



*A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.*

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## BLACKMORE

Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum was founded by Dr Richard Fowler in 1860 and was for many years located in St Ann's Street in the city. The core of the collection was the drainage collection – an incredible collection of medieval finds recovered from the old water channels in the City which were replaced with sewers in the 1850s.

Alongside the Salisbury Museum there was also the Blackmore Museum, founded by Salisbury business man Mr William Blackmore 1827 - 1878 (right) to house the Squier and Davis collection of archaeological finds from the *pipe* mounds of Ohio, USA\*. The Blackmore Museum was opened in 1867 and was managed by the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. The collections of the Blackmore Museum were later dispersed to other museums in the 1930s and 1960s. The Blackmore Museum name was removed in 1968.



\*1847 Squier and Davis volume *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi*

*Valley*, the first book ever published by the Smithsonian Institution and still considered by many as the bible of mound archaeology in North America. The ceremonial tobacco pipes are thought

to be from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.



R o s e m a r y  
Pemberton writes:  
Some readers may recall my blog on the Read Family and their connection with the early museum. After writing it I came across this reference to Charles Read, the musician, performing at the opening of Blackmore

Museum in 1867. The three Blackmore brothers were involved with the museums from the beginning with Salisbury and South Wilts Museum having opened in St Ann Street in 1864. The middle brother, William, had made a fortune in America and acquired a collection of prehistoric remains from around the world. He chose to build a separate museum for their display in the garden behind the first museum. Seemingly sparing no expense, he used Minton encaustic tiles on the floor, with roof and wall decoration by Harland and Fisher, a London firm who worked at the South Kensington Museum (to become the V&A). The architect was John Harding of Salisbury, who was also County Surveyor.

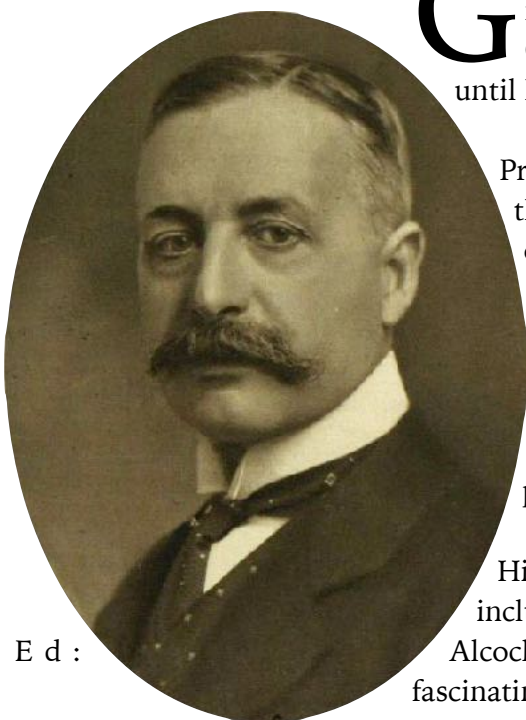
The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (WANHS) published an account in wonderful Victorian prose with the description of the museum, details of the elaborate opening ceremony and an amusing anecdote regarding the musical performance. Present at the opening was Charles Darwin's eldest son William Erasmus. He told his father of his visit in a letter dated 9th September 1867, writing "it is a most splendid collection of Antiquity of Man relics given together with the building to Salisbury. I dare say you have heard of it."



By the middle of the 1930's the buildings of the two museum had been connected. The collections of the Blackmore were gradually sold off during the 1930's and 1960's, with items from the local area remaining. The Blackmore name was dropped in 1968 and the Blackmore building became used as a store and was closed to the public.

The Blackmore coat of arms can still be seen on the east side of the building - 'Wokes' please look away now.

#### COCKALORUM\*



Ed :

**G**ordon Verity writes: With the impending Coronation, it is interesting to consider aspects of the career of Sir Walter Galpin Alcock, organist at Salisbury Cathedral from 1917 until his death in 1947.

Prior to that, he was at Westminster Abbey, and played at the coronation of both Edward VII and George V. The organ now at Westminster Abbey was used for the first time at the coronation of George VI in May 1937. The specification for the organ was drawn up by Alcock, Ernest Bullock, organist of the Abbey at that time and two other organists, in consultation with the builders, Harrison and Harrison. Alcock then had the honour of playing for his third coronation in 1937.

His memorial plaque in the south aisle of the choir includes a cockerel ('Alcock' more or less said backwards). Alcock studied with Sir Arthur Sullivan and John Stainer but fascinatingly, his hobby was his model railway on which the

choirboys would be given rides.

\* Brewer's Phrase & Fable *Cock of Cocks*.

