

BULLETIN NUMBER 20

March 2001

This Bulletin brings you up to date with the activities of the Society since we last circulated members, when the Bulletin was in the form of a letter from the Chairman and the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting in 2000.

Annual General Meeting 2001

The AGM will be held on May 14th 2001 at 6.30pm in the Lecture Theatre of the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. The Agenda and papers for the meeting will be sent to members nearer the time.

Please remember to put this date in your diary. The AGM is one of the few occasions in the year when members can meet together and enjoy a social gathering as well as hearing the latest views of their Committee and having a chance to express their own.

The Society Lecture 2001

Arrangements are going forward for the annual lecture in the Autumn on an aspect of interest regarding the preservation of the Close. The possibility of a summer social occasion for members is also being explored.

Traffic Management in the Close

In general your Chairman and the Committee consider that the management of traffic in the Close has improved in the past few years, there is no longer congestion and thoughtless parking on the Broad Walk allowing this to be a pleasant and relatively peaceful walk for pedestrians. Through traffic has been reduced and although some drivers clearly regard the traffic calmers as a challenge for their vehicles they have cut down the speed that most cars and vans reach on the road. The car park on the former tennis courts has allowed the better management of the parking of those cars of drivers visiting the cathedral either to worship or as volunteers.

In the past few months the regular closure of the Harnham Gate at 5.30pm until 6.30pm has not been maintained, due to pressure of other duties on the Close constables. There has not as yet been a resurgence of cars using the Close as a short cut at this time, but the congestion on the ring road due to repairs has meant that the short cut was of little if any benefit. Should there be an increase in the number of cars using this route again, the matter will be raised by the Society with the Chapter Clerk.

The temporary planning permission for the use of the tennis courts as a car park expired last year. The Dean and Chapter applied to the District Council for a renewal of temporary planning permission and this has been granted for 5 years with Section 106 conditions which the District Council officials are currently drawing up. As explained in an earlier Bulletin (19) the Society did not oppose the application.

Schools Traffic

There remains a problem with the schools traffic in particular when the children are picked up and cars are parked randomly in the south of the Close. There has been some improvement with the staggering of the times the classes finish, but it is to be hoped that parents will become more sensitive to the environmental damage caused by the traffic in the Close and adopt some means of limiting the number of cars bringing and fetching children by increased sharing of transport or walking where possible. One change that has made a considerable difference and reduction in the number of cars using the High Street Gate is the opening of the Queen's Gate for Cathedral School parents to use at peak periods in the morning and afternoon. The resurfacing of the road into the school grounds has recently improved this route.

Traffic Surveys

Wiltshire County Council Survey July – August 2000

The SCCPS were asked by the Dean and Chapter to give their assistance in the surveys of parking in the Close. This formed part of a wider survey of traffic flows in Salisbury managed by Wiltshire County Council (WCC), and included counts of cars and pedestrians entering the High Street Gate and the length of time cars were parked.

Members of the Close Traffic Management Committee of the SCCPS had some preliminary discussions with the organisers of the survey. The main interest of the WCC seemed to be tourist traffic and not traffic connected with the schools as the survey did not commence until 9.30am omitting the morning peak period.

The SCCPS undertook to carry out the surveys in the car park in July as all the other parking places in the Close were earmarked. It proved a more difficult exercise than previous surveys as it involved recording the number plates of all cars entering and leaving in order to calculate the time spent in the car park. SCCPS volunteers are to be commended for the way they tackled this task.

The results were sent to the WCC and a short report written for Dean and Chapter, the SCCPS and all the volunteers. It is the view that the results were predictable as the car park is used mainly by workers and volunteers. Most of the public parking in the Close is now taken by season ticket holders in earmarked places. On the survey days the number of cars paying parking fees ranged from only 8 to 18. A final report from the WCC is awaited.

Originally the plan was for them to undertake a later survey of the school traffic, which would be of more interest in relation to the traffic problems in the Close.

Experimental Closure of the High Street gate to outgoing traffic from 8.15am to 9.30 am.

