year, making it one of the town's key visitor attractions. But to keep it open requires the support of a team of volunteer stewards, who look after the museum during the two-hour opening sessions, talk to visitors and sell the many publications now available. The past couple of years have taken their toll, and the museum now badly needs new volunteers to replace the significant number who have had to withdraw.

With the current number of volunteers the museum cannot open as often as we would like, so if you are interested in helping to keep alive an important part of Bradford on Avon's cultural life, Peter Mann at the Museum Society would love to hear from you: [petermann46@btinternet.com](mailto:petermann46@btinternet.com)

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*Joceline Bury*



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## Oh dear, what can the matter be...?

### A rare day out in Bath turned into a saga of imprisonment and mistaken identity for a pair of (anonymous) Preservation Trust members

As an elderly Preservation Trust couple, we rarely visit Bath nowadays. But recently, needing to replenish our wardrobes, we took the once-weekly old folks' bus to the big city. My wife's shopping list was longer than mine, so we agreed to continue separately and meet at 1 o'clock by the Abbey for the return bus at 1.10pm. That left me time to sight-see.

In particular I was struck by three Grade II listings. The imposing porticoed hall in York Street is now the splendid new Topping's shop, with books floor-to-ceiling on three levels, ladders to reach the higher shelves, and complimentary pots of coffee on offer. Next I browsed the handsome Guildhall Market, reacquainting myself with the old Nail column, perhaps the origin of "cash on the nail". Finally, from the balustrade of Pierrepont Street, I looked down on the immaculate Parade Gardens by the river, deserted on this chilly morning except for gardeners planting a flower bed to form the Union Jack.

With 20 minutes left before meeting my wife, a brief visit to the historic gardens seemed a fitting end to my tour. I strolled through the monumental gateway, to be hailed by a lady popping out of the great Grecian kiosk: "Are you a Bath resident? No? Then we charge for entrance." Slightly chastened, I paid £1 (senior rate, I assume) and proceeded down the grand staircase. An information panel explained the history of the garden, and the construction of the esplanade between the two bridges in the 1930s.

Then I noticed a pair of modern conveniences neatly set

into the masonry. As 20p in the slot seemed good value for a precautionary pee, I decided to take advantage. Inside was dark, but the ceiling light would surely come on when the door closed. It did not. With light only from a small porthole in the door, it took a while for my eyes to adjust enough to follow the instruction "press button to lock door", and with sufficient visibility to be confident of my aim.

Suitably relieved, I could see no advice for exiting, so I guessed the locking button would be a toggle switch, and pressed it again. Wrong! Therefore, the door's large lever handle must release both lock and latch; I tried it downward and upward, but to no effect. The illuminated display, to add insult to injury, stated "Toilet unoccupied", which seemed to prove a malfunction, not just one of my senior lapses.

Thankfully my old unsmart phone found a signal, even in this dungeon, so I dialled the Helpline to the company managing the toilets. The lady answering heard my situation, then confessed that actually she did not work there, but please hold while she made inquiries. Eventually she brought news that an engineer would be sent, and advised that the lock should automatically release after 15 minutes. Meanwhile I could try a hard kick on the big button low down in the left-hand corner. Although long unpractised with kicking and punching, and concerned for my shoes, in the darkness I managed a left forward toe kick, a right backward heel kick, and

a thump with my right fist, back-handed to spare my knuckles. All in vain.

Far from reassured of rescue in time to meet my wife for the bus home, I dialled 999. The lady at Avon & Somerset Police was sympathetic not officious, but as she didn't know Bath, asked the whereabouts of Parkside Gardens? Between abbey and river, I replied. She assigned an incident number, and noted my details, remarking that the Fire Service might need to be involved.

When I mentioned that my wife would be waiting by the Abbey where tour buses start, incommunicado because she cannot hear her phone over traffic noise, I was asked for her details too. And how would she be recognisable? Unremarkable raincoat, floral carrier bag, and a distinctive haircut. After a while the police lady called back to say that she had confirmed with the toilet company that an engineer was on the way, and police patrols would be on the lookout for my wife.

Fifty minutes since my first Helpline call, and well after the departure of our homeward bus, there was a knock on my prison door and "Are you stuck?" Some jangling of keys, then the door opened to dazzling daylight. The engineer was unapologetic, even resentful at having to come so far, and anticipating human error rather than mechanical failure.

He tested the door from inside, and of course it worked fine for him.

