



Guide Lines

The *Occasional* Newsletter
of the
Winchester Area Tourist Guides Association

Issue of April 2018

Contents:

- Item 1: TIC Refurbishment
- Item 2: Graffiti in the Tower of St John's Church
- Item 3: A Little More on St John's Graffiti
- Item 4: The Final Part About St John's Graffiti
- Item 5: Mediaeval Graffiti CPD at Salisbury Cathedral
- Item 6: Captain Scarlet, Winchester Hero
- Item 7: Colebrook Street Water Garden
- Item 8: Diary Dates

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I wonder whether any other readers of The Daily Telegraph spotted Fiona Duncan's article last Saturday, in which she paid tribute to Fanny Craddock? As well as being a famous (infamous?) TV chef, Fanny was also one of Fiona Duncan's predecessors as a reviewer of hotels for the newspaper. The article quoted a review from 1950 when Fanny visited Winchester and stayed in a (thankfully unnamed) hotel where *'The dust was as thick as the breakfast tea, the chamber as chilly as our toast'*. Fanny's 1950 review advised that *'England should pay more attention to this historic town which draws so many tourists. Winchester's restaurants and hotels should, in their turn, pay more attention to Englishmen and tourists'*. I like to think that things have moved on since, but it's a reminder that we should treat each customer as if they were a reviewer from a newspaper – you never know! Happy guiding,

Clare

Item: 1	Title: TIC Refurbishment
Date: 5 Apr 2018	Contributor: Sarah Davis & Steve Heath

Sarah Davis at the TIC gave us an update on progress with the refurbishment, or we should say transformation:

Last summer Winchester City Council Cabinet approved plans for the £124k refurbishment project to modernise the welcome for a growing number of day and overnight visitors to the district. The refurbished centre will be officially opening at the start of the busy visitor season with the investment seeking to support businesses and make more use of innovative digital techniques.

Visitors to the new TIC can expect to experience a modernised layout that uses inspiring images of the city by local photographers to help give an immediate 'sense of place'. Digital screens and tablets will relay information about attractions, events, shops and food and drink establishments, and attractions. The centre will also provide new dedicated Box Office to support local events guided tour tickets and entry to the district's many must-see attractions will also be on sale. A retail area is set to offer an improved choice of souvenirs, local produce and gifts.

Sarah also invited me over to take a look. The wallpaper is up, the cabling is in and the carpet (most of it) is down.



The current plan is dependent on the arrival of furniture and initialisation of the IT, but Sarah is expecting to move in by 16th April so sometime during that week they will look to open to the public in their new setting. It's a major change, and demonstrates the City Council commitment to the TIC – for which we should all be appreciative.



The TIC team is particularly fond of the “WINCHESTER” behind where the Box Office will be, and to the right as you look at it there will be a glass screen, emblazoned with the graphic of the fanciful Winchester skyline – but the suppliers managed to break it the day before it was due delivery; so fingers crossed for no more disasters.

Final note of caution is that when the TIC opens again only the left hand doors will be used, and if you try to open those on the right through which you have entered for decades, you will be sorely (literally) disappointed.

Item: 2	Title: Graffiti in the Tower of St John’s Church
Date: 20 Mar 2018	Contributor: Colin Cook

While on a walk last Sunday, Polly and I called by to commiserate with Elizabeth and Anthony Proudman over the damage to their house from a car that slid down the hill into her kitchen on “Snow Thursday”. She was excited about the article in that day’s Sunday Telegraph about the discovery of some graffiti in the Tower staircase of St John’s church nearby. I thought it might be of interest.

Sunday Telegraph

11 March 2018

Medieval graffiti uncovered in a Hampshire church sheds new light on years after Black Death

Hazel Southam and Olivia Rudgard, *Religious affairs correspondent*

Newly-uncovered medieval church graffiti which lay undetected for hundreds of years sheds new light on the mindset of people around the time of the Black Death, experts say.

The images include unusual scenes of riders on horseback accompanied by a figure on foot, a highly-stylised bird, and images intended to



Aldous Rees, of the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey, which uncovered the lost treasures, said that the quality was very high
Photo: RUSSELL SACH

protect against witches and the devil, as well as the names of bell ringers and builders.

While the church was originally built in the 12th century, the tower was added in the 14th century.

The medieval art in the tower dates from the 14th century to the 16th, with graffiti in the main part of the church stretching all the way from the early medieval period to the 1950s.

The hidden art was discovered in the medieval tower of St John’s Church in Winchester as part of a survey of medieval graffiti taking place in 12 counties, and involving hundreds of volunteers.

