



## Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting  
Wednesday 19 April 2023, 7.30pm  
Online via Zoom

### Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Naomi Sackett (WSHC), Gillian Swanton, Ruth Newman, Nick Baxter, Christina Richards, Anne Goodyer, Dr Jane Howells, Jo Hutchings, James Holden, Peter Roberts, Tim Couzens, Ruth Butler

Apologies: Wendy Lawrence, Stuart Raymond, Sara Steel, Jenny Akrill

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

This meeting was a trial of the hybrid meeting set up which seemed to work. If anyone has any comments, then please send them to [naomi.sackett@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:naomi.sackett@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Prior to starting the agenda for this week Julie shared the sad news of the death of Lyn Dyson who had written numerous publications on the history of West Lavington and was a valued member of the local history community.

#### 1. Actions from previous meeting

Julie was to contact Wiltshire Libraries about referring possible volunteers undertaking Duke of Edinburgh Award to interested local history societies and museums. If anyone is interested in hosting a D of E volunteer then please contact Julie ([julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk)) or Heather Perry ([heather.perry@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:heather.perry@wiltshire.gov.uk)) Conservation and Museum Manager.

Julie was to look into sending out WLHN promotional piece to parish clerks for insertion in newsletters. A promotional piece has been written and was shared with the group. This can be sent out (through the Wiltshire Library Service list of parish clerks). Julie asked if the VCH would like to promote themselves as part of the piece. James Holden expressed an interest and will liaise with Julie to discuss. **Action: Julie to contact James Holden, VCH**

Gillian Swanton: suggested putting promotional piece out to church parish councils as well as civil parish clerks. The church parish magazines are generally distributed to most

households and so could be a better avenue to reach people. Julie agreed it would be worth doing, but that it would take a bit of time without an existing mailing list of contacts – the website A Church Near You can be used to find contact information.

**Action: Julie to look into this**

2. Update from the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre

*New team members:*

After a restructure in September 2022 WSHC has now been able to employ three new staff members to return to a fully staffed team:

Sophie Bunce – a new Community History Advisor started in late December 2022

Abigail Mortimer – has started a CILIP Library, Information and Archive Services Assistant Apprenticeship working as a Community History Advisor.

Sophie Johns – has started as Archivist in late March 2023, recruited to replace Max Parkin who has moved to work at Gloucestershire Archives. She will likely have a particular focus on outreach.

*Rooted in History project update:*

The Rooted in History testbed project is designed to connect with people who would otherwise not normally engage with archives and the History Centre. It also takes advantage of the History Centre's relationship with community gardening group Rooted Chippenham who have taken over the green spaces around the centre.

A £10,000 grant to create a programme of activities based around our extensive collections relating to gardening, growing and cooking. As well as events we have printed up a series of leaflets to give away with free seeds. The combination of activities is designed to support people's physical and mental wellbeing.

We held an open house at the beginning of March which saw around 30 people come into the History Centre on a Saturday to see an exhibition of our gardening archives. Families also made their own newspaper pots and planted sunflowers to take away.

A talk "Rooted in History: where archives meet gardening" attracted an enthusiastic audience who braved torrential rain to join us at the History Centre on 1st April. They also took their free seeds to grow at home.

An unexpected success has been the two sessions we ran for families who home educate. We set up one session which was oversubscribed so we had to run a second – in total we have worked with 20 adults and 28 children.

One of our final activities will be working with a local primary school (Monkton Park) with their KS1 pupils visiting the History Centre and community garden. We will then be going into school to meet with teaching staff to see how might further support their "green" curriculum.

This project has been a great success and most enjoyable.

Running alongside this is the work of Rooted Chippenham who meet at the History Centre every fortnight. Having set up the no-dig beds in 2022, the first few months of 2023 have proved hugely industrious – seed planting, potting on and the building of a polytunnel.

#### *Ancient Woodland Inventory update from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre*

Unfortunately, Euan McKenzie has now moved on from the AWI project and has handed this over to Charlotte Dacre (project officer) and Michael Clark (project assistant).

They are now in Phase 3 of the project, which requires gathering evidence. For this, they are using the documents archived with the WSHC, as well as undertaking site surveys to collate botanical evidence. They are very grateful to also have the Wiltshire Botanical Society, professional botanists, undertaking additional surveys.

The next step will be to use this evidence as a foundation for refining the dataset, i.e. designating the sites believed to be of ancient status.