Eventually, though, he conceded that "some lubrication" might be needed. I declined his offer of help up the steps, and was in too much of a hurry to register with the kiosk lady as a dissatisfied customer, and perhaps even suggest a refund of the £1.20. My wife, though, was nowhere to be seen. Having assumed I had gone on an earlier bus, she had taken the oldies bus as planned.

I headed for the D1 bus stop, where I saw two giant young policemen confronting a slightly alarmed lady with a haircut almost identical to my wife's. I explained the mistake, apologised to the lookalike lady, and confessed to the officers that I was the guilty party. They seemed mildly amused by the situation, and radioed to Control "Case resolved".

From the next Bradford-bound bus, I phoned home. My wife had been surprised not to find me there before her. Over a very late lunch, I recounted my ordeal, expecting concern and sympathy for my plight sitting on the throne in a dark cell, acquiring a police record for us both. Instead I was rewarded with surely her longest fit of suppressed laughter ever.

All's well that ends well, they say. But beware the mod cons in Grade II Listed Parade Gardens.



Photo: Shutterstock

## IFORD MANOR GARDENS

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

**Open:** 11am – 4pm (last entry 3.30pm)  
April to September: Wednesday to Sunday (& BH Mon)

Our cafe and restaurant serves tea, coffee and cakes, as well as lunches, afternoon teas and snacks. We also offer takeaway tea, coffee and snacks

**Admission:** Adults £7.50; Concessions £6.50  
Online booking is essential  
Children under 10 are not permitted to the garden.

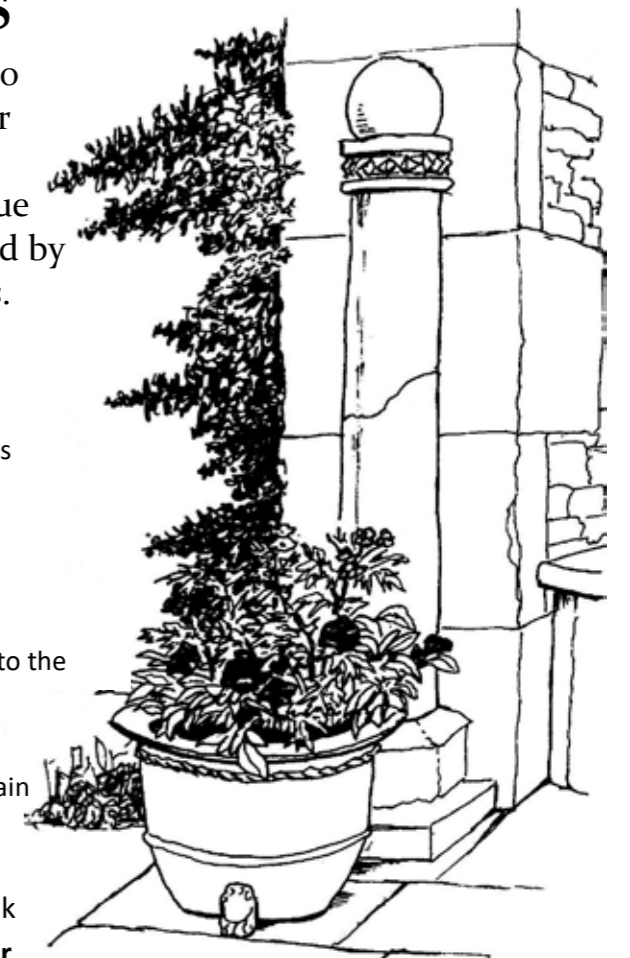
**Groups:** Welcome by appointment.

WINNER – 2017 Group Travel Awards – Little Treasure of Britain

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

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

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## Book reviews

### What an Education: My Life and Work in the Building Trade

By Michael Lintern

Michael Lintern's book picks up the tale of his life where his first book (*Privileged – A Freshford Boyhood*, Ex Libris Press, 2015) ended, with him leaving school and his father finding him a place with one of the two village building firms. What follows is not so much an autobiography as a succession of vividly recollected and described episodes from the full life that has followed.

A life in the building trade meant that Michael learnt most of the aspects of the trade and he explains many of the methods used by traditional craftsmen. But Michael quickly concluded that his favourite job was dry stone walling and that he liked nothing more than to be alone in the countryside with a stretch of wall to be rebuilt. His work also brought him tasks at many of the major houses in the area, such as Iford Manor, The Hall in Bradford on Avon, Farleigh House and several houses in Bath. His recollections will interest those wanting an idea of what these houses were like up to 50 years ago and of things that have happened to them during that time.

