

The Milfordian



Milford Bridge by Edwin Young, SBYEY:EY33 © The Young Gallery, Salisbury

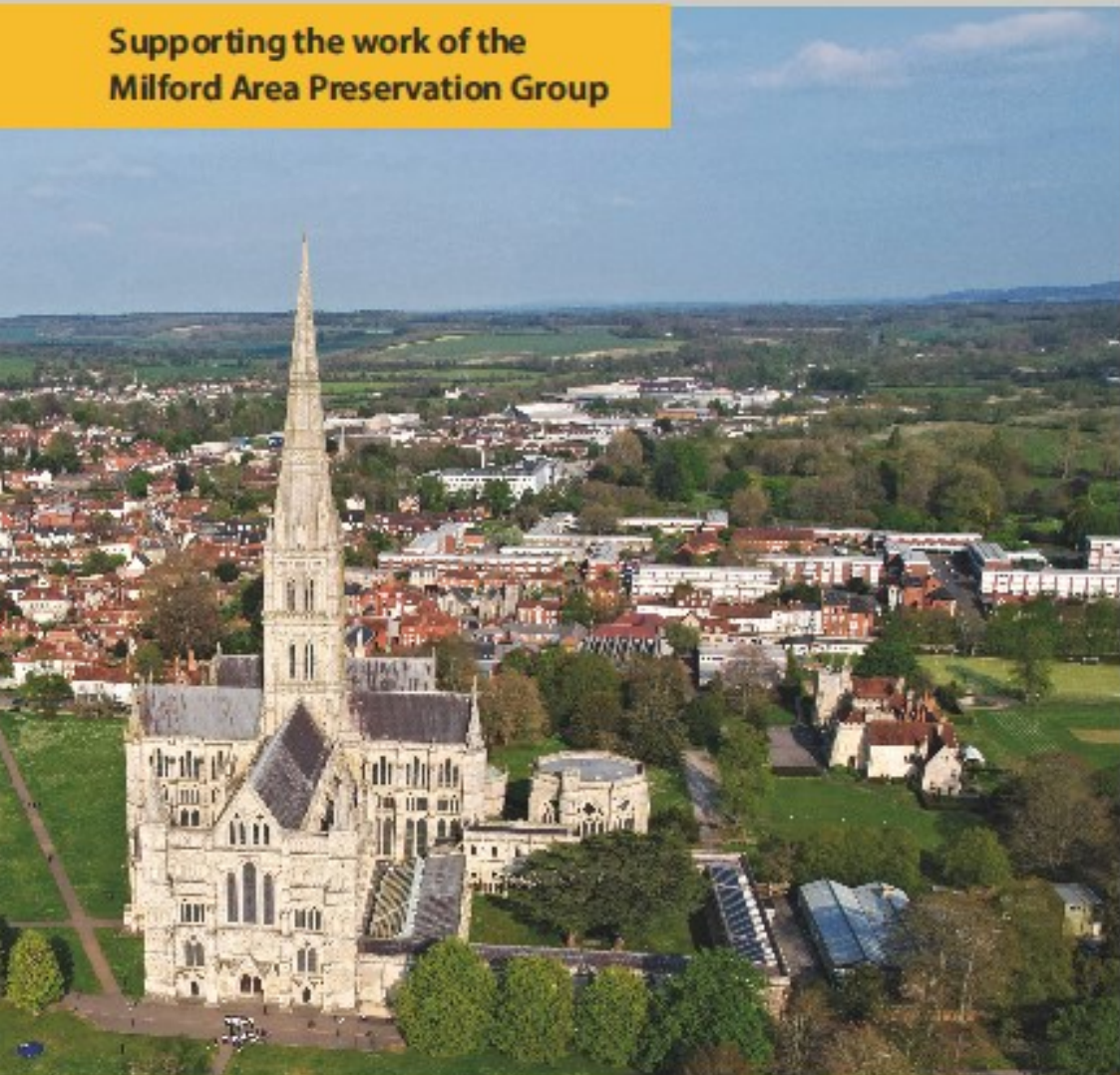
Milford Area Preservation
Group
April 2024

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Chairman's Report

As I look out of my workroom window on this cold January morning, the meadow below is a shimmering mere with flotillas of waterfowl cruising contentedly about, delighted no doubt with an unexpected treat. Above, a red kite circles the still water.

It may no longer be formally managed, but the water meadow is essentially doing part of the work it was designed to do when originally set-out in the 17th century: excess water in the River Bourne channelling usefully away to bring nourishment to the meadow grasses.

The problem in this 21st century is that the drains are blocked and exceptional rainfall brought not nourishment but flooding and chaos to Milford. As residents will know, the junction of Milford Mill Road with Queen Manor Road is particularly vulnerable. At the turn of the year the flooding here was worse than ever; a problem compounded by huge volumes of traffic challenging for right of way and becoming stuck on the medieval bridge. Unique in my experience, though, was the flooding on the Salisbury side of the bridge. The pavement was under water and impassable. Irresponsible drivers ignored the red stop lights and drove at speed through the flood, careless of drenching pedestrians and of the risk of forcing foul water into roadside homes. After a long morning of urgent phone calls, Wiltshire Highways was persuaded to temporarily close Milford Mill Road.



The MAPG has campaigned for decades for a long-term solution to the perennial problem of flooding in our area. We have been promised limited remedial work for the end of March. Please see pages 14-15 for a fuller report of the challenges, the campaign – and interesting conversations.

The 20mph speed limit has now been extended (with signage and road markings in place) to include the entirety of Milford Mill Road, and the

Riverbourne and Potters' Way estates. Peter Hicks' speedwatch team will be monitoring – see page 9 for his report.

Developers continue to circle. At the time of writing there is an application for 27 'dwellings' at Elmfield House on Petersfinger Road. This site is of acute archaeological sensitivity. Church Road, Laverstock, remains under threat of 50 or even 135 houses on a much-valued stretch of open country. No less concerning are persistent rumours that a speculative developer has acquired land on Milford Mill Road. Full report on pages 11-12.

As always, your MAPG has been busy. Quarterly litter picks, wonderfully supported, have scoured a wider area than ever before. Once again our 'Return to the River' project undertook vital work on the Bourne; the river, banks and island below the medieval bridge were cleared of weed and dense underbrush (and litter..) removed. The Milford Hollow project has continued: a composter was bought and placed, and hundreds of bulbs, plants and shrubs were dug in. Action Days, with over thirty volunteers, renewed paths, expanded the planting areas, controlled weeds, put up bird boxes and built a hedgehog shelter. To provide a more secure future for the Hollow, and for the work we do there, we were negotiating with Salisbury City Council for a more formal arrangement - but we had a shock instore. See Hollow report on pages 22-23.

For all these and other projects we would welcome more volunteers. Details on how to become involved are at the foot of the project reports.

But it hasn't all been hard work for MAPG (although the organisers might disagree). We held our now traditional and hugely successful Quiz Night in May; and the Wine and Cheese evening in October was supported by record numbers. Despite a local typhoon, with gazebos eager to take to the skies, the summer garden party became memorable for all the right reasons courtesy of the extraordinary generosity of neighbours (thanks Nick and Susie). The 'Walk Through Time 3' was a guided walk of the Cathedral Close, where we heard distressing tales of hangings, drawings and quarterings – and the sad fate of Mrs Henry Fielding's nose. This year, 'Walk Through Time 4' will be an archaeological walk starting from the medieval bridge. Dates and details of this year's events, outings and Action days are on page 29-34.



