



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 17 January 2024, 7.30pm
Online via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Naomi Oakley (WSHC), Peter Roberts, Terry Bracher (WSHC), Arlene Bishop, Tim Couzens, Nick Baxter, Anne Bailey, John Chandler, Jean Belt and Lucy Lewis, Marion Coupe, Jamie Wright, Julia Hunt, Stuart Raymond, Ruth Butler

Apologies: Karen Johnstone, Roseanne Russell, Dr Jane Howells, Stuart Raymond, Ruth Newman, Gillian Swanton, Jo Hutchings, James Holden, Anne Trevett, David Dawson

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

1. Actions from previous meeting

WLHN Conference – Julie has not yet looked into using the Kennet Valley Village Hall as a venue but has had many positive comments about it so it is likely to be a good option. Speakers can be arranged initially and then a venue booked.

Action Julie: Investigate conference venue

Items were sent out following the previous meeting: questionnaires relating to the reorganisation of the searchroom; drawings of plans; details of remote volunteering projects during closure for searchroom works.

Maria was going to put Athelstan museum back in touch with Julie. Julie has not heard anything as yet. **Action Maria if not done already**

Julie and Ally investigated the disappearance of tithe awards on the Know Your Place historic mapping website. This was done and the issue resolved. The issue of the Wiltshire Council watermark on the image has also been resolved.

2. Updates from the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre:

New search room layout

Those that have visited the new searchroom have had positive feedback. John Chandler noted he was impressed.

Julie shared images of the new layout and explained the new arrangement with a new shop area in reception stocking books by local authors and smaller items. Julie would like to develop this retail area further. There is a welcome board with photographs of staff on duty – this is part of improving accessibility helping people such as those with autism who may sometimes finding it helpful to have a known face to approach. Following feedback, there is signage to lockers and toilets.

A new more relaxed layout for the reception area is being trialled with coffee table style seating, as well as normal table and chairs which now have access to plug sockets. Julie may investigate the possibility of selling slices of cake for people to enjoy along with a hot drink from the existing vending machine. Julie would be interested to hear the Network's views on this.

There is a new glass inner door between the reception area and the help desk for staff to more easily man both desks. A clear glass panel next to the reception desk and entrance door currently has a chair placed in front of it to ensure people do not walk into it. Glass stickers will be added to prevent this without the need for the chair.

The searchroom entrance door is now operated solely by staff to let people in and out (important for service accreditation). Volunteers with access passes can use them to swipe in and out (the pass access reader to enter is now placed next to the small meeting room opposite reception).

Staff will endeavour to let people in and out without any delay but will be adjusting to a new process and may require a wave if not immediately admitted! Julie asked if customers could bear with staff whilst they get used to the new procedures.

The new help desk is linked through the glass to the reception desk and has the same processes as before. When you arrived staff will let you know where you are sitting, and it is where you collect and return your documents.

The archive research area is area in front of help desk – in front of archaeology offices – with a large table for maps area with lights able to be fully switched off. The whole local studies library has moved to the to the opposite end of the searchroom, and there is a dedicated computer area, an area with paper copies of parish register and other transcripts with seating.

The library area contains pockets of seating to enable people to sit and enjoy the books, and study the library resources (archive documents viewed solely in the archive research area). The Wiltshire studies section runs around the outside and continues on to the central shelving, followed by the general reference Heritage collection. Staff will be happy to help with finding material.

It has been a busy couple of weeks following re-opening but all should feel free to book a visit and have a look around. Feedback is welcomed.

Pele's boots:

The Conservation Museum Advisory Service's previous work conserving Pelé's football boots has recently been picked up in the media (including an article in the

Guardian), with a subsequent flurry of interviews including with the BBC and Ireland's National Radio station. This followed the publication of an academic article written by the conservators published by the University of Cambridge on the challenges of conserving boots and plastics.

A private client had recruited CMAS to work on George Best's football boots, which were successfully conserved following some in depth research into the complex task of conserving leather uppers attached to plastic soles and studs. The same client then requested work on Pelé's boots which were to be displayed at the National Football Museum (and still contained a blade of grass from their use, believed to have been worn). Further research was undertaken on the best methods of preservation of plastics. Conservators Gabrielle Flexer and Kayleigh Spring worked on the boots for six months.

