

Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society

“ Rus In Urbe ”

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Conservation Plan for the Cathedral and Close

Over the last two years, each report your Committee has made to members, whether in a Bulletin or at an AGM, has focussed on the Cathedral's Conservation Plan which is being developed by the Chapter on the basis of work done for them by the consultants Alan Baxter & Partners. You may recall that the Plan is being built up in three parts: first, a comprehensive record of every item or feature in the Cathedral and Close judged to be worthy of conservation; second, what is known as the Master Plan, which will set out the objectives the Chapter wish to achieve in the light of the study so far and the vision in 'Faith in the Future'; third and finally, what is known as the Strategic Plan, which will turn the objectives in the Master Plan into a series of defined projects, with timings and costings. Financial feasibility will obviously be a key consideration at this point, and various other practical constraints will also have to be taken into account, including blending with the plans of the local authorities.

For some time, we have been eagerly awaiting publication of the Master Plan. We understand that we should learn about it at a presentation in the summer. This will be of great interest to the Society and we shall examine the Plan closely to find out how the propositions in it may affect The Close.

Meanwhile, we have continued to emphasise how important it is that a clear statement should appear prominently, in the published papers of the overall Plan, recording that the total effect of the Cathedral standing majestically in the elegant wide-spreading Close is exceptional, as well as being unique and world-class. We consider the word 'exceptional' to be important as we are told this is the highest grade in conservation terminology. Our wish is that the exceptional quality of the overall scene should be on record as part of the outcome of the current major Conservation Plan. This recognition of exceptional quality can then be pointed to, in decades and centuries ahead as tastes and politics change, if there is argument about what should be preserved.

Annual Society Lecture, October 2006

Each October, the Society organises an Annual Lecture. Last year, Pamela Neville-Sington spoke on 'Anthony Trollope and the Cathedral Close' and there was again a good attendance. The audience was very appreciative and clearly enjoyed it. We are grateful to Pamela for creating a successful evening. We are now actively seeking a suitable subject and speaker for October this year. The Lecture Theatre at the Salisbury Museum has been booked for Monday, 15 October.

The Society's Website

In recent years, some pages about the Society have been included on the Cathedral's website, and we have been grateful for this. However, we believe that, sooner or later, fuller and up-to-date information about the Society is likely to be needed, and that we should prepare and launch a website of our own. Experience tells us that situations can arise which require us to appeal to a wider audience than just our established members. In this context, an attractive and informative website could be an important strength. A sub-group of our committee is working on this, and domain names have been registered. A high standard of design is being aimed for so that our website will stand comparison with other good sites. The main emphasis now is on collecting suitable material, and on editorial work so that it can be presented in an attractive form.

Planning Applications

We continue to keep a watch on planning applications affecting The Close; protection of its appearance and atmosphere are obviously important to us. We are against commercialisation of The Close, and believe there are already enough institutions such as museums and schools. Fairly recently, we objected to a proposal to erect prominent boards at the entrance to the Salisbury Museum, which we believed would be intrusive and not in keeping with the tranquil atmosphere in that part of The Close. We are pleased to report that the proposal was turned down.

The Southern End of The Close

The southern end is an important feature of The Close because the cottages, Harnham Gate and the trees in the background contribute to a very pleasing rural quality and tranquillity. The hedge at the southern end of the playing field on Marsh Close, the height of which has now been slightly increased as suggested by the Society, provides an effective screen for the car park on the former tennis courts. Unfortunately, the strip of land between the car park and the cottages is unsightly and is at times used for dumping some rubbish. The Society is pressing for the appearance of this piece of land to be improved.

Life Membership of the Society

At the request of a member, the Committee has considered whether life membership could be offered. We believe there is unlikely to be much demand for this but have decided that it should be available for a subscription of £100.

Annual General Meeting of the Society

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Lecture Theatre of the Salisbury Museum at 6.30 pm on Monday, 14 May. We hope that many members will attend, to question the Committee on any points of doubt, and to encourage us in our continuing efforts. The notice and agenda for this meeting is enclosed with this bulletin.

As on many previous occasions, it is right to end this bulletin by recording how beautiful The Close is looking in the spring sunshine. We thank the Chapter, the Chapter Clerk and the members of the Cathedral staff for all that they do to maintain it in such excellent condition. We also express appreciation to those residents who make an important contribution through the care they take of their gardens.