



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 24 July 2024, 7.30pm
Online via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Naomi Oakley (WSHC), Arlene Bishop, Jean Belt, Lucy Lewis, Stuart Raymond, Peter Roberts, Ruth Newman, John Chandler, Tim Couzens, Nick Baxter, Christina Staff, Anne Trevett, Ruth Butler,

Apologies: Ally McConnell, Dr Jane Howells, Anne Bailey, Brian Edwards, Julia Hunt, Terry Bracher, James Holden

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

1. Actions from previous meeting

Jamie Wright sent details for book launch of Tales of Two Cities: Settlement and Suburb (for which he contributed a chapter on Fisherton) taking place at Salisbury Museum on 25 July. The details of this were sent out to the network.

Julie forwarded details of the project officer of the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre Ancient Woodland Inventory project to Peter Roberts. They may be able to provide assistance with tagging data and maps for a Redlynch History Society Lloyd George survey project.

John Chandler sent Julie the contact details for Dudley Dodd (in relation to potential as keynote speaker at conference in May 2025)

Tina can provide an introduction to Julia Mottershaw as a speaker – to roll forwards as conference plans develop.

Brian Edwards sent details of A Date with the Two Cerne Giants: Reinvestigating an Iconic British Hill Figure Ed. Michael J Allen to which he has contributed to Julie

2. Update from the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre:

**Wiltshire & Swindon
HISTORY
CENTRE**

Wiltshire Council

Local History Month evaluation

Local and Community History Month runs in libraries throughout May. Local History Champions research and put on exhibitions on topics which interest them. Julie undertakes an evaluation each year to see what is working and whether it can be improved.

- 16 libraries featured exhibitions created by each library's Local Studies Champion
- Just under half of the libraries taking part ran events which included talks, walking tours, object handling sessions, a story time, a reminiscence session, a discussion, Ancestry and BNA workshops.
- c.200 attended the events, with around 9,900 library visitors viewing the exhibitions
- Event feedback:

Motivated to find out more – 30.4%

Trying something new – 29%

Meeting people – 27.5%

Would like to attend more similar events – 72.5% (*good opportunity to provide events for adults as well as children*)

- Many attendees reported that the events were interesting, engaging and different from the norm.
- The Local Studies Champions reported back on how wonderful it was to have the opportunity to encourage people to get excited and informed about the local history of their area. They particularly felt that the library and their customers benefitted from the opportunity to have a conversation and make meaningful connections; customers very much enjoyed the opportunity to reminisce and share these thoughts with others. LHM is seen a great opportunity to create a sense of place and shared community.
- It was also noted that the work helped promote the town; local people were always interested, but positive feedback had also been received from visitors to the town who really enjoyed the displays.

Ideas for improvements by the LS Champions:

- Suggestions to help make links with people who could lend props to enhance exhibitions or take part in an event.
- Help with exhibition theme ideas – what has been successful elsewhere?

For WLHN to consider:

- Would there be any benefits for local history groups if they got involved in Local History month?
- What are the barriers to local history groups or individuals participating?
- What might encourage local history groups or individuals to take part in Local History Month?

Julie hoped that members would be able to share their thoughts with her on the questions she posed.

Action – all to email any response to julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk

Autumn Local History workshops at WSHC

John Chandler, Ally McConnell and Ruth Butler met to discuss the plans for the upcoming series of ten local history workshops to be held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre on alternate Mondays from 7 October.

The sessions will run over winter, with a break for Christmas and are run through a partnership of the Victoria County History, University of West of England and Wiltshire Council (WSHC). They have previously run two successful sessions in Gloucester partnering with Gloucestershire local authority.

The sessions will run from 9.30am-1pm with a 30-minute break for refreshments and will be suitable for beginners or those with more knowledge covering all aspects of local history. Each workshop will have two-three people leading from the VCH or UWE and notes and resources will be sent out to participants of each session. It will be possible to attend individual sessions or multiple either pre-booking or attending on the day aside from a bonus conservation session for which pre-booking will be required. A leaflet with the syllabus will be sent out shortly.

September Study Day at WSHC

A study day on medieval women in Wiltshire will be taking place on Saturday 21 September 9.30am-4pm. "Maud Heath and Beyond: Exploring the Lives of Women Before 1600"

It is organised by the Victoria County History and is part of the 550th celebrations of Maud Heath's causeway a partnership project with the VCH, WSHC, Yesterday's Story CIC and others. The session will be led by VCH academics and present insights into researching medieval women, their lives and diverse impacts on society, economy, religion and politics.

Julie noted that the study day will explore women's history before 1600—their diverse impacts on the society, economy, religion and politics of the world around them. The event will feature papers and discussions and will draw, in part, on academics involved in the Victoria County History project and present their insights from research in place-based histories from Wiltshire and beyond.