Milfordians may have noticed that in recent years MAPG has assumed more of a campaigning character. This has certainly not been at the expense of our other activities, but it has meant that we have to some extent become the first port of call when anything needs attention locally. In part, I think this may be explained by the invisibility and inactivity of too many of our elected Councillors, with honourable exceptions (thank you to Cllrs Jones and McGrath) they are simply not known at all widely. We may inadvertently have given the impression that MAPG is the Council. On occasion this misunderstanding can lead to farcical results. Whilst collecting subs in July, an irate gentleman in Milford Manor Gardens berated me for not sorting out the flooding and filling in the potholes. He didn't pay his sub.

I'm sure that most residents appreciate that as a small group of volunteers there is a limit to what we can do. To make better use of our resources, the Committee put a proposal to last year's AGM that the MAPG become a charity. The vote was in favour, and we made the appropriate applications – and failed. Although initially disappointing, on reflection we have concluded that as a small group the MAPG is best served by remaining a residents' organisation.

Finally, a deep attachment to the particularities of place is the sentiment that gives local communities, as well as the nation itself, their cohesion and strength. By helping to protect, preserve and restore our small but much-loved corner of England we give deference to the past, certainly, but more than that we are all playing our part in transmitting to the future something precious and fragile, our historic memory. I for one think that that is worth fighting for.

David Lovibond

Chair

Milford Area Preservation Group

AGM

This year's AGM will be held on **Thursday April 25th** at the Community Farm.

Doors open at 6.30 pm with drinks and nibbles for members and guests.

The meeting will begin at 7pm.

A notice of agenda will be distributed separately.

The guest speaker will be David Burton of the Devenish Bradshaw Charitable Trust

Updates can be found on our website:
www.milfordpreservationgroup.com



Treasurer's Accounts

MILFORD AREA PRESERVATION GROUP INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT: FY 1st FEB 2023 to 31st DEC 2023

	2023 (11 Months)		2022/2023 (12 Months)	
INCOME	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions	1,585.00		1,525.00	
Advance Subscriptions	5.00		5.00	
General Household Donations	191.00			
Support from Local Businesses	2,175.00		1,600.00	
Raffles (quiz/cheese & wine)	630.00		422.00	
Interest	<u>23.58</u>		<u>2.88</u>	
		4,609.58		3,554.88
Events				
Garden Party	440.10			
Guided Walk	145.00			
Quiz, excl. raffle	1,743.49		1,142.82	
Visit to Kew Gardens			580.00	
Cheese & Wine, excl. raffle	<u>1,410.91</u>		<u>1,622.55</u>	
		3,739.50		3,345.37
Projects				
Queen Elizabeth II Oak Tree	0.00		730.00	
River Bourne Restoration	0.00		0.00	
Milford Hollow (Donation Wessex Care)	0.00		250.00	
		0.00		980.00
TOTAL INCOME		<u>8,349.08</u>		<u>7,880.25</u>

EXPENDITURE				
Printing - Milfordian, Newsletters etc	625.11		442.88	
Bank Charges	0.00		41.60	
Website	158.40		158.40	
AGM (Community Farm)	185.75		164.94	
Liability Insurance	215.73		210.32	
Miscellaneous	<u>203.65</u>		<u> </u>	
		1,388.64		1,017.94
Events				
Garden Party	225.55			
Quiz	1,234.27		697.24	
Visit to Kew Gardens			563.34	
Cheese & Wine	<u>1,118.87</u>		<u>1,105.27</u>	
		2,578.69		2,365.85
Projects				
Queen Elizabeth II Oak Tree	0.00		1,069.04	
River Bourne Restoration	0.00		119.95	
Milford Hollow	<u>923.80</u>		<u>2,358.75</u>	
		923.80		3,547.74
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>4,891.13</u>		<u>6,931.53</u>

Balance at 01.02.23	11,464.22	Cash in hand	0.00
Surplus	3,457.95	Lloyds Current Acc.,	978.59
		Lloyds Savings Acc.,*	3,943.58
		Lloyds Deposit Acc.**	10,000.00
Balance at 31.12.23	<u>14,922.17</u>		<u>14,922.17</u>

Interest: *1.3% var; **1 Yr FR 3.2% matures 03/06/2024

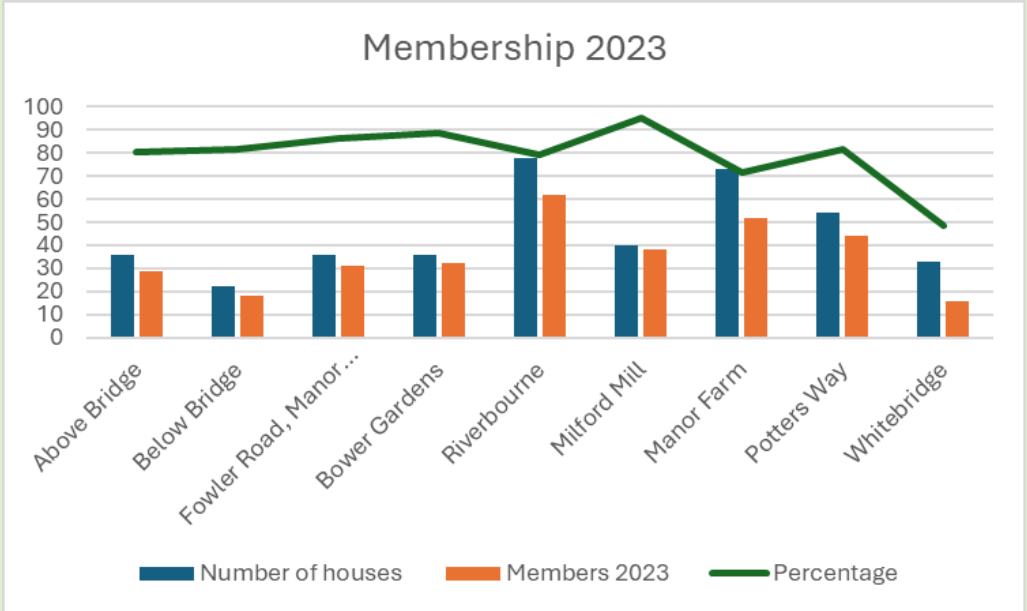
Auditor's Certificate

I have examined the books and vouchers relating to the Income and Expenditure Account, have verified the balances, and, in my opinion, the above figures give a true statement of the accounts as at 31.12.2023.

J Perry, Auditor 9th February 2024

Membership Secretary's Report

MAPG membership now amounts to 322 households, 16 more than this time last year. The graph below illustrates the distribution of members throughout the area. We have been delighted by the support from residents in our new areas of Fowlers Road, Manor Road and Millbrook.



