



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 17 April 2024, 7.30pm
Online via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Naomi Oakley (WSHC), Anne Goodyear, Tim Couzens, Ally McConnell (WSHC), Tina Richards, Terry Bracher (WSHC), Marion, Jamie Wright, Nick Baxter, Brian Edwards, John Chandler, Gillian Swanton, Julia Hunt

Apologies: Peter Roberts, Lucy Lewis, Jean Belt, Liz Johnson, Roseanne Russell, Dr Jane Howells, Jo Hutchings, Ruth Newman, Wendy Lawrence, Graham Trickey

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

1. Actions from previous meeting

Julie to investigate conference speakers: she has created a list of potential speakers to be discussed.

Julie – forward details of project officer for W&SBRC Ancient Woodland Inventory to Peter Roberts for advice on community project linking data to Lloyd George survey maps, and to forward copy of e-volunteering report. **Action Julie**

Peter Roberts to send Stuart Raymond copy of publication – completed?

2. WLHN Conference

Julie proposed putting conference on hold until 2025 due to her workload being impacted by ill health and the fact a symposium is planned as part of a project to celebrate the 550th anniversary of bequest to create Maud Heath's causeway to be held in September at the History Centre. This may be too much for one month to attract enough people to both events.

It was agreed to delay the conference until May 2025, which will dovetail with Local History Month.

The theme will remain the same with the following list of potential speakers:

Tim Couzens (Draycot Park and Gardens)

Tina Richards (book on grottos)

Tim Mowl - Easily contactable. Landscape history, gardens.

Dudley Dodd – Stourhead (**Action John Chandler**: give Julie Dudley's contact details)

Wiltshire Garden Trust

Todd Gray – history of gardens, based in Devon (Exeter University) Reference guide to historical sources, introduction to would-be garden historians on how to conduct garden research.

Katy Layton-Jones – doctorate on municipal parks.

Julia Mottershaw – new book on Francis Faugoin gardener at Stourhead. Tina can provide introduction. **Action Tina**

Brian Edwards – Stonehenge dahlias

List to be sent out and decision made on speakers **Action Julie/Naomi**

3. Update from Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre

i. Inclusion panel update

The WSHC Inclusion Panel is making great progress. It meets once a month with participants online and in-person. Following some training sessions from Lucy Whitfield (who has recently published a book on 'Extraordinary Ordinary Women of North Wiltshire' with Hobnob Press) the group has been researching case studies focussing initially on disability. These can be highlighted as part of disability history month in Nov/Dec.

One of the case studies relates to the newspaper record of the marriage of a 'deaf and dumb couple' in Conigre Chapel, Trowbridge on Christmas Day in 1904. The work of panel has revealed various details. The couple were Annie Florence Dicks and George A Kingman. George grew up in Steeple Ashton, a tailors apprentice, and moved to Trowbridge by age 15 lodging with a tailoress where he was still living just before his marriage to Annie. Annie seems to have had a more difficult life – in 1881 she was living in Trowbridge with her father, a woollen worker and her mother. She was noted as born in Frome. In 1891 she had moved to the Institute for Deaf and Dumb at Margate. The institution stated it was a deaf and dumb asylum for the education of the poor. Her family moved to Stroud, and a panel member has worked with a local history group to explore why Stroud fared better than Trowbridge with the cloth trade.

This is one case study of several, being researched by volunteers. They are doing brilliant work and moving forwards the panel hopes to get involved with oral history, and to get into the community. They want to create an exhibition of the case studies in time for Disability History month in November/December.

The panel has also received some funding via the Public Health team to provide access to Find My Past for two members to research online from home. Ruth Butler, Heritage Education Officer and Digital Lead has also received some of this funding to develop education packages for home-educated children.

4. Local History Workshops – save the date

Local history workshops run in partnership between Victoria County History and University of West of England will run at the History Centre for 10 sessions on Monday mornings 9.30am-1pm (30 minute break) from 7 October 2024 until March 2025.

Usually two lecturers will be involved, the sessions will be informal, handouts will be provided so notes do not need to be taken.

It will be a crash course on studying local history including topics such as reading old handwriting, using maps, landscape history, manorial courts etc. They have been run successfully in Gloucestershire for two years with 40 participants in year one, and over 30 in year two. You can come to as many or as few as you want. The searchroom at WSHC can accommodate a large group. John Chandler will create a flyer with the course syllabus. There is no formal booking live currently, information will be sent around but email naomi.oakley@wiltshire.gov.uk if you would like to express your interest or have a particular enquiry.