Tickets are free but booking is required at: https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/yesterdays-story-cic?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR2B1MjgsxFbwE5b32ZwDg7u4rxCLQwx62E0E7QOWNaLzBisylAtmwJUB7g_aem_98rCVg1WqZF8FOBFSWIZPg

Addendum - details from the keynote speaker, Professor Catherine Clarke:

'My name is Maud Heath': Generative AI and New Questions about Women's Histories
Generative AI is changing how we engage with history – for better and for worse. From new visual impressions of the past, to invented source materials, to (often troubling) representations of and engagements with real historical figures, AI materials are now part of the landscape historians have to navigate. But are there ways we can engage with this new world critically and usefully? In this presentation, I'll connect Generative AI

with our focus on the lives of women in Wiltshire before 1600. How does AI reflect back our own assumptions, prejudices, and gaps in our historical knowledge? How can we use AI outputs as a 'diagnostic' for the public knowledge and understanding of women's history? And are there ways we can use generative AI productively, to re-visit gaps and uncertainties, to re-tell women's stories, and start new conversations?

3. Selection of conference speakers for the WLHN study day on garden history, May 2025

Tim Couzens shared a link in the meeting chat to highlight a new website on historical parklands for the whole country: [Historic parks in England, 1890s-1900s - Georeferenced Map Overlay viewer - Zulu Ecosystems - National Library of Scotland \(nls.uk\)](#)

Julie shared a list of potential keynote and additional speakers. The options for keynote are:

Tim Mowl on Gardens, Landscape and Architecture

Dudley Dodd on Stourhead

Katy Layton-Jones on The History of Public Parks

Todd Gray on The Garden History of Devon: Case Study looking at archival sources and research, providing some practical tips on garden history research

Stuart Raymond suggested Todd Gray would be good, and having some practical guidance to take away from the session would be a benefit.

Action all to let Julie know of any particular strong thoughts or preferences. Otherwise:
Action Julie to proceed with Todd Gray as keynote speaker and contact in September after the holidays

Additional speaker talks list:

Tim Couzens on The History of Draycot Park and Gardens

Tina Richards on The Tisbury Grotto Makers

Brian Edwards on the Stonehenge dahlia exhibition

Julia Mottershaw on Francis Faugoin, Stourhead gardener (recent book published) potential, would need to contact

4. Group information share for those attending

Jean Belt, Purton Historical Society:

1. On 6th July over 20 members and friends enjoyed a guided walk to Ringsbury Camp, the well preserved Iron Age Hillfort a short walk across the fields from Purton. Unfortunately, the site has never been excavated.

2. In September a group will visit the Richard Jefferies Museum and Gardens at Coate, the former home of the Swindon born nature writer.
3. The exhibition 'Purton in the 1980s' can be seen in Purton Museum until the end of October.
4. On 26th September David Mitchell will talk about 'The North Wessex Way: the forgotten road across north Wiltshire.'
5. Archaeologists from Foundations Archaeology are digging pits in the Pavenhill area on some Saturdays. The test pits are 1.2m square and about 1m deep. 11 have been dug so far, with 2 more planned for the coming weekend. The project will continue in 2025. Roman pottery is in most of the pits, but in June a copper coin was found which is proving difficult to identify. Roof and mosaic tiles have been discovered in this part of the village previously. The 'Romans in Purton' project has not unearthed anything spectacular so far.

Stuart Raymond:

Upcoming book on *Avebury without the stones* is awaiting proofreading and should be published in around three months. Julie asked Stuart to let her know when it was available, Stuart confirmed it will be published through HobNob Press with John Chandler.

Stuart requested to be kept informed of any new books for review in WAM. Julie wondered if Stuart received the Wiltshire List which highlights all publications catalogued for the Wiltshire Local Studies library Wiltshire Collection. **Action Naomi to check if Stuart is on the WSHC mailing list for updates sent quarterly and which includes the latest Wiltshire List**

Ruth Newman:

Ruth recommended seeing the new galleries at Salisbury Museum which opened a fortnight ago. Ruth had assisted in proof reading (including with a tight deadline!) The group of Laverstock and Ford Local History Group meets regularly with attendance of around 25-30. A few weeks ago they enjoyed a well-received walk around the village centre with around 30 people. The next event on 25 July is Jenny Head and Anne Johns talking about the sisters of Thomas Hardy, Mary and Kate. They have regular speakers and have consistent attendance, but are not currently attracting many new members.

Arlene Bishop:

Arlene (Little Somerford) was recently asked to create exhibition for the Great Somerford fete. She put a request on Facebook for old photographs and organised them into display boards, meeting up with local people who helped her with names for people on photos. The boards with themes such as sports teams, pubs, news clippings, stage productions, Malmesbury carnival floats, old school etc were then displayed in Great Somerford church. A new resident in Great Somerford assisted with researching the landlords of each pub using census records and Kelly's Directories. The exhibition was well received at the fete and remained in place for more people to bring visitors to see it. Arlene sought advice on the best way to preserve the resulting documentation of historic info and photographs with their newly associated names. Julie mentioned having created a ring binder publication of exhibitions held at local libraries which is catalogued as a book and can be loaned. The photos could be digitised and added to the photographic collection at the History Centre (a public catalogue is not currently available for these, but photographs in the collection are available to be viewed in the History Centre searchroom or low-resolution copies can be provided). Julie happy to discuss options with Arlene. Christina Staff later advised Arlene she could also contact the curator, Deborah Clogg at the Athelstan Museum in Malmesbury for advice.

