

A Walk Through Time 3 : The Cathedral Close

This article is a shorter version of the guided walk itinerary which will include the North Walk

The Cathedral Close is as old as the cathedral itself, being laid out in 1220. While the cathedral was being built, the land around it was divided into plots and given to the canons to build their 'fair houses of stone'. The Close walls date from the 1330s and use stone taken from Old Sarum. In the 18th century, James Wyatt transformed the Close. He pulled down the bell tower and removed the gravestones. It was during the 18th and early 19th centuries that many of the houses in The Close acquired their Georgian facades.

Virtually all the buildings in The Close are Listed as being of historic interest – even the phone box on the Green.

The West Walk

The North Gate

Starting from Choristers' Green, look first at the North Gate leading from the High Street into The Close. Built between 1327 and 1342 of a mixture of rubble stone and ashlar, this gate is the main entry into the Close. It housed the small lock-up jail for those convicted of misdeeds within the Liberty of the Close. The niche above the gate arch once held a statue of Henry III, the present resident is Edward VII. Beside the gate stands the Porters Lodge. Before the building of St Osmund's Roman Catholic Church in Exeter Street, a Roman Catholic Chapel was registered as being in this lodge.

Matron's College (Alms Houses)

A few steps into The Close, the alms house dates from 1682 and was probably designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Originally intended for ten widows of clergy, the widows received a weekly pension of six shillings. To be eligible to live here, widows had to be at least 50 years old and have an annual income of less than £10. Among the early rules, tenants were required to attend two divine services *each day* in the cathedral and could not be absent from the Close for more than a month in each year.

Mompesson House

Walk back to Mompesson House. Grade 1 Listed, the main part of the house was built by Thomas Mompesson around 1680 and improved by his son Charles in 1701. These dates and the quality of the design *suggest* that it may have also been the work of Sir Christopher Wren.



The external appearance of the house is enhanced by the original lead work and wrought iron of railings, gates, and lamp carriers (note the rainwater hoppers, marked 'CM 1701'). Internally, the decoration includes elaborate plasterwork on ceilings and walls.

Mompesson House was donated to the National Trust in 1952.

The Hungerford Chantry

Next to Mompesson House, is the Hungerford Chantry. There was a house on this site from 1263, and a later building here was funded by Lord Hungerford in 1459 for the priests serving his chantry chapel in the cathedral. The first reference to the present building was in 1794 but it appears to date from the mid-18th C. The Chantry is of two storeys and is of brick. There is a parapet with stone coping and an old tile roof. The first floor has five windows with moulded frames, with four more on the ground floor. The central door has an architrave surround, moulded cornice, and pediment.

Note the round 'oculus' windows added in 1800 to the house next to the Chantry.

Hemyngsby

A few steps further on, in the north-west corner of The Close, is Hemyngsby. This canonry was named after Alexander de Hemingby who died in 1316.

In the 15th century three celebrated canons, Upton, Fideon and Powell occupied this building. Nicholas Upton was secretary to Thomas Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, and was at his side when the Earl was killed in the unsuccessful defence of Orleans against Joan of Arc in 1428. Upton's successor was William Fideon who escaped from Constantinople when the Turks overthrew the Byzantine Empire in 1453. In 1525 Edward Powell was living at Hemyngsby and acted as counsel to Queen Catherine of Aragon during Henry VIII divorce against her and denounced the libidinous King's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Powell so angered Henry that after Catherine's death he was tried for treason and hanged, drawn, and quartered at Smithfield. A few years later, during the Reformation, the house was lived in by Simon Symonds – better known as the Vicar of Bray.

The medieval house survives at the right-hand or northern end of the building. Note the 14th C porch and mullioned windows – and particularly the herringbone pattern of tiles which stud the wall and which *may* have been taken from Roman buildings at Old Sarum or Stratford-sub-Castle. As will be clear from the left-hand side of the building, a major repair had to be carried out here in 1727 and which gives Hemyngsby the appearance of being two houses.

Braybrooke House

A few yards further on and next to Wren Hall, Braybrooke is named after William de Braybrook (1298-1319). Elements of the medieval building - hay barn, wine cellar,

kitchen, and ovens - survive behind the Georgian facade. The original building was re-fronted in the early C18 but the earlier flint and stone rubble structure, including remains of the timber framework, are at the rear. The house in front of you has two storeys and an attic and is built of brick with stone quoins. Internally, there is an 18th C staircase and two front rooms - one with panelling, and the other with Rococo stucco work.

The Wardrobe and Rifles Museum

The original house here, dated 1254, was a canonry. A note from 1543 says it 'now is called Le Warderobe' which has been taken to mean that it changed use to storage, rather than residential. The present building is mainly 15th century but has been much changed over the centuries. In *England's Thousand Best Houses*, Simon Jenkins describes the façade as 'enticing'.

The War Office took over the Wardrobe in 1939. When the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner visited in 1975 he noted it was disused and 'Its future is uncertain'. In 1979, the Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust leased the building to provide a regimental museum. The Museum was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1992



The Wardrobe & Rifles Museum



Arundells

Arundells

Fifty yards on is Arundells. Between 1291 and 1316, Henry of Blunson was the first canon recorded as living in a house here, and there is still a core of the thirteenth century canonry preserved in the interior masonry of the house. The last canon to live in the earlier building was Leonard Bilson who was pilloried in 1562 and described as still being in prison in 1571, on charges of sorcery and magic. By 1609 the lease had been taken by Sir Richard Mompesson who carried out a major restoration of the medieval building. John Wyndham acquired the lease in 1718 and gave the house its Queen Anne frontage. He gave the house as a wedding present for his daughter who married James Everard Arundell, son of the prominent Roman Catholic Lord Arundell of Wardour in 1752. It is noteworthy that at a time when they were largely disbarred from public life, such high-status Catholics could live in the Close. Indeed, when the Arundells were not in residence it was on occasion occupied by Jesuit priests.

