



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 18 October 2023, 7.30pm
Online via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Ally McConnell (WSHC), Ruth Newman, Tim Couzens, Brian Edwards, Jamie Wright, Neil Butters, David Dawson, Michelle Haley, Jean Belt, Gillian Swanton, John Chandler, Christina Staff, Nick Baxter, Terry Bracher, Tina, Ruth Butler, Maria Marsh, Brian Evans

Apologies: Dr Jane Howells, Naomi Oakley (WSHC), Wendy Lawrence, Roseanne Russell, James Holden, Anne Trevett

A thank you for coming and to David Dawson, Wiltshire Museum for hosting with the preferred Zoom platform.

1. Actions from previous meeting

JD – meant to do promotional piece about network and send out, which she did. People have put it in parish magazines. Lots of interest in community history website as a result, and some changes made
Other actions about conference: facilities and promotion.
JD – 6 people joined the WLHN due to conference

2. Update from the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre

Conference feedback:

- JD: lots learnt about schedules and planning! People seemed to like the venue but got lost, so next time will do more planning of directions. Venue was a good price, and people there were very helpful. Preparation went well. Main complaint was about toilets – not enough. Lots of good feedback – people enjoyed the speakers and the whole day. JD happy to do it again but found it was really helpful having advice on theme/speakers. The previous venue the WLHF used can't be used again as it burnt down – main problem when choosing a venue was parking.
- Gillian – good acoustics in the room.

- John C – lack of toilets not WLHN fault, venue needs to be careful when promoting themselves. Suggested venue of Lockeridge – Kennet Valley Hall [Kennet Valley Village Hall \(Lockeridge\) – WVHA](#)
- Gillian – really enjoyed conference and says the Kennet Valley Hall is good too
- Terry – Kennet Valley Hall is good
- Tina – echoed Gillian – pleased with low ceiling as you could hear speakers. Re toilets – maybe just allow extra time
- Jean - screen too low – possibly also an issue with the way the chairs were arranged
- Show of hands in chat for people who would come again – 13
- JD and others will have a think about possible themes and bring suggestions to next meeting for people to decide. JD to investigate the possible use of Kennet Valley Hall

Action: Julie, Terry, John – think about possible themes

Action: Julie to look at Kennet Valley Hall as the next venue

3. Update from Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre: building works

TB – explained about building works and staffing. Bell put on the desk in afternoon as most people come in the morning. Plan is to merge help desk and reception – CAD drawings will be sent out to members. Arrangement means staff can staff both reception and help desk from the same area, making it more efficient. Will also help with staff availability for information to visitors, using the telephones and being generally more welcoming. Will also revamp the reception area. Terry will send out searchroom drawings to be distributed with the minutes.

Large “old” searchroom will be changed into a more flexible space including the Performing Arts Library. Will bring PA in including material from Devizes. Means the building is more sustainable and being more used. Hopefully also bring new people in. Space will still be used as flexible space with movable shelving.

JD – button by the door to exit searchroom will be removed so desk always manned by staff. Production will be done via help desk.

December into January closure of WSHC.

Remote volunteering projects – details included as appendices to minutes

JD – there is a short questionnaire at the History Centre asking for view related to the works. Julie will see if it can be sent out to members.

Action: Julie to see if the questionnaire can be sent out to Network members

Action: Julie to ensure details of remote volunteering projects are sent to members

Action: Terry to ensure drawings of searchroom changes are sent to members

4. Group information share – a chance for members to discuss their work or ask questions

David Dawson: Wiltshire Museum. Recently published latest edition of WANH magazine and some new exhibitions including “Lest we Forget” about Black soldiers in World War 1 and 2, and about author Eric Walrond. If anyone wants an invite to the preview please email hello@wiltshiremuseum.org.uk

Jamie Wright – member of Fisherton History Society which has about 8,500 members on Facebook. Meeting every two months and alternate months an informal get together. Julie noted that the WLHN had discussed the difficulty of getting new members in the past and that it might be useful to have some discussions on topics like this at future meetings. Julie thought it would be good to ask for suggestions to put on forthcoming agendas.

Action: Julie to send email out when preparing each WLHN agenda to see if anyone has any topics they might like to discuss at the next meeting

Tina Richards – Tisbury History Society doing well – soon to have talk on Shaftesbury by Julian Richards. Archive open once a month. Christmas party on 12th December with a French theme.

