

# Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society

*"Rus In Urbe"*

**BULLETIN NO.2 OCTOBER 1991**

Since the first Bulletin was circulated in July this year quite a lot has happened so we hope the following update will be of interest.

**Seminar with the Dean and Chapter, Cathedrals' Fabric Commission and English Heritage:** Representatives from the Committee of the Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society were invited by the Dean and Chapter to attend a Seminar on 13th September '91 at the Conference Room at the Chapter Offices in the Close. A representative from English Heritage (Mrs Jane Sharman) and several members of the Cathedral Fabric Commission including their Chairman, Michael McCrum, and Secretary, Dr Richard Gem, and three members of the Salisbury Civic Society were also present. Peter Young, the District Planning Officer, came in the capacity as an observer from Salisbury District Council's Planning Committee. Tony Jones came from the Wiltshire County Council Highways Department. Mr James Thomas, the author of the Rothermel Thomas Report, and members of the Chapter also attended.

The meeting was good humoured, relaxed and provided an excellent opportunity for certain issues to be clarified and points of view to be explained. We hope that this seminar will not be the only consultation between the various groups concerned with the Close and its future development and it remains to be seen if attention is paid to the reservations expressed by this Society.

**The Royal Fine Art Commission:** On the 16th September there was a meeting with the Chairman, Secretary and several Commissioners of the Royal Fine Art Commission. Lord St John of Fawsley (the Commission's Chairman) explained that the Commission would be reappraising the Rothermel Thomas Report and, following their meeting with this Society etc, they would be consulting with other members of the Commission and forming a view. Lord St John also expressed regret that a proper traffic survey had not been carried out; something also highlighted by the Cathedrals' Fabric Commission.

**The Addendum to the Rothermel Thomas Report:** This long awaited document has now appeared. It comprises some 8 pages of text and a variety of maps and plans to do with the southern area of the Close. In addition to this 'Addendum', it appears Mr Thomas produced a 'Corrigendum' to the original report in April '91. Unfortunately this 'Corrigendum' was not made publicised to the people who had purchased the report!

**The National Rivers Authority:** This Society has written to the N.R.A. about, in particular, the proposed new road and in June received the following encouraging reply: "We are likely to object to any proposal which would reduce the capacity of the flood plain". The N.R.A. will, of course, not come to any definite decision on whether or not to object until a formal planning application goes in.

**Symphony for the Spire:** After this magnificent concert in the Close in aid of the Spire Appeal we are happy to confirm that no damage at all was done to the High Street Gate by any of the extremely large vehicles that passed through it in the

course of preparing for and dismantling after the concert.  
There must be a moral in this somewhere...

**World Heritage Site Status:** Salisbury Cathedral is on the tentative list for World Heritage Sites, but the current list is up for review and the Review Group (chaired by Jane Sharman of English Heritage) has proposed Salisbury Cathedral be deleted from the list. Naturally, we think it should be retained and so if you would like to write to The Rt. Hon Michael Heseltine MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Department of the Environment, 2 Marsham Street, LONDON SW1P 3EB asking for its retention please do so. This Society will be sending a dossier to the Department soon. In your letters it is important to stress the significance of Salisbury Cathedral as an outstanding example of Early English Gothic, the uniform quality and stylistic integrity of its architecture. As Jane Fawcett of ICOMOS wrote in 1989 "We selected Salisbury as a possible World Heritage Site for the uniform quality of its architecture and the beauty of its Close [which is] generally regarded as the most beautiful of them all".

**Lush House coach park request:** In August '91 the Dean and Chapter made a formal approach to Salisbury District Council to have Lush House car park converted to a coach park. As the land is owned by the Council there was no need to have a formal planning application. The full planning committee considered the matter and rejected the approach for a variety of environmental and financial reasons. This Society welcomed this decision as we feel the Council have already provided a pleasantly situated and well serviced coach park near the Boathouse Restaurant which is a ten minute stroll through the town, which would benefit from tourist spending, to the Cathedral.

**Leadenhall application for Listed Building Consent:** Leadenhall School, a Grade One listed building, has put in an application for a tennis court and a netball court within its gardens that extend to the River Avon. It is making this application, which may come up before the South East Planning Sub-Committee of Salisbury District Council on October 16th, because it fears it may lose its lease on the three tennis courts in the south of the Close should the Dean and Chapter (who own them) get permission to convert them into a car park, which is one of the recommendations of the Rothermel Thomas Report. This Society has objected to the scheme and if you too would like to object (do remember that every individual letter counts) please write to the planners listing your objections in the next few days. The address is: S.D.C. Planning Department, Mr Peter Young District Planning Officer, 61 Wyndham Rd., Salisbury SP1 3AH. You will need to quote the reference S/91/1192. Our reasons for objecting are that (a) the proposed courts would create disturbance within an area of freehold residential properties within the Close and one property (the Bishop's residence) which is owned by the Church Commissioners. The noise would interfere with the retreats, quiet days and meetings at the Bishop's residence. (b) The use of the two proposed courts would be more intensive than is the use of the three currently at the school's disposal because there would be one fewer. This would exacerbate the noise problem described in (a). (c) The land in Leadenhall is higher than that in the adjacent property and the court fencing would greatly exceed the height

