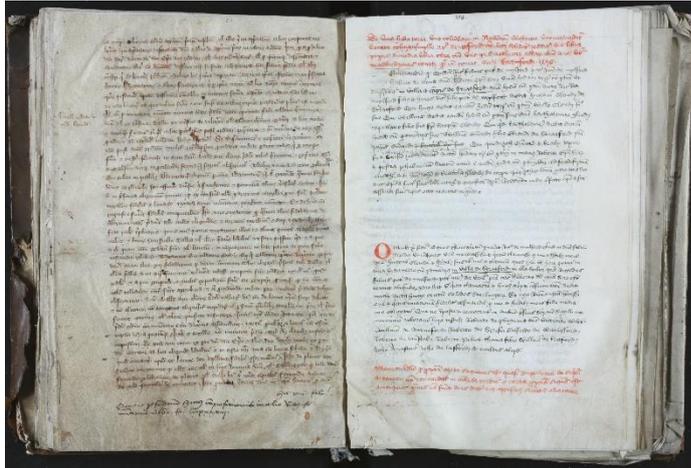


## The People and Economy of Old Sarum 1070 – 1500: new discoveries in old manuscripts by June Effemey. Lecture given on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021

June is currently researching for her PhD thesis at the University of Swansea, on Old Sarum and Salisbury, and has undertaken a search of the archives held at both Salisbury Cathedral and Wiltshire County Council at Chippenham. It appears that most documentation covering the area of Old Sarum may have been destroyed once the settlement, castle and cathedral went into decline and were eventually abandoned. However, in July 2019, June found a useful manuscript in the Chippenham archives: the Bishop's Book of Sarum, known as the



Registrum Rubrum which covers a period from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century up to 1456. Many larger towns such as Southampton are well documented but the Registrum Rubrum is the only one that covers Old Sarum, with the names of 300 locations, field names and ninety individuals, including some of the families who held land within the town, such as de Milford, Glendi (Glendy) and Everard (Avery).

*The Bishop's Book of Sarum: Registrum Rubrum.*

The area was Anglo Saxon until Norman times when the castle was built in 1067. The cathedral built by Bishop Osmund was finished in 1092. Excavations 1909 to 1915 looked at the castle and cathedral, but not the hill fort area within the outer ramparts. Where were the people and medieval borough, or was it just the castle and cathedral? From 2015 onwards, the University of Southampton

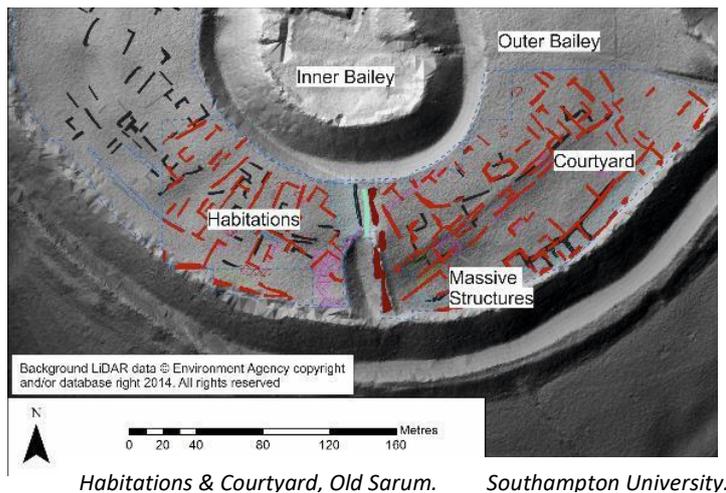


*Aerial view of Old Sarum looking east. Southampton University.*

carried out geophysical surveys of the hillfort and ramparts, the Old Sarum Project. This revealed an area of settlement south of the cathedral. A curtain wall was built around the ramparts with entry through the east gate, where Roman roads converged, and evidence suggests a small town within the ramparts.

