

Extract from the National Gazetteer 1868

Salisbury, (or New Sarum) comprising the parishes of St. Martin, St. Thomas, and St. Edmund, it is a city, market town, municipal and parliamentary borough, having separate civil jurisdiction, but locally in the hundred of Underditch, county Wilts, 82 miles S.W. of London, and 28½ from Winchester. It has stations on the Basingstoke section of the London and South-Western and Salisbury and Warminster branch of the Great Western railways, communicating directly with the metropolis, and another on the Bishopstoke branch of the South-Western, connecting it with the port of Southampton.

This city owes its origin to the decline of Old Sarum, which is believed to have been a seat of the Belgæ prior to the Roman invasion of Britain, and was selected by the latter people as a station on the highway to the W., the three roads to Winchester, Silchester, and Dorchester branching off at this point, and probably three others to Bath, Ilchester, and a station on the Kennet; but these last are only traceable in certain localities: numerous coins of the several Roman emperors have also been found within its area. Under the West Saxons it first became the seat of a bishopric, founded by Ina in 704, but for a time resident at Sherborne, in Dorsetshire, whence the see was removed in 905 to Wilton, in Wilts, and afterwards to Old Sarum, or the ancient Salisbury, which William of Malmesbury describes as more properly a castle than a city, being situated on a barren hill, and encompassed with a high wall.

In this area the cathedral church was built by Bishops Herman and Osmond, shortly after the Norman conquest; but King Stephen having quarrelled with Bishop Roger, placed a strong garrison in the castle, which was considered a gross violation of the liberties of the church, and the military occupants of which levied contributions on the property of the churchmen. From this dreary spot Bishop Poore, in 1215, obtained license from Pope Honorius to remove his see, and the site for the new cathedral was revealed to the reverend prelate in a vision of the night, in the fertile plain below, "that they might begin at the house of God", observes Camden, "the bishop, in a pleasant meadow, before called Merifield, laid the foundation of the great church, a stately pile of building, the which, with its high steeple and double cross aisles, by its venerable grandeur, strikes its spectators with a sacred joy, and was, in forty-three years space, finished at a great expense, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in 1258, in the presence of King Henry III.

This monarch conferred upon the rising town the privileges of a free city, with the same immunities as were enjoyed by the people of Winchester. Old Sarum was speedily deserted, not only by the members of the establishment, but by the greater part of its lay inhabitants, who rebuilt their houses in the vale, under the shadow of the sacred precincts, and modern Salisbury consequently soon increased in extent, and became one of the most flourishing cities in the kingdom. In the succeeding reign of Edward I. Bishop Bridport built the bridge at Harnham, over the Avon, thus diverting the great western road, which formerly passed through Old Sarum, and that place became completely deserted, as it continues at present, the hill on which it stood rising like a desolate mound on the N. side of the present city, with its sides furrowed by deep fosses and stupendous earthen ramparts, now called Old Castle, or Castle Hill, and parochially included within the village of Stratfordsub-Castle.

Two parliaments were held here, one by Edward I., to deliberate concerning the rescue of the province of Gascoigne from Philip of France, and the other by Edward III to which Mortimer, Earl of March, came with his followers in arms, and but for the intervention of the clergy blood would have flowed. In the reign of Richard II the Lollards assembled here in considerable numbers, and the citizens refusing to assist the bishop in his efforts to suppress their meetings, their charter was temporarily suspended; and in the reign of Richard III, the Duke of Buckingham having been taken prisoner, was brought here and executed without trial.

Both James I. and Charles I. confirmed its ancient charters, but no historical event of importance occurred in connection with the city till after the close of the parliamentary war, when, during the interregnum, Colonel Wyndham, with 200 armed men, marched into the town and proclaimed Charles II but not being joined by the citizens they again dispersed. After the Restoration Charles II renewed the charters, which were confirmed by Queen Anne, and which served as the governing charters till 1835, when, by the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act the government was vested in a mayor, 6 aldermen, and 18 councillors, with the usual corporate style, and a separate commission of peace. By the same Act the municipal boundaries were made co-extensive with those for parliamentary purposes, and the city was divided into three wards. The city first exercised the elective franchise in the 23rd of Edward I., since which time it has regularly returned two members to parliament.

