



Wiltshire Local History Network Meeting Minutes

Via Zoom

26 January 2022, 7.30pm (21 attendees)

Attending: Julie Davis (Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre) (Chair), Naomi Sackett (Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre), Tony Pratt, Tim Couzens, Ruth Newman, Jane Browning, Jo Hutchings, Jane B, Marion Coupe, Brian Edwards, Gillian Swanton, Peter Roberts, Jan Pennington, Pam from Pewsey, Julia Hunt, Jean Belt, Nick Baxter, John Chandler, Jane Syckelmoore, James Holden, Anne Trevett

Apologies: Liz Johnson: Easton Royal Heritage Group, Dr Jane Howells

Before beginning Julie shared that WSHC are holding an event as part of Chippenham Fringe Feb:



Wiltshire in Film and Song

Sunday 13 February 7pm-8pm at WSHC

Travel back in time with an evening of wonderful and little seen film footage of the county dating from the 1930s to the 1980s, accompanied by evocative live traditional west country music and song.

Themes include agriculture, celebrations and local industry including Westinghouse, and views of Chippenham past, brought to you by the Windrose Rural Media Trust in partnership with the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.

LIVE STREAMING This event will also be available to watch via a live stream. If you want to watch the event by live stream only please select that option at checkout. You only need to book one ticket per household to watch the live stream.

Book here: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/chippenham-fringe/wiltshire-in-film-and-song/egkardb>

Tickets are £5.00

Further information: <https://www.chippenhamfringe.co.uk/events/wiltshire-in-film-and-song/>

The event is funded by Chippenham Borough Lands Charity

Please do book to come along either in person or virtually!

1. Actions from previous meeting

One action carried forward. Julie has contacted Wiltshire Family History Society regarding a list of speakers but not heard back as yet.

Jane Syckelmoore later noted that she has now taken on general secretary role. The email was likely forwarded to John Hurley as he is the only one who hold a list of speakers, but he has been poorly and is 94. She will see if he has a list that is possible to share. Best wishes were sent to John Hurley for his recovery from participants.

Ruth Newman highlighted Jane Howells input following mention of a dearth of publications on the study of local history following Steven's Sources on Local History. Jane Howells highlighted several books (added to the previous minutes for [20 October 2021](#)) notably David Dymond's 'Researching & Writing History : a Guide for Local Historians' (Carnegie), 2016 which is due to be updated in 2022. British Association of Local History who are doing some great work producing useful publications for local historians.

2. Update on recent WSHC archive accessions/cataloguing that might be of particular local history interest – Naomi Sackett

Naomi shared information on the below collections which have recently been deposited at WSHC and which may be of interest to local historians. Many of the collections are not yet catalogued but can usually still be accessible. Please contact Naomi or the archive team if you would like to view any of them. Collections highlighted included:

Ref 4499 Personal archive of Margaret Green relating to Downton with additional material from her son, Ed Green who is the author of 'Downton and the First World War'. The collection includes photographs and postcards relating to Downton and an album with over 100 photographs from a POW camp and of life on the Western Front in WW1 in Belgium. The collection also includes various pamphlets and cuttings relating to history of Downton.

4532 Little Somerford parish chest material includes material relating to Queen Anne's Bounty, coal and clothing clubs, account books and even 32 removal orders dating from 1728 – 1841, and 13 marriage licences, 1814-1944 and information relating to charities including Kemble charity, William White (Church House Charity), Hicks Charity.

4506/1 A drawing made in 1761, fully titled "An Exact Plan and Section of Old Sarum: Also the East View of That Ancient City As It Then Stood (Before It's Reduction) in 553. Taken From the Best Authorities By F Merryweather". As well as an annotated plan of the castle, it

also features an artist's impression of the structure, plus a description of the features, building material and surroundings.

4417H material from a Swindon Quaker group who invited German prisoners of war to join them for refreshments and discussions at the meeting house following the end of WWII. The group also sent parcels of food, clothing and books to the families in Germany, as well as photographs of the graves of those who did not survive the war. The collection consists of correspondence from the families dating from 1947 to 1952 and gives an insight into everyday life in post-war Germany.

4496 Edwin Sloper Beaven (1857-1941) who was a noted maltster and barley breeder in the Warminster area. Documents re the history of the family and their property of Boreham Farm, Semington from the 1811 will of Samuel Beaven, a yeoman of Semington through accounts, inventories, mortgages and tenancy agreements. With terriers, sale catalogues and stock valuations, there is plenty of local history interest.

4509/1 Lease of a tenement and barn in Bemerton between Sir Richard Grobham Howe and John Spelt (described as papermaker). The depositor believed the mention of Spelt's profession lease may be significant in revealing a papermill at Bemerton. The VCH records a mill at Bemerton at the time of Domesday, another mention of one or two mills in 1584 and according to the VCH there was a working papermill from the 16th to the 19th centuries in West Harnham just outside Bemerton, so it is possible John Spelt was associated with this mill.

4417K HA Cope collection. Cope worked for Westinghouse for 46 years and in 1905 he joined the Westinghouse Patent Bureau, which was formed to deal with all patent business of the European and British Westinghouse Companies. Highlights from his collection include a variety of patents going back to the nineteenth century, plus a copy of a 1951 Westinghouse company magazine which outlines the various events which took place in Chippenham to celebrate the Festival of Britain.

3661D a file relating to the redevelopment of the former Harris Bacon factory site in Calne. The work at St Mary's Courtyard, 21,23 and 25 Church Street was undertaken on the instructions of the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust and the collection includes newsletter articles, annual reports and brochure entitled A Taste of Harris promoting an exhibition on the factory held at Marden House, plus a history of the Trust's work produced in 2007.