Medieval graffiti specialist Matthew Champion said: “Sometimes the graffiti speaks of those who survived [the Black Death]. “People put on the walls what’s important to them. There are times when they put inscriptions on the walls and those tend to be times of social stress.

“There’s the idea that you might not be around. In the Black Death, people are wiped out. They wanted to leave a permanent mark. They knew that paper, life and normal society was insubstantial, so they inscribed on the structure that they knew would be the same, the church.”

Winchester, which had been the most important city in England in the 11th century and which became the capital of Wessex in 1529, was devastated by the Black Death of 1348. In 1300 it had had what was then a massive population of 11,625. By 1370 that had dropped to 5000. The population didn’t return to 1300-levels until 1841.

“It’s really exciting,” said curate, the Revd Christine Smith. “It is an ancient church, dating back to 1142, and we have a real sense of all the people who have come before us. “Hundreds of pilgrims visit our church every year and this is something new that we can offer them.”

St John’s lies on the Pilgrim’s Way between Winchester and Canterbury, and on an old Roman road, which was formerly the main road to London. But, experts think, it was not pilgrims, but locals who left their mark on the church.

“This is being done by all levels of society,’ added Mr Champion. “Everyone did this. This is not



Bell ringers, builders and riders on horseback are among the unusual graffiti
Photo: RUSSELL SACH



Images found included some intended to protect against witches and the devil
Photo: RUSSELL SACH



Other figures on the walls of the Winchester church include a highly-stylised bird

choirboys doing naughty things. It was normal and acceptable. Everyone was leaving inscriptions everywhere.”

Aldous Rees, of the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey, which uncovered the lost treasures, said that the quality of the graffiti was very high.

“The detail of the work in tower, the craftsmanship is incredible,” he said. “They were good artists. “They were the Banksies of their time, though they probably weren’t getting lots of money for it.”

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/11/medieval-graffiti-uncovered-hampshire-church-sheds-new-light/>

15 March 2018

Item: 3	Title: A Little More on St John’s Graffiti
Date: 18 Mar 2018	Contributor: Michael Fielding

Michael spotted an item in the BBC R4 Sunday programme on Medieval Graffiti in Winchester. In this Matthew Champion tells William Crawley what medieval graffiti tell us about life during the time of the Black death in Winchester. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09vyvkr>

It comes about 14 or 20 minutes into the programme (opinions differ on this detail – thank you Colin): and within the interview it is interesting to note that Matthew Champion believes that in his view Winchester was more affected than other places in the aftermath of the Black Death.

There is more elsewhere on the web, eg <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/extraordinary-medieval-graffiti-found-in-winchester-churchexecute1/127251.htm>

Item: 4	Title: The Final Part About St John’s Graffiti
Date: 22 Mar 2018	Contributor: Clare Dixon

Further to the piece about graffiti at St John’s, I have received some additional information from Elizabeth Proudman, ex-Chairman of WATGA, who of course lives in the old Blue Boar Inn at the top of St John’s Street where Thomas Thetcher did (or I seem to remember according to Elizabeth didn’t) drink his fatal small beer. The house also featured in the Hants Chronicle in the recent snow with a photo of a car which had skidded into the front of it. Elizabeth said:

Yes, the graffiti in St. John's is very exciting. The people who found it came to see our house on Friday because the house is of much the same date, and we have one or two odd scratches, but what we do also have are lots of taper burns. We always assumed that they were where careless customers of the inn had put their candles too close to the wall. But now some people believe that they are apotropaic marks - that is burns deliberately made to keep out witches and evil spirits. (Unfortunately not skidding cars). There is an article about them at Knole etc. in this month's British Archaeology. We are not convinced, but they are odd, and it is an interesting idea.

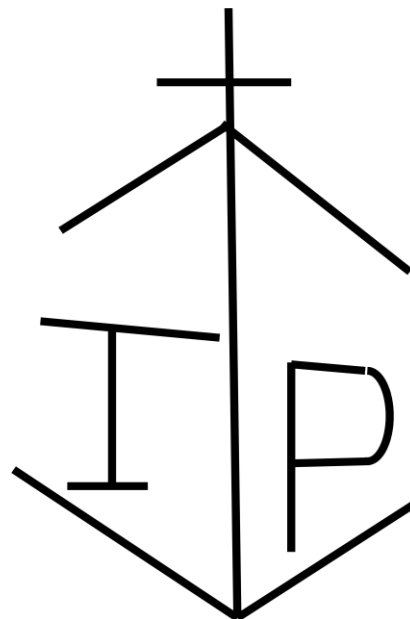
There is more information about the marks at Knole on the National Trust website at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole/features/witchmarks-at-knole-date-back-to-gunpowder-plot>

