

THE GEORGE HERBERT HERITAGE CENTRE

For at least the past 150 years, and almost certainly longer, the people of Bemerton have celebrated George Herbert and kept his flame burning locally. They have organised and staged events to mark centenaries of his birth and death, including in 1933 a spectacular pageant in the grounds of Wilton House.

In 2002 a group of local enthusiasts was formed to promote Herbert more regularly by arranging each summer a programme of talks, musical performances and other activities. In 2014 the group staged a George Herbert Festival that drew over 2000 international participants. The group's website regularly attracts over 4000 visitors a month.

The group has taken this local promotion of Herbert a step further in Lower Bemerton by establishing the **George Herbert Heritage Centre**. The centre is situated in the Victorian church building dedicated to his memory, now beautifully converted into a community centre (**St. John's Place**).

The Centre provides a local focus for visitors. many from overseas, who journey to Bemerton because of its association with Herbert. For those studying George Herbert's life and works, it offers a wealth of literary and other resources together with information about the village and its history. It provides local people, especially school children, with a source of information about Bemerton's most celebrated former resident. And It holds the archives of the local group, ensuring that they are preserved for Herbert devotees of future generations.



GEORGE HERBERT (1593—1633)

Although George Herbert spent the greater part of his adult life as a Cambridge University academic, it is with the parish and village of Bemerton that he is universally most closely associated. His time as Rector was all too brief, but he left his mark not only as a supreme devotional poet but also as a model for rural clergy that is studied to this day.

His collection of poems entitled 'The Temple', first published in the year of his death, has inspired and nourished people of his own Anglican faith and many others, as well as those entirely without faith. There have been well over one hundred different editions since that time, and his poems also continue to appear as individual selections and feature in anthologies. Herbert's own skill in music is well documented, and no doubt accounts for the inspiration that so many composers have found in his lyrical verses.

He is also renowned for his prose work 'A Priest to the Temple', more popularly known as 'The Country Parson'. Although not explicitly autobiographical, it serves as a fascinating indicator to his time in Bemerton and his work as the parish Rector.

*George Herbert portrait by Robert White
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The George Herbert in Bemerton Group



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www.georgeherbert.org.uk

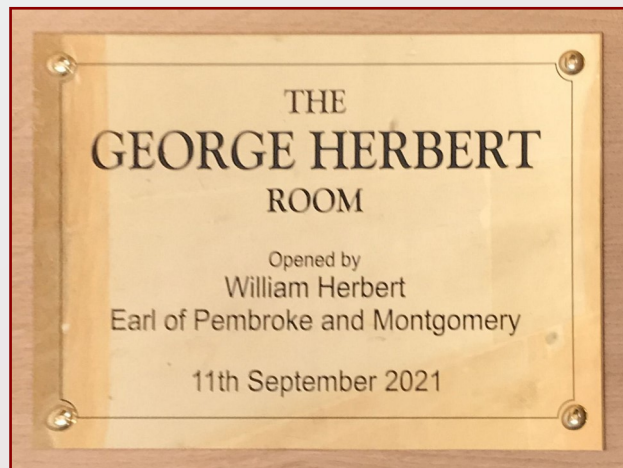
The George Herbert Heritage Centre

BACKGROUND

For many years, visitors from all over the world have been coming to Bemerton to see for themselves the small corner of Salisbury where George Herbert was the Rector of a country parish, and where he spent the last three years of his life. They have always been surprised to discover that the only memorials to him are two tiny plaques, one in the little St. Andrew's Church and the other on the wall of the Old Rectory. There are no other local sources of information about his life and work.

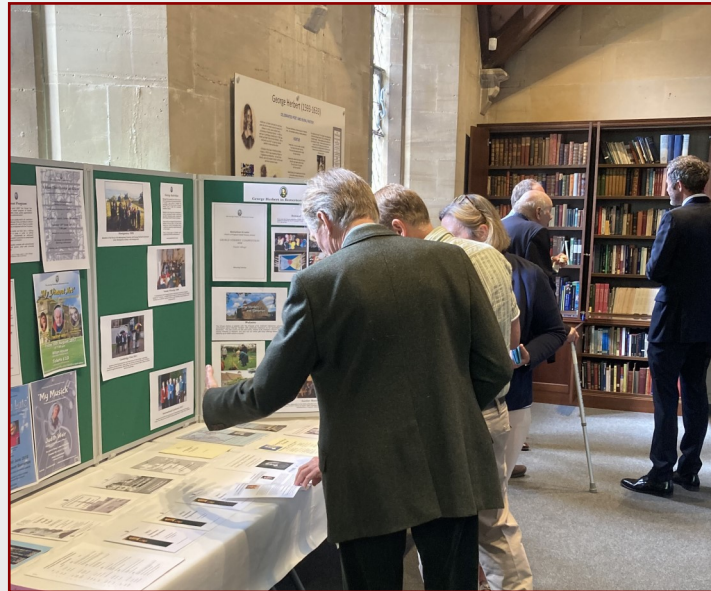
The Bemerton community had long wanted to rectify this by establishing a George Herbert focal point within the village. The opportunity finally arose when the larger church of Bemerton St. John was converted into a community centre. One of the aisles was partitioned off to become the George Herbert Room, which now houses the Heritage Centre.

The Heritage Centre was opened formally in 2021 by The Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, William Herbert. His antecedents were kinsmen of George Herbert, who was a frequent visitor to his Wilton House home and estate in the 1630s.



Plaque commemorating the opening of the Centre

RESOURCES



At the heart of the Centre is a unique, comprehensive library comprising more than 500 volumes, including biographies, academic criticism, and all the major works of reference on George Herbert, together with over 120 editions of 'The Temple' covering almost four hundred years.

Other resources are available through a dedicated data terminal. These include academic papers relating to Herbert, selections of his writings, biographies and other material relating to his family and contemporaries, musical settings of his works, and documents concerning the religious and political environment of his time.

The George Herbert Room is also the repository for a wealth of fascinating historical material collected by the Bemerton Local History Society including photographs, maps, architectural drawings, and original documents.

VISITING THE CENTRE

The Centre welcomes visitors wanting to know more about the life and works of George Herbert, either individually or as a party. Academic researchers and students are also warmly invited to make use of the Centre's resources.

Due to restrictions on access to St. John's Place, visitors must make a prior appointment with the curator. Requests to visit should be sent to:

curator@georgeherbert.org.uk

detailing the proposed date and time of visit, and size of visiting party (if applicable). Researchers should indicate their particular area of interest.

St. John's Place is situated about 1½ miles to the west of the cathedral city of Salisbury, which is well served with rail and bus connections. The Centre lies on a local bus route.

Visitors travelling by car or coach should be aware that the roads approaching the Centre are very narrow and unsuitable for heavy vehicles. The curator can advise on routes and parking if requested. The postcode is SP2 9NP.



Map showing the location of the Centre