The archaeology shows areas of housing and other buildings but the Registrum Rubrum lists charters with names, many of them in Anglo Saxon or Old English etymology: amongst the specific places named is a chalk pit (Chalkput) later owned and rented out by the Ship and still shown on OS maps. There are field names and trackways most likely named by the people who lived there, often referring to the local geography/geology, and metalled roads are shown throughout the town. The population is estimated at ~1000 inhabitants. Major

locations within the town were La Staple and Le Forestaple, the wool market founded in the 12th century by Edward I. The Staple needed to be secure with strong walls around it, which is identified as an area on the geophysics plan showing large stone buildings with an open courtyard, located against the wall just inside the main gate. The Bishop and Dean of Salisbury Cathedral owned land in that area. An area named Penslade in the west part of Old Sarum may be where sheep were penned, sold and slaughtered.



As a precious commodity, wool had to be carefully and securely stored above ground, because if stored in damp vaults it would rot. This would be where packing and weighing took place, before being brought to Southampton for sale and/or export, where the wool trade was organised by Italian merchants. The Staple area was extremely important to the town, being its main trade and the area would have been developed for commerce as well as dwellings for the people involved. Near the Staple was an area named Netilhalve which could have been where vegetable fibres such as hemp were produced and sold. The existence of La Staple may have been one reason why Old Sarum continued so long after the new settlement of Salisbury was established only one mile distant. It is evident that high status people continued to hold land in Old Sarum, with the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses of Salisbury holding deeds through to the 15th century. Old Sarum was a Royal Borough and its Mayors are recorded up to 1469. A seal from 1428 has been found, and the town may have continued until about 1485. Parliamentary representatives from the 13th to 15th centuries included three members of the Avery family – Adam, John and William. But by the 19th century Old Sarum was notorious as a ‘rotten borough’ as no-one then lived in the town.

*Excavated well, 1912. Salisbury Museum*

The excavations of the early 20th century opened part of the south west quarter of the outer bailey, and in 1912 a large open well was uncovered. A story from the Miracles of St Osmund tells of a small girl drowning in a well in Old Sarum. Her body was retrieved and taken to the cathedral, where it was reported that she came back to life after being placed next to the tomb of Bishop/St Osmund. In the area near the old cathedral a later chapel and stone house with burials were found, together with a Glendy family seal.



Evidence from the Registrum Rubrum charters indicates substantial land holders, such as the Glendy family in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; John Everard and John London owned plots in this area, and transactions are recorded, for instance 'In 1374 J London granted half an acre to Thomas Domberdale and his wife Edith'. Other names include a skinner named Sampson who held the civic office of hundredsman for the Hundred of Underditch, living in the town in 1215; and Hugh, a merchant in 1222. Some offenses were also recorded, for instance in 1249 William Alveredi, draper and cloth merchant was accused of selling cloth contrary to assize regulations; and also in 1249, John the Flexmongre (flax seller) was accused of robberies.

Magna Sarum: Outside the west gate was an area where the Canons lived, with high status houses of green sandstone lining each side of the road. The west gate and one of the houses were re-excavated in 2018 and glazed roof tiles, floor tiles and pottery were uncovered, as well as traces of walls. Records show that between 1110 and 1130 Bishop Roger had walls built, and this could have been for a covered walkway, (similar to that at Sherborne). Once the Canons moved to Salisbury these houses were demolished and this area was known as Newton Westgate, just outside the west gate of the old borough. The Western part is what it is referred to in the book and was the residential part of the town. From East Gate towards Salisbury, burgage plots are shown at right angles to the road. However, the southern suburbs seem to be less densely populated. Outside the gates of Old Sarum to the east was St John's Hospital (the poor house), possibly surviving to the 1450s with a burial ground nearby, the plot now occupied by the Old Castle Inn. The leper house stood in the same area but may have gone out of use in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Within the environs of Old Sarum there was thriving arable farming, mills, geese being raised and mineral extraction. The existing documents have no information for the northern section.

### **Conclusion:**

June hopes to see:

- Further geophysical surveys to the north of Old Sarum
- Excavation in the residential and market sectors where the medieval borough remains undisturbed below ground.
- Hopefully there could be further discoveries of Old Sarum charters in private collections.
- In 1957 a trench was excavated and a wall located at right angle to the main wall, as well as large structures in the market area with a courtyard dating to 12<sup>th</sup> century. This area has never been built on or farmed, so archaeology remains there in pristine condition, apart from some stone possibly being robbed out.

