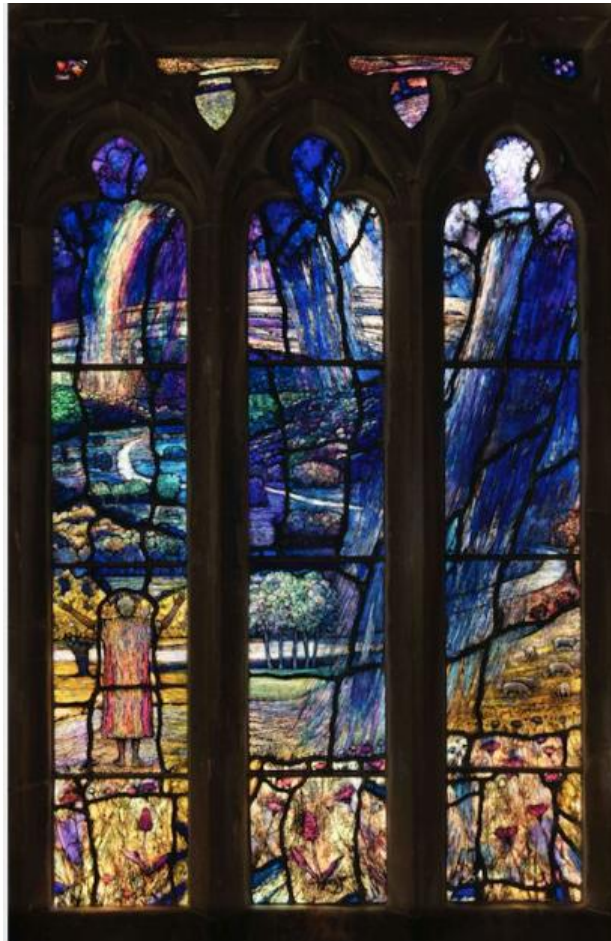


## WILTSHIRE CHURCHES

I have been revising Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's volume for Wiltshire, published in 1963 and last revised in 1975. Pevsner is justly celebrated for his analysis of church architecture, especially for his detailed analysis of the great cathedrals and abbeys, in Wiltshire, Salisbury and Malmesbury. In revising Pevsner I have had as objectives correcting errors, changing emphasis where subsequent scholarship has altered the story, adding features omitted, principally monuments and stained glass and notable Victorian or C20 additions, and adding important features dating from after the last revision.

The last, the important features added since the last edition, is the easiest. I have found that nearly all the most notable additions are of stained glass, as there are scarcely any modern church monuments of artistic merit. So glass by Tom Denny at Woodford



(01) and the Gabriel Loire East windows in the Cathedral feature. Among the best other artists with work in Wiltshire are several who are local, Henry Haig in Dorset, Peter Berry and Andrew Taylor in Wiltshire, Sam Kelly here in the Cathedral workshops.

Among the nonconformist churches unfortunately most of the post-1975 alterations have been negative. Many have been converted to houses or flats. The horizontal subdivision of the major town chapels, as at Brown St Baptist (02)



and Fisherton St United Reform here in Salisbury, has been more practical than beautiful. The Methodist church in St Edmund Church St, Salisbury is stripped out for modern multi-purpose use





(03-04). I have tended not to include reorderings on the grounds that they may not last – like the reorderings of the 1970s now being stripped out. New churches are very rare, the county being so well supplied. There are several Catholic churches, the externally unremarkable one at Amesbury has good glass by Haig. Architecturally more interesting is the barn-like one in West Swindon, St Peter Eastleaze of 1986 where the parish priest has made a point of commissioning art works (04a).



