



PRESS INFORMATION
For immediate release

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No Retreat for This House of Retreat

Sarum Refurbishes to Thrive in Economic Climate

Bookings at Sarum College are booming in a difficult financial climate where other retreat houses are closing their doors.

Situated in a group of Grade 1 listed buildings and set in the magnificent Salisbury Cathedral Close, Sarum now welcomes more than 10,000 guests a year. With its newly refurbished Butterfield Wing bringing the total number of contemporary, television-less en-suite bedrooms to 40, staff expect that number to increase.

"People of all faiths and none come here for all sorts of reasons - to study, for residential conferences, to find space to read, or to join in one of our organised or private retreats. Some just come for bed and breakfast to enjoy our fantastic welcome and to be in this lovely space," says Canon Keith Lamdin, principal Sarum College. "With our newly refurbished en-suite rooms, guests will be able to do that in even greater comfort."

"Sarum College offers everything we wanted for our Easter Gathering: great facilities - from the beautiful bedrooms to the light and airy meeting rooms and accommodating catering arrangements, friendly helpful staff and all in the perfect location," says David Everett, Trustee of Order of the Cross. "We're looking forward to having a spiritually enriching time in Salisbury."

Everett's group previously held their gathering at Glenfall House in Cheltenham, which is due to close on July 31st. Glenfall is the second diocesan retreat house to announce its closure this year. A secular venue, Urchfont Manor, the local Wiltshire Council-owned education and conference centre, was sold in March and it looks likely that it will be restored as a private home.

"People have always appreciated the specialness of our setting and historic buildings," says Christine Nielsen-Craig, director of development and marketing. "Nowhere else offers an environment of spiritual refreshment where you can walk straight out of the front door into the most magnificent Cathedral Close in England."

"Because Sarum is independent, we've always had to stand on our own financial feet and this is especially challenging with Grade 1 listed buildings. The Trustees and leadership team are very clear that the standard of our facilities must match the excellence of our programmes and people," says Lamdin. "So we've worked hard to offer attractive learning programmes and services at competitive prices. To keep up with the huge cost of maintaining historic buildings, we seek funding from trusts and donors for major development projects."

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Photographs

Sarum College ensuite bedroom: Linda Cooper, director of hospitality at Sarum College smooths a pillowcase in one of the 22 new single bedrooms in the refurbished Butterfield Wing. Credit: Ash Mills

Sarum College in Spring: Sarum is just opposite North Walk in Salisbury's Cathedral Close. Credit: Peter Langdown

Notes for editors

Contact

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Sarum College is an independent ecumenical centre for Christian study and research based at 19 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EE. Sarum College receives no regular funding from churches or other public bodies, and is a registered charity (no. 309501). The college website address is: www.sarum.ac.uk

An estimated 10,000 people of all faiths and none visit Sarum College each year. The College offers a non-denominational space for spiritual refreshment - no matter what form this takes, whether it's through tourism, learning or guided reflection. Space for this sort of experience is especially valuable given our media-saturated world and the difficult economic climate. By the end of this year, at least two retreat houses will have closed: Offa House in Coventry (March 2013) and Glenfall House in Cheltenham (July 2013). Urchfont Manor, the local Wiltshire Council-owned education and conference venue, was sold in March and it looks likely that it will be restored as a private home.

(Potted) history of 19 The Close Walter Kerr Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury established the Theological College at this site in 1860. In 1971, following a merger, it became Salisbury and Wells Theological College. This closed in 1994 and the following year Sarum College was established to provide non-denominational theological education.

Details at www.sarum.ac.uk/college-community/a-brief-history

Butterfield Refurbishment Celebration: Sarum marks the completion of the works with a official opening of the Butterfield Wing the Right Reverend Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury, on May 22, 2013. More than 100 guests will mark the achievement and have the opportunity to tour the building and see the new rooms.

Art Scheme: Also on May 22nd, Sarum will launch a call to local artists and photographers to propose art works for the new rooms for long-term loan and possible sale. This initiative aims to enhance the visitor experience and offer artists a new way to showcase and sell their work.

The launch includes a special promotion for first-time guests to Sarum College: starting May 23rd, the first five people to book a stay of two nights or more will receive a free print of a photograph of the Cathedral Close entrance by Ash Mills.

In his book *Notes from a Small Island*, Bill Bryson writes: "There is no doubt in my mind that Salisbury Cathedral is the single most beautiful structure in England and the Close around it the most beautiful space".