#### BEHIND THE BLUE PLAQUE

**H**enry Hatcher (1777 to 1846) was a local historian with a national reputation. In 1795 he became amanuensis to historian William Coxe\* and he also assisted Sir Richard Colt Hoare. His memory is perpetuated in the Alderbury & Whaddon Local History Research Group's *Hatcher Review* (published from 1976 to 2000) named in his memory, and by the Cathedral plaque set up by public subscription. The *Hatcher Review* has now been replaced by the *Sarum Chronicle*.



There is a blue plaque on 54 Endless Street which was his home and school from 1824. The portrait (right) is attributed to John Westcott Gray, active from 1827 to 1851. Note the Cathedral in the background. It was a gift from Salisbury District Council to the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum in 1981.

\*Coxe (1748 to 1828) was a well-known historian who often accompanied the nobility on their Grand Tours. These included our Lord Herbert and Samuel Whitbread of brewing fame. In 1788 he became rector of Fugglestone St Peter with Bemerton and he also held the rectories of Stourton and Fovant and was made a prebendary of the Cathedral in 1791, then Archdeacon of Wilts in 1804. His mother remarried after his father's death, one John Christopher Smith, Handel's amanuensis.

#### MOMPESSON X 2

**C**athedral conservator Dave Henson made the discovery when he started the latest round of practical conservation work on the monument to Sir Richard Mompesson and his wife Katherine. Mr Henson found what is believed to be a 17th century polychrome coat of arms on the reverse of the stone.

Peter Martindale, polychrome expert, said: *The coat of arms on the reverse of the monument is important historically and artistically, and quite rare. It appears not to have undergone a programme of treatment since being painted, its condition seems good and it is therefore a valuable witness to the methods and materials of the time.* One possibility is that it could be a draft painting of the coat of arms found on the front as the blazoning of the two is almost identical.

Mr Martindale has recommended discrete cleaning tests and that five paint samples are taken for analysis – two from the front of the coat of arms and three from the reverse – to determine what similarities there are between them. The Mompesson Tomb, an elaborate tomb chest of painted and gilded Chilmark stone, was built after 1627 and it has been repainted twice since the original painting. It was originally located on the north side of the quire in the north nave aisle, perhaps in a position where both sides of the monument could be seen, but it was moved to the south wall of the south side aisle in 1877 when the Father Willis organ was installed. Research into the

historical and artistic significance of the coat of arms is being carried out by experts from the Church Monuments Society and Church Buildings Council in London.

**I**n another place, the churchyard at Eyam in Derbyshire (famous plague village) contains the remains of the wife of the vicar, one Catherine Mompesson who caught the disease in 1666. Her husband, the rector, is pictured right: British School; William Mompesson (1639-1709), Rector of Eyam. *Courtesy of Museums Sheffield..*



According to legend, late in the summer of 1665 – just as the plague was hitting its peak in London – a bundle of cloth was delivered to the house of the village tailor, Alexander Hadfield. When his assistant George Viccars opened the parcel he found the material within to be damp, and so he hung by the fire to dry out. Little did he know that by doing so he was awakening some fleas which had been bundled in with the fabric. These fleas were infected with the deadly plague, and soon hopped on to the unsuspecting assistant.

Shortly after, Viccars developed symptoms that would have terrified the villagers, knowing the doom it portended. Before long he died from the plague, and within the month 5 others died too. Any hopes that the disease may spare them were dashed throughout autumn when steadily household after household was hit, with whole families being killed. Deaths slowed across winter and spring, perhaps bringing hope to the villagers, but as a hot summer hit the county the infected fleas increased their activity. In June 1666 21 of the villages died, 14 of them across one week. As it became clear the plague was not done with them yet, a radical idea was proposed by the village's priest.

Reverend William Mompesson was a newcomer to Eyam, having only arrived in April 1664. His predecessor, Thomas Stanley – who was popular with the villagers – had been removed because he refused to acknowledge the 1662 Act of Uniformity introduced by the newly restored King Charles II. This made it compulsory for churches and priests to use Charles' Book of Common Prayer. However, Eyam had been on the Parliamentary side of the Civil War of a few decades prior, and leant in a more Puritanical direction in line with Oliver Cromwell. They supported their old rector over this intruder and Mompesson had not yet found popularity amongst the villagers.

Mompesson was not a proud man, and he was keen to do what he could to save not only his immediate parishioners, but the people across Derbyshire and beyond. He had a plan, now he just needed help. So he took his idea to Stanley, who had been living on the edge of the village, and persuaded him to get on board. On 24th June 1666, the same day another resident, Ann Skidmore, was buried, Mompesson and Stanley stood before the congregation. Mompesson proposed a 17th-century lockdown: no one in or out of the village. The Earl of Devonshire, the local landowner, had agreed to send food and supplies to the village to ensure their survival, and the goods would be left at boundary stones outside the immediate vicinity of Eyam. The villagers would leave coins – disinfected with vinegar – as payment, and the plague would not leave the village and infect anyone else.