The two most interesting modern churches I found were two built well before 1975 but not noticed in the revision of that year. I am sure you all know St Peter, Frogwell, Chippenham, of 1966 where the whole interior was entrusted to Frank Roper of Penarth



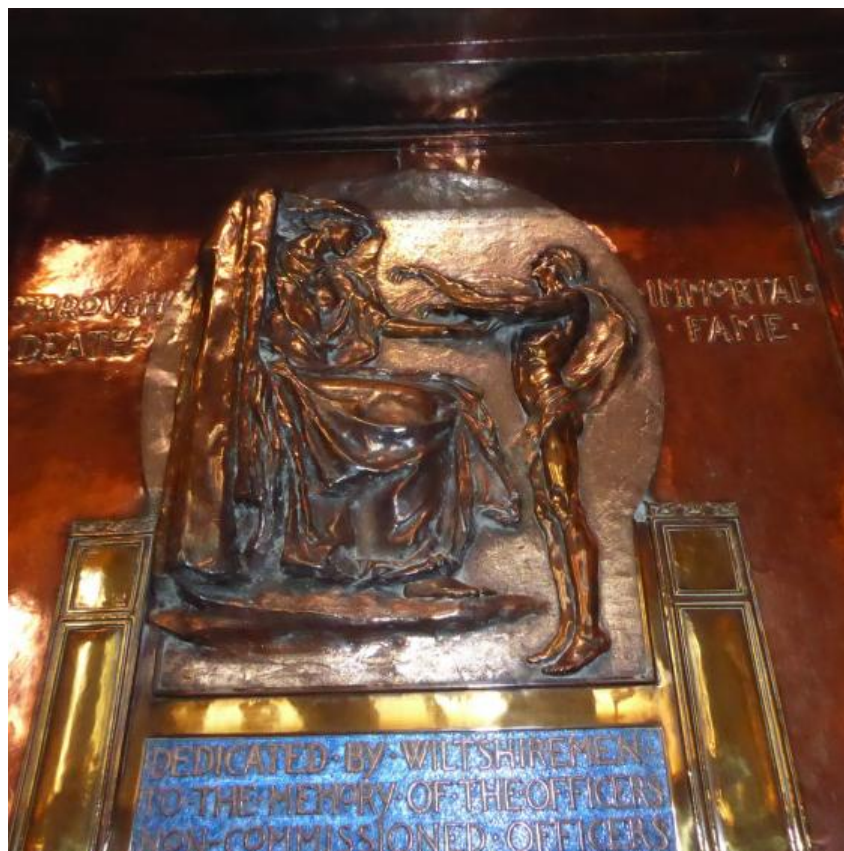
(05-06) a rare example of harmony in fittings.



Warminster St Giles, the garrison church of 1967-8, is externally as stark (07) as the Chippenham church, but inside has luminous abstract glass by Hugh Powell (08).



The addition of things omitted largely concerns things that Pevsner probably left out for reasons of space. They are often of the C19-C20 period, and I have found some very good things, the Arts & Crafts memorial (09) to Boer War dead in Salisbury Cathedral of 1904 by Alexander Fisher,



the one window in the county by Karl Parsons (10), at Winterslow, of 1931,



the 1947 murals in St Barnabas Swindon by Father John Perret (11).



The correction of errors is mostly straightforward, Pevsner saw so much that inevitably there are mistakes, and new research has thrown up corrections. The mistakes include ones easy to make and easy to correct such as N for S, and two-light for three-light. Among the corrections, the most obvious are those

concerning Victorian restoration where I have access to more information in the form of Victorian plans and also the pre- restoration drawings by John Buckler in the first decade of the C19. The Buckler drawings allow us to be more certain of what was changed in Victorian repairs, and also of what was copied accurately. Pevsner says that the S aisle at Cricklade



(12) is too restored to be relied on, but Buckler (13) shows something similar, whereas at Corsham



(14) Pevsner's suggestion that the crossing tower was Norman cannot I think be proved by the capitals that Street inserted when he took the tower down.

The Victorian church at Allington



(15) is much more a copy of its predecessor (16) than Pevsner knew, and he dismisses the great W window at Westbury (17) as all the work of TH Wyatt, while it seems very close to what Buckler drew (18).





Where it comes to interpretation, each church needed to at least be approached afresh, so I went to each without reading Pevsner, then went around again with the 1975 text, and of course my writing up was influenced by any newly published evidence. I will try to tease out a few themes that have emerged, some new, some already touched on by Pevsner. To start with the Anglo-Saxon period, I have made more of the possible sites of minster churches, where long after the Anglo-Saxon period a series of dependent chapelries around a church suggest especial importance to that church. Such sites I suggest include not just the obvious Warminster, but Amesbury, Calne, Chippenham, Melksham, Bradford on Avon, Downton.