Charlotte has written a blog about the project and WSHC involvement which has been published on the WSHC website: [The Archived Ancient Woodlands of Wiltshire: Using Modern Mapping to Preserve our Natural Heritage \(wshc.org.uk\)](https://www.wshc.org.uk/blog/the-archived-ancient-woodlands-of-wiltshire-using-modern-mapping-to-preserve-our-natural-heritage)

### 3. Discussion: possible WLHN conference event, autumn 2023

A possible conference event was touched on at last meeting. A general thumbs up was given for the conference taking place, aiming for September so it will still be light for driving afterwards. A location was discussed, and it was generally agreed that a central location such as Devizes or [Bromham Village Hall](#) which had been used successfully in the past for Forum events would enable more people to attend in person. A hybrid event is likely to be possible for those unable to attend in person.

A topic for the conference was considered. Julie proposed a theme of how to attract new members to local societies. There was strong enthusiasm for the theme of Chartist in Wiltshire. Julie will put a plan together and establish whether there will need to be a charge as there had been previously. She will also double check the amount that the old Wiltshire Local History Forum account had held as this money was to be used for events of this nature.

It was noted that a confirmed date will need to be in people's diaries ASAP. Currently looking at a Saturday in September, avoiding Heritage Open Days and annual conference of *West of England and South Wales Women's History Network* on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. It will depend on speaker availability. **Action: Julie to plan and organise a September WLHN conference and advise on how this can be funded**

### 4. Any other Business – a chance for members to discuss their work or ask questions

Anne Trevitt (sent to Julie to share):

The Bemerton Group has the pleasure of a talk by John Chandler on the people who made up the church congregation of the poet and priest George Herbert in the 1630s. Tuesday 2nd May 7 pm in St Andrew's Church, Lower Bemerton SP2 9NP. Free entry, donations welcome, followed by drinks in a riverside garden. Reserve your place by a call to 07876 642990

Jean Belt, Purton Historical Society sent an update:

- 1 During the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> February Paul Booy, a prominent PHS member who was due to give the talk that evening, fell down the stairs and broke his neck. He died in the Great Western Hospital the following day. Paul ran 42 courses over 21 years for the Society, co-edited the Bulletin for 10 years, was a regular speaker on a range of topics and a long serving committee member. Deep appreciation was expressed at the funeral service for his outstanding contribution to the PHS for more than 25 years.
- 2 We have lost other valued and loyal members this year. Hector McLean was an authority on St Mary's Church who enjoyed taking visitors on conducted tours, while Ernie Paish was 99 and probably the last Purton resident to have served in WW2.
- 3 The Museum reopened on 1<sup>st</sup> April with a new exhibition "Purton at Leisure". In addition to numerous displays of posters, photographs, documents and craft items there are reminders of how the parishioners celebrated the coronations of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.
- 4 The next two talk are on "The Lydiard Archives" and "The Roman Invasion".
- 5 In June we visit Marlborough for a guided tour and there will be a boundary walk, beginning in Cricklade, in July.
- 6 On 6<sup>th</sup> May the Coronation of King Charles III will be streamed in St Mary's Church. All those who would like to watch on a large screen, in a group, are welcome to book a seat.
- 7 The next PHS Bulletin is being prepared and should be published in September.

Tina, Tisbury History Society:

The Society is now opening archive open once a month for public at the Nadder Centre. You can contact through the Tisbury History Society website.

Editing a book *Eminent Tisburgers*; a community book written by members of the community where each contributor has chosen someone who has a national profile but has lived in Tisbury. There are 30 different individuals currently being worked on.

Thinking of trying to find a grant to publish and will also talk to John Chandler, but as it is a community effort, they may be able to get a grant. They are looking at a number of options.

The Society puts on one a month talk including a recent one on the Life of Thomas Paine given by Denys Peek. There are upcoming outings booked including to Salisbury Cathedral to look at the stone mason yard, and talks on Wardour, and History of Cinema and Theatre in Salisbury.

Tina is no longer Chairman, having undertaken role for 7 years, although is still on the committee.

Ruth Newman:

Salisbury Local History Society ended during Covid. Margaret Smith was a driving force and has hopes to get it running again with the help of a younger Chair or Co-Chair but unfortunately she is not able to do this at present due to health reasons.

Nick Baxter:

Presented talk "From Slave Trade to Parliament" at St Peter's Church Marlborough April 20<sup>th</sup> at 7.30. Few today know that James Townsend was the first MP of Black African Heritage. He represented Calne from 1782 to 1787.

Marlborough History Society: Nick has moved to Calne but still associated with the society. Nick expressed enthusiasm for the WLHN and its value to members. He was enthused by and appreciative of Tina's Tisbury work and of being part of a community of people all engaged with local history. Julie had also noted that a colleague at WSHC was hugely impressed by her latest publication about Kipling; she is including it in her next blog article that will be available on the WSHC's website.