An engraving of the house was made by J. Lyons in 1745 with the house looking little different from today.

Arundells was the home of the former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath until his death on 17th July 2005.

The North Canonry

Adjacent to Arundells, the North Canonry has a Tudor frontage and occupies the site of a 13th C canonry. (The crypt of the earlier house survives). The outstanding features of the building are the large 16th C windows that once lit the great hall. Other than those features, the house was largely rebuilt by Sir Gilbert Scott in the 1860s, whilst he was working on the restoration of Salisbury Cathedral. The North Canonry is set well forward on its plot to leave room at the rear for a fine garden stretching to the river. We can't see it, but the formal layout of the garden remains more or less as it was in the 1750s.

Medieval Hall and Old Deanery

Turn right at the end of the North Canonry into Sarum St Michael and then take the first road on your left. This is the Old Deanery, which incorporates the Medieval Hall. Dating from circa 1220, the Old Deanery was one of the first sites to be developed within the Close. In the 13th century, the property comprised an open hall with service rooms, a cross range and a chapel. It was enlarged during the late 14th or early 15th century, and further restored in 1670. Another, partial reconstruction took place in the second half of the 18th century, with further alterations followed in the early 19th century.

The Medieval Hall, the centre section of the Deanery, is an almost complete survivor from the second half of the 13th C. The extraordinary timber-framed roof includes the only extant example in England of original louvre framing. The roof is supported by stone walls and shelters the High Table, the old central hearth and 13th-century wall painting.



The Medieval Hall before and after the restoration work of 1963

The King's House – Salisbury Museum

Return to the West Walk and turn right. A couple of hundred yards brings you to the King's Hose. Known as Sherborne Place from the 13th to 16th century, this was the mansion of the abbots of Sherborne until the Reformation in the 1530s (note the Ham Hill stone, local to Sherborne). The Grade I listed building has been reconstructed several times over the centuries, but originally extended north and south of the vaulted 15th C porch. The building gets its present name of 'King's House' from the time King James I was a guest here in 1610 and 1613. Within the building is a 14th-century roof to a former hall, and much 16th- and 17th-century work. A survey made in the later 18th century shows that the King's House consisted of four dwelling houses. One of these was used as a girls' school from 1767 and subsequently housed the Godolphin School for ten years from 1837. In 1851 the house became a Training College for Woman Teachers. Thomas Hardy's sisters, Mary and Katherine attended the college – as did Sue Bridehead, the heroine of 'Jude the Obscure' where the college is described. In 1979, the King's House was acquired by Salisbury Museum.

Myles Place

Continuing on straight for 200 yards, the magnificent four storey house on your right is Myles Place. Described by Pevsner as "too townish," the present building dates from 1718 but is on the site of a medieval canonry which used stone taken from Old Sarum. The building is a mix of styles. It has a curiously raised basement, the eastern front facing the road is of ashlar stone, with a pediment-topped doorway and shield of arms enclosed by Corinthian pillars. The back of the house is of red brick, and the sides are tiled.

Myles Place sold for £6,000,000 in 2007.



Myles Place



The Walton Canonry

The Walton Canonry

Next to Myles Place, the Walton Canonry was built around 1720 and like its neighbour has a raised ground floor. The house is named after Canon Isaac Walton - the son of Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler*. The three-storey house is made of brick and has a parapet to hide the roof. The wings were added in the later 18th C. There is a large back garden which sweeps down to the river and the fields where Constable painted some of his views of the cathedral. Walton Canonry was leased to Rex Whistler in 1938, until he died in the D-Day landings. The author Leslie Thomas also lived here for ten years.

The Leadenhall

The next building of significance and set back from the road, The Leadenhall, is a Grade I listed building on the site of the oldest house in the Close: a canonry built in 1220 for Elias de Dereham, the man responsible for the building of the cathedral. The canonry had a great hall and chapel, and a lead roof – hence the name. The building you see now is mostly from the 1720s, with 19th century additions. In the early 19th century, it was the home of Archdeacon John Fisher, a great friend of John Constable who stayed here several times while painting the cathedral. For nearly 80 years the building was a girls' boarding school until it closed in 2017.

The South Canonry

Walking straight ahead in the south-west corner of The Close, is the South Canonry. When the original canonical house here was surveyed for repairs in 1402 it included a private chapel, bakehouse, hothouse, brewhouse, dovecote, and stable. The building was severely damaged in the Civil War and rebuilt around 1665, with major alterations in 1778, the early 19th C and in 1889. The interior has preserved some earlier features: the room to right of the entrance has moulded beams and a large boss with arms of Henry Seward circa 1640.

Since 1951 it has been the residence of the bishop.

Guided Walk: Saturday July 8th. Meet at 10.00 on Choristers' Green - opposite Mompesson House in The Close. The Walk will include a private tour (and coffee..) of the Medieval Hall courtesy of Mr John Waddington.

As numbers are limited, please book early for this special event. The ticket price is £5 per person.

To confirm attendance and book tickets, please contact Laura Jones
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