



# Winchester Area Tourist Guides Association



## Newsletter



**December 2009**



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## **Letter from the Chairman (Sue Coles)**

The last few months have been challenging for WATGA. The reduction in the level of support provided by Winchester City Council was a serious blow and caused us to look hard at the way guiding is organised in Winchester.

Nevertheless, the arrangements subsequently agreed with the City and endorsed by members at the EGM are a good basis. The new way of working should bring us closer to customers and so has the potential to improve the service we offer.

I was particularly pleased at the level of support given to the Executive Committee at the EGM and it was encouraging to receive so many offers of help from members. The negotiations with Eloise and Alison, far from damaging our relationship with the City have actually improved it. The City has, I think been genuinely impressed by the way we responded to the new situation.

With the help of the many volunteers and support from the TIC during the transition, we can make the new structure work to our advantage. There are a few "i"s to be dotted and "t"s to be crossed, but nothing insuperable.

With that behind us, we can now look forward to 2010 with much more confidence. We have already agreed to do a series of special tours associated with the Treasures of Hyde exhibition as part of Hyde 900 and the sub-committee responsible for the 2010 Programme is hard at work putting together an interesting programme of tours linking where we can with events that generate their own publicity. Kate Colwill has been exploring the potential of working with various bodies and the possibility of cooperating with the Chesil Rectory restaurant is particularly exciting. If any of you have particular knowledge of the building's history or any good photos, please contact Kate direct.

Winter is a time for training. Graham Scobie has already provided some initial training on the Treasures of Hyde exhibition. We continue to benefit from good links with the Cathedral, both in the form of venues for our training and the opportunity to participate in their training events. For three of our members – Clare Dixon, Tina Reid and Mike Craze – training is now almost a way of life as they get used to the rigours of the Blue Badge Course for South and South East England. Other WATGA members are helping Pamela Boyes with the running of the course.

Arrangements are well in hand for our New Year's Party on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January. Thanks to Lis Moll and Judy Simmons who have taken on the organisation this year. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible – Full, Associate and Honorary – at the party in St. Lawrence's Hall.

Finally, a big thank-you to the Executive Committee of Kate, Clare, Tina, Lis and new member Colin. Thanks also to the Newsletter team of Denis and Tony and last but not least thanks to Michael Fielding, Chris Maxse, Tony Newing, Geraldine Buchanan Elizabeth Proudman and Pat Byford, all of whom have volunteered to help with the production of the rota and the programme of themed tours for 2010.

Best wishes for Christmas and good guiding in 2010 - Sue

## Dates for your Diary

### **WATGA Events**

15 Jan (19:00) WATGA New Year's Party, St Lawrence Parish Room  
9 Feb (14:00) WATGA General Meeting, St Cross.

### **Winchester Events:**

27 Nov-3 Jan Winchester Cathedral Ice Rink  
27 Nov-20 Dec Winchester Cathedral Christmas Market see  
[www.winchesterchristmasmarket.co.uk](http://www.winchesterchristmasmarket.co.uk)  
12/13, 19/20 Dec "Christmas at Hinton Ampner" (NT)  
14 Dec (19:30) "Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones"- talk by Garrad Cole -  
Peter Symonds, Science Lecture Theatre – 01962 867490  
01 Jan (10:30) "Milling in the New Year" – City Mill (NT)  
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/events>

### **Winchester Cathedral**

20 Dec (15:30) Christmas Market Carols  
21/22 Dec (18:30) Public Carol Service by Cathedral Choir

## Winchester City Council Update (Alison Woods)

### **Tourist Information Centre Christmas and New Year Opening Times**

Christmas Eve	Thursday 24 December 2009	10am to 12noon
Christmas Day – New Year's Day	Friday 25 December 2009 to Friday 1 January 2010	Closed for the Christmas Break

From Saturday 2 January 2010, the TIC will resume its usual winter opening hours: Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm.

Guides are reminded to call the tourist information centre by midday on Christmas Eve to confirm any tours taking place during the closure period.

The staff at Winchester Tourist Information Centre would like to wish all the guides a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

### **Christmas in Winchester ([www.christmasinwinchester.co.uk](http://www.christmasinwinchester.co.uk))**

Don't forget to log on to our Christmas in Winchester website to find out about all things Christmassy in one single place on line. This includes promotion of the guides' popular "Christmas in Winchester through the Ages" tour.