Nick Baxter:

Marlborough summer history course successful in its third year. The Priestley 250 project is also underway with a programme of events over the summer and autumn celebrating the discovery of oxygen by Joseph Priestley in his laboratory at Bowood House, while living in Calne. Nick led a guided walk around Calne, dressed as Joseph Priestley with 25 attendees including international visitors. He has added three more walks to the events programme fully booked with 80 and a waiting list reflecting the global importance Priestley and interest in his work. Nick shared his enthusiasm for Wiltshire's role in the age of enlightenment, and the success of the celebration of Priestley's discovery, along with the unexpected occasion of trying the special Hidden Oxygen beer brewed by Stealth Brew Co for an interview with BBC Wiltshire. Julie will be adding additional copies of the Priestley 250 booklet to the Local Studies collection and shared that Bowood House had been a recent subject for the Memory Box Reading Group at the History Centre and they had enjoyed learning about Priestley, the Earl of Shelburne (later Marquess of Lansdowne) and Jan Ingen Housz.

Ruth Butler:

The Sarum Chronicle issue 24 is due to be released and the annual lecture will take place on Thursday 7 Nov. Flyers will be sent out and information at the Salisbury Museum which will host the talk in their new lecture hall, 6.30pm for 7pm start. It will be a talk by Louise Ryland Epton on 'Witchcraft & Tudor Salisbury: The Witchcraft Trial of Agnes Mylles 1564'. Booking will be essential as numbers are limited, booking information to be released nearer the time. More information here:

<https://sarumchronicle.wordpress.com/about/sarum-chronicle-annual-lecture/>

Ruth also recommended the new galleries at Salisbury Museum, as well as the archaeology festival taking place weekend of 27/28 July.

A chat link posted to Fisherton History Society annual festival in Salisbury taking place Aug 26-31.

See website for details <https://fishertonhistorysociety.org> or their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/834343469966904/>

Christina Staff, Malmesbury History Society:

The society have a bi-monthly meeting at the town hall. A recent meeting hosted Tony Hack (Medieval Graffiti Survey, surveying Lacock Abbey) and the next one on 19 September is a local historian on The Artwork in the Whole Hog and its connection to Richard III and Henry Tudor plus Malmesbury's Worldwide Connections. On 21 November former archivist at Bowood House will talk about Joseph Priestley.

Peter Roberts, Redlynch & District Local History Society:

A recent walk to Harnham meadows to look at the drowning system was well supported and went down well with members. In September they will be having a session looking at Salisbury Journal photographs. They have made a start digitising their archive with the intention of putting some on the web, using home scanners of committee members, and will test in next month. They will also create displays in the village hall to encourage interest.

Peter gave a talk the at the local Hale village hall on Hatchett Green, near Hale on the history of the houses there. He contacted locals and gained information from deeds, knowledge of those who lived in the houses, and old photos including the 1910 Lloyd George survey maps and survey books. He has been asked to do the same for Redlynch in January as well as a walk around the green for members next June. There

was much interest and enthusiasm locally for people to share information and learn more about their houses. Peter suggested it seemed a good means by which to encourage interest in local history, but that is helped to have a useful contact in the right street or area to make the first connections.

The society continues to work on material they have already obtained including interviews with people who have since died.

John Chandler

Highlighted that Chippenham Museum has also opened new galleries, now featuring Maud Heath and the research which has identified who she was. Swindon Museum opened its new site in Euclid St in Civic Offices after its move away from Old Town and have done a wonderful job.

Victoria County History: work is ongoing for Alderbury and Clarendon (will be online in draft form), and Whiteparish will also go on online in draft form soon. Research for the Chippenham volume has resulted in a book on Kington St Michael and Kington Langley which was launched at the Kington St Michael village hall and the scarecrow festival at Kington Langley. There will be another on Langley Burrell which will include research work undertaken by John and Louise Ryland Epton and their discoveries about Maud Heath.

HobNob Press: recent publications are *Bishopstrow: A small village with a big history* edited by Victoria Coombs (Julie was delighted to see Victoria's success after she had come to Julie with the initial idea to seek advice); Stuart noted that he is reviewing it for WAM and has been impressed with it; *The Kingtons: a history of the ancient parish of Kington St Michael with Kington Langley* by Louise Ryland Epton; *Civic Pride: the Public Buildings of Wiltshire Towns* by James Holden; *Chippenham On This Day* by Chris Dallimore which is selling many copies at Chippenham Museum; and *Moonies, Movers and Shakers: Rediscovered stories and personalities from the Association of Wiltshiremen in London*, by Noel Ponting and Graham Carter. Next up is Stuart Raymond's book on Avebury which John described as magnificent.

Thanks to all for sharing.

5. Suggested date of next meeting

16 October 2024 via Zoom