Key to Collection Areas

Above Bridge – Shady Bower (above railway bridge), Glenside Gardens, Courtwood Close, , St Margaret's Close

Below Bridge – Shady Bower from bridge to beginning of Manor Farm Road, Milford Manor Gardens

Fowlers & Manor – Fowlers Hill, Fowlers Road, Manor Road, Millbrook and area

Bower Gardens – Bower Gardens

Milford Mill – Milford Mill Road, The Meadows, Milford Park, The Granary, Mill House & Barns

Manor Farm – Manor Farm Road, Westbourne Close, Laverstock Road nr railway bridge

Riverbourne – Riverbourne Road, Glendale Cres, Bourne Gardens, St John's Close, Queen Manor Road

Potters Way – Potters Way

Whitebridge – Whitebridge Rd, Becket Way and area.

We are keen to build up our data base of contacts so that we can send news of events and voluntary activities to our members. If you would like to have your details added, please contact Barbara Lovibond on milfordpreservationgroup@gmail.com.

We adhere to GDPR rules

Should you wish to pay your 2024 subs (£5) by BACS the details are:

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sort code: 30-99-50 Acc No: 25774860.

When paying, please use your address as a reference.

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Speedwatch and Traffic Report

Our small Speedwatch team of four dedicated members has managed to monitor traffic on Milford Mill Road for over 50 hours this last year. Our activities in the latter part of the year have been hampered by the weather and by flooding. However, these adverse conditions have in themselves ensured that speeding has been severely restricted.



Readers will know that the 20mph speed limit has been extended to cover the Riverbourne and Potters Way estates as well as the entirety of Milford Mill Road down to the railway bridge. Until very recently, then, it was only possible to monitor the speed of traffic proceeding eastwards. The extension of the limit gives us extra time and space to check cars moving in the other direction.

We have had many requests from residents to conduct speed checks on Manor Farm Road, where speeding is a severe problem. We are sympathetic to these demands, but our team is too small to take on any extra tasks. Just two more team members would allow us to extend speed monitoring to this road. If any readers have a couple of hours a month to help reduce speed on our residential roads then please contact our team leader, Peter Hicks, at peteredhicks@gmail.com

The statistics

9700 cars have been monitored travelling east along Milford Mill Road whilst our teams have been on duty, of which 587 were reported for speeding. To be reported, vehicles have to be recorded as travelling at 25 miles an hour or 25% over the speed limit of 20 mph. Letters were sent by the police to 449 of these offenders, of which 138 vehicles could not be identified. 376 vehicles were recorded as first-time offenders, 39 as second-time offenders, and 10 were recorded an astonishing three times. In addition, 10 drivers were admonished by the police for excessive speed - that is travelling at 30 mph or more in a 20mph limit.

It is fair to say our team is making some impact in reducing the speed of traffic on our narrow residential roads. Clearly, though, a greater impact could be made if the team had more members.

Traffic

Although we seem to have largely eliminated the problem of HGVs ignoring the 7.5t weight limit on Milford Mill Road, the volume of vehicles continues to grow. The last formal survey (by Wiltshire Highways) in 2021 showed a 40 per cent increase in traffic over the previous ten years. It is very clear to residents that as more and more drivers use Church Road, Manor Farm Road, and Milford Mill Road as an irregular East Salisbury by-pass so traffic volumes have still further increased.



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Planning Report

Building in field on Queen Manor Road.

In May last year MAPG reported a structure resembling a residence and which did not have planning permission.



Eventually, a Wiltshire Council enforcement officer visited the site and advised the owner to apply for retrospective permission for the erection of an agricultural building. This application was opposed by more than dozen local residents and other bodies.

Sept 2023. Objection

“It is strange that this building was erected without apparently seeking permission. It is difficult not to conclude that this approach is indicative of the owner's attitude to the planning process. Second, the present structure has the characteristics of a residential building; does a tool shed truly need picture windows, two stories and a garden? Third, the site in question is in the open countryside and not adjacent to other buildings. Fourth, the site is in a field alongside the track to the medieval Clarendon Palace - a set of buildings of national importance.... the open fields are a vital part of the Palace's rural setting. To allow an urban building to intrude into this much-loved countryside ought to be unthinkable. Fifth, there is a suspicion that if retrospective PP is granted, the existence of this building will be used as precedent for further development in the field.”

January 2024. Planning permission is granted – with conditions: the windows are to be removed; no external lights installed; no overnight stays. The enforcement officer will revisit the site by the 18th June 2024 “to ensure that compliance have been achieved.”

We will be watching...

Proposed development in grounds of Elmsfield House on Petersfinger Road

This is an extension of the 2021 planning application and now refers to 21 dwellings in an area of acute archaeological sensitivity. Close by, there is an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavated by Professor Stuart Piggott in 1948-51. In a field adjacent to the new application site, excavations conducted in 2005/2008 in advance of the construction of the Petersfinger Park and Ride found evidence of the settlement that almost certainly relates to the cemetery. Notably, archaeologists uncovered foundations of a 5th C Saxon building called a ‘Grubenhau’ – or sunken-featured structure. The report on the excavation described the discovery of this building as of “national importance.” The gardens of Elmsfield House have not been investigated, and archaeologists say the areas of proposed new housing, “have the potential to impact on significant buried archaeological remains, especially those relating to the early prehistoric and Saxon periods.”

More romantically, the known archaeology of this area is of very early Saxon date and at least suggests some relationship with the last days of Roman Britain. The so-called Dark Ages about which we need to know far more. This incredibly important site must not be lost to development – certainly not without thorough archaeological investigation.

Church Road, Laverstock

At the time of writing, there is still no decision on the application to build 135 houses on the last stretch of open land on Church Road.

The threat to this much-loved, archaeologically, and ecologically important field is also represented by Wiltshire Council’s Draft Local Plan. The Plan contains a Strategic Site Allocation of 50 dwellings for the Church Road site. This allocation contradicts the ‘Small Villages’ policy which is supposed to limit development to in-fill. Consideration of this allocation will be completed by June and submitted to the Secretary of State by September.

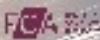


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Flood Report

It will have escaped no one that we have had a wet winter. The Environment Agency advised that the flooding experienced in the Salisbury area in 2023 was the wettest year in this catchment since records began in 1871. In the Milford area we have seen the highest level for the River Bourne for many years. The river peaked at 1m 83cm (recorded at the measuring station where the Bourne crosses the Southampton Road) on the 7th of January 2024.



The flood water caused several problems for some properties in the local area and there was the perennial problem of flooding at the junction of Milford Mill Road and Queen Manor Road. The MAPG's longstanding campaign to resolve or at least alleviate this flood problem continues - although it is a challenging issue to fix. There were some positives, however. The fields alongside the river in Laverstock and Milford did their job as water meadows admirably, allowing dispersal of the flood water into (generally) safe areas.

The problems faced in Milford and in Salisbury reinforce the importance of schemes such as the £35m Salisbury River Park. The riverpark scheme will reduce the risk of flooding in the area once completed in May or June. More details can be found at www.salisburyriverparkphase1.com

If you are concerned about obstructions to flow in any local river, please ring the Environment Agency Hotline 0800 80 70 60. Regarding river obstructions, the MAPG has had preliminary discussions with Laverstock and Ford Parish Council about the significant number of fallen trees disrupting the River Bourne alongside the Whitebridge Spinney boardwalk. We will keep you posted.

