

Redlynch & District Local History Society

The Salisbury Cathedral Major Repair Programme

by Gary Price

A very well-attended meeting, heard Gary Price, the Clerk of Works at Salisbury Cathedral begin his talk on the Major Repair Programme by noting that the cathedral at Old Sarum had been erected in 1092 only to be burnt down five days later. Its replacement stood for over a century but disputes with the garrison at the castle led Bishop Poore to commence the construction of the new cathedral in 1220. Completed in 1258, the spire was added in 1310, the additional weight requiring the construction of between one hundred and one hundred and twenty flying buttresses. In the late 15th century strain beams were installed and in 1950 the top thirty feet were replaced in Clipsham Stone quarried in Lincolnshire. Roy Spring, who was then Clerk of Works, surveyed the spire from a bosun's chair in 1976 and found that the tower gave cause for concern. Making a second survey in 1985, he established that the spire itself was in a precarious condition and as a result the Spire Appeal, with the Prince of Wales as its patron, raised £7,500,000 to make the structure secure. In the same year a major restoration programme was commenced. This is continuing, to be completed in 2019. (The building took thirty eight years to complete and it will have taken thirty three years to conserve).



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The work is undertaken by the staff at the Cathedral Workshop which includes stone masons, glaziers, a carpenter and a plumber; the intention has been to work from the west to the east end where the final phase is currently being undertaken. Statues of George Herbert of Bemerton and Bishop Ezra of the Diocese of the Sudan which has links with Salisbury Diocese and who lost his life in the Sudanese Civil War, had been carved to fill empty plinths on the west end whilst the meeting was shown photographs of the senior mason lying on a block of stone and the gargoyle which he carved from it to exactly replace a severely decayed medieval predecessor. Another slide showed the mason's tools which had remained substantially unaltered since the construction of the Cathedral in the thirteenth century. The talk concluded with a reference to the [Sponsor a Stone](#) scheme under which a contributor's initials are carved on a stone which forms part of the restoration programme.



Our next meeting will be held on 7th June at Plaitford churchyard for a tour by Stephen Ings.

For further details visit our website www.redlynchlocalhistory.org

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