A link to a video made by the team on the process can be found here:

[Preserving Pele's Football Boots \(wshc.org.uk\)](https://www.wshc.org.uk)

[Hang up your boots? How Pelé's and Best's were saved in Wiltshire | Heritage | The Guardian](#)

CMAS take in work from private clients for income generation and to maintain and improve skills and knowledge of conservators which can then be used to support the museums across Wiltshire with training, governance and conservation. Recent and current projects include a tiger pelt from regimental museum, a 19th century front-loaded shotgun (decommissioned), and roman curse stones. Enquiries on projects large or small can be directed to cmas@wiltshire.gov.uk

3. 2024 WLHN conference – discussion re. conference theme

Julie proposed a potential topic relating to gardens and gardening inspired by the recent successful testbed 'Rooted in History' gardening project.

Discussion followed of the numerous potential avenues could be explored including allotments (Great Somerford reputedly having the oldest in the country), Abbey House Gardens at Malmesbury, social and economic aspects including market gardening, parks, ornamental gardens, municipal parks, deer parks.

Potential speakers of sources of information include: Terry Bracher's contact at the University of Reading, Tim Mowl, Dudley Dodd, Wiltshire Gardens Trust, Todd Gray (done work of history of gardens, based in Devon), Katy Layton-Jones who worked on a doctorate on municipal parks (suggested by John Chandler, and who has recently moved to Wiltshire), Tony Pratt and Lackham.

Julie to investigate speaker options will send out a list of who could be approached for comment. **Action Julie**

A vote was taken on a potential date and majority preference was for a September date rather than May.

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

Contributions from those sending apologies:

Jane Howells: West of England & South Wales Women's History Network
conference provisionally booked for Saturday 12 October 2024 in Bath. Should have further details before the next Network meeting.

Pewsey Vale Local History Research Group update on *Pewsey People* project which invited local people to bring along their photos for digitisation and inclusion in the Pewsey Heritage Centre archives:

On a sweltering hot summer's day in September, the Pewsey Vale Local History Research Group threw open the doors of the education rooms at the Pewsey Heritage Centre to welcome in local people with their photos and their stories. The digitisation session was the first of its kind in the Pewsey Vale and combined free scanning with an opportunity to enhance the Heritage Centre's archives with previously unseen images of Pewsey and its people.

From images of amateur dramatics to sports teams, social groups and workers, photos were shared dating from the earliest days of photography all the way through to the advent of digital photography in the 1990s. The highlight was a real "show and tell" with Mr Yeates from Milton Lilbourne bringing in a photo of the Queen's Coronation in 1953 where the villagers were presented with silver spoons; he also brought along from the village a mug celebrating Charles III's coronation.



Following the success of the sessions and the huge variety of images shared, the Pewsey Vale Local History Research Group have decided to run some more sessions in the Spring – details to come soon. If you, or someone you know, has interesting photos of groups of people from Pewsey Vale and is interested in sharing these, especially if you are unable to attend in person, please contact natalieawdry@gmail.com. The group plan to hold a presentation later in 2024 to share these images and local memories.

Updates from attendees –

Peter Roberts: Redlynch Historical Society Working towards a new website with the intention to digitise material they hold. Hoping to start a new community project connected with the Lloyd George survey of land values and the wealth of information they include including owners and occupiers, quality of housing, toilets, wells and general conditions pre-WW1 linking the data to the map references. Advice and guidance from those who have worked on similar projects welcomed.

Action all.

John Chandler recommended the Glos 1909 project glos1909survey.org.uk which was a major piece of work linking the maps and data. Stuart Raymond highlighted the ongoing project by the Genealogist website to digitise the National Archive copies of the survey. Peter noted the work began with London and may take some time to reach Wiltshire.