But the strongest impression left by the book is of Michael's interest in the people with and for whom he

worked and in the natural world, particularly the animals, around him. And his tales are told with a simple enthusiasm, kind-heartedness and pleasure in the fun of life which are quite infectious.

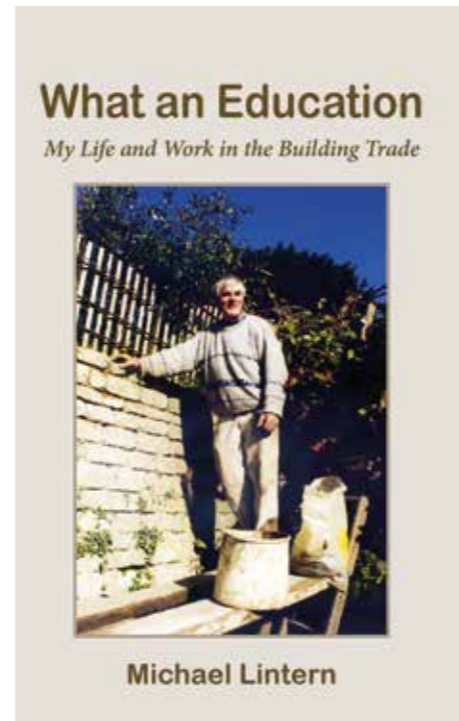
Fortunately there has not been much editing; this means there are repetitions (we are introduced to someone on one page and then introduced again a few pages later) and some sentences that are not very clear. But it also means that the story-telling has the freshness of seeming to come straight from the story-teller's mouth, vividly conveying his enthusiasms. This is really oral history, which happens to have been written down.

The best way of giving some idea of this is probably to give you potted versions of a few of Michael's tales.

One concerns an adder and a toad. The toad seemed frozen with terror and was screaming, with an adder poised to attack it. Michael threw a stone at the adder, missed but got close enough to frighten the adder, which slithered to its hole – which happened to be where Michael's mates had been watching, leaving these brave men to back away quickly.

Then there is the tale of the very large sow, who wasn't moving at all but was not asleep. Michael thought she would be unable to resist a large apple and placed it before her nose. There was no reaction so Michael prised her teeth apart and placed the apple between them. Still no reaction. Then, late in the afternoon, he looked down and saw her teeth close on and break the apple. "Mrs Pig must have liked the taste and started to eat it. When she had finished it, I hurtled down the ladder and found a couple more apples. This time she accepted them, still laid there. We let out a great cheer when she struggled to her feet and we left for home with large smiles on our faces."

One day when Michael was working in a farmyard he decided to give one of the ducks a swim in a cattle drinking trough. He was surprised to find that the cows would no longer drink from that trough because, the farmer later explained, the oil in the duck's feathers put them off.



And, as a final example, there is the tale of the new roof and the house sparrows. Michael and his mates had finished building a new roof and had moved on to another task, "quite oblivious of a pair of house sparrows doing what house sparrows do. I did by chance spot those two going in and out of a small gap in the woodwork. Judging by the noise when one entered they were feeding their young. How cute, I thought, and mentioned it to one of my bosses, thinking their reaction would be the same." Michael was shocked when he was told to get them out and block the hole, and was much relieved when he mentioned the sparrows to the house owner, who agreed with him that they should stay.

These are but a few examples of the tales that abound in Michael's book; if you've liked them, you'll enjoy the rest.

David Moss

● *What an Education – My Life and Work in the Building Trade* is published by Belcombe Books and can be obtained from Ex Libris bookshop in The Shambles and at other good book shops, price £10.

### Wild West Wiltshire – Outlaws and Schemers

By Rosie MacGregor

When I arrived in Bradford on Avon in January 1987 to start work as a subeditor on the *Wiltshire Times*, I had just left a demanding job in London, working for a weekly Middle East news magazine. I was looking forward to a gentler pace of life, at a publication focussed on village fêtes and morris dancing, births, marriages and deaths, some petty crime perhaps, and the inevitable lengthy but dull reports of local authority deliberations.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Horrific murders, drug abuse, bitter arguments about air pollution from various local industrial sites, interminable wrangling over the route of a bypass for Westbury (that particular story is no closer to resolution now, 35 years on), the sad decline of Wiltshire's market towns – these were the stories making the front pages, week after week.

But when the first murmurings were heard about dodgy land deals and even dodgier information technology sell-offs at West Wiltshire District Council, no-one had any idea that the scandalous events that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s would make national news headlines, bring the council into disrepute and have a lasting impact on those involved.