Many of the villagers were, understandably, not keen on the idea. But Mompesson’s wisdom in recruiting Stanley paid dividends, as he was able to persuade the residents of Eyam to listen to the plan. Everyone was going to get through this together. They knew that many, if not most of them would die, but at least they could go to God knowing that they had not been responsible for spreading this dreadful disease any further.



The plan sprung into action. The villagers became responsible for themselves, avoiding their neighbours where possible. Instead of burying their families in the churchyard, risking transporting an infected body through the village, they would be buried in their gardens or close to their homes. People would not gather to hear Sunday service in the church, but instead the town stood in the open air at *Cucklet Delf*, a limestone cavern and bank, appropriately socially distanced from family to family. The “all in it together”

atmosphere may have been slightly marred by the fact that Mompesson had already sent his children away from Eyam to Yorkshire to protect them from the plague. Mompesson’s Well (left) was one of the places where food and payment were left (*photo courtesy of Tripadvisor*) The boundary stones (bottom) served the same purpose (*photo courtesy of Flickr and coins of the period courtesy of American Numismatic Assoc.*).

The first two months of the quarantine were devastating for Eyam. In July 56 people died, followed by 78 in August. Entire families were decimated: a woman named Elizabeth Hancock lost her husband and 6 children across the space of one week. Because of the restrictions on burials in the village, Elizabeth had the agony of burying them each – two on the 3rd August, three on the 7th and two across the 9th and 10th – by herself on a small plot by the family’s farm. Legend says that her neighbours from the nearby village of Stoney Middleton watched her go about her work from a nearby hill that overlooked the farm, powerless to help her. But despite the heavy death toll, some members of the village found that they did not succumb to the disease, even when their entire household did. These people took on caring roles and one man, Marshall Howe, decided to make the most of his immunity. Howe had been infected with the plague when it first hit the village but had lived, and now had strong faith in his resistance. He began to help people bury their dead family members – and helped himself to the victims’ possessions as payment for doing so. Sadly his family were not so lucky, and his wife and two-year-old son were amongst those who died that August.



Mompesson did his best to keep up the spirits of his congregation

during this terrifying time, but soon even his spirit was broken. On the 22nd August 1666, at the height of the deaths in Eyam, he and his wife took a walk in the nearby hills that formed part of their quarantined village. The next morning, she died. Mompesson was devastated, and wrote "I am a dying man". His wife Catherine was fortunate enough to have been granted a church burial right at the church door and her tomb still survives today.

As Autumn 1666 swept in, the deaths were steady but slowing. On the 18th October Francis Morten was buried, followed by William Morten ten days later on the 28th, and finally Abraham Morten on the 1st of November. Abraham was the last recorded plague death in the village.



Winter had finally heralded the end. Once the villagers were sure that no more cases were coming, they trepidatiously came out of their isolation. Plague had ravaged them for 14 months in total, and 259 people had died. Mompesson identified 76 households who had been touched by the plague. It is not known exactly how many people had been living in Eyam as the plague struck, but recent research has identified at least 700 individuals. In the 18th century it

had been thought that just 350 people lived in the village and thus that the plague had almost killed everybody, but this new research puts the death toll at between 1/3 and 1/2 of the population, which is in line with other death toll estimates of other plague outbreaks.

Despite the horrors the village endured, it seems that the survivors wanted to move on and forget what had happened. Centuries later there was little commemoration of the isolation, with tombstones that had been erected to mark the dead being reused for flooring. Even the burial site of Elizabeth Hancock's family, which became known as the Riley Graves, were almost torn up for ploughing before a local gentleman bought the plot to save it. However, with the bicentenary of the plague in 1865 and 1866, a new light was shed on the events in the village. Eyam came to appreciate the actions of their ancestors and the hardship they endured and it gave something for the village to focus on at a time of growing poverty and declining population.

Catherine's grave (above) includes the words *Cavete, Nescitas, Horam* (take care, Ye know not the hour) courtesy of Jennifer Jenkins author of *Three A tale of Brave Women & the Eyam Plague*.

The local rector proposed a public event to mark the occasion as a way to interest *the general public and the Gentry of the County & get them to help us*. He printed 500 copies of the story of the plague and his event was a huge success. From this time on interest grew in Eyam's plague story, and many other pieces of literature emerged telling the tale. By the 1930s, Eyam had become a tourist destination for those interested in the plague. But Eyam's surviving descendants had been impacted in other ways that were still to be discovered. A scientific study undertaken in 2000 suggested that a human gene mutation which is known to provide immunity from HIV could have been what protected the villagers who appeared to be immune to the plague. Their descendants who were still in the village were found to have a higher-than-average percentage of the mutation.