

Jot & Tittle

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*A personal selection of
Salisbury, Wessex,
British and world, history
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BALH
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
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WAS DRACULA A REAL PERSON?

Whilst researching Romania for a SWIG¹ wine tasting I came across this delightful town in the heart of Transylvania called Sighisoara which still has the house of Vlad Dracul, Dracula's father. So whereas Bram Stoker's story is fiction, it is based on a real historic person, or persons. Vlad was the Voivode (Duke) of Wallachia (1436 - 1442) and acquired the surname Dracul, meaning dragon, after he was made a First Class member of the Order of the Dragon by Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor.



His second son became known as Vlad Tepes or Vlad the Impaler as this was his usual form of punishment, most notably with the Saxon people of Transylvania. His cruelty really impressed the Sultan Mehmed II's army who treated him with respect. In fact he massacred tens of thousands of turks and Moslem Bulgarians. Stories of his exploits began to circulate in Germany and Russia, beginning a legend that was used by Bram Stoker for his vampire count in his 1897 Gothic horror story.

Countess Elizabeth Bathory, or Erzsébet Báthory (1560 - 1614), was a wealthy and powerful Hungarian noblewoman whose relations included an uncle who was king of Poland and a nephew who was prince of Transylvania. In 1610 she was accused of gruesome acts of serial murder and confined to her home of Castle Čachtice, where she remained until her death. Bathory is reputed to have killed at least six hundred victims, earning her a Guinness World Record for most prolific female murderer. Her actions resulted in a nickname of the "Blood



Countess " and may have been another source of inspiration for Bram Stoker's Dracula (left²). However, it's possible Bathory (right³) was not guilty of all the crimes that have been laid at her feet.



Depictions of Bathory often

mention her bathing in the blood of virgin victims in an attempt to recapture her lost youth. However, this depraved action isn't backed up by contemporaneous witness accounts (which otherwise didn't shy away from gore). The first mention of Bathory's blood baths came 100 years after her death and thus seems to be an invention.

1. For more information on SWIG go to website: salisburywineinterestgroup.org.
2. Ambras Castle portrait of Vlad III (c. 1560), reputedly a copy of an original made during his lifetime. In the public domain.
3. Elizabeth Báthory from Zay artist. Probably a copy of the other painting which is at the Hungarian National Museum, in Budapest (also made by Zay). In the public domain.

A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 47

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:



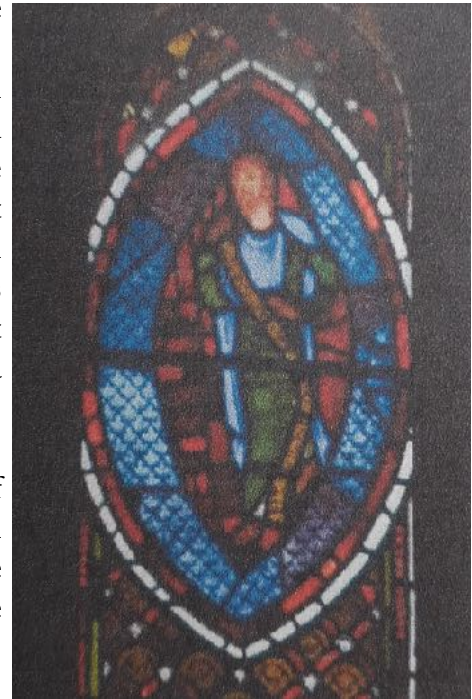


I'm often asked where you should go in the diocese to see the most outstanding stained glass windows. As far as Wiltshire is concerned, you need go no further than Wilton. Here the fabulous Italianate St Mary and St Nicholas Church, completed in 1845, displays a remarkable collection of stained glass with 900 years of history.

The architect of the church was Thomas Henry Wyatt (1807 - 80), first cousin twice-removed of James Wyatt (described by Pugin as 'Wyatt the Destroyer') who had re-ordered the Cathedral in 1790. Architecture ran in the family and Thomas was the Diocesan Architect when the Wilton church was planned, and went

on to be President of RIBA. He was generally regarded as a safe establishment pair of hands.

The windows are filled with an extraordinary collection of glass from across Europe, ranging from the thirteenth century through to some fine C19 glass relating to the Pembroke family. I'm showing here two images from the main apse behind the chancel



- The image of Balaam (right) is from a Jesse tree at St Denis in Paris, dating from 1140. St Denis was of course the base of Abbot Suger, the promoter of the Gothic style of architecture. His influence on the design of Salisbury Cathedral is widespread and, in particular, he advocated the installation of 'Tree of Jesse' windows, as we have in our Cathedral. These family trees show Christ's direct descent from Jesse, the father of King David.

- The marriage at Cana (below right) dates from around 1230 and comes from the cathedral in Rouen.

