



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
11 March, 2020, 7-7.45pm
Devizes Library, Sheep Street, Devizes SN10 1DL

Minutes

Chaired by Julie Davis, County Local Studies Librarian, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk with Principal Archivist Donna Marshall (minutes).

1. Julie summarised minutes from the last meeting.

The list of Local Studies Champions which was emailed out following the last meeting will be added to the website at: <http://wshc.eu/our-services/wiltshire-local-studies/30-wiltshire-local-studies/262-wiltshire-local-history-network.html> List is on the website; it has been updated to reflect a couple of recent changes.

The RAF oral history event took place Saturday 30 November at WSHC. 11 people gave 16 stories which included the Berlin Airlift and the return of hostage Jackie Mann at RAF Lyneham, and a tortoise mascot!

2. Local History Month

Julie noted that Local History month planning was well under way for May 2020. The theme is chalk and cheese, looking at how the county's landscape and geology have shaped Wiltshire's communities. Local Studies Champions were working on a display for their library, focussing on something they feel was important to the local community, such as carpets at Wilton, cheese production in Chippenham and lacemaking in Malmesbury. A range of events have been planned, Julie advised looking out for the upcoming leaflet which will be distributed via the mailing list.

Highlighted was the talk to be given by John Chandler at Devizes Library on Wednesday 6 May, 7pm. Tickets £5.

“The Ox, the Sheep and the Moon

Wiltshire is a county of contrasts, often simply expressed in the comparison between chalk and cheese. The truth is rather more complicated, and to delve into the matter we need to explore how the county came into being; how geology affects settlement and settlement affects attitude; how boundaries have been drawn and redrawn; what divides us, but also what – in our history, folklore and allegiances – unites us; and finally, since most of us are

neither sheep farmers nor cheesemakers, do the same contrasts still exist or have they changed?"

Addendum: This event will now be rescheduled later in the year.

3. Introducing the new Principal Archivist at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre

Donna talked about her career to date: Donna was previously the Archive Manager at the Mercers' Company, a London livery company, and has 20 years' experience as an archivist in both private and public archives, including the family/estate archive of the Duke of Westminster, the Grosvenor Estate property archive, BBC television archive, and Wessex Film and Sound Archive at Hampshire Record Office. She is also a qualified librarian and has worked in academic libraries. Having a keen interest in archaeology, building history and planning, Donna is delighted to have joined the team at Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. Her contact details are: donna.marshall@wiltshire.gov.uk

4. The Rambler's 'Don't Lose Your Way' project

Julie introduced this crowdsourcing project. As of 1 Jan 2026 historic paths will no longer be added to the definitive rights of way maps. The Ramblers Association has set up a web site to enable people to help them map these paths <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way-2026.aspx>

The site is very easy to use. The country is split into squares with unavailable squares greyed out. Choose a square to begin searching. Use the yellow slider to move between current OS maps and two types of historic maps, the OS 6" 1888-1913 for paths and the Bartholomew's 1/2" for roads. Look to see if you can see any paths or roads on the old maps which no longer show up on the current map and use the pencil tool to highlight them. If you find nothing, there is an option to click on. Each square can be looked at separately by two people, then it goes to experts to check if paths/roads have been marked.

Julie noted that her husband was really enjoying using the site; he loves looking at maps, so it was right up his street. He had been surprised at the number of lost paths and roads he'd found. One point that she raised was the chance that the site could be misused – land owners could access a square twice, say there was nothing there and this wouldn't be checked. It was a shame that the squares could be checked many more times to build up a better statistical picture. It was asked if this would affect changes in the future; Julie presumed that as now, alterations to existing paths could be made, it would just be that they had been put back onto the rights of way maps. Julie felt that it was an important project to ensure the survival of public rights of way for future generations and encouraged people to take a look.