Nick also doing a talk for Local History Month in Calne Library on Coleridge in Wiltshire on Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. £4 First done for Marlborough College during lockdown for Zoom. People don't realise how important Coleridge was in Wiltshire. Nick can be contacted on [nickbaxter.history@gmail.com](mailto:nickbaxter.history@gmail.com) Website is: [www.wiltshirehistoryman.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirehistoryman.org.uk)

Gillian Swanton:

On behalf of Avebury Chapel project: Nick Baxter gave an amusing talk recently, and they have also enjoyed another talk by Louise Ryland-Epton on her Bremhill parish through the ages book published with the VCH. There will be more talks coming up which Gillian will send to the Network via Naomi.

Jane Howells:

1. British Association for Local History [www.balh.org.uk](http://www.balh.org.uk)

Jane has retired as editor of Local History News; the new editor is Andrew Chapman, same email [ahn@balh.org.uk](mailto:ahn@balh.org.uk). News from local societies and other projects always welcome. Are all Wiltshire groups in the Societies Directory? With a 'society profile'?

Do all member societies share with their own members that they can get reduced price access to events with code from the society?

BALH Digital webinar 9 May 'Archiving your local history collection'

BALH AGM 18 May (all welcome), followed by talk 'Risk and choice in West Kent in long 19th century' (content broader than title suggests).

2. West of England and South Wales Women's History Network  
[weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk](http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk)

Study morning 20 May 'Women and local politics in the 1920s: new stories' (zoom)  
Annual conference 30 September Exeter 'Women and the Natural World', call for papers closes 26 May

Julie remembered Etheldred Benett of Pyt House who was a highly regarded geologist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but who is little known now. Tina said that she would be looked at as part of the Tisbury project. Tim noted that he was a member of the Geological Society and would be happy to liaise with Tina. **Action: Julie to put Tina in contact with Tim.**

James Holden:

Gave a detailed update on the VCH last meeting. The online talks for this year are now fixed. The first two are Caroline Dakers talking about the Houses of Fonthill on 17th May, and John Chandler on 'The Wiltshire Traveller' on 21st June. Booking £10 a time via Wiltshire Museum website.

Peter Roberts :

Redlynch History Society. Mostly a group that does talks. Several good ones including James Holden on Non-conformist chapels which he tailored for their local area. Getting talks organised – approached South Wilts Industrial Archaeological Society and had the unexpected result of being offered copies of photographs of the area from the Salisbury Journal photographic archive by the chairman who is also a volunteer for Salisbury Museum. They hold one walk per year, this time in Langley Wood. Member numbers around 80. Julie interested in hearing more about the collection of photographs and will be in touch with Peter.

Anne Goodyer:

Malmesbury History Society is up and running again after Covid with regular meetings every 2 months. Membership is back to pre-covid levels and they have a couple of new members. The next talks will be "Roman Settlement and after in the Malmesbury Area. New Evidence from excavations by Cotswold Archaeology" Thursday 18th May  
Historian Tony McAleavy on "The early history of Malmesbury Abbey: New findings" on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July.

Julie really enjoyed his recent book on John Aubrey and the Witch Craze and Anne was recounted the success of their street theatre day last year where the Athelstan Players dramatised some scenes from the book.

Tim Couzens:

Continuing work on mini biographies for his Wilts Record Society volume on the Long family correspondence. Now has a greater respect for the ability of John Aubrey to have condensed so much detail into such short entries.

Jo Hutchings:

Aldbourn Archive. A technical issue meant Jo wasn't able to make herself heard, but added a message to the chat: "Despite technical assistance, the sound isn't working here. Lovely to be able to join you all again and to hear from everyone."

Ruth Butler:

WSHC. Suggested there could be a possible link for Jane's West of England and South Wales Women's History Network conference with Rooted in History project and will liaise with Naomi to consider whether a paper could be submitted. Interested to hear about Nick's talk on James Townsend and suggested Nick could perhaps give the talk at the History Centre in the future.

Julie Davis:

Update on Local History Month: Julie has worked hard to create events to celebrate the month. There will be promotion going out shortly for events happening at many Wiltshire Libraries who are also advertising events on their Facebook pages. A mailing will be sent to the WLHN with a list of the events.

Nick Baxter's talk on Coleridge at Calne Library can be booked through the History Centre. Tickets are £4, payable when booking. Tel 01249 705500 (Tues, Weds or Fri) or email [archives@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@wiltshire.gov.uk) and we will get back to them.

**5. Suggested date of next meeting**  
**Wednesday 19 July, 7.30pm**