

ARCHITECTURE

October 2019: Members' Interests

At our first meeting after the summer break we always have several members giving short presentations about places or buildings they like. This year's selection provided the usual interesting mix.

1 . Arundel

The town of Arundel is dominated by its 11th century castle, but it has many other interesting buildings as well. Another dominant building is the Roman Catholic Cathedral built in 1873 as a church and dedicated as a cathedral in 1965. For comparison we were shown both modern photographs and those taken in the mid-20th century.



The Old Post Office was a nice half-timbered building and what was a Tudor-style building that was Lloyd's Bank is now a burger bar. One interesting comparison was the view of the old slaughter house alongside the River Arun which has now been converted into desirable apartments. The River Arun at the lower south end of the town is one of the fastest flowing in England and is tidal not just at Arundel but a further 15 miles upstream to Pullingham. We were shown several photos of the town bridge both then and now.

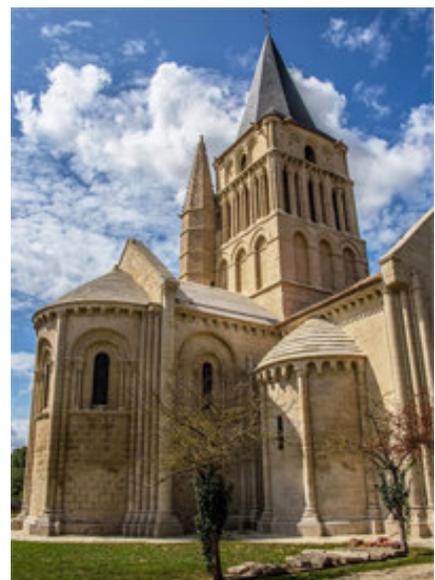
Altogether Arundel is an interesting town, well worth exploring.

2. Church of St Pierre D'Aulnay

One of our members was particularly struck by this church when she and her partner passed through this village in the west of France, that they went back in August this year to explore it in more detail.

It is in Romanesque style which dominated Western Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries. This style tends to display a strong sense of proportion and order, its buildings are solid and robust, and feature numerous rounded arches and vaults. The Church of St. Peter is such, and stands at the west end of the village of Aulnay, and was built between 1122-1140. Both the tall spire and upper section of the tower however are Gothic, dating from the late 13th or early 14th century.

Amongst its features are the typical Romanesque window arches, and three apses topped with beautifully tiled roofs and decorated with a variety of lively sculptures - corbel figures, carved capitals, and reliefs. The east window is framed with a bas-relief of men struggling among vines and vertical reliefs of entwined creatures run below each window of the central apse.





Perhaps the most interesting features are the four archivolt on the south portal. These are the decorative bands on the underside of the arch. From a distance the sculpture forms a repetitive pattern, providing a pleasing visual rhythm. But closer inspection reveals that the pattern is actually a procession of fascinating figures - human, animal, and somewhere in between. From inner to outer archivolt are depicted 1) six animals amongst vines; 2) 24 figures probably 12 apostles and 12 prophets; 3) 31 front-facing figures with crowns, vials, and musical instruments; and 4) large figures of beasts and hybrid creatures.

3. The Malthouse, Great Shefford

This is the home of one of our members and she told us about its history and changes that have taken place to the building and its surroundings during her lifetime. The current village was constituted in 1891 when West and East Shefford were combined. Prior to 1891 there were two churches and two manor houses. Today the former church of East Shefford is redundant and is noted for its 12th century paintings on the wall above the chancel arch. Great Shefford straddles the main Oxford-Salisbury road (A338) and as such was on an important transport route and provided hospitality to visitors at The Swan Inn dating back to 1752 just after the malthouse was built.

The original malthouse was built by maltster Anthony Westbury. Evident today is a motif "AW 1746" and nearby a fire insurance mark of the Sun Alliance company. Next door was an old chalk pit which provided building materials for several of the buildings in the village including the malthouse.

4. Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral aka Paddy's Wigwam



The original plans for this Catholic cathedral were drawn up by architect Edward Pugin in 1853 but the funding was never found to build it. Having acquired a 9-acre site in 1930, Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned in 1933 to build something to match the Anglican cathedral then being built to a Gilbert Scott design. Building started and it would have become the second largest church in the world with the world's largest dome at 51m diameter and larger than St Peter's in the Vatican. However, war and rising costs intervened so work halted. A competition was held in 1959 for a scaled down design and this was won by Sir Frederick Gibberd. Building started in 1962 and the cathedral was consecrated in 1967. It is made of concrete, clad with Portland stone and covered with an aluminium roof. It is 195 feet in diameter and has 13 chapels around its circumference.

Internally, the main feature is the central altar. To accommodate a congregation of 2,000 while giving them a good view of the altar, the seating is laid out in circular tiers. The one part of the Lutyens design that was built is the central crypt. Its roof is now an elevated platform at one end of the current building.

The cathedral attracts 250,000 visitors a year and is highly regarded: "an amazing piece of modern architecture. The interior is wonderful and the stained glass is breathtaking."

