



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 14 September 2022, 7.30pm
Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), David Dawson (Wiltshire Museum), Tony Pratt, David Moss (Chairman, Wiltshire Victoria County History), Jean Belt (Purton Historical Society), Nick Baxter.

Apologies: Dr Jane Howells, Ruth Newman, Gillian Swanton, Wendy Lawrence, John Chandler, Marion Coupe, Marlene Lewis, Steve Bridge, Stuart Raymond

1. Actions from previous meeting

List of speakers – Julie has heard back from the Wiltshire Family History Society. They have a list but it is not in a form to be passed on yet. They will work on it and are happy to give Julie a copy when it is ready.

Wiltshire Community History website – Julie has spoken to the Swindon & District History Network about the possibility of them helping to write up SBC parishes to add to the site. They have sent out details in the minutes.

2. Ancient Woodland Inventory – E-volunteering opportunity

This work is to locate small pockets of woodland in Wiltshire that are very old using historical maps. The project is being run by the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre, operating from the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust headquarters in Devizes. Euan McKenzie is the Ancient Woodland Inventory Officer at WSBRC. Julie noted that at Euan's talk given at the History Centre, she hadn't realised just how important ancient woodland was to biodiversity. Of the three types of land, modern (C19 onwards) woodland had the same biodiversity ratio as agricultural farmland, both way below ancient woodland. Julie has started E-volunteering for the project and is enjoying it. Euan notes that the project involves a lot of historical research (initially online using tithe maps) and he would very much like to engage with people who have an interest in/experience of landscape history. Volunteers at present are mapping long established woodland with the tithe apportionments. To become a volunteer you will need to register with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and then volunteer for the project [Wiltshire Wildlife Trust promoting and developing volunteering in your area. A TeamKinetic powered website](#). If you have any questions you can email

Euan direct (EuanM@wiltshirewildlife.org). He is also based at the History Centre most Fridays if you'd like to chat to him in person.

David Dawson noted that the Museum Library holds a PHD thesis on this topic

Action: David to contact Euan to let him know about the thesis

3. Creative Digital Heritage Skills – WSHC

Julie updated people on her latest project. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, running from September 2022-March 2023, the project aims to work with people who are currently unemployed, have struggled with the education system, are interested in but have not previously engaged with archives to explore, research, digitise and respond to items of their choice, developing confidence and employment skills. Participants will include care leavers and those with SEND and SEMH needs. Participants will learn research methods to locate and research material from collections. With the help of local creatives, participants will digitise, curate and display their responses to the archive material. The project will culminate in a celebratory event at Chippenham Library to which local business representatives will be invited. Julie was very excited about the project which she hopes, if successful, can be replicated on a regular basis, subject to funding.

4. Historical Atlas project

This possible project was suggested by Tony Pratt some time ago; he wanted to revisit it with the hope of setting up a working group to move the idea forwards. Background: Tony has recently completed his thesis of the agricultural history of Wiltshire and other counties. He has found historical atlases particularly useful, with a map on one page and text on the other. He suggests an atlas for Wiltshire would be of value. To consider:

How should the project be organised?

What should it achieve?

Possible topics include: physical environment, historical periods and prehistory, religion, politics, population, industry and commerce, agriculture and rural society, transportation, population and health, administration areas and more.

Tony had talked again to John Chandler who felt that it might be better hosted online, although print on demand is an option. Julie suggested the possibility of utilising the Wiltshire Community History website. Tony had also spoken to Mike Stone who was excited and interested in the project. The project could be tailored to match the interests of the various researchers, for instance those interested in canals could work on that section. David M suggested that the proposed online atlas should offer links for those wanting fuller information to the Wiltshire VCH website (www.wiltshirehistory.org). David D was not sure in Archaeology should be included, especially as the Historic Environment Record covers this.

Action: Julie to put a call out into the minutes for anyone who might be interested in the project.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about the project please contact Tony Pratt in the first instance (chetwynd222@aol.com), and Tony or Julie (julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk) if you are interested in joining the working party.

Any other Business: Information share for those attending

Tony Pratt – researcher - interested in agricultural history, including the Victorian cattle plague and its effect on counties such as Wiltshire and its effects on rural society. Teaches at Wiltshire College, Lackham

Marion Hobbs – Purton Historical Society on behalf of Jean Belt

The Purton Historical Society has three talks arranged for the autumn on Chedworth Roman Villa, Marlborough and the Civil War and Ringsbury Camp and the Iron Age. The last speaker is one of their members, Keith Allsop.

Two copies of The Golder Chapter, the beautifully illuminated document recording those who served in WWI, dedicated on 1st April 1920, have been printed and bound after a long delay due to Covid 19. The copies include all the additional information researched by Bob Lloyd over a decade.