Frankly, it has not been easy to persuade Wiltshire Highways to meet their obligations to address the flooding in Milford. In fact, at times it felt as if MAPG were dealing with Dickens' Circumlocution Office. Some examples:

January 2023. Graham Axtell, Area Highways Engineer, said flooding on MMR is in their "top five sites" to resolve, but we were given no timescales or indication of what else is in this queue.

February. Cllr Caroline Thomas, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for flooding, said: “The Council’s drainage team have identified some works that can be carried out to the outfall in the river that may assist although this will not solve the problems completely. This work is included in the 2023/24 works programme.”

July. Samantha Howell, Director of Highways, said: “Whilst this [the flooding on MMR] is recognised as a local priority, when weighed against other flooding issues across the County it is not classified as a danger to highway users and is not a high priority in terms of intervention criteria. We have identified some works that can be carried out to the outfall in the river which may help, but this will not solve the problem. Our programme consists of 58 live projects, categorised with priority given to those locations on the high-speed road network and where residential property is at risk of internal flooding. Millford (*sic*) Mill Road does not meet either of these criteria.”



January 2024. Following dreadful flooding, MAPG and others lobbied for immediate action. Eventually MMR was closed for a couple of days and Highways cleared the ditches and tankered away most of the floodwater – but these are sticking-plaster measures only. In fact, by the afternoon of the day the ditches were deepened and drained, the floodwater had reappeared.



Simon Rowe, Operations Resilience Manager, said “Ref further works, Danny (Everett) has a scheme planned which would be larger than what we have done today and look to be the permanent solution. As for timescale I will leave it with Danny and his team and the water levels.” We have been told that these “further works” will take place in March and involve the relocation of outfall pipes – presumably into the Bourne.

STOP PRESS: Cllr Ian McLennan tells us that due to stubborn flooding, remedial work is delayed until ‘the summer.’

Andy Howard: Flood Warden



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Return to the River Report

October 28th Action Day Report

As has become traditional, volunteers returned to the River Bourne for an intensive morning's work on the island, riverbanks and riverbed below the medieval bridge on Milford Mill Road.



The team of volunteers prepares to start

The approaches to the river, which follow the line of the ancient ford, were thoroughly cleared. Excessive weed was thinned from the bed of the Bourne, the island's crack willows lightly pollarded, and the underbrush cut away.

One of our main aims with this work is to encourage the river to flow unimpeded through its several channels. Clearing the river arches, and the reedy exits from them, is a vital part of our efforts.

At the end of the morning, the river ran faster and deeper, and was clearly a welcoming habitat for local wildlife.



An otter was caught on camera by the bridge a couple of weeks after the work was completed.

Events and Activities Report

We are very grateful for the tremendous support our activities and fundraisers continue to enjoy from so many local people. These are some of the highlights of another busy and immensely enjoyable year:

Wine and Cheese Evening

The second of our Cheese and Wine Evenings was attended by over fifty enthusiasts - whether for the cheese or the wine remains unclear... The gastronomic journey featured five distinct cheeses from around the British Isles. These were paired with four complementary wines. A tabletop quiz added an extra layer of enjoyment, testing everyone's knowledge of wines, beers, and festive beverages. The pinnacle of the evening's entertainment was the enchanting performance by Laura and Amy, whose wonderful singing infused the atmosphere with Christmas spirit. The evening also featured a high-quality raffle, with fantastic prizes generously donated by committee members and local businesses.

At the rarely avoided risk of hyperbole, let me say the evening was a triumphant celebration of community as well as a fundraising success.

Right: Laura and Amy singing at the Cheese and Wine Evening



Quiz Night

A minor rebellion by the Committee saw the quizmaster for 2022's evening reduced to a mere walk-on part in 2023.

Apparently my (that it to say his..) questions on battles of the 13th C were not appreciated by absolutely everyone.

Odd. Anyway, a record turnout in May heard rounds on musicals and gardening – which

seemed to go down rather better than how many perches are in a rood. As always, the fish and chip supper went down best of all.



A Packed Hall at the Quiz Night

Summer Garden Party (or a Storm in a Teacup)

This was to be a gentle afternoon in Maggie's delightful garden by the Bourne. The barometer, however, played us false. A warning of moderate wind and possible showers, rapidly translated into howling gales and Old Testament rain. We scrambled our array of gazebos and moved the venue indoors - hearty thanks to Nick and Susie, who gave us such a generous welcome. With a delicious afternoon tea and plenty of Pimm's we still had a lovely, not to say memorable, time.

'Can we do this more often?' was a question asked by many. I feel sure it will become an annual event.



Litter Picks

Readers will know that the MAPG organises several litter-picks through the year. At each 'pick' we see a new record turnout of volunteers – so much so that we ran out of Hi-Viz jackets at the January event.

Litter is a blight on our streets and green spaces. The quantity of beer cans scattered on the verges is astonishing, and many of the bags, boxes, and wrappings we collect are dropped by customers of local fast-food outlets. At each pick we fill dozens of black bags, and it constantly amazes us that there are people happy to throw rubbish of all descriptions out of their car windows as they so evidently are.

The MAPG acknowledges the assistance of Salisbury City Council, particularly in the collection of the filled bags.



'Walk Through Time 3'

On a rainy day in July, the 'Walk Through Time' was an historical and architectural tour of the Cathedral Close. The antiquity of so many of the houses means they all have tales to tell: tenants led out to gruesome execution; hauntings; connections with great heroes and low villains, with kings and saintly men; with corruption and sad decay. The Close saw John Constable crouched at his easel, Henry Fielding courting his long-nosed wife, and Civil War Roundheads cut to ribbons at Harnham Gate. It is also a place of buildings like Arundells, of such stunning beauty that their ashlars seemed to catch the fleeting sun and gleam through the mizzle.

We are especially grateful to John Waddington, owner of the Medieval Hall, who gave us a private tour of this stunning 12thC building and treated us to coffee and biscuits.



Above: Our walk begins

Above right: Coffee in The Medieval Hall with John Waddington explaining the history of the building

Right: Great to see children taking part too.

We look forward to future events that continue to strengthen our community bonds and contribute to the success of MAPG's initiatives.

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Milford Hollow

Breaking News

In January, we received extraordinary news from Salisbury City Council that they did not own the MAPG Milford Hollow site after all. Readers can be assured that the group only began our huge programme of work, involving as it has a great deal of hard-collected money and uncountable hours of volunteer time, with the permission of the Council and having been told in writing that the land was indeed their property.

It appears that the project site is owned by Godolphin School. In correspondence, the school has shown every appreciation of the work we have done. They have been supportive and indeed generous in reassuring us that they envisage no immediate change in the management of the land, and that we can continue our curation of the Hollow. But it remains 'disconcerting' that we undertook this work and investment on false information. We are also aware that Godolphin is joining a group of independent schools and that this structural change will impact the land owned by Godolphin. We are in a time of uncertainty and can only hope for the best.

Report

Since the last Milfordian, we have acquired a 'composter' which breaks down the weeds and other detritus gathered from the site and turns them into fertile black earth.



Experts at work layering-up the new composter.

The busy programme of plantings and infrastructure maintenance is most evident on our regular Action Days. Last November's Action Day, for example, was supported by a record number of volunteers who spent the morning in furious activity. A large number of pulmonaria, mulleins and teasels, donated by a local garden centre, were planted on the top section of the plot, while hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose sapplings were bedded in to form an infant hedge by the railway fence.