The bounds, which were formerly confined to the city, including the three city parishes, St. Edmund, St. Martin, and St. Thomas, except a small portion of the parish of St. Martin, were enlarged by the Reform Act of 1832, so as to include the liberty of the Close and parts of Milford and Fisherton Anger parishes. The population of the parliamentary and municipal borough in 1861 was 11,657, and in 1861 12,278. Previous to the Reform Act the franchise was in the corporation, 57 in number, but since then has been enjoyed by the £10 householders and about six freemen, the mayor being the returning officer. Salisbury is a polling-place, and the principal place of election, for the southern division of the county of Wilts. The old tree near Stratford-sub-Castle, the nominal place of election for the decayed borough of Old Sarum, was blown down in a storm a few years after the passing of the Reform Act, but the stump is still visited by the curious.

The city occupies a site at the confluence of the four rivers Avon, Wiley, Nadder, and Bourne. The principal streets are parallel, and crossed at right angles, or nearly so, by others, forming towards the rear of the houses quadrangular "chequers", laid out as courts and gardens, while the river Avon is conducted in a miniature Venetian style through the streets, in bricked channels, formerly open and crossed by miniature bridges; but these canals, as they were locally termed, have recently been covered in, thus destroying the peculiar feature for which the city had long been celebrated.

The principal stream of the Avon, also on the W. is crossed by two stone bridges of six arches each, connecting the city with the suburban village of Fisherton-Anger, and on the S. by another connecting it with East Harnham. On the latter ancient bridge of ten arches, built by Bishop Bingham in the year 1244, stood at one time a chapel dedicated to St. John, occupying a small islet near the centre of the bridge, which is thus divided into two parts

Most of the houses are of brick; many of the more ancient are irregular in form and size, and constructed with gable ends of timber and brickwork plastered over, exhibiting curious specimens of ancient domestic architecture. In the centre of the town is the market place, an open area surrounded by shops and public buildings. The council and sessions house, at the south eastern corner of the market-place, was rebuilt in 1795, at the expense of the late Earl of Radnor, on the site of the ancient guildhall, which was burnt down. It is of white brick, with rustic stone quoins and cornices, and a Doric portico, also of stone. It contains on one floor two court rooms, a council room for the corporation, and numerous other apartments.

At the N.W. corner of the market-place is the new corn and wool market-house, connected by a branch line with the railway stations at Fisherton; also, at the S.W. corner of the market-place, forming a small square, a curious old hexagonal building, known as the Poultry Cross, built in the reign of Edward III., and thoroughly restored in 1855.

The county gaol and bridewell was erected in 1818, at the cost of £30,000, in the suburb of Fisherton Anger, where also is situated the infirmary. Other public buildings are the literary and scientific institution, assembly and concert rooms, baths, and several subscription libraries. The most conspicuous object, however, in Salisbury is its cathedral, considered one of the purest and noblest specimens of the early Gothic or pointed style of architecture extant. It is built in the form of a double cross, with an enriched tower and spire rising from the intersection of the nave and larger transepts to the height of 404 feet from the pavement, being the highest in England, and no less than 70 feet higher than the dome and cross of St. Paul's. It is supported on four slender piers and pointed arches, 80 feet high. Some of these piers are much warped, and it is an evidence of the artistic skill of the architect that, although owing to an original settlement of the foundations, the spire declined 23 inches from the perpendicular towards the S.W., not the slightest variation has since been detected in the course of above two centuries.

The western front and buttresses all round are adorned with canopied niches for statues, a few of which alone now remain. The cloisters are the largest and most magnificent of any in the kingdom, and in the nave, choir, and transepts are numerous monuments to the bishops of the see, the Earls of Salisbury and other noble families, including those of Bishops Joceline and Roger - the latter perhaps the earliest specimen of monumental sculpture extant. The E. window is filled with stained glass in memory of the late dean, and in the choir is a painted window designed by Mortimer, and presented by the late Earl of Radnor, representing the Elevation of the Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness.