5. On behalf of Redlynch & District Local History Society – suggestions for funding and building a new website

Julie remembers a good website created recently by a local history society but couldn't currently remember which. If anyone has any advice or thoughts on developing a website please email naomi.oakley@wiltshire.gov.uk and we can share with Peter Roberts at Redlynch & District Local History Society and with the wider Network.

6. Malmesbury Athelstan 1100 celebrations – Anne Goodyear

King Athelstan was buried in Malmesbury Abbey, and 2024 marks 1100 years since he acceded to the throne. Malmesbury Athelstan 1100 celebrations are running from May to July 2024. A flyer with listing of events, and speakers was circulated with the Agenda for this meeting. There are many events happening including keynote speaker Michael Wood talking in Malmesbury Abbey (tickets selling fast) "The Lost Life of Athelstan: Further Reflections" Friday 5th July 7.30pm. The Very Revd Professor Sarah Foot is the following week: 'Athelstan, First King of Britain?' Friday 12th July 7.30pm – Town Hall. Many more events and speakers including community archaeology (test pits will be dug around Malmesbury with help from Cotswold Archaeology), music events and Anglo-Saxon re-enactments can be found and tickets purchased at:

<https://www.athelstan1100.co.uk/>

Anne Goodyear is a volunteer for Athelstan Museum and hopes to have some exhibits from big national institutions for an historic exhibition.

Malmesbury History Society: on 18th July host a talk on a Survey of Medieval Graffiti at Lacock Abbey. Guests are welcome. See <https://www.malmesburyhistorysociety.org.uk/> for details.

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

Tim Couzens:

The basic framework of new website is complete:
<https://draycotestatehistory.wordpress.com/>

Many pages currently 'work in progress' but preference was for a soft launch rather than waiting until it was perfect. He will be adding material.

Tim confirmed to Julie that he had found the process with Wordpress very easy to use.

Tina Richards, Tisbury History Society:

The Tisbury History Society archives are open once a month in Nadder Centre for visitors to come and find out anything they are wanting to know about families in Tisbury. It is open on first Monday each month. They are hoping to display a fossil collection including fossils collected by Etheldred Bennett, sister of John Bennett, MP for Wiltshire. There will be photographs of fossils collected by Etheldred held at Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as well as John Needham's fossil trees.

Eminent Tisburgers is progressing and is at the stage of getting a quote for publication with forty pieces from twenty contributors about people with a Tisbury connection and national profile including John Bradshaw, regicide of Charles I and Peter Brook, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under Margaret Thatcher. Grant applications are being submitted including to the Area Board.

Tina thanked Terry Bracher for finding out information on the history of her cottage. Terry thanked Tina for the input on the Explore Wiltshire app text for Tisbury. It has gone to the parish council for approval for a soft launch to test before a bigger launch. The information for Tisbury has been fantastic.

Terry Bracher, WSHC:

Explore Wiltshire app: Tisbury coming soon. Wilton had a soft launch recently. Melksham Without council are working with the History Society for content. Westbury also working on their trail. The app is going well with 11 or 12 currently live and a link to Malmesbury's independent trail. There will be more to share at a future meeting with plans for a What's On events section.

Nick Baxter:

Leading a walk "In the footsteps of Joseph Priestley - what Calne was like 250 years ago" on Saturday 20th July as part of the Calne 250 Priestley celebrations. The event is free and Nick will be dressed in 18th century attire. A piece written for Calne Wordfest Anthology will be published shortly.

Joseph Priestley lived in Calne 1773-1780 working for Lord Shelburne. During this period he published significant works including on experiments on air and phlogiston theory, discovering "dephlogisticated air" (oxygen). He was a natural philosopher, advocate of the Enlightenment and also had radical political views.

Queries regarding the 250th anniversary of Joseph Priestley's discovery of oxygen whilst living in Calne and the events planned to commemorate this can be addressed at priestley250@gmail.com

Generally busy bringing Wiltshire history to a wider audience, owing a debt to colleagues and enthusiasts within Wiltshire who have helped along the way.

North Wessex Downs Walking Festival 31st May - 9th June.

A number of walks focussed on the chalkland of north-east Wiltshire are included. Nick's walk, which was over-subscribed last year, "Treacle Bolley and the Margins of the River Kennet" is on Monday 3rd June. Details of all the walks can be found at <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/walking/walking-festival/>

Brian Edwards:

Calne over 65s Walking Football Club are producing an account of the history of walking football with interviews and bios of current players. It has a forward written by Telegraph football columnist and author Jim White. It is edited by Trevor Cherrett and Mo Needham. Current players range from 65-82 (both the goalie and striker are aged 82). The book is finished and in the final stages.