The woodchip paths were renewed, a huge encroachment of briars was cut back and the new ground prepared. The composter consumed vast quantities of weed, and we all toiled and tidied with determined enthusiasm.



But it is the 'Hollowers', a dedicated band of more knowledgeable gardeners, who gather at the site every month to plant bulbs and shrubs in season, and without whom the Hollow would simply not have its spruce and cared-for appearance. The Committee is deeply grateful for their efforts.

We do not securely know what the future of the Hollow, and the MAPG's connection with it, will be. Nonetheless, under the leadership of Project Manager Barbara we will continue to cherish the site and 'bring light into life.'

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Water Meadows: Milford and Otherwise

Valued in the English imagination, hugely diminished by changing farming practices, and vigorously protected by heroic groups of volunteers determined to secure a future for the fragmentary survivals, water meadows are ingenious, complex, and have never been of greater importance than in our dangerous age of rapid climate change.

The boom time for water meadow construction was the 17th C, but in the medieval period the monasteries controlled water flows over their meadows – and there is evidence that the Romans did much the same.

Low-lying and characterised by flood-plains, Salisbury and its wide countryside were ideal for water meadows. The idea was simple: flooding meadows nourished the land and encouraged early grass. This had the effect of filling the 'hungry gap' before spring and meant that sheep could be over-wintered, which in turn fertilised the meadow so that in summer hay could be harvested from the meadow. As well as added nutrients, the watering warmed the ground and by flooding in the summer too, assuming there was enough water in the river, farmers might get several hay crops off the same meadow for winter feed.

The technology needed to build a successful water meadow was impressive. In Salisbury, each loop of the Avon and perhaps the Bourne had its own system of irrigation depending on the slope of the land. At the top of the loop a head of water was built up behind a weir and then released onto 'carriers' cut into artificial ridges called 'bedworks.' The river water would spill from these bedworks, flood the land – ideally to a depth of no more than an inch - and then be carried away by drains back to a lower part of the river.

This 'drowning' or 'floating' of the meadows was strictly agreed and controlled by local landowners, and typically took between two and seven days. The maxim for bedworks was "on at a trot, off at a gallop..."



A 'drowner' at work in Britford



A restored water-hatch in Harnham

Not all water meadows were subject to this sophisticated treatment or indeed deliberately floated. The Milford water meadows along Milford Mill Road do not appear to have had bedworks, but a network of drains – still largely visible – intended to take flood water away from the fields as quickly as possible. The meadows here are shown on 19th C tithe maps but undoubtedly existed immemorially. They may be interpreted as water meadows by accident of nature rather than by human agency. As readers will know perfectly well, Milford floods very readily and the meadows are regularly covered in river water without invitation...It seems likely that landowners here took advantage of circumstances, drained the waters back to the Bourne and then grazed their sheep on the fresh grass. By way of fortuitous support for this theory, members of the Barber family – long established in Milford – have told me that sheep were grazed on the meadow well within living memory.



*Local farmer tending sheep on a water meadow.
Photograph by kind permission of Mrs Betty Barber*

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As Seen In ... Salisbury Journal

Wiltshire Council Local Plan: Residents angry about plans to build

10th July 2023

ANGRY residents say the proposed plans to build on greenfield land in their village are 'wholly inappropriate'.

Recently, Wiltshire Council released its Local Plan which includes proposals for the development of more than 1000 houses around the city.

Residents in Laverstock are facing 50 houses in Church Road but this would override the neighbourhood plan which is already in place.

Chair of the Milford Area Preservation Group, David Lovibond said: "The proposed allocation of land for housing at this location is wholly inappropriate.

"This is a greenfield site in open countryside which is much valued by local people. The land has been identified as archaeologically significant, with artefacts and buried features dating from the Neolithic. The proposed 50 houses will have an impact on the nearby Cocky Down SSSI."

He said: "This is not a brownfield site. They can't just override 500 objections from the previous proposal. I think they are trying to wedge the door open for more houses."

He added: "Approval of this proposal would undermine the principles of localism and community engagement in the planning process as set out in the Localism Act 2011."

Road rage at flooded junction in Milford made worse by traffic lights

19th December 2023

MILFORD residents have expressed frustration with a chaotic flooded junction and say the council is doing nothing to fix the problem.

Motorists have broken down, blocking access to homes, after their vehicles were damaged and temporary traffic lights were installed to try and alleviate the problem. But David Lovibond, chair of the Milford Area Preservation Group (MAPG), said these lights have been put in the wrong places and are mistimed, causing "more harm than good".

"The overall frustration is how difficult it is to get anyone at all levels of Wiltshire Council to do anything about it. It's the devil's own job to get anything done. There are so many excuses and always a reason for not doing anything," he said.

The MAPG has been pressuring the council to clear the water and restrict access as Mr Lovibond claims Mill Road has become the "unofficial east Salisbury bypass".

Wiltshire Council clears debris at flooded Milford Mill Road

17th January

DITCHES near a junction that was left flooded for more than one month have been cleared.

On Tuesday, January 16, council workers were spotted cleaning the gullies and removing debris from the ditch adjacent to the junction....In the meantime, Wiltshire Council is working on a longer-term solution which can be implemented once the River Bourne's level drops to allow access.

The Milford Area Preservation Group had been lobbying the council to take action after numerous residents reported the problem. "We are grateful to Wiltshire Highways engineers for responding so thoroughly to the severe flooding problems experienced along Milford Mill Road.

"Unfortunately, such is the level of the groundwater that the newly dug ditches are already brimming and sections of the road are flooding again."

Milford Under Water



Thank you to Mike Jones for these aerial photos of Milford water meadow (above) and Milford Park (below)



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An Archaeological Walk Through Time

Start: Milford Mill Road medieval bridge.

This Grade 1 Listed structure dates from the 1490s. But there had already long been a bridge at Milford by 1386, when it was reported to be broken and was said to have been repaired immemorially by the villagers of Milford Pychard, Milford Richard, and Milford Episcopi. Before the Bourne was bridged, a ford took a (probable) minor Roman road from the villa estates to the east and ultimately from Venta Belgarum (Winchester) to Sorviodunum (Old Sarum).

Detour briefly down the grassy approach to the ford, on Laverstock side, to look up at the bridge. There are two pairs of archways of dressed limestone; the western arch is semi-circular, the other three are pointed. Note the cutwaters with weathered heads between each pair of arches. At road level there is a roll-moulded continuous string course. The parapet has weathered C18 coping and square piers at either end.



Stop by the Information Board. In the field to your right, was a late Anglo-Saxon village recorded as 'Meleford' in 1086. If the sun is low you might see the slight ridges and hollows of this long-vanished settlement. It is possible that 'Meleford' was later known as Milford Richard (see above) as in the late 12th C there was a Richard de Meleford who held land here. Looking ahead of you up Queen Manor Road towards Potters Way, there were at least two and possibly three settlements close to the junction with Gypsy Lane. We know that one of them was called Milford Pychard, probably this was the village closely associated with the 13th C pottery industry hereabouts. The other two villages are late Anglo-Saxon (A/S) and 11thC. Potters Way and the fields to the right of Queen Manor Road revealed plentiful evidence of the pottery kilns that serviced the demands of Clarendon Palace.