But in selecting these two images, I'm being unfair to the wealth of glass here from across the centuries. You have to go to Wilton to see it, armed with a copy of the church guide, or having the website (wiltonparish.co.uk) to hand.



Incidentally, tucked away behind the market square and the tree-lined graveyard in the centre of Wilton, is a small chapel, the remains of the original C15 parish church of St Mary. There's little stained glass left here, but there is one charming 1952



BEAMINSTER, DORSET

A friend leant me a *History of St. Mary, Beaminster* by Alec Walbridge (Walbridge Publications 2002). It is far more interesting than the usual parish church info.

First of all it is one of the old Saxon minsters, other examples are Axminster, Ilminster, Charminster, Yetminster and Sturminster. These were the pioneering 'mother' churches from which the canons spread the Word. This was followed up by building 'daughter' parish churches. The Saxon minster was probably built by St. Aldhelm who was born at Wareham and educated at Malmesbury Abbey. It is also likely that he dedicated the church to St Bee and hence the other half of the town's name.

The current church stands on an outcrop of oolitic limestone. This not only made it a visible icon but the site had previously been a prehistoric sacred

mound. The Saxons had come largely from Friesland and the Netherlands so always looked for a high point or if necessary built them. This was especially important for burials.

The minster was responsible for gathering taxes which were known as *Scots* (hence scot-free), of which the tithes were the most important. The tithes were divided into three parts, one for the upkeep of the minster, one for the ministers and one for the poor. It is likely that not all taxes reached their final destination.

Manorial churches began to arise in Saxon times and these were often the precursors of parish churches. Until one was built, candidates for baptism had to travel to Beaminster at Easter. The ceremony began outside the church and then moved inside, which is why fonts are usually placed close to the door. The diocese had belonged to Sherborne Abbey since 705AD but passed to Salisbury in 1075AD.

The Benedictines decided to build a new church at Beaminster as the population had grown and so had the wealth. The dedication to *St Mary of the Annunciation* was a cultural fashion that had emanated from the Carolingian renaissance. The church had been given a Victorian font but the

original Norman one was found in 1927 in a builder's yard and was restored. There is also a Norman chest. There was of course no seating originally, other than the ledge around the walls (as at Salisbury Cathedral) which gave rise to the expression *backs to the wall*. The rest of the floor was covered in straw which was removed every autumn and burnt. It must have been most unpleasant.

We will continue this story in a later edition.

ST HILARY OF POITIERS

Hilary was born a pagan but took holy orders in 353AD. He was chosen Bishop (right¹), but this was when the Arian heresy was in the ascendent (which denied the Trinity), so he was banned to Phrygia. He spent three years working on his great works on *The Trinity*. After seven or eight years missionary travel he returned to Poitiers where he died in 368AD. He was an influential Doctor of the Church and was known for his Latin writings. Hilary's feast day is on 13th January. The spring term of English and Irish law courts as well as Oxford and Dublin universities is called Hilary Term as they begin on approximately the same date.



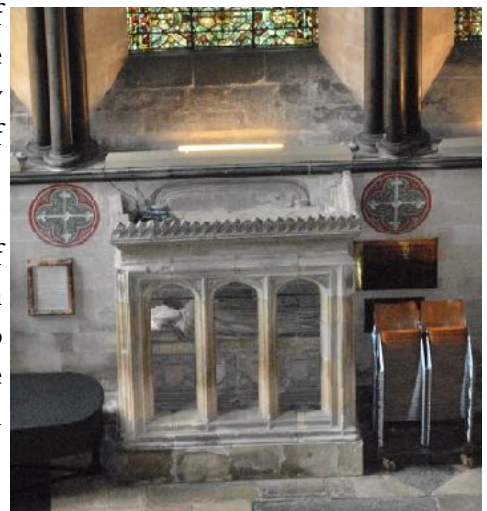
VIEW FROM THE GODS



I have always been puzzled by the porch² in Salisbury's Bourne Hill which was requested by Henry Penruddocke Wyndham for his St. Edmund's College garden, after Wyatt removed it from the North Transept of the Cathedral in 1791. It was known as the St. Thomas Porch and must have looked rather out of keeping as it was fifteenth century, though it had its pyramidal roof added by Wyndham. You can see that the north buttresses (on the right) are plain were they would have abutted the cathedral.

The puzzle was that there was no sign of where the porch was attached on the outside of the north transept. The inside being covered by Bishop Blyth's tomb that Wyatt moved from the east end of the presbytery where it had been since 1499.

Recently I had the good fortune to be guided around the roof space of the Cathedral by Gary, the Clerk of Works. On crossing the north strainer arch I managed to take the photo (right) - despite vertigo. You can just see the top of the *shoulder flat arch* that I assume was part of the original doorway.



1. Ordination de Saint Hilaire from a 14th century Vie de saintes by Richard de Montbaston. In the public domain.
2. Porch, courtesy of Salisbury City Council.