John Chandler highlighted that there is some dispute over the location of the paper mill. The consensus conclusion is that it was West Harnham. Anne Trevett noted that she knows the owners of the site and if people want to investigate what remains of the mill they can make contact with her.

Anne Trevett also shared the news that Jane Holmes who authored 'Foot Loose in South Wiltshire' sadly died just before Christmas.

3. Local History Month 2022

Local and Community History month will be taking place in May as always. There should be physical exhibitions in libraries this year with the larger libraries such as Bradford-on-Avon and Calne taking part.

Any local history groups are welcome to put a display up (manning the exhibition does not have to be necessary). Please get in touch with Julie on julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk if you would like to do this.

WSHC also hope to repeat a social media shout-out day to highlight local societies. Julie works with the South West Local Studies Librarian group to create hashtags on local history topics to share on particular dates topics will be food, buildings, water, gardens, work, stories, celebrations and animals and dates will be announced nearer the time. LHM has been a good way to enthuse people to share local history, and to promote groups and societies.

4. 1921 Census on Find My Past – accessing records for local history purposes

Peter Jones raised concerns regarding the availability of the 1921 census being prohibitively expensive as it currently stands. It can currently be viewed for free at one of three hubs – TNA, National Library of Wales and Manchester Central Library but otherwise requires payment of £2.50 per transcript and £3.50 per digital image.

Payment is required even for members of Find My Past although you do get a (limited) discount. If looking at the census a community level then it is extremely expensive.

John Chandler will raise the issue at a trustee meeting of the BALH and Julie will see if Terry Bracher can raise it at a meeting of the Archives and Record Association. Groups which can vocalise support for local history usage rather than genealogy could be pursued. The period of exclusivity to Find My Past is for 3 years.

Action: Issue to be taken forward by Julie, John and Terry

In terms of using the census Julie shared the following search tips – watch out for relatives disguised as visitors; any relative present in dwelling on census night was required to be recorded as a visitor. When viewing an image you also see a map of the registration district, the cover of the volume in which the return was bound and a copy of the enumerator's walking route, showing the streets included in that same book. A box at the bottom of census form also gives the number of rooms in the property.

5. Any other Business: Information share for those attending

James Holden – a short update on VCH progress. The joint project with Bremhill parish history group has come to its conclusion; a project in which researcher Louise Ryland-Epton wrote the chapter on Bremhill for the Chippenham volume (20) and also wrote a local history book, launched before Christmas. The book is an interesting read and high quality production and exemplar of what can be done for the local history of parish. As a community of scattered hamlets with no clear nucleus it has been successful but challenging. The book Bremhill Parish Through the Ages retails at £20. If you would like a copy then go to the website of the group - <https://www.bremhillparishhistory.com/>

Upcoming VCH events for engagement and to continue fund raising include walks in Salisbury area lead by eminent local historian David Richards.

23 March - he is conducting walk called Hidden History of Salisbury, exploring various less visited but interesting parts of the city £15.

27 April - David conducting walk around Stratford-Sub-Castle immediately below Old Sarum including history of the Pitt family.

Go to the VCH website <https://www.wiltshirehistory.org/> for booking.

VCH research work is ongoing. Volume 20 for Chippenham is getting towards the home straight and making good progress but still a few years from publication. The delay is gathering together enough money to pay for the research necessary to write the volume.

John Chandler – continues researching Chippenham's pubs. Also working hard on the Mere area for volume 19, quite a lot of progress there too.

They are making the new funding model work as well as possible. There remain pros and cons; the previous model of employing staff would have been preference. The aim is to make the work as palatable as they can despite precarious income. There is a good current team with Mark Forrest, Louise Ryland Epton, and Rosalind Johnson.

Book publishing coming up in the next few months: James Holden's Wiltshire Buildings Record book on Non-conformist chapels and meeting houses was sent off to the printer and is a monumental work including pictures of hundreds of chapels. The cost will be £20 although there is hopefully a discount for members of buildings record. The book covers all of the county.

Number of other books including a history of Salisbury Plain, Mary Sidney Herbert biography, Roman Excavations at Littlecote, also on Rebecca Smith from Bratton the last woman to be hanged for infanticide of her own children in 19th century.

Ruth Newman Although no longer involved with the Sarum Chronicle, she is aware they have a surplus of past volumes. If anyone is interested in past volumes of the Sarum Chronicle then she recommends writing to one of the editors to ask for them. It is likely they would be pleased to give copies to societies who would like them. Contact ruth.butler@wiltshire.gov.uk

Anne Trevett – highlights a project called Silver Salisbury about health and wellbeing. Its annual programme of events aims to get older people/less active people out and about. A thread of those is local history, particularly helping people coming to retirement housing get a feel for the place they have moved to. There was general agreement that looking at the history of where you live can play an important role in health and wellbeing. Similar projects could happen across the county.

Julie notes that WSHC are partners to the Celebrating Age Wiltshire project which has similar aims – it started as an Arts Council project and is run by the Wiltshire Music Centre. The scope is now increasingly including heritage. Dorothy Treasure, Wiltshire Buildings Record will be doing some work with them.

Julie Davis – the new [Community History](#) website has finally launched and should be an improvement on the previous - more intuitive and easier to browse and search, and easier to use on phones. We had a number of queries including a parish council asking whether we could add a website link to them. WHSC would like to go ahead and add links to parish and local history groups websites with the proviso that it is the responsibility of the parish council/group to contact us if an address or email contact goes out of date. They will then be amended and avoid broken links. There are already links to the VCH website and most of the larger organisations such as the Wiltshire Record Society and BALH. Please email julie.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk if you would like a group contact to be included on the Community History pages.

6. Suggested date of next meeting

End of April. Date to be confirmed nearer the time. This meeting will again be on Zoom and then perhaps a Summer/Autumn trial of an in-person meeting.