Wiltshire Thatcher exhibition at Wiltshire Museum is open. The image of a man carrying sticks appearing on the Led Zeppelin IV album cover was discovered by Brian in an album of photographs bought by Wiltshire Museum. Lisa Brown has put together an exhibition based on the image. It is open at Wiltshire Museum 10.00-5.00 Monday to Saturday until 1 September 2024, it features over 100 late Victorian photographs of Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset. It includes a restaging of image of Stonehenge using original equipment, a puppet of the stick man and a short animation.

Stonehenge Dahlia exhibition runs 27th -29 September 2024. It was spectacular and very popular last year and is likely to up its game again this year.

Brian has written three chapter contributions to a new book on the Cerne Giant which also includes a chapter on Wiltshire chalk horses by Garry Gibbons. A Date with the Two Cerne Giants: Reinvestigating an Iconic British Hill Figure Ed. Michael J Allen. **Action Brian to send details to Julie**

Jamie Wright:

Has a chapter in a new book on Salisbury and its suburbs, along with other contributors including Phil Harding, Lorraine Mephram, Wessex Archaeology and Dr Hadrian Cook, Society for Landscape Studies. It will be launched at Salisbury Museum annual weekend which is usually held July/Aug. **Action Jamie to send Julie details**

Gave a talk on Fisherton at Salisbury Library. Anne Trevett had organised new History Club meeting at the library. She had been in hospital but is out now.

Mentioned error in VCH on Fisherton although it is generally brilliant. Map of Andrews and Dury quoted as Gallows Gate but in fact shows gallows and turnpike gate (lettering is at an angle). John Chandler confirmed that errata had not been published for a long time, but the online version of the VCH can be altered.

Gillian Swanton:

Water meadows have been flooded and lambing in progress.

John Chandler:

Wiltshire Record Society: Helen Taylor's volume has now been published (on 1865 Bishop's Visitation for South Wilts) and has been well received. Next will be Tim Couzen's on Long letters later this year.

VCH: the revised draft for Chippenham is now online and John is working on the rest of the parishes for the volume. Editing will be finished later this year. Mark Forrest is working on Stourton and Maiden Bradley. Rosalind Johnson has nearly finished Clarendon. A popular history of the Kingtons (Kington St Michael and Kington Langley) based on the VCH

research but re-written with plenty of pictures is also in the works. John will produce a similar one on Chippenham eventually.

British Association for Local History: annual meeting will be on 16 May on Zoom. John will be speaking about Swindon.

HobNob: Lucy Whitfield's book on Extraordinary Women of North Wiltshire has recently been released. Upcoming are one on Henry Hunt and Dorchester gaol, a social history of Bath between the wars, James Holden's book on civic buildings, Ken Roger's on Weavers of Wiltshire and Somerset, a community history on Bishopstrow, Stuart Raymond's on Avebury and one on Chippenham by Chris Dallimore.

Julie noted how great it was so many publications on local history were being produced and the value of writing up research into some form of publication. John is receiving more proposals than he can publish.

Jean Belt, Report from the Purton Historical Society (sent via email)

- 1 In February 45 people attended the talk on The Romans in Purton when the 1987 and 2016 excavations at Northview, the old workhouse site, were described by Andy Hood.
- 2 After the AGM in March one of our members, Keith Allsop, spoke on How WW2 came to North Wiltshire.
- 3 On 25th April and 23rd May talks on The Ship Wilhelm Gustloff and The Source of the Thames will be given by Eve Booy and Bill King.
- 4 The Museum has reopened with a new exhibition - Purton in the 1980s.
- 5 On 6th July there will be a guided tour of Ringsbury Camp, led by Keith.
- 6 Bulletin 45 has been well received, sold out and will be reprinted.
- 7 Following the February talk The Romans in Purton Project, run by Foundations Archaeology in association with the PHS, is planning to dig 15-20 test pits in lawns belonging to residents in the Pavenhill and Dogridge area, where Roman artefacts have been discovered in the past. This will take place during the summer, on Saturdays from May onwards, when experts will be looking for pottery, bones and coins, in addition to mosaic and kiln remains. There has been a good response to the request for volunteers to take part.

Further info of interest:

Glyn Coy of Hidden Wiltshire is also advertising guided walks with him. <https://www.hiddenwiltshire.com/events>

Local History Month happening in May. Each of larger libraries are putting on an exhibition, with varied displays. Calne has one on Priestley, with lots happening in around that (including quilting project being displayed at the library). If any local history society would like to be involved then libraries are more than happy to work with groups to create displays etc. If anyone is interested, get in touch with Julie (Julie.Davis@wiltshire.gov.uk) Julie is encouraging Local History Champions at the local libraries to make connections with local enthusiasts.

8. Suggested date of next meeting

Next meeting in 3 months – July (likely 17th)