Brian Edwards – the Stonehenge Dahlia Show which brought a lot of people and a new dynamic to the visitor centre – looking back at the shows of 1842-1845, was based on his research. Has written and published material on the Moonrakers and also Thomas Twining. Julie noted that she'd be interested in acquiring any material from WLHN members that was being published, and for details of any upcoming publications relating to Wiltshire that anyone knows about. She has a small stock fund available, and is also happy to welcome donations! Please contact Julie with details: julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk

Christina Staff – Malmesbury History Society. 16th November members' meeting talking about research into Malmesbury area geography and brickworks

John Chandler – VCH: making progress on 3 volumes. Mark Forrest should be working on 2 more volumes, JC will be editing Chippenham. Mark and Louise Ryland Epton have finished research on parishes around Chippenham. Text for volume 20 to central office by June 2024. Louise and Mark are moving to South East Wiltshire and starting on Alderbury. Rosalind Johnson working on Clarendon. Ancillary work with VCH – Louise has been working on possible spin-off publications in Kington Langley etc. Local History workshops to start next year.

WRS: Helen Taylor just finished intro to new volume on 1864 Bishop's Visitations to the Sarum Diocese which covers most of Wiltshire. Should be published early next year.

Hobnob: The Pyt House, and a revision of the Clarendon booklet. West Swindon book by 3 local Swindon people including one of the planners. New edition of Swindon Decoded. Edition of Thomas Baskerville.

BALH: explore website as they run lots of webinars and guidance for societies.

Ruth Newman: Laverstock History Group doing well with regular speakers every two months. Jane Howells and RN are proofreading text for a new gallery.

Brian Evans: been researching history of house and hopes to submit article to Sarum Chronicle next year.

Gillian Swanton: 1st November at Avebury Chapel – Josh Pollard giving talk on Avebury manor grounds excavation.

Jean Belt – Purton Historical Society. The autumn season of talks began in September when Dr Gillian White's subject was "Portraits of Elizabeth 1". On 26th October Paul Barnett will speak on "Port to Port", an historical journey, the length and breadth of the Sharpness to Gloucester Canal. In November we welcome Mike Pringle whose subject is "The Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate, 150 years of wildlife!" Purton Museum closes on 28th October for the winter when the ambitious and successful exhibition "Purton at Leisure" comes to an end. The Museum reopens next April. There will be a New Year Social on 5th January when a group from SALOS will entertain us with "Songs from the Shows". We are pleased to announce that the PHS Bulletin issue number 45 has been published. It is the longest edition so far and 100 copies have been printed but we hope to sell many more! Articles on a variety of subjects include the tragic tale of a young Purton sportsman, details of St Mary's Church renewal, the history of a house in the High Street, family reminiscences and two

fascinating accounts of the early days of Purton Cricket Club entitled "Professional Bowlers" and "Cricketing Blues".

Maria Marsh: Malmesbury Civic Trust 60 years celebrations with new publications. Opened Abbey House for HOD and showed 600 people around. Athelston Museum has restarted Wednesday tea time talks. Julie noted that she had been meaning to get in touch with the museum; she thinks they have publications she hasn't yet acquired. Maria said she'd ask them to get in touch

Action: Maria to put the Athelstan Museum in touch with Julie

Nick Baxter – Not Just Bacon – anthology from Calne WordFest writing group. Book on sale at Calne Heritage Centre.

Ruth Butler – Sarum Chronicle – SC23 is out. Lecture on 2nd November at St Francis Church, Sidney Blackmore speaking about sale of Beckford "Fonthill Fever". Can order through website: Have discussed future of SC and decision has been made to keep the title but extend the geographical coverage further than Salisbury and even Wiltshire if suitable articles are available – if there is relevance to Salisbury. Sarumchronicle@gmail.com

Terry Bracher: Explore Wiltshire app has now added Trowbridge and Pewsey. New ones coming and text will be shared with relevant societies for feedback. CILIP: Alan Ball Awards for Local History publications.

Anne Trevett: could not attend but provided an update via email. Anne feels passionately that local history and reminiscence work are really important in combatting isolation and loneliness in older people and for that reason have been involved in local history forming part of the Silver Salisbury programme. This year's programme was again a success with around 50 people attending Frogg Moody's talk on City Hall, about 24 for the talk on the Soroptimists Hidden Women project, 45 for Roger Elliot's talk on his work as photographer for the Journal and 50 for Adrian Green talking about developments at the Salisbury Museum. Building from this we had decided to experiment with a History Club at Salisbury Library. This differs from the traditional local history meeting in that it is not a formal talk but an informal 20-30 minute presentation on a topic of interest followed by tea and conversation. We had the first meeting yesterday with Rosie talking as Local History Champion in the Library: we were both quite nervous and expected half a dozen but 30 turned up! More planned for November and December.

Jamie – KYP website has lost tithe award apportionments.

Action: Ally and Julie to investigate

Michelle – the Wiltshire Council watermark is currently covering a lot of the screen, making it impossible to see the detail on the maps of the council's portal website.

Action: Julie and Ally to investigate

5. Suggested date of next meeting

JD will set date as 2nd or 3rd Wednesday in January.