Alternatively, pick up a copy of the Christmas in Winchester brochure from the tourist information centre.

## **Watch the NEW Winchester Festivals film**

If the cold weather is getting you down, brighten up your day by reminding yourself what a great place Winchester is and watch our new film about the city's summer festival season. Watch it on [www.youtube.com/VisitWinchester](http://www.youtube.com/VisitWinchester)

## **Keats: a Winchester walk in the poet's footsteps**

The tourism marketing team have recently revised and printed the popular self guided trail known as the Keats walk to encourage people to follow in the poet's footsteps. This was to coincide with Jane Campion's *Bright Star* film, which puts the life and loves of poet John Keats firmly in the public eye, and is supported by a marketing campaign to encourage more visits to the city from fans of the film and the poet.

Keats visited Winchester during 1819. Letters he wrote at the time show he spent a happy period here, taking a daily walk along the river to St Cross. On 19 September 1819 he was so inspired by one of these walks that he composed his famous ode 'To Autumn'.

Guides can collect copies of the leaflet from the tourist information centre.

## **An historical account of Winchester with descriptive walks: Charles Ball**

Guides may be interested to know that The Winchester University Press is publishing a 1818 guide book to the city of Winchester. The book, *An historical account of Winchester with descriptive walks* by Charles Ball, will be available from Winchester bookshops in the new year.

## **And finally a thank you!**

Thank you from Winchester City Council to all the Winchester Official Tourist guides for their help during 2009. Next year will bring some changes in the way we work with you. We look forward to the new opportunities this will bring and to ensuring the guiding service is as successful as it has always been.

## **Laon, a summer visit (Colin Cook)**

My family and I started our summer holiday this year by visiting our twinned city of Laon. For those of you yet to make the journey it is well worthwhile.

The old town is perched on a crescent shaped limestone ridge which provided a fortified site in the third century for



the Romans, and also Saint Beat, Laon's first Christian, who lived as a hermit in a cave on the plateau.



Saint Remi created a bishopric here in 511 AD so Laon can claim to have been a city earlier than Winchester.

For some one hundred years from 888 Laon was the last refuge of the Carolingian kings. In 1128 Louis VI granted the city a charter which presaged some two hundred years of prosperity, including the building of the cathedral of Notre-Dame.



Rose Condette in front of the 13<sup>th</sup> C carving of Moses and the Burning Bush



Nave of the cathedral of Notre-Dame

Built at the same time as Notre-Dame in Paris its style represents several Anglo-Norman influences, and its five towers create a dramatic impact on the townscape. While some restoration work has been carried out, there is still much to be done to preserve the decaying stonework of the 13<sup>th</sup> century pierced towers designed and built by Villard de Honnecourt.

We were shown round it by a founder member of the Laon guides, Rose Condette, and she very kindly invited us back to her delightful house for an evening meal. My photo below of the cathedral in the setting sun is taken from her dining room.



West front of cathedral and Tourist Office

Our visit was all too short to do justice to Laon's rich history. Rose told us that financial limitations have restricted the activities of Laon's experienced guides, but I do hope WATGA's link can continue. I, for one, will certainly want to return there!

*I have a copy of 'Laon - The Upper Town', Martin Plouvier, 2002 should any WATGA guide wish to borrow it.*



St Martin's Abbey

## **Who are The Knights Templar? (James King and Tony Newing)**

Within two decades of the victory of the First Crusade (1095-1099) a group of knights led by Hugues de Payens offered themselves to the Patriarch of Jerusalem to serve as a military force. This small group had the mandate of protecting Christian pilgrims who were en route to the shrines of the Holy Land. Somewhere between the years of AD 1118 - 1120, King Baldwin II granted the group quarters in a wing of the Royal Palace on the Temple Mount (now the al-Aqsa Mosque).

Although it has been widely speculated that at first the Templars decided to keep their numbers small to cover their secret mission of digging for buried treasure on the

Temple Mount, in truth the lifestyle adopted by the Order was not to everyone's taste, and as a result, the Templars had difficulty in recruiting members to their cause in the early years.