Rosie MacGregor had joined the staff of the Architects Department at West Wilts in October 1986. Her first impressions were positive: "... it felt warm and secure and I looked forward to a spell of stability in my career, protected from the volatility of the building industry." It was an impression that was "rapidly dispelled by the rumours we heard of alleged irregularities in the shadowy

Chief Executive's office".

She, like all her colleagues, was a member of the local government union, NALGO, and by early 1988 she had taken on the role of Branch Secretary. It was a role that inevitably placed her in a frontline position as the saga unfolded.

Her first-hand account tells a story of secrecy, lack of accountability and alleged fraud and deception surrounding the transfer of council-owned assets to private companies – most notably the apparent sale of a lucrative council information technology department for 'a peppercorn'.

*Wild West Wiltshire* is peopled with characters whose names are now almost forgotten, but at the time were as familiar as any soap opera cast. Rosie writes with vivid and lively recall about the heroes and villains of the piece.

At the centre of the scandal was Gerald Garland, Chief Executive of West Wiltshire District Council in the late 1980s. He was allegedly complicit, with a group of senior managers and councillors, in selling off council assets and in the suspension of his successor, Don Latham, who had started asking questions about the legality of the deals. So many other names – the good, the bad and the very definitely ugly – bring to mind the 'mug shots' published every week in the *Wiltshire Times* and other local papers, as more and more damaging revelations came to light.

Events culminated in a walk-out by staff, questions in Parliament and a high profile court case.

Rosie writes with assurance, clarity and a welcome dollop of humour about an extraordinary period in local government history. She concludes: "I felt it important to record my own memories of these unprecedented events ... before they are lost in time. There are lessons to be learned. These events serve to remind us that our lies and indiscretions are usually found out, there is almost always a price to be paid for dishonesty and that we should all have the courage to stand up for what we believe to be right. How different it might have been if greed, financial gain and secrecy hadn't clouded good judgement."

● *Wild West Wiltshire – Outlaws and Schemers* is published by White Horse (Wiltshire) Trades Council and can be purchased locally from Ex Libris, price £7.50; it is also available at £10 (including postage and packing) from [www.watermarx.co.uk](http://www.watermarx.co.uk)

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# Obituary

## Anthony Beeson: classical iconographer, archivist and expert on Roman and Greek art and architecture, April 1948 – April 2022

My earliest memory of Anthony would be of the rather dapper figure, suited and seated at a desk or ‘gardening’ the shelves at the Bristol Art Library housed in Charles Holden’s magnificent building off College Green. Since moving to Bristol in 1972, he had developed the library into “one of the finest public collections of art books outside London”. When some philistine managers amalgamated it with the main collection he was reduced to tears – an incident that achieved legendary status among librarians throughout the region.

Some time later (early 2006, Anthony had been redeployed to Reference), an ill-conceived idea was put forward to transfer the library contents wholesale to the new shopping centre at Quakers’ Friars – as had already happened at Bath, with the move to the Podium. The library staff were distraught, and not allowed to criticise council policy in public.

A well-aimed letter to the *Bristol Evening Post* from myself was followed by an open day and the launch of Anthony’s elegant book celebrating the centenary of the Central Library. The *Post* ran a double-page spread and the library was saved.

By this time I had got to know Anthony through the Association for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics (ASPROM): he had given generously of his expertise concerning odd bits of stone built into the field walls near the Roman villa excavated in 2002-03 at Budbury. His knowledge of Roman art was second to

none, and he described the dolphins on the Budbury triclinium as the best yet discovered in Britain.

In 2004-07 he helped a group of us – under the aegis of the Preservation Trust – to reconstruct panels of painted plaster from the Bath House from fragments that had been in store since 1976. They now adorn the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre at Chippenham.

Anthony had a great eye for arranging exhibitions: two stick in my mind. At the Central Library, he mounted a display on fossils and prehistoric life forms in the cases along the long corridor between the marble staircase and the great reading room, with all kinds of interesting and amusing images he had discovered in the collection. And at Bristol Museum he was responsible for having the Orpheus mosaic from Newton St Loe put back together (twice). On the spring 2014 occasion, the mosaic was accompanied by antiquarian coloured prints of other mosaic discoveries made locally in the 18th and 19th centuries.

He will be missed.

*Martin Valatin*



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We welcome 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](mailto:guardianangel@bradfordheritage.co.uk), by Monday 14 November** for inclusion in the winter 2022 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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