The project has been funded mainly by a legacy in memory of Brian Freegard, their Museum Curator from 2009 to 2012. Another donation commemorated the service to the PHS of Jean's husband, Dr John Belt, who was a founder member of the group. After a fifteen year old completed his volunteering in the Museum, for his Duke of Edinburgh silver award, another fifteen year old, a girl, is helping to update the website.

The Museum closed for the winter at the end of October. This year we have been establishing links with other museums in our area, to view their exhibitions and share ideas. I went to Cricklade with Lucy Lewis, our archivist, and a group of volunteers who visited Royal Wootton Bassett. Representatives from both museums have been to Purton.

David Dawson – Wiltshire Museum

The latest copy of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society magazine has been published. It includes Malmesbury's Saxon areas. The industrial Archaeology Society's conference is on 15 October and is looking at Bath stone and building materials [CONFERENCE: Industrial Archaeology - Building Materials - Wiltshire Museum](#). The museum is currently wrapping up an oral history project on the Assizes and plan to publish a booklet on the topic. There are lots of talks organised on various topics – see the museum's website for more details [Events - Wiltshire Museum](#). Museum relocation – the museum has successfully got through the first round and need to submit by 17 November for the second stage. If they are successful it will take two and a half years to get £5m and they will have to fund the rest of the costs themselves.

Avebury – a group linked to the parish council is due to take over the chapel on 1 October. They plan to use it to highlight local history. The first exhibition will be based on Wiltshire Museum's 'Wiltshire in 100 Objects' project. It will also tell the history of the building.

David Moss – Chair, Victoria County History Wiltshire

As John had previously mentioned, the Chippenham volume is almost complete and now requires editing. The volume for Mere is almost at the same stage too. The editing process will take 2 to 3 years but drafts are available online [Wiltshire Victoria County History - local history of Wiltshire \(wiltshirehistory.org\)](http://wiltshirehistory.org). There are also talks which raise money for the VCH. John Chandler's talk on John Leland is on 5 October

[ONLINE TALK: John Leland: a Tudor traveller in Wiltshire - Wiltshire Museum](#) and Michael Hodges is looking at Wiltshire Parliamentary Constituencies on 23 November [ONLINE TALK: Wiltshire Constituencies and the 1832 Reform Act - Wiltshire Museum](#). Book via the Wiltshire Museum website £10 per ticket.

Nick Baxter – Marlborough Historical Society and researcher
Nick is still on the committee of the Society (was previously chairman). He gives talks and does guided walks around Marlborough and the North Wessex Downs. Teaches at the Marlborough College Summer School. He's happy to give talks to any groups who might be interested.

Jane Howells via Julie:

Firstly, my apologies. Secondly, a reminder that the **British Association for Local History** continues to offer a range of interesting online activities and presentations – Local History Hour, Ten-Minute Talks, Blog, webinars etc. For LHH on 27 October Alan Crosby will introduce Working Class writing in general, and then Ruth Newman and Jane are talking about William Small's Cherished Memories and Associations (Wiltshire Record Society Vol 64). Bill Reed has done a Ten-Minute talk about The Linolite Light Fittings Factory in Malmesbury which you can watch on [The Linolite Light Fittings Factory, Malmesbury - YouTube](#)

Jane is still editor of **Local History News** for a few more months, so if anyone has any relevant news they would like included, please let her know. I am preparing the October issue at the moment, so would need contributions for that before the end of the month; the next will be sent to members at the end of January (copy before early December). Email editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

And thirdly, the **West of England & South Wales Women's History Network** conference this year will be held in person on 15 October in Bristol. The topic is 'Women and Money: a historical perspective'. The keynote speaker is Dr Helen Doe, University of Exeter. The papers are mostly, but not all, on West Country material. Links to the programme and booking form can be found here <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/> Please share this information with anyone who might be interested.

Gill Swanton (on behalf of the Marlborough Mound Trust) via Julie:

The Mound Trust was set up in 2000 by Old Marlburian, Eric Elstob (C2 1956-60) to restore, to maintain and to promote knowledge and understanding of the Mound based on scholarly research. Since the Trust's establishment, there have been dramatic results in the systematic restoration of the Marlborough Mound and in the exploration of its history.

They are delighted to make you aware of the publication of a new book, *The Marlborough Mound. Prehistoric Mound, Medieval Castle, Georgian Garden*, edited by Richard Barber which captures the work achieved thus far under the auspices of the Mound Trust. The book is a celebration of the vision of Eric Elstob and of the continued wholehearted support of the College to this most remarkable of monuments.

Copies are on sale at the White Horse Bookshop at a special price of £25 and on [the Boydell website](#) for the same price by using the discount code 'BB072' when completing the order.

Julie and Nick Baxter both noted that they were impressed with the book.

Suggested date of next meeting:

Wednesday 11th January at 7.30pm, online via Zoom, courtesy of Wiltshire Museum