

# Redlynch & District Local History Society

## Mompesson House

By Emma Jones, Visitor Experience Officer

In a comprehensive presentation, Emma Jones, Visitor Experience Officer at Mompesson House in Salisbury's Cathedral Close, talked about its history, its architecture and some of the people involved in its evolution.



Land and buildings on the site where it stands on Choristers' Green were leased from the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral from the sixteenth century onwards and by the mid seventeenth century it had

become very fashionable for local gentry and professional classes to live in the Close.

The current house, faced with Chilmark stone, was built in the Queen Anne style in 1701 for Charles Mompesson, MP for the rotten borough of Old Sarum. The hopper heads above the drainpipes bear his initials CM and the date of construction. In 1703 he married Elizabeth Longueville and their union was celebrated with the addition of a decorative cartouche above the front door.

After Charles' death in 1714 the lease of the house was taken over by his brother-in-law, Charles Longueville, who commissioned the richly decorated internal plasterwork and the oak staircase which can still be seen today.

The lease of the house was subsequently taken over by two other families, the Hayters and the Portmans, before the Townsend family moved there in 1843, their daughter, Barbara, living there until her death in 1939. A talented artist, she recorded everyday life in the Close in her water colour paintings, many of which are now on display. After her death the Dean and Chapter sold the freehold of the house to the Church Commissioners and it became a temporary home for the Bishop of Salisbury.

It was then bought as a weekend retreat by a London architect, Denis Martineau, in 1952. Conditions of the sale were that the property be given to the National Trust on his death and that he would be responsible for the upkeep whilst living there. During his time at Mompesson Denis Martineau carried out major repairs, both internally and externally and also commissioned the artist Martin Battersby to paint troupe l'oeil panels in the entrance hall. He died in 1975 and in 1977 the National Trust opened a redecorated and refurnished house to the general public.

The Society next meets for a guided tour of Romsey on June 6th. For information about our Society and future meetings visit our website [www.redlynchlocalhistory.org](http://www.redlynchlocalhistory.org).