In the year 1127 the Cistercian abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux, wrote a rule of order for the Templars that was based on his own Cistercian Order's rule of conduct. He also wrote a strongly supportive letter to Hugues de Payens. This letter swept throughout Christendom drawing many men of noble birth, who joined the ranks of the Templar Order. Those who were unable to join in person often gave the Templars land and other valuables.

Although the Templars were not permitted by their rule to own valuable possessions as individuals, there was no such restriction on the Order as a whole. Gifts of land were accepted and put to immediate use by the Templars, who farmed the land generating additional wealth. Over the years the Templars rose to become the wealthiest of the Crusading Orders, acting as the bankers for the Crusades, and gaining the favour of both Church and State.

The wealth generated in their homelands was put to immediate use in the Holy Land to buy arms and raise armies. However, after two centuries of defending the Christian faith, the Order met its demise when Philippe IV of France - known as Philippe le Bel - sought to destroy the Templars. Philippe was deeply in debt to the Templars from his war with England and he seized on rumours of heretical secret rites, which had been circulated by a disaffected former member of the Order, as an excuse to suppress them.

Philippe had the Templars arrested on 13th October 1307 – a Friday - and this is the origin of the modern superstitions surrounding Friday 13th. The Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Jaques De Molay and other senior members of the Order in France were imprisoned in one of the towers of the Castle of Chinon, in the Loire Valley, and a visitor today can still see preserved graffiti scratched into the stone wall of their cell. Confessions were extracted under extreme duress from many of the Templars: for example, Jacques de Molay was tortured by being crucified, nailed to a door, which was then swung to and fro to increase the pain!

In 1312 the Templars were officially dissolved by Pope Clement V, under pressure from King Philippe. Although not found guilty of the crimes with which they had been charged, it was felt that the reputation of the Order had fallen so low, as a result of the scandal generated by the confessions, as to warrant its dissolution. Although Philippe seized much of their assets in France, elsewhere Templar property was handed over to the Knights Hospitaller. This order has continued to exist in various parts of Europe, despite being suppressed by Henry VIII in England. It was re-founded in England in the nineteenth century as the Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem, and its best-known modern activities are based around [St. John Ambulance](#), and the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem – which receives substantial financial support from today's masonic Knights Templar

On 18th March 1314 Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake in Paris, for having recanted his earlier confessions of guilt. He is said to have cursed King Philippe and Pope Clement as he burned, asking both men to join him in death within a year.

Although there is no proven historical fact to the de Molay curse story, both Pope Clement V and Philippe IV followed de Molay to their graves within the year. Whether or not the Templars were entirely eradicated is a matter for speculation.

In 2002, a document known as the "Chinon Parchment" was found in the Vatican Secret Archives, apparently after having been filed in the wrong place in 1628. It is a record of the trial of the Templars and shows that Clement absolved de Molay and the Templars of all heresies in 1308 before formally disbanding the Order in 1312.

It is currently the Roman Catholic Church's position that the medieval persecution of the Knights Templar was unjust; that there was nothing inherently wrong with the Order or its Rule; and that Pope Clement was pressured into his actions by the magnitude of the public scandal and the dominating influence of King Philippe IV

At the start of the Eighteenth Century all freemasons professed a belief in the Christian Trinity as a matter of course, but changes to the freemasons' Constitutions in 1723 and 1738 opened the doors to 'all good men and true' irrespective of their religious persuasion.

A Papal Bull in 1738 excommunicated all freemasons, and produced a strong counter-reaction, particularly in France, where a number of Masonic degrees with a Christian background appeared and gradually spread across Europe. One of the most significant of these was the Masonic Christian Order of Knights Templar, which has no historical connection with the original Military Orders, though its ritual owes much to their history.

The first evidence in England of masonic Knights Templar dates from the 1760's, when the ceremonies were worked as a part of other masonic degrees. One of the earliest recorded Knights Templar 'Encampments', as they were then known, was established in Portsmouth in 1791 and is still flourishing today. The modern title of the Order in England and Wales is 'the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta of England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas'. The precepts of the order call upon its members to maintain and defend the Christian faith, to be loyal to the Sovereign, to assist the distressed, the widow and the fatherless, and to maintain a high moral and personal code of conduct as individuals.