of the wall; it would be visually ugly and obtrusive and out of character with the residential area. (d) The proposed courts would be out of keeping with the character of Leadenhall, which is a Grade One listed building. The new courts would detract from, rather than enhance, the environs of this important building and the building of the courts would necessitate the felling of six or so trees which have great amenity value. (e) It is possible that the installation of the courts might have adverse implications on the drainage of surrounding land.

This Society feels that this application is indicative of the type of pressure some properties in the Close will be placed under due to the recommendations in the Rothermel Thomas Report and the mere threat of their implementation.

**The Georgian Group:** This Society has received welcome backing from The Georgian Group. Extracts from its letter follow: "It would be undesirable to use the tennis courts for car parking. It is unlikely that the cars will be hidden from view unless there is a fast growing screen of entirely inappropriate shrubbery or suburban tree planting...The Group has very strong reservations about the possibility of a new road entering the Close from the south...such a road would entail (a) the demolition of a stretch of a Grade One wall (b) the loss of mature trees that make an important contribution to the skyline of the Conservation Area ... (d) the disruption of the foreground of a view made world famous by Constable...[the road] would represent a scar cutting across a landscape that is unspoilt and perhaps unrivalled. The Group feels quite strongly that the Dean and Chapter should take a long term view on the character of The Close and the sense of enclosure that has remained the same for centuries...There are ways to make further damage to [the High Street Gate] very unlikely...collapsible bollards and a boom should prevent cars striking the stonework at the cost of minimal visual intrusion. The Group considers that a new road would be unnecessary if a sensible approach is taken to controlling traffic entering The Close...it is quite clear that attempts to attract more tourists into The Close will bring insoluble problems"...

**Dr Jenks' report on traffic management in The Close:** A short report on traffic management in The Close has been submitted to the Society by Dr Michael Jenks DipArch FRSA. This too is critical of The Rothermel Thomas Report. Some extracts follow: "The Rothermel Thomas Report... provides virtually no solution to parking an access, other than to propose designs for car parking and new roads that detract from the environment. A particularly poor proposal ... concerns the provision of a 75 place car park which simply displaces a problem in one part of the Close to another. ...Options 2 and 4 ... will despoil environmentally sensitive areas, with no guarantee that both new and existing roads will not attract further traffic to drive through the Close in search of parking spaces. Far from being solutions, Options 1 to 4 create more problems where vehicles are concerned and at the same time damage the Close while achieving no particular benefit. To provide any solution to cars in the Close, ideas of control and restraint need to

be explored, and this can only be done following a proper traffic survey. In terms of traffic management, the narrow entrances and rather inconvenient route through the Close should be seen as a positive benefit. ... In my opinion, The Rothermel Thomas options to provide a new car park and new road should be rejected. The proposals solve no problems, and indeed are likely to cause more. The provision of car park and road is simply a waste of money...Salisbury Cathedral Close is too important to be landed with such an inadequately researched and thought out scheme with its outdated proposals. The Close deserves better than this".

**Membership:** at the most recent count the Society had over 330 members, about 50% of whom come from outside the area. This, we feel, reflects the fact that Salisbury Close and its fate are not a local but a national, or even international, issue. We want to carry on building up our membership so would be delighted if each member could recruit at least another one person. We cannot stress enough the importance of having a large and vigorous membership. Please use the enclosed leaflet, as effectively as you can!

**Planning application?** We still do not know when a planning application for the new road and car park will be made. It may be that it will go in shortly before Christmas of this year which means that the statutory time for objections will be running out when we are all at our busiest with mince pies and present wrapping. Writing letters of objection will probably not be at the top of our list of priorities! If this does happen the best thing is for us all to be prepared, so perhaps we can all give some thought to this now. If any one has any ideas for a campaign or for how to tackle the public enquiry that may well result, please do contact the Society Hon. Secretary: Rachel Blissett, 2 de Vaux Place, Salisbury SP1 2SJ.

In the meantime on behalf of the Committee may I thank all all members for their continued support. Any help you can give by recruiting more members or bringing the issues to the attention of as many people as possible will be gratefully received. Salisbury Cathedral and Close are a valued part of our world heritage, so it is up to people everywhere to help preserve it and its unique character for the future.

Rachel Blissett, Hon.Secretary.