For the Norman period one of the more interesting questions, considered by Pevsner, is what can be attributed to Roger of Salisbury before 1139, Roger being the Bishop most especially praised for his buildings, at Old Sarum, Devizes, Sherborne and Malmesbury. The consensus on Malmesbury Abbey has been to date it to after Roger's time, to after the death of William of Malmesbury in 1143, as William does not mention a rebuilding in his writings. It is conventionally dated to the

60s and 1170s. But there are strong voices to put it back to the time of Roger. There



are biting masks

(19) over the hoodmoulds of the nave arcades, found also at Sherborne (where the strange Greek-key motif of the string-course at Malmesbury also appears). Biting masks appear in fragments from Old Sarum and over the N door at Great Durnford



(20).

Great Durnford has the polychrome stonework associated with Roger at Old Sarum as well as, in the S doorway, the strange purse-like motif (21),



sometimes called 'ravioli' that very definitely was at Old Sarum, as we find it built into the Close wall at Salisbury (22),



built of fragments from Old Sarum. I have tried to weave into Pevsner's text the suggestion of an earlier date for Malmesbury and also the radical thought that the great sets of Apostles (23)



in the Malmesbury porch could predate the porch itself. An intriguing point about Wiltshire's Norman churches was how large some of them were, thus the full length of Melksham church and all but the eastern chancel bay of Bradford-on-Avon were there by the end of the C12, as fragments (23a) at each end tell.



At Salisbury Cathedral I have modified in line with recent scholarship, especially by Tim Tatton-Brown, the dating of the cloisters, tower and spire – it being clear that while the cloisters were planned from the outset and the E walk begun in the 1220s, the example of Westminster Abbey prompted a redesign, the cloisters widened by a bay to the W and a bay to the S (24),



with the new doorway to the bishop's palace at the end of the S range, and a much grander Chapter House (25).



The period for building the tower and spire (26)



is much shortened from about 1310 into the 1320s, the tower begun under Bishop Simon of Ghent 1297-1315 completed under Bishop Roger Martival who decided on the enormous spire. Bishop Roger died in 1330. Tatton-Brown has pointed out that two of the other great stone spires of the period at Grantham and St Mary Redcliffe were built at Salisbury prebends.

Nicely, the matching tombs of Ghent and Martival are opposite each other, differentiated by ball-flower ornamenting Ghent's (27),





appropriately as ballflower covers the tower; and tiny flying-buttresses Martival's (28), appropriately as flying buttresses were required to spread the weight of the tower and spire.

The medieval glass at Salisbury is a tragedy considering how much survived before Wyatt. I have pointed out the importance of what is left, among the pieces the earliest heraldic glass in Britain (29).



Some other rescued pieces are in Laverstock church (30).



The geology of Wiltshire building stones needed enhancement – I have been pulled in both directions over whether Chilmark is the right name for the Cathedral stone, when it came from Tisbury, but have decided that Chilmark is the currently understood name. Equally whether Bath stone is right for medieval oolitic limestone when, as in the case of the Saxon church at Bradford (31)



it probably came from Bradford, and most medieval Bath stone is actually Hazelbury, and most later Bath stone is Box or Corsham. The oolitic limestone at Malmesbury Abbey appears to come from Sherston, nowhere near Bath or Hazelbury. I have highlighted the wonderful Greensand where it occurs but resisted calling it Hurdcott, also the dark brown Heath stone, which appears in the SE, as in the Downton tower. Greensand and Heath appear together in the N arcade (32)