The SCCPS had proposed to monitor this experiment, but in the event the Dean and Chapter had decided not to repeat it after the first short period in which it was enforced. The Chapter Clerk agreed that if it was repeated the SCCPS would be asked to investigate the consequences particularly for the Harnham Gate.

Flooding in the Close

Last year we informed members that the Environment Agency were undertaking a survey of the consequences of flooding in Salisbury. This winter has demonstrated to the Agency the effect of the river flooding the gardens and basements of the houses both within the Close and within the Liberty of the Close. The water table rose to within 15 inches of the floor of the nave in the cathedral but did not flood it as it did in 1915. The Marsh and Rack Closes were completely flooded but fortunately the tarmac on the tennis courts/car park remained more or less free from surface water.

Salisbury Cathedral Close Landscape Committee

We continue to be represented on this Committee by Mrs Priscilla Mackay. It has been influential in improving the appearance and standard of maintenance in the Close.

Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society

"Rus In Urbe"

Patron: Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Heath K.G. M.B.E.

Chairman: Sir Robin Ibbs K.B.E.

Secretary: Mrs Alison Pinkerton O.B.E.

15 August 2001

Dear Member

Letter from the Chairman

As in the last two years, the summer bulletin is in the form of the provisional minutes of the AGM held on May 14th 2001, together with this letter. The minutes provide a good summary of the Society's activities and there have been few notable issues since the meeting.

Two matters which need to be reported on relate to schools in the Close. The Society regards the presence of the schools as an asset to the Close and accepts that they have to be viable and have facilities that are up to modern standards. But the Society has long been concerned about the volume of traffic generated as parents set down and pick up children.

New Buildings for Leadenhall School

About a year or more ago the Society opposed a planning application by Leadenhall School for new buildings intended primarily to replace poor temporary classrooms. The main objection was that the design was not up to the standard that should apply to buildings in the Close. The school has now employed a different architect and has taken trouble to keep the Society informed as new plans have been developed. The design in its final form was displayed in a presentation at the school on July 6th 2001 to which all members of the Society's Committee were invited. The members of the Committee believe that the scheme and design now proposed would be acceptable. They have been pleased to note that the application includes a statement that there is no intention to increase the number of pupils, and that efforts to reduce the traffic generated by the school will continue. The Society will not be objecting to the planning permission.

Creation of a dormitory in existing buildings behind 57, The Close.

The Dean and Chapter have submitted a planning application for the buildings behind 57, The Close to be used as a dormitory for the Cathedral School. The Society has been uneasy lest this change should spoil the character and atmosphere of the north part of the Close. There are several issues that arise, including some of a health and safety nature, which are matters for the relevant authorities. The Society's concerns include the risk of noise and particularly the possibility of additional traffic and parking problems. To avoid such difficulties the planning application itself contains restrictions, notably that children and their luggage should be dropped off and picked up from the main school. It is also proposed that children should be taken to the main school each day in the early morning and not return until shortly before bedtime. The Society is strongly in favour of these restrictions and believes they should be included specifically if planning permission were to be granted. To make this point the Society has formally objected to the proposal but has stated that it would withdraw its objection if appropriate enforceable conditions are included in any planning permission.

The Society's Annual Lecture: October 15th 2001

You will see from the minutes and from the enclosed leaflet that the Society's Lecture this year, in the Salisbury Museum Lecture Theatre, will be given by the Chapter Clerk, Brigadier Kit Owen and by the Clerk of Works, Mr Andrew Robertson. The subject will be

"Looking after the Historical Close – Then and Now". On several occasions the Society has congratulated the Dean and Chapter and their staff on the well kept appearance of the Close. The lecture will provide an opportunity to hear from those responsible for its upkeep, the practical steps that are taken to achieve the excellent appearance, and also how the task of looking after the Close has changed during its long history. The subject should be of great interest to all who value the Close. We hope that many members and their friends will attend. Because numbers in the Lecture theatre are limited, early booking is advisable.

May I again thank all members of the Society for their support, and couple this with my own special thanks to the members of the Committee whose energy provides the mainspring for the Society's work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. L. H." with a horizontal line underneath the initials.