Julie mentioned the Ancient Woodland Inventory project run by the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre which had volunteers using maps to enter data into spreadsheets. She also thought a report on an e-volunteering project run at WSHC might be useful. **Action Julie to get in touch with current project lead/forward contact details for potential advice Action Julie to email Peter the WSHC E-Volunteering report**

Peter and his partner have published a booklet entitled 'Guardians of the Wood: A History of Tinney's Firs' (John Tinney was a mayor of Salisbury). A small amount of land was sold and used as a semaphore station by the Navy. A copy has been donated to Julie for the Local Studies Library and she will be purchasing more. Stuart would like a copy for review of WAM. Peter to send a copy to him. **Action Peter**

Marion Coupe – Netheravon, Haxton & Fittleton

Raised the value and importance of school photos. They are in contact with someone in possession of a large number and are identifying people. Any advice on how names can be added to photographs (aside from labelled with 'from left to right'). Julie suggested using photoshop to annotate and save a digital copy. The free software package Canva may also be worth looking into, but Naomi is unsure if the free version will have the capability to do this kind of work. If not, Marion can contact Julie to see if she can help.

A company based in Blackpool (who are still in existence) and produced many school photographs nationally had only recently disposed of their entire archive. A valuable series of records now lost. Those at the meeting agreed what a shame that was and Marion wondered if anything could be done to stop this happening. Julie noted that the Network had heard similar stories from other members at previous meetings.

Jean Belt – Purton Historical Society

1. The society and museum participated in the Christmas Tree Festival in St Mary's Church by decorating a tree with photographs of recent exhibitions. 35 village organisations were involved in imaginative and ingenious ways. The publicity resulted in an enthusiastic student joining as a museum volunteer.
2. 2024 began with a New Year Social where 12 young singers from SALOS (from Swindon) entertained members and friends.
3. The first talk will be "A Journey Through Time in Wiltshire" by Nick Baxter on 25th January.
4. "The Romans in Purton", speaker Andy Hood, is on 22nd February.
5. Our AGM will be held on 21st March when Brian Coe will remind us of "Purton Carnivals of the Past".
6. The museum reopens on 6th April. A new display will depict Purton in the 1980s.
7. The website is being updated and improved and now has a link to the museum's Collections Catalogue.
8. Looking ahead: there will be a summer outing to Bradenstoke Priory, Medieval House and Church on 8th June and a tour of Ringsbury Camp on 6th July.

John Chandler Wiltshire Record Society: the next volume - Helen Taylor's volume on 1864 Bishop's Visitation – will be out shortly. The Bishop's Visitation was a questionnaire sent to every incumbent in the Diocese, 52 questions about church,

non-conformity, population and problems in the parish. The volume will be of particular interest to those located south of the A4.

Victoria County History – the history of Chippenham will very soon be online, along with surrounding parishes. Current research work is being undertaken on Alderbury and Clarendon. Whiteparish and Landford will also soon be online. The VCH in conjunction with the University of West of England are planning a series of local history workshops to be held at the History Centre with lectures from VCH researchers from the West Country and London. They will likely run alternate Monday mornings in a ten-week course from October to March. Ally McConnell, Principal Archivist at WSHC, is making arrangements with John and WSHC's Digital Engagement Officer Ruth Butler.

HobNob Press: John thanked Julie for his new HobNob press shop table in the searchroom at WSHC. Christina Richard's book on the Pythouse Riots has recently been published, along with a new edition of Swindon Decoded by John Chandler, and West Swindon by Angela Atkinson, Francis Bevan and Roger Ogle as well as the paperback version of Bremhill Parish Through The Ages. Upcoming volumes include women of North Wiltshire, and a volume by Ken Rogers on Wiltshire and Somerset Weavers, James Holden volume on civic buildings in Wiltshire, and Stuart Raymond on Avebury 'without the stones'.

Stuart Raymond – raised the proposal by the Ministry of Justice to destroy original probate records after 25 years. There was a universal agreement to share the petition to protest this in the minutes for people to sign if they wished:

[Do not allow original wills to be destroyed after 25 years - Petitions \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/petitions/do-not-allow-original-wills-to-be-destroyed-after-25-years)

There is a current open consultation on the issue: [Storage and retention of original will documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/storage-and-retention-of-original-will-documents)

Lastly, Stuart requests copies of any new publications for review in WAM.

5. Suggested date of next meeting

Wednesday 17 April, 7.30-8.30pm

Julie will update in the meantime on plans for the conference.