The cathedral has been twice damaged by lightning - the first time it was repaired by Sir Christopher Wren, and more recently by Mr. Wyatt, at an expense of £26,000. The chapels in the transepts have been removed, and their principal ornaments distributed in various parts of the interior. The chapter house has been lately completely renovated as a memorial to Bishop Denison. The close of the cathedral, which is separated from

the city on one side by a lofty wall, comprises an area of nearly half a square mile, resembling a spacious meadow, shaded by lofty trees, and besides the cathedral, the bishop's palace, and the residences of the canons, and others connected with the cathedral, contains also the residences of several private families, from one of which sprang the present Earl of Malmesbury's family.

Most of these houses environing the close are detached. The palace, which stands near the S.E. corner of the cathedral, is in various and discordant styles of architecture, surrounded by gardens, and having access to the Exeter road by the old bridge over the Avon, which is nearly as old as the cathedral. The three gates which give approach to the close are ancient—that at the southern end communicates with the suburb of Harnham; that at the northern with the High-street, running in a direct line between the old and new cities, and not, as in most towns, forming part of the London road; and that at the eastern end opens out into St. Ann's-street and the Southampton-road. A broad gravelled and shaded mall, crossing the close from N. to S., forms the approach to the great western entrance of the cathedral.

The diocese of Salisbury, as modified under the provisions of the Act 6 and 7 William IV., cap. 77, consists of the whole of the counties of Dorset and Wilts. It is divided into the archdeaconries of Sarum, Wilts, and Dorset, the first comprising the deaneries of Amesbury, Chalk, Wilton, and Wylde; the second the deaneries of Avebury, Marlborough, and Pottern; and the third the deaneries of Bridport, Dorchester, Pimperne, Shaftesbury, and Whitchurch. The capitular establishment consists of a bishop, dean, precentor, chancellor, treasurer, 4 canons residentiary, who are also prebendaries, three archdeacons, subdean, succentor, 38 prebendaries, 4 priest vicars, 6 singing men, 8 choristers, organist, and other officers. The dean and chapter, which consists of the 4 residentiary canons, have the patronage of the 4 minor canonries, forming a corporate body of themselves, and of 16 benefices out of the 427 included within this diocese.

In addition to the cathedral, the city contains three parish churches: St. Martin's, St. Edmund's, and St. Thomas's; the livings of the two first are rectories, value respectively £189 and £180, while St. Thomas's, originally erected in 1240 as a chapel-of-ease to the cathedral, is a perpetual curacy, value £140, in the gift of the dean and chapter. St. Martin's church, situated at the south-eastern extremity of the city, is an ancient building, repaired in 1850, with a square tower surmounted by a spire, and containing a peal of six bells. On the N. side of the chancel is a monument to the Swayne family, and a brass bearing date 1632. The register, which is written in Latin up to 1620, commences with the reign of Elizabeth.

St. Edmund's church, formerly collegiate, has a square embattled tower surmounted by pinnacles and containing six bells. The tower was rebuilt in 1653, after its fall, by which the nave was injured, and at the same time the nave was entirely pulled down, and the large choir made to serve the purposes of nave and chancel. In 1766 a mean chancel was built to the E. of the choir, which has lately been replaced by one more in harmony with the original building, from designs by G. G. Scott, Esq. It contains a brass bearing date 1586, and the register commences in 1538.

The church of St. Thomas has a square tower on the S. side of the S. aisle, containing a peal of eight bells and a set of chimes. The interior is spacious, with an E. window of stained glass representing Christ blessing the Eleven Apostles, and a roof of carved oak. Among the monuments are two kneeling figures and the supposed tomb of the Duke of Buckingham, who was executed here in the reign of Richard III. The register commences in 1570

There are also churches in the suburban districts of Fisherton-Anger, East Harnham, West Harnham, Stratford-under-the-Castle, but these are described under their separate headings or the parishes of which they form part. Two cemeteries have recently been formed, in accordance with the provisions of the Extramural Interment Act: one of 8 acres is situated a mile N.E. of the town, on the London road, and the other, of 2½ acres, on the Devizes road, both having mortuary chapels. The environs are diversified with villas and mansions, including Wilton House, of the Earl of Pembroke, Longford Castle, of Viscount Folkestone, Trafalgar House, presented by the national gratitude to the illustrious Lord Nelson, and Clarendon Park, the seat of the Bathurst family, in the grounds of which are preserved the ruins of the palace of Henry II from which the constitutions of Clarendon were issued.