Now take the boardwalk alongside Milford Mill Road and after 35 metres look first to the railway embankment on your right. The brick structure on the skyline is double-walled enfilading position from WWII, which overlooked an anti-tank ditch (filled-in in 1945) which ran from under your feet and diagonally across the fields on the other side of Milford Mill Road. If you now look down to your immediate left you will see the concrete remains of the bridge which crossed the ditch.



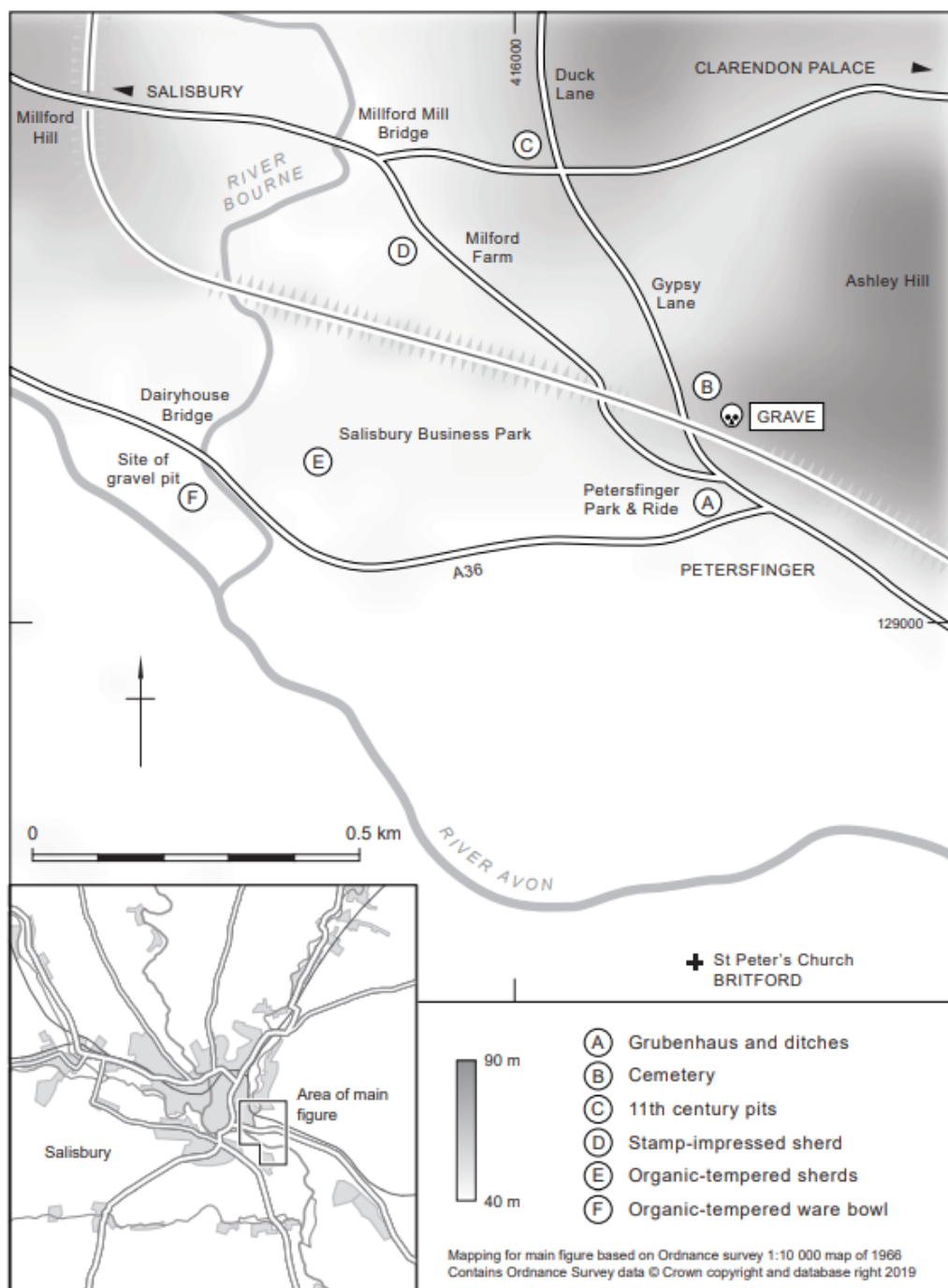
As you walk towards Milford House Care Home, this part of the field on the right has yielded potsherds from the 7th or 8th C – and thus much earlier than Meleford or Richard. These sherds are evidence of the extent of another A/S village, but of at least regional significance, and to which we will return shortly.



At the end of the boardwalk, Milford Farm to your left is of the 18th C. Continue with great caution along Milford Mill Road and under the rail bridge. Then take Petersfinger Road immediately to the left until reaching a Bridleway sign 300 metres on the left and near Elmsfield House. This track is the southern end of Gypsy Lane and part of an ancient valley route which runs up through Laverstock to connect with the Roman roads east of Old Sarum. The land part occupied by the gardens and paddocks of Elmsfield and part by the Park and Ride, conceal the remains of a very early A/S settlement excavated in 2009 and possibly dating from the late 5th C. The star discovery, under the Park and Ride, was a Grubenhaus, or 'sunken floor building,' together with other evidence of settlement. Only 150-yards away up Gypsy Lane is the site of an early 6th C cemetery, excavated by Stuart Pigott in 1948 and 1951, which included 64 warrior burials, many furnished with swords. It is intriguing to consider whether some of these warriors had fought at the battle of Sarum in 552 when Cynric defeated the Romano-Britons.



An Anglo-Saxon warrior burial of 6th C from near-by Salisbury Plain.



*Map showing location of graves, related sites and places referred to in the text.
 By kind permission of Peter Saunders and David Algar.*

The proximity of this cemetery to the Grubenhaus settlement must mean a relationship between the two. Given the late 5th C or early 6th C date, and the geographically remote location of the settlement, is it fanciful to suggest these Anglo-Saxons were not invaders but foederati (mercenaries or allies) employed by the remnants of Romano-British rule and settled on marginal territory as part-payment? The centre of this vestigial authority could have been Sorviodunum or even the large Roman villa complex on the far side of nearby Ashley Hill. It could be that it was the long-settled sons or grandsons of these foederati who rose in support of their ethnic kinsmen and drove out their neighbours, or at least some of them (see below).

The presence of Iron Age sherds in the Grubenhaus dig and in backfill from outlier graves, together with the discovery of a Roman brooch nearby, make it clear that the Anglo-Saxons are unlikely to be the first occupiers of this area.

On the other side of the Avon is Britford. This is a rare example of a pre-Saxon settlement of Britons that somehow survived the upheavals of the A/S era to live in some sort of toleration of each other. Britford (or *Bryt Fordingea* in Old English), as the name indicates, was at a crossing point of the river. The village church of St Peter has two quite sensational porticus (small transept rooms) on either side of the nave. The porticus in the south wall has an arch of re-used Roman brick, and on the north side the stone slab reveal is uniquely decorated with vine scrolls which may date from 700 AD. This extraordinary building appears to be in direct alignment with the Gypsy Lane valley route, which is probably pre-Roman. There must, too, be a connection between the name Petersfinger and Britford's parish church?



