



# The Friends of St. Andrew's Bemerton

© 2010

## George Herbert Walk

Salisbury Cathedral to St Andrew's Church, Lower Bemerton

(2¼ miles of easy walking)



George Herbert Statue

We start our walk at the West end of Salisbury Cathedral, under the statue of George Herbert **(1)**. If you face the West front, look to the right hand side of the main door. The statue of George Herbert is looking South to the left hand side of the smaller door.

To attempt a detailed description of Salisbury Cathedral, one of the finest Gothic Cathedrals in Europe is beyond the scope of this walk but before starting the walk, you may wish to admire the interior of the Cathedral and see the stained glass window illustrating George Herbert's poem 'Love-Joy' with vines illustrated in all three panels. The window is at the East end of the North Aisle

beyond the choir. George Herbert is shown praying in the bottom left panel. Unfortunately the window is partly obscured by an undistinguished monument.



George Herbert Window



Mitre House

Returning to the West front of the Cathedral, we turn North and walk towards the High Street gate admiring the fine buildings of the Cathedral Close. Mompesson House of 1701 is open to the public and faces a green to our left as we proceed towards the High Street. As we go through the gate we can see, straight ahead of us, St Thomas' church built for the builders of the Cathedral to worship in. Continue along the High Street looking at Mitre House **(2)** on the right as you reach the traffic lights. This is said to be the site of a temporary house built by Bishop Poore while the Cathedral was being built. Certainly it was the custom from 1451 for the Bishop of Salisbury to robe in Mitre House prior to being taken to the Cathedral for his enthronement.

At the traffic lights, we turn left into Crane Street. You may want to make a small diversion further down the High St to see a half timbered building on the right which is the remains of the Old George Hotel, the most important of the city's medieval inns. Parts of the building date to the C14th.

Continuing down Crane Street, the three houses (95, 97 & 99) on the left immediately before the bridge form Church House **(3)**, the diocesan offices. In 1630 the property was bought by Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven. When he was executed in 1631 the property became 50% owned by the Bishop. It was used as a workhouse from 1637-1879 when it became the diocesan offices. Unfortunately the building is not open to the public.



**Church House**

Continue over Crane Bridge, a C15th structure (since widened) and walk along the pavement or through Queen Elizabeth gardens towards the pedestrian Long Bridge. We know that George Herbert regularly walked from Bemerton to the Cathedral but we do not know the route(s) he took. The direct route to Bemerton past the railway station did not exist in Herbert's day and so the most likely alternative routes would have been along the main Wilton road or across the water meadows. The paths may have been different in his day, but many English footpaths are of great antiquity and this seems the most likely route across the water meadows.



**Cathedral from the Water Meadows**

Cross over Long Bridge **(4)** over the river Nadder, looking upstream towards the former Fisherton Mill House and then continue along the town path. On either side you can see the Harnham water meadows with the complicated array of ditches and sluices traditionally used to flood the meadows in the winter. This system of irrigation had just been introduced at the time of George Herbert and is now preserved by the Harnham Water Meadows Trust. As you walk along the path **(5)**, look back towards the Cathedral. John Constable painted one of his views of the Cathedral from this path.

As you reach the end of the Town Path you see Harnham Old Mill with its various sluices and mill pool. The Old Mill **(6)** is now a pub and restaurant and you may wish to stop for a rest and refreshment before continuing your walk. There is some discussion about the age of Harnham Old Mill with Wiltshire Tourist Board claiming it dates from 1135 and was originally an ecclesiastical building. RCHM believes it dates from C1500 and was probably built for paper-making (there are four fireplaces inside). The mill is part built in the traditional south Wiltshire style of chequered flint and ashlar. The river flowing under Harnham Mill is another stream of the River Nadder.



**The Old Mill at Harnham**

Leaving Harnham Old Mill, we continue past the old Mill House until we meet Middle Street where we turn right. Unfortunately this part of the walk is not the most interesting or picturesque, so you may wish to walk through Middle Street meadow playing field on the right for a few hundred yards. Rejoin Middle Street and continue on until the road takes a sharp turn to the left and you can see a sign post pointing right saying Bemerton **(7)**.

The path initially has a lower or upper section. The lower path is easier going. Continue along to the Spring Bridge **(8)** where the path narrows to a single track, and go over the bridge and along the path for half a mile. This is the most rural part of the walk and you may be lucky enough to see a kingfisher, water vole or owl. Certainly, as you reach the far end of the path and reach another former mill stream **(9)**, there are often Little Egrets to be seen fishing.



**Spring Bridge**



**House with Green Shutters**

At the end of the path, you turn left to enter Lower Bemerton. Be cautious crossing the road as there is a sharp corner. After 100 yards you will see a house with green shutters **(10)** set back from the road which would probably have been in existence in Herbert's day. It is much altered. Continue along the road through the village and glance to the left when near No 135 Lower Road. The house end onto the road is a C15th cruck house (despite the ugly concrete roofing tiles).

Continuing along we can see the end of our walk where the road narrows and on the left (southern side) is the Old Rectory **(11)**, his vicarage and now a private house. Be cautious as you approach the narrowing of the road as the traffic can travel fast here and there is limited space for pedestrians. The rectory was much extended in the C19th and the part of the rectory rebuilt by George Herbert which is visible from the road is the Western most part, furthest away in the photograph.



**The Old Rectory**



**St. Andrew's Church**

On the northern side of the road is St Andrew's church **(12)**, also rebuilt by Herbert and where according to Izaak Walton, he is buried 'in his own church, under the altar, and covered with a gravestone without any inscription'. As you enter and sit in the calmness of the little church, it is worth reflecting that the walk you have just completed is one that George Herbert is said to have done habitually twice a week during the three years of his ministry in Bemerton.

**(Map of Walk Overleaf)**

# MAP OF WALK