Templar Masonry has independent Sovereign bodies spread throughout the world, and a Conference of Grand Masters is held every three years to discuss matters of mutual and international interest. The recent conference in Winchester was the 2009 Triennial Conference of the world-wide organisation at which 15 jurisdictions were represented. During the course of the conference substantial donations were presented to the Mayor of Winchester for his charities, to the Master of St Cross and to the Dean of Winchester. The finale of the Conference on the Saturday afternoon was a magnificent choral evensong held in Winchester Cathedral, led by a choir of the Occam Singers. The congregation of around 750 members and spouses filled the nave, and was welcomed by the Dean. They enjoyed a beautiful service and the colourful spectacle of about 350 Knights Templar in their various regalias complete with national banners leading in each delegation. Statistically the conference is unlikely to return to England for many years.

## **The Great Hall & the IRA Trial 1973 (Geraldine Buchanan)**

The recent arrest and subsequent release without charge of Marian Price, now aged 55, in connection with the murders of two soldiers in Northern Ireland in March of this year, brought back memories of the IRA trials in the Great Hall in 1973.

On November 14<sup>th</sup> 1973, six men and two women were convicted of exploding two IRA car bombs in London in March 1973. All eight were active members of the Provisional IRA and the two women defendants, Dolours, aged 22, and Marian Price, aged 19, were believed to have played the most important role in the conspiracy, along with a third defendant, Hugh Feeney. All three were student teachers in Belfast. A fourth defendant, Gerry Kelly was also regarded as one of the ring-leaders. A ninth defendant, 18-year-old Roisin McNearney, was acquitted.

One person died of a heart attack and almost 200 were injured in the two bombs. One blew up outside the Old Bailey criminal court, while the other went off outside Scotland Yard, near an army recruiting office.

The 10-week trial was held the Great Hall, as the new Winchester law courts were still to be opened. The trial saw some of the strictest security precautions in British legal history to date. The court was heavily guarded throughout, and as the verdict was delivered, four rows of plain-clothes detectives sat behind the dock and at least 15 prison officers surrounded the defendants. All doors to the court were bolted.

First, the jury returned a not-guilty verdict on Roisin McNearney, a known IRA activist who is believed to have helped the police identify the other conspirators. As her verdict was handed down, the other defendants began to hum the Dead March from Saul, and one threw a coin at her, shouting "Take your blood money with you" as she left the dock in tears. A number of threats have already been made to members of her family and she has said she is unlikely ever to be able to return to her native Belfast.

As the eight guilty defendants were led to the cells below the court several gave clenched fist salutes to relatives and friends in the public gallery, who shouted "Keep your chins up" and "All the best". The judge then addressed Miss McNearney, saying, "You have learned a bitter lesson and I hope it has taught you and others like you not to dabble in murderous enterprises." He then ordered that she be given police protection. She was subsequently given a new identity so that she could not be traced.

The eight conspirators were jailed for life, and almost immediately began a hunger strike, demanding to be transferred to prisons in Ireland. The four ringleaders - the Price sisters, Gerry Kelly and Hugh Feeney - continued their strike for 200 days force-fed by prison authorities. They were finally transferred to Irish jails in 1975. Marian and Dolours Price were released from jail early on medical grounds in 1981, both suffering from anorexia nervosa.

Marian Price split with the mainstream republicans of Sinn Fein around the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Of the Agreement she said, "It is not, certainly not, what I went to prison for". She now chairs the Irish Republican Prisoners

Welfare Association and is active in the political wing of the Real IRA, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. Dolours Price was married to the Protestant Republican actor Stephen Rea from 1983-2003 and is still active politically. Gerry Kelly escaped from the Maze Prison in 1983, but was recaptured in 1986. He was a member of Sinn Fein's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement, and also served as a Sinn Fein Assembly Member for North Belfast in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

(Sources: BBC Website with supplementary material from Wikipedia.)

The Quirks of History - On the same day as the verdict – November 14th 1973  
- Princess Anne's Wedding to Mark Philips took place in Westminster Abbey.