Voussoirs of Roman tiles at the porticus

Now turn round and follow the bridleway under the railway bridge. The quarry up to your right (now occupied by Travellers and behind fencing) is the site of the A/S cemetery. Follow the track past a concrete bollard – note how deep and ‘hollow’ the track is, how worn away by the usage of centuries - and then take the muddy track on your right that passes round the quarry. This footpath skirts Ashley Hill on the summit of which scattered Roman building material indicates a farmstead or small villa.

Continue for ten minutes to Ranger's Lodge Farm. Turn left onto the Clarendon track and then almost immediately right onto the footpath. After 50 metres or so take the left fork and pass the farm cottages. Climbing steadily, carry straight on past the permissive path.

Three hundred yards further on the left and close to the wire fence are two low mounds – these are probably post-medieval rabbit warrens. A little further along the track, the field to the left reveals the faint network of a field system – best seen in slanting light. The system is undated, but the ridge patterns suggest a 13th century date.

Walking along this path you will glimpse Burrough's Hill House. There is evidence of a Neolithic flint quarry here. Also, there is a mound immediately in front of the house called 'Byrhtferth's Low'. As '*Byrhtferthes Hlaewe*' in Old English, this tumulus is mentioned in King Eadred's Anglo-Saxon charter of 949 AD and defines the parish boundary of Laverstock and Ford. It is interesting to note the similarity between 'Byrht' here and the 'Bryt' of Britford – and even more intriguing that the church tower at Britford can be seen from Burroughs Hill.

Follow this path until reaching a metal kissing gate on the right. Take this footpath along Laverstock Down towards Cockey Down. This is an archaeologically rich area. On the slope below you as you leave the gate, sherds of Roman pottery were found in the 1990s. The hilltop above the belt of trees to your right is the site of a cemetery of disputed date: the graves contained crouched inhumations including one with the bones of a newborn child. The burials may be Romano-British – which would be consistent with extensive evidence of Roman settlements along the Cockey Down ridge and connected by a sunken track.

Walk diagonally downhill for 200 yards to another kissing gate (in bad repair). Go through the gate and walk towards Church Road. In the middle of the field to your right are the traces of the field system, where a Bronze Age drinking vessel was found in the 1950s.

On reaching Church Road turn left and visit the foundations of the medieval St Andrew's at the rear of the Victorian church. Somewhere among the weeds at the very back of the site are the fragments of a Roman sarcophagus which was found when builders were laying out Greenwood Avenue in the 1930s. Unbelievably, the coffin was broken up in the 1970s and the greensand pieces scattered.

Cross the road and take the first road on the left. This is Duck Lane, an extension of Gypsy Lane and part of the ancient North-South valley route. Note 'The Thatch' cottage on the corner which dates from the late 17th C. Much of the left side of the lane was given over to allotments until the 1930s, and the land on the right comprised the grounds of Laverstock House Asylum which opened in 1781 and was demolished in 1955. Note the short stretch of wall on your right, alongside 'Appleby.' The wall, which dates from the 17th C and predates the asylum, consists of flint nodules, clunch (chalky limestone), and Chilmark stone said to have been taken from Old Sarum; the tile capping to this wall may originally have been thatched in the manner of cob walls.

Stop for a moment at the junction of Duck Lane with The Avenue. Up to your left, on the site of the playground, was a terrace of notoriously primitive cottages called 'The Barracks.' The cottages had no military connection but were named for their dreariness; they lacked even basic amenities and were only demolished in 1937. In front of The Barracks there was a short row of small, thatched cottages that ended at the track by the Duck Inn. They too lacked sanitation but did not disappear until the late 1950s.



17th C wall Laverstock House Asylum

Continue past the Duck Inn, which dates from 1906, until reaching Queen Manor Road. Turn right at Queen Manor Road and back to Milford Mill Road bridge.

Guided Walk: Saturday July 13th.

Meet at 10am at the medieval bridge on Milford Mill Road. The walk will include coffee and a private tour of St Andrew's church and ruins. As numbers are limited, please book early for this event.

The ticket price is £5 person. To confirm attendance and book tickets, please contact Laura Jones: lauraejones76@gmail.com

Entrance to Porticus on North Side of Britford Church nave.



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Nothing is Lost: A Ghostly Tale

By David Lovibond

There is a stretch of old road within sight of Salisbury spire that, when the hour is right, is filled by a clamouring tumult of voices: howling, plaintive, agonised voices demanding to be heard but never understood.

The past is a lonely place.

Long centuries of urgent lives that could never slip from memory, buried deep, stone on stone, a jumbling of bones, gone to dust, mere shadows in the green, dark patches in the corn. Forgotten beyond record or knowing.

We stand on ancient ground here, tangled unwontedly with those before us. They reach for us, pleading to be seen, "Remember us". And there are fleeting moments when we glimpse them at the edge of vision, a flickering among the trees, voices on the wind.

Up on the hill the mist lifts, and in the shafts of slanting sunlight, burial chambers of green, and some stark white, cluster the skyline like sentinels. Below, there is a palisade of hewn wood and huts with thatch steep and overflowing like uncut dough on a pie-dish. Alone, a young girl sits cross-legged under the fall of her long hair. There is a blue stone in her hand, plump and smooth as a pigeon's breast. She is pounding flints. Some have shattered and scatter the ground around her, some few are good and lie on woven cloth. The girl's fingers are bloody with false hits but this is the work she must do. The men are hunting today, her father is among them. They need the sharp flints, her weapons of prestige. The girl shivers and looks behind her. The light is fading. One



day, perhaps soon, she will join those of whom tales are told, in the new chamber not the green.

The night comes. It is dark upon the hill, and everywhere is dark. Famine ruins the land. Life narrows and fails. The girl, her father, her children, and their children are gone from the hill. Only their useful stones, careless in the tiny fields, remain.

Continued



The rivers shift and find new ways to the sea. The woods are forests and then woods again. The watchers in their nameless chambers, wait. The centuries forget.

There is a time of warriors, of blood and fire, of iron and ash, of fear and change.

There are new people on the hill, their heavy ploughs and their beasts break the chalk and tumble the blue stone among the thin soil and the seed. A boy is running at the crows, flinging stones and shouting. He sees the glinting light on the sheared planes of a blue stone and, reaching, thinks to kill. But he hears a whisper in the wind and does not to kill and does not fling the stone. The boy is afraid and lets the shining stone lie. It will lie below the old green chambers and among the fields of speaking shadows until the boy is dust.



But the Roman is not afraid. He brings slaughter and calls it peace, he drives his cruel roads and fords through sacred places, groves, and chambers of bone. He tramples the spirits of marsh and river and defies the keening shades of multitudes. And the Roman must have stone for his building, for his marching road. It is taken like tribute from the hill and hammered home: the grave markers, the axes, the worked flint, the blue stone.

For a thousand years, two thousand, the road is the one immutable. The galloping road, the road of banners and lords of battle, of hedge priests, chapmen, and ranters, of noble men of wide renown, of pilgrims and the plagued, of outlaws and the condemned, of potters and ploughmen, of wedding feasts and funerals, of the broken, the lame, the starving and the sure to die. Age fell upon them all and oblivion was their common fate.