Item: 5	Title: Mediaeval Graffiti CPD at Salisbury Cathedral
Date: 2 Apr 2018	Contributor: Steve Heath

I accepted the invitation extended by Sally Peel last month, and attended the Salisbury Guides CPD session at the Cathedral, conducted by Stephen Dunn who is a nationally recognized expert on the topic. It was an excellent session, and that is without taking into account that the Salisbury guides wouldn't let me pay as I was the sole "outsider". They were a very generous and welcoming bunch, thank you.

Any presentation which begins with a word you've not heard before puts you on your mettle, and he kicked off with "apotropaic marks" – which were new to me, though apparently not to Elizabeth!

Too much information to convey in one shot, but it was a fascinating couple of hours, which have since led to my spending a couple of hours in the village church of All Saints, where I found the following mark, among others, though most of the interior was scoured or rendered by our good friends the Victorians, and little remains.



What does it mean? Was it good or bad? How old is it? I have no idea, but I do know that I shall be seriously distracted when in any church in the future. This mark is among others by a side door, and Stephen said doorways were prime territory for such graffiti.

One thing I will share is the origin of what I to date had understood was a slightly archaic W, a bit like the backwards N in Tudor script.



There was a widespread and Mediaeval Marian Cult which led to people “calling” on Mary for help, and they would inscribe a double V for Virgo Viginum (Virgin of Virgins) on the walls. Sometime much simpler in form, not always the right way up, but they are everywhere. Often quite near to these Marian Marks you find other apotropaic symbols which could be to ward off evil from the called for blessing, or it could have been scratched by someone seeking to overcome the blessing because they didn’t like the original scribe

Does anyone know if there is a “Stephen Dunn” of Winchester Cathedral? If so I’d love an introduction and maybe we could set something up

Item: 6	Title: Captain Scarlet, Winchester Hero
Date: 20 Mar 2018	Contributor: Clare Dixon

A bit of digging around has revealed some more fictional connections with Winchester. My favourite is that Captain Scarlet of the 1960s programme ‘Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons’ was born in Winchester. His real name, you may remember, was Paul Metcalfe and he had been rendered indestructible after an early encounter with the Mysterons. There is a clip which brings back memories of hiding behind the sofa at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV8YbLvGrb0> I always preferred Thunderbirds myself!



Item: 7	Title: Colebrook Street Water Garden
Date: 23 Mar 2018	Contributor: Sally Peel & Clare Dixon

Sally spotted a marvelous article entitled Peter Smithers: Plantsman, Politician & Floral Pornographer, explaining that Sir Peter Smithers [1913-2006] was an intelligence officer, a Tory politician, diplomat and above all a great gardener. “I regard gardening and planting as the other half of life, a counterpoint to the rough and tumble of politics,” he wrote. The article includes information about not only Sir Peter, but also the Water Gardens.

<https://parksandgardensuk.wordpress.com/2017/07/15/peter-smithers-plantsman-politician-floral-pornographer/>

Clare offers up the article below, with all due acknowledgements to Judith Martin and the Trust



City of Winchester Trust

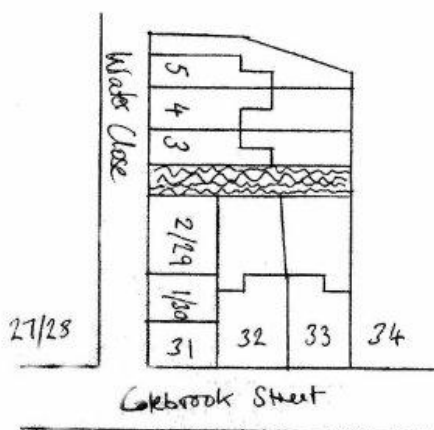
Winchester's Water Gardens and its creator - TrustNews Mar 18

“The Spy with the Green Thumb” is how Winchester's MP was described in his obituary in the New York Times. That was in 2006, and the MP was Sir Peter Smithers, the Conservative who had represented Winchester between 1950 and 1964. Born in 1913, his wartime exploits alongside Ian Fleming must have made Winchester seem rather tame. There was even a suggestion – not confirmed - that Smithers was the model for James Bond. Certainly he was tall and dashing.

In 1964 he left Winchester to become Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, which involved organising eighteen member governments, the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Court of Human Rights, which he considered “the best international court in existence then or since”.