### **Acknowledgements:**

*Photographs: Bishop's Book of Old Sarum: June Effemey*

*Aerial View of Old Sarum and Results of geophysics: University of Southampton*  
*Well excavated in 1912: Salisbury Museum.*

*Many thanks to Mandy Kesby for her notes of the lecture.*

Sarah Hanna

### **QUESTIONS:**

*Q: Cathedral, did it continue in use into 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century? I believed it was demolished quite soon after the cathedral in Salisbury was opened.*

A: After 1331 the king gave permission for the stone from the old cathedral to be used on the new cathedral, although this was completed sometime before. St Marys Chapel was built in Old Sarum away from the cathedral. The old cathedral was left for over 100 years before it was completely demolished, the walls being undermined and blown up to do so. Some stone can be found in other old buildings in Salisbury.

*Q: Why did the town and cathedral move to Salisbury? Was shortage of space a factor?*

A: Clergy asked the Pope in Rome and the king for this move. They claimed the shortage of water – wells were no doubt dug but not being near a water course and on a hill, drilling down was a big job. There was also conflict with the secular authorities. The town was under the control of whoever lived in the castle with Sheriff's men guarding the gates, and on one occasion the clergy processed around the walls but the guards wouldn't let them back in. The Bishop owned Salisbury and so he had control of the town. June advised it was also probably a commercial and comfort element. There was no shelter from the weather on the hill so the climate could have played a part.

*Q: There is a reference on maps to a vicus. Is it a reference to its earlier history? Was there a Roman fort on the hill?*

A: No fort has been found. However, the Normans flattened the top of the hill, deepened the ditches and built the town and cathedral, heaping 14ft or more of chalk over the area. Three quarters of the area has not been excavated through this flattened layer. Some Roman finds have been made around the area but no Roman settlement of villa etc. It is thought the Anglo-Saxon settlement may have been nearer to the river.

*Q: Where are you going to look next?*

A: For Old Sarum, I am pleased we managed to find who peopled the town. Using this as a baseline, random documents may be found from elsewhere and we may possibly be able to feed in information to make a bigger picture. June has a couple of possible leads, which she is keeping close to her chest!

*Q: What led you to the Chippenham archive (Wiltshire)?*

A: On starting her thesis, June was advised of the Bishops register and went to Chippenham to photograph and record it all. Whilst doing this In Chippenham, June located the relevant information. She believes it all needs to be fully mapped and put with the surveys and any future archaeology.

*Q: Alex Langlands has stated that new Salisbury was planned for commercial interest. Could you contrast Salisbury with Old Sarum, comparing both markets to show what was in each?*

A: Salisbury had no evidence of a weigh house or the usual Master of the Staple, both present when wool was traded. They did, however, appear to have a thriving linen trade, being near the water course which was necessary to dyeing cloth. Old Sarum still had the wool trade and indeed the Salisbury elite continued to buy land in Old Sarum, with Drapers

holding land in the market area to be near their trade. In later years, wool became less popular and as the wool trade disappeared, Old Sarum declined

*Q: Old Sarum seemed to remain relatively secure with properties of high value. Is this also why the wool trade remained there?*

A: Salisbury in 13<sup>th</sup> century had no wall or ditch, but Old Sarum had both as well as sturdily built stone buildings. Salisbury was open and could be easily approached without anyone guarding it. Indeed, in 1305, the Bishop tried to put a tax on merchants and burgesses, and they quickly sent all their products out of the city so they wouldn't have to pay!

*Q: There are often random documents held in the Vatican. Is this somewhere you may investigate?*

A: As part of my investigations for my thesis, I was sent to the Vatican and found a catalogue of material about Old Sarum, but only found one thing about money. Nothing was of use to my investigations. During this research, I noted money collected from the church outside Old Sarum. It is evident that during the collection of this particular tax, the Vatican concentrated on the wool areas which were wealthy, so they would have gathered more tax.

ATTENDANCE: 40 +