And the ford where the blue stone lies? A Domesday village, built on the debris of dark ages past, huddled in the meadow close by. Their whipped men carried a King's bridge across the river and then another bridge and another, each familiar to long generations but they wore away just the same and vanished as if they had never been, like the village and all within. But, safe and easy in the valley, other villages grew along the road and gathered the ford-stones for their uncertain footings - but in their turn, faded too. Scraps of remembrance surround us: a stretch of roadside wall with the half-imagined outlines of doorways and windows, to show that a line of cottages stood here, where families lived crowded lives, their hay carts swaying in the lanes, their cattle drinking at the ford, but have gone to darkness now, faint smudges on the brick, voices on the road.

And here am I, with my brief time along the road below the hill. The watchers see as I dig a garden through the chaos of wire and rubble of those long-ago cottages, through the wet chalk beneath and, forking deeper, rattle the rough flints and lift them to the day. On the hill, a shaft of golden sunlight breaks through the winter clouds and shows the banks and hollows of tiny fields, the chambers white and gleaming once again, and a girl who is waiting, sees.

At my feet among the clods of earth and the miry chalk, a blue stone plump and smooth as a pigeon's breast, shines.

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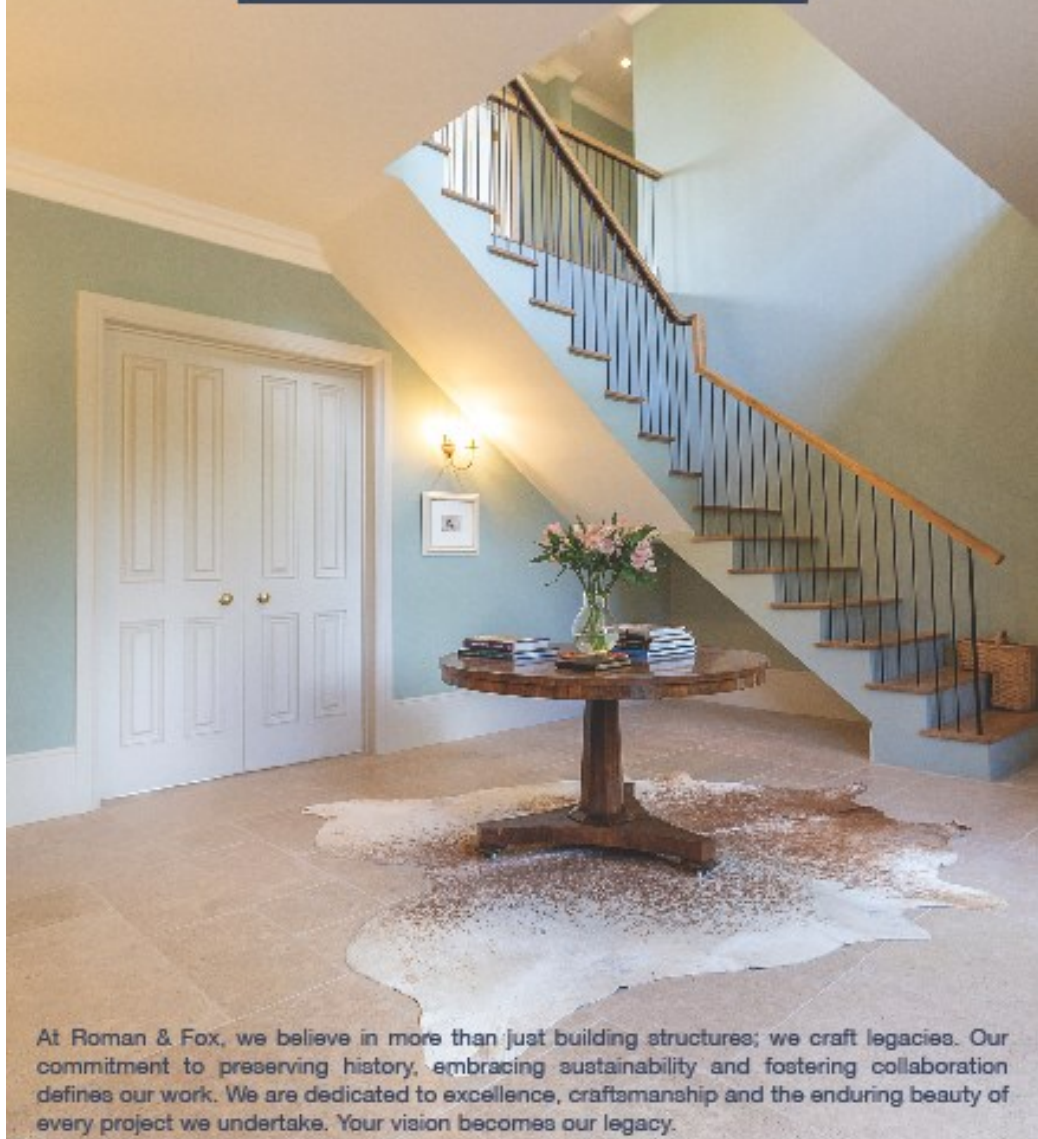
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Forthcoming Events

AGM. Thursday April 25 at the Community Farm. Join us for drinks and nibbles from 6.30. Meeting will start at 7pm.

Outing to RHS Wisley Gardens. Saturday July 6th, pick up time 08.30 in Riverbourne Road. Cost per person £35 (reduction for RHS members). To book a place, contact: lauraejones76@googlemail.com

Walk Through Time 4: an archaeological and historical walk through Milford and Laverstock. Saturday July 13th, meeting at 10am at Milford Mill Road medieval bridge. This is a guided walk and includes coffee. Tickets £5 per head. To book please contact lauraejones76@googlemail.com

Outing to Stourhead. Saturday October 12th, pick up time 08.30 in Riverbourne Road. Cost per person £35. To book a place, contact: lauraejones76@googlemail.com

Quiz Night. Saturday November 23rd in Laverstock Village Hall. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30 start. Cost per person is £15 to include a hot supper. To book please contact: lauraejones76@googlemail.com

Litter Picks. Saturday April 13th at 10am, Sunday July 21st at 11am, Saturday October 26th at 10am. Contact jupe.eastaugh@btinternet.com if you can help.

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Member: Caroline Shanklyn: cpshanklyn@yahoo.co.uk

Member: Jim Boyers jb@jimboyers.co.uk

Last Word

I hope you have enjoyed reading the magazine as much as I have in putting it together. The walk is our fourth journey through time and in its expanded form should be an entertaining challenge. The reports on MAPG's activities and events will have shown you that we are as determined as ever to meet sterner challenges and to protect the green spaces of our community.

We are a busy group and always welcome volunteers. We have been asked by the Parish Council to help with possible restoration work on the Bourne between Riverbourne Road and Whitebridge Green. If that project is confirmed, there will plenty to do for the able-bodied and the merely enthusiastic...

I would be interested to hear from readers where they think the haunted road in our ghostly tale can possible be?

Finally, my grateful thanks to the many local businesses who support us. The Milfordian would simply not be possible without them.

Barbara Lovibond, Editor.



Website: milfordpreservationgroup.com





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