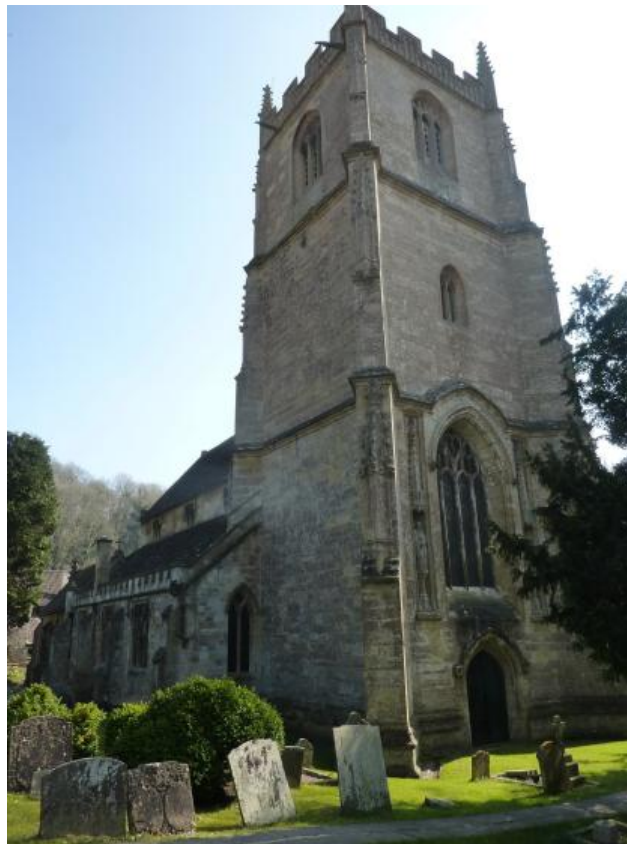
at Downton. I have tried to note more obscure stones where they occur in churches, Swindon stone, Warminster stone at Crockerton, sarsen at West Overton.

The interesting feature of the late medieval period is how far stone could travel. The porch of the building we meet in today, the Salisbury house of the Abbots of Sherborne, is notably of Ham Hill stone from Somerset, a display on the part of the C15 Abbot, using the stone of which his Abbey was built. Bath limestone travelled greatly from early times, used on Devizes St John in the C12, and for many of the biggest Late Medieval churches. It spreads eastward to Calne (34),



to the enormous tower at Aldbourne, and to Marlborough St Peter, S to Trowbridge and Westbury, SE to Devizes St Mary and Marden, NE to Castle Combe and Cricklade. Chilmark was used as ashlar for the grandest projects in the S, but it is notable that Hazelbury stone was specified for some C14 flying buttresses here at the Cathedral.

The Perpendicular towers of Wiltshire are not as notable a group as those of Somerset or Gloucestershire and I have been wondering about their identity as a group. There are handsome Bath stone towers at Devizes St Mary and Castle Combe (35)



where decoration of a Somerset sort such as buttress pinnacles and canopied



niches appears. Aldbourne (35A) stands out for its scale, and had the crown been achieved would certainly have been



among the noblest.

Steeple Ashton (36) must have been superb before the spire fell. The most elegant group, not particularly closely related to Somerset types, have a grid-panelled



bell-stage, the best at Westwood (37), but also West Kington, Nettleton, Devizes St James and Melksham. Cricklade and Marlborough St Peter (38)



have thick octagonal corner turrets, distinctive but inelegant compared to Magdalen College tower, the presumed source. One curiosity I noticed is the prevalence of parapets pierced with quatrefoils rather than battlemented across northern Wiltshire,



Purton (39) and Crudwell (40)



are examples. I am not sure if they occur across the Gloucestershire or Berkshire borders.

I am trying to keep track of pieces of churches that have wandered, some reused, some gone out of the county. The C13 Purbeck marble font from St Edmund, Salisbury I have not managed to trace. It disappeared when the church became an arts centre. Sir Gilbert Scott's 1876 font from the Cathedral is under tarpaulins in the Works Yard since the William Pye font was installed in 2008. Its twin is in Langley Burrell (41)



where they have a medieval font too. I can only guess that it came from another Scott church, perhaps Chippenham St Paul down the road. The predecessor font to Scott's at the cathedral (42)



went to Yankalilla, South Australia, in 1876 along with a similar C17 font from Britford (43), now in the neighbouring South Australian church of Delamere. The E window glass from Latton, of 1861, is at Watrous, Saskatchewan. Conversely the medieval font from Stoke Wake, Dorset, is in the modern Catholic church in Swindon I showed at the beginning, and the alabaster and marble font and pulpit from the demolished Pontnewynydd church in Monmouthshire have come to rest in Trowbridge Catholic church, not entirely intact, in the case of the pulpit. Pevsner had to attempt to list the continental treasures that came to furnish the new church in Wilton, but I think he would have been surprised at how much of our Wiltshire churches has wandered out as well as wandered in.