He left two legacies to Winchester. One was the avoidance of a truly shocking plan. The government had wanted to create a 4,000 acre reservoir under the city for the storage of gas. Smithers created an all-party coalition of MP3, various Wykehamists, the Bishop of Winchester and the Council, and in 1962 defeated the plan. Even if few people now recall this, the entire population should be grateful to its erstwhile MP.

It's hard to imagine James Bond taking up gardening, but that was Smithers' other legacy. His parents had bought Colebrook House, 27/28 Colebrook Street, some time in the 1940s - unfortunately there is a gap in the run of street directories in the Hampshire Record Office between 1942 and 1951, but by 1951 Peter and his mother Ethel were both living there, presumably along with other family members. Peter had married his American wife, Dojean, while serving in Mexico in 1948. His mother died in 1952. Colebrook House was listed Grade II* in 1950, in the first round of the newly-devised designations, demonstrating its obvious significance.



The Water Garden occupies the site of what were once five cottages and three houses, the cottages lining the path (officially Water Close) and the houses fronting Colebrook Street, between the path and no. 34, the handsome house (also listed Grade II*) which happily remains. Again using the street directories, it's possible to establish that the three Colebrook Street houses, nos. 31, 32 and 38, were built some time before the first directory, which is for 1880, as were the two to the right of the path. These two were originally nos. 29 and 30 Colebrook Street but later became 1 and 2 Water Close, while nos. 3, 4 and 5 Water Close, between the water and the cathedral wall, were built and occupied by 1884. There seems to be no record of what any of them looked like, apart from a photo from about 1955 showing the pair of cottages at 32 and 33 Colebrook Street, and the edge of the attractive barge-boarded gable of no. 31.

Peter Smithers wrote his book *Adventures of a Gardener* in 1996, by which time he was retired and living in Switzerland, where he created another magnificent garden at Vico Morcote above Lake Lugano. He writes of how in the 1950s he bought several small houses that had been scheduled for demolition, in order to create the water garden, starting with the houses to the right of the water - presumably numbers 1 and 2 Water Close and 31, 32 and 33 Colebrook Street. The houses were demolished in 1958, and the garden was commenced. A conveyance dated 1967 shows how the final three houses, 3, 4 and 5 Water Close were sold by The Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Winchester (the forerunner of Winchester City Council) to Peter Smithers, along with a protective covenant covering the area of the three houses saying "the said property hereby conveyed shall not at any time hereafter be laid out as or form part of a building site but shall be laid out and maintained as a private garden".

The paradox now, of course, is that the City of Winchester Trust would almost certainly be arguing to keep the eight houses – that was, after all, how the Trust came into being, to prevent the demolition of swathes of St John's Street in the same mania for "slum clearance" that caused the loss of the first Water Close cottages. But 60 or so years later, like most of Winchester's citizens and visitors, the Trust appreciates and values the Water Garden, and can be thankful to its creator for his incidental gift to the city: private yet open to the eye, a harmonious and tranquil space of great beauty. Long may it continue to be so.



Judith Martin

Item: 8	Title: Diary Dates
Date: 28 Feb 2018	Contributor: Clare Dixon

WATGA Dates for the diary

- Wednesday 11th April, 10.30am and Monday 16th April 2pm, CPD sessions for St Cross walk. Tell Clare if you would like to come.
- ~~Thursday 19th April at 1400 – Tour of Bombay Sapphire, **CANCELLED**~~
- Tuesday 15th May at 1030 - James King offers Chesil Tunnel training. Contact him to take part
- Wednesday 20th June at 1900 – June General Meeting at East Stratton Village Hall.
- Monday 17th September at 1900 – Annual General Meeting at Winchester Guildhall.
- Wednesday 24th October 1415 – Autumn General Meeting with talk on Falconry, Pilgrim’s Hall

Guide Lines Dates

- May Issue
 - submit copy by weekend 28/29 Apr 2018
 - publish over weekend 5/6 May 2018
- June Issue
 - submit copy by weekend 26/27 May 2018
 - publish over weekend 2/3 Jun 2018

WATGA takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information in this Newsletter. Please contact individual contributors with any queries.

Send contributions to: watganewsletter@gmail.com in editable format (Plain text or Word please)
Chairman, Clare Dixon dixons@ec27.me.uk Editor, Vanessa Silcock vanessasilcock@gmail.com and Newsroom Runner,
Steve Heath steve.heath@entadic.co.uk; reserve the right to edit or omit any contributions received.