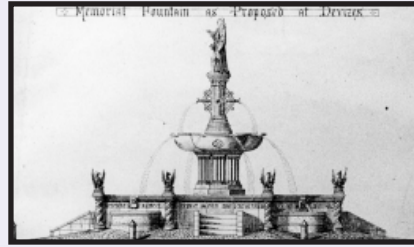


The Estcourt Fountain



A drawing of the proposed fountain. The fundraising committee used this sketch on letters sent to potential donors

When Devizes MP Thomas Sotheron Estcourt died in 1876 there was a popular move to commemorate his life with a memorial. He founded the Wiltshire Friendly Society (1812) and it was this that endeared him to ordinary people in Wiltshire. It was a time of much rural poverty, and before the days of a welfare state, so Friendly Societies were life savers for many families. You paid into them when you could and drew benefits when times were hard. Branches of the Society were set up in villages and towns all over Wiltshire. It was decided that his memorial should be a fountain and submissions were invited for an original design. A fundraising committee was formed and its secretary Lord Nelson (grandson of the Admiral) set about finding the money to build it.

However, not all had gone well in the run up to the unveiling. Water refused to run through the fountain properly. It was the first use of mains water in the town and the pressure proved too strong for the fountain's plumbing. Instead of running neatly from the spouts into the bowl and then filling the large basin below it overshot them both and splashed onto the road! When the pressure was reduced water just dribbled miserably over the rim and down the central columns. A temporary solution was found just in time: rose attachments were fitted to the top spouts causing the water to spray upwards and so fall back neatly into the bowls



The fountain was built on 16 September 1879 amidst great celebrations



The fountain in its early days (c.1880) and working as originally intended