### Winchester - Heart of a City, by Andrew Rutter (Elizabeth Proudman)

This is an excellent book which will be useful for all guides, and a delight for anyone who loves Winchester. If you can persuade someone to give it to you for Christmas, you should, and I am sure you will get endless pleasure from it. Sadly, it is expensive £35, published by P & G Wells and sponsored by the City of Winchester Trust. However, it has everything we need, and it is a lovely book.

Andrew Rutter was the Winchester conservation officer from 1974 until he retired about ten years ago. Since then he has continued to live in Winchester, and to draw endlessly the street scenes that he admires. This book is based on his drawings and text with additional drawings by Keith Leaman and photographs, some of them by John Crook. There are also old prints and some lovely drawings by Heywood Sumner done in 1880s.

The book describes the conservation area, and its importance. It begins with an outline of the history of the town, and stresses the importance of its setting. Andrew has produced sketches from each of the access roads, and Keith Leaman has done delightful watercolours analysing the important view points.

Then the individual areas of the city are described and explained, nine areas within the walled city, and five suburban areas. Each is introduced with a large scale OS map, and then a description of the interesting features. It is very subjective, and that is part of its charm. Andrew writes beautifully. Of St. James Cemetery he says: *The beauty of the serried ranks of simple patterned gravestones, with their decorative tops and accumulated lichen, separated by mown grass paths is emphasised in autumn when the bright orange of the turning beech trees seems to enhance the light that outlines the stones. ....the change in fashion from the use of limestone to shiny black granite, often with decorations in colour and attached photographs, is regrettable. Granite will not mellow over the years like Portland stone and will damage the character of this cemetery....*

Then he goes on to tell you when the cemetery was founded and who by (1840 and CW Benny who was mayor in 1834). So you get what he appreciates as beautiful, what he dislikes, and then useful and necessary facts for guides!

Chapter 9 is about detail - windows, gates and brickwork and a page of chimneys which would set the most knowledgeable guessing. Chapter 10 by Dick Whinney is on the archaeological development, and the last chapter is on interiors.

## **Licoricia Of Winchester by Suzanne Bartlet (Judy Simmons)**

This book is about a prominent Jewish business woman who in 1277 was found by her daughter murdered, stabbed to death in her own house alongside her maid, Christian.

Suzanne Bartlet was a Jew and a former County Councillor. She had done extensive research, trawling through documents held at the Hampshire Record Office at Winchester and in London. She was inspired to do this after it was discovered, in 1992, that there had been a Jewish cemetery in Crowder Terrace.

Sadly Suzanne has died of cancer so the book was published posthumously. It sheds light on the Jewish community in medieval Winchester. I recommend this book especially to a guide who is doing a walk in the West Hill cemetery area.

The book is published by Vallentine Mitchell and costs £39.50 but of course can be borrowed from the local libraries

## **Some useful hyper-links (Michael Fielding)**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/restaurants/6406783/Crunch-lunch-The-Chesil-Rectory-in-Winchester-Hampshire.html>

Saturday 24th October

For a fresh twist on old British favourites, Hix marks the spot. Credit lunch at The Chesil Rectory and Mark Hix, once of Le Caprice and the Ivy

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/outdoors/6408712/Autumn-walks-around-Britain-Keatss-Walk.html>

Friday 23rd October

Autumn walks around Britain: Keat's Walk, article by Nicholas Roe

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/6245938/Winchester-an-ode-to-autumn.html>

Wednesday 30th September

There is a half page spread by Joanna Symons headed Ode to Autumn in Winchester: half text and half is a picture of the cathedral. A good plug for the tours from the TIC included.

[www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/activityandadventure/walkingholidays/6231501/Fifteen-walks-in-Britain-worth-a-weekend-away.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/activityandadventure/walkingholidays/6231501/Fifteen-walks-in-Britain-worth-a-weekend-away.html)

Friday 25th September

Fifteen walks in Britain worth a weekend away, walks selected by Fiona Duncan Item 12 is Hampshire and a walk from Winchester to St Catherine's Hill and St Cross

## **A word from the Editor (Denis Howe)**

Many thanks to all the contributors for making this a "bumper" edition. Well done!

Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Bright, Happy, Healthy New Year!