The woollen manufacture was formerly extensively carried on, and Salisbury flannel was once in high repute, as were also scissors and ornamental cutlery made here; but these branches of industry have gradually declined. The trade of Salisbury is now limited to the supply of the city and neighbourhood, and a considerable business in agricultural produce of all kinds is done weekly in connection with the various markets and fairs mentioned below. The county assizes and spring quarter sessions are held here, but the Lent, or winter

assize, has latterly been transferred for greater convenience to Devizes. General sessions and a bishop's court of record were formerly granted, but the latter, under the new Municipal Act, has become merged in the borough court, over which the recorder is the presiding officer.

Petty sessions are held every Monday, and a court-leet annually on behalf of the bishop, as lord of the manor, when a bailiff and deputy-bailiff are appointed. Salisbury gives the title of marquis to the family of Cecil. Three newspapers are published in the town, and races are held on the Downs beyond Harnham Hill for two days in August. There are places of worship for Independents, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Primitive Methodists, also a Roman Catholic church in Exeter-street, built in 1851 from a design by Pugin. The charitable and educational establishments are numerous, and many of them well endowed, the gross income derived from the whole being above £5,000, the smaller part of which is under the immediate supervision of the municipal charity trustees appointed in 1837.

Some of the principal charities are the College of Matrons, founded by Dr. Seth Ward, Bishop of Salisbury, for the maintenance of ten clergymen's widows of the diocese, and endowed with about £700 per annum; St. Nicholas's Hospital, near Harpham Bridge, founded by Bishop Poore, for a master and 12 brethren and sisters, with an income of £1,200, besides fines; Trinity Hospital, founded in the reign of Richard II. for 12 aged brethren, income about £50. To these may be added Eyre's, Bricet's, Frowd's, Taylor's, and Blechynden's hospitals or almshouses for aged or infirm persons, and Sir Thomas White's charity for loans without interest to poor citizens, in sums of £25 for ten years. The schools include one for the choristers, situated in the close, at which the poet Addison received the rudiments of his education; and a grammar school for the sons of citizens, founded and partially endowed by Queen Elizabeth, which is under the control of the municipal charity trustees. In the close is also a normal training school for female teachers, under the management of the bishop and a committee of clergy and laity.

Another school was founded by the Godolphin family for 8 orphan daughters of poor gentlemen, and has an endowment of about £300 per annum. There are besides several Church of England, Wesleyan, and Roman Catholic schools, also central National schools, 8 other public and 25 private day schools, and 8 Sunday-schools, in connection with the various places of worship. A college, formerly of secular canons, adjoining to St. Edmund's church, has been converted into a private residence, and in its grounds numerous antique weapons and accoutrements have been dug up, marking it as the site of a battle between the Danes and Saxons.

Numerous antiquities, including the foundations of the original cathedral, and still earlier Roman remains, are visible on Castle Hill, the site of Old Sarum, where some years since a curious double key, supposed to be that of the church, was found. The neighbourhood abounds with flints, found in the alluvial soil and in the chalk, containing a variety of organic remains of the spongia and alcyonia genera; and some of those found in the gravel appear to have been artificially fractured.

The market days are Tuesday and Saturday, the former chiefly for corn; also a cattle market every other Tuesday. Fairs are held on the Monday prior to the 5th April, and the 22nd October, also a large sheep and cattle fair at the village of Britford on the 12th August; but the pleasure fair formerly held during Whitsun week in the cathedral close has for several years been discontinued.

Close of the Canons, a parish and liberty within the precinct of the cathedral church of Salisbury, in the city of Salisbury, in the county of Wilts.