5. Archive research at WSHC, PRO and Salisbury Museum (Brian Edwards)

Unfortunately, Brian was not able to attend the meeting, but the group discussed whether the rules at WSHC regarding one document at a time were working for customers. The need for the ruling to protect the documents was understood, and it was felt that generally there were no real problems, although sometimes production was a little slow. John Chandler noted that many local archives have timed production and sometimes no production over the lunchtime period, Wiltshire was very lucky. Donna Marshall added that due to staff shortages there would be times, such as when a member of staff was ill, that would affect document production. Julie and Donna encouraged customers to bring their documents to the help desk if they were finding production times that day were slower than they would like. A further comment was given regarding the inability to compare documents which could cause difficulties when conducting research. Donna reassured the group that those items which needed to be looked at together, such as the tithe map and award, are still produced at the

same time. She advised customers to talk to the help desk staff if they were having these kinds of issues; it may be possible that their needs could be accommodated.

6. Networking & Discussion:

Unfortunately, the meeting had to be disbanded 15 minutes early with the library on automatic shutdown at 7.45pm. Instead of a round the group session, Julie invited those who had something specific to report to share it with the group and apologised for the abrupt finish which she will ensure will not happen again.

Stuart Raymond requested review copies of all Wiltshire history-based books. Stuart is book reviewer for WAHNS.

Request for information regarding women on the land in the Great War. It has been hard to find names of Women Land Army or before. If other researchers find named women on the land please contact julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk who will forward the information. Julie also thought that James Thomas at BBC Wiltshire Radio James.Thomas@bbc.co.uk would be interested in the story.

Jean Belt from Purton Historical Society wanted to let the group know about their new book '200 not out: the bicentenary story of Purton cricket club', published in 2019. Please contact Julie if you are interested in obtaining copies; she will pass the details on.

AOB: notices from those unable to attend

Dr Jane Howells:

For information for other members present: the West of England & South Wales Women's History Network annual conference will be in Swindon on 3 October, the subject is 'Women & Transport: historical perspectives'; call for papers is currently out, with a closing date of 24 April. See website: <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk>

Ruth Newman and Jane Howells, Sarum Chronicle update on activities:

Jane and I are both very involved on the editorial board of Sarum Chronicle, a journal in its 20th year which contains historical articles on Salisbury and its district. I attach our flyer for last year's publication Sarum Chronicle 19 for interest. We are currently gathering together material for Sarum Chronicle 20 due out in October/November this year. Articles will include the normal variety which we hope will stimulate interest and provide enjoyment for our readers. Contributions include Salisbury 18th century music festivals, some delightful illustrations and extracts from Bishop Wordsworth's picture postcards sent to his children in the early 20th century, Thomas Cromwell in Salisbury and 'Remembering Sidney Herbert' amongst others.

We also hold an annual lecture in November which this year will be given by Graham Bathe on the very topical Wolf Hall.

Our Sarum Studies series are semi-independent publications on aspects of Salisbury's history. Last year we published a history of Laverstock and Ford. This year we are celebrating the 800 years of Salisbury Cathedral with Sarum Studies 7 celebrating 'people and place' connected with the Cathedral - due for publication hopefully within the next two months. The volume is not a conventional history, rather a set of independent essays covering both past and present aspects of the cathedral's life: from new and important research on Old Sarum to the current volunteers; from architectural history and restorations

to the spire, to the cathedral's literary heritage and how its treasures were saved in World War Two. See www.sarumchronicle.wordpress.com

Chris Clynes:

Has produced a ringbound volume 'Early Wiltshire Cricket 1769-1880' and is happy to provide copies for £7 if collected or £9.50 posted. Email julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk and she can put you in touch.

Paul Knight:

Paul Knight has moved to the area from Lancashire where he gave talks for local history groups and is keen to continue to do so. He is a serving army officer with a PhD in history and was the WW1 project officer in the NW of England, now working at Warminster as SO2 Historical Analysis. His areas of research are mostly WWI, primarily the Territorials and Middle East (especially Iraq, where he served with the Army and where 5th Wiltshires served), but also the American War of Independence and 1940 Dunkirk campaign. Contact julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk to be put in touch.

Jim Beavis has published a *History of Salisbury Racecourse*, 2019, 216 pages, with illustrations. Again, contact Julie if you are interested in getting copies.

Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 9 September, Devizes Library, 7-8pm.