



Wiltshire Local History Network

Meeting
Wednesday 23 July 2025, 7.30pm
Online via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Julie Davis (Chair), Naomi Oakley (WSHC), Tina Richards, Sue Lewis, Lucy Lewis, Jean Belt, Jamie Wright, James Holden, Anne Trevett, Arlene Bishop, John Chandler, Nick Baxter

Apologies: Dr Jane Howells, Brian Edwards, Gill Swanton, Peter Roberts, Christina Staff, David Gilks, Ally McConnell (WSHC)

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

1. Actions from previous meeting

Study day – the remaining funds from Wiltshire Local History Forum are around £2000, to be confirmed by Julie and Terry.

Julie was to liaise with Box and Corsham library staff to acquire new publications mentioned by Claire Mills. **Action: Julie to carry forwards.**

Julie to send update re Local History Month – sent update to promote. If people could feedback where they might expect to see promoted so we can target.

Research area on website – for people to share what they are working on then they can make connections through us. Currently listed on the membership list, could add to website as a membership list. Try adding to a table on the landing page for interests – current interests, special projects, specialisms or knowledge happy to share. Aim of the Network to get people networking and sharing knowledge. **Action Naomi**

2. Update from Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre:

The Sounds of Southwest project, run by Bristol Archives, and involving archives across the South West, with the aim to preserve at-risk local historical audio collections alongside outreach projects, has culminated for WSHC with a physical and online exhibition titled 'Wiltshire's Modern Moonrakers'. Videos which form a part of the exhibitions were created by the young people who took part and show their responses to the audio recordings and

themes that formed part of the creative sessions held at the History Centre. They can be viewed at [Wiltshire's Modern Moonrakers - Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre](#) One video drew inspiration from an interview with Kathleen Wiltshire conducted by John Chandler in the 1980s, while a later video includes an oral history interview with John Chandler conducted as part of the project. Wiltshire photographer Mark Somerville was also interviewed by participants. A physical exhibition is also on display at libraries across the county. Julie noted there were challenges in being involved in a project which was not designed and managed by ourselves for the first time, but that it had been a lovely project.

There are a few other projects which are in the pipeline and more can be shared if funding is successful. A Swindon and District Pride project is almost at stage of a formal NLHF application. They are hopeful that they will get funding, and WSHC will be participating in that.

3. Feedback: May study day

Sue Lewis commented that the day was interesting with a broad offer. People's expectations were different across the audience as to what they were getting out of the day. A fellow attendee, who had not attended similar before, said they would come to another.

Jean Belt commented that she had brought two new people to the day and they were both delighted by the whole day.

Julie reported that people seemed happy with the venue. There were varied speakers, perhaps the programme was too full but all the talks sounded so interesting Julie didn't really want to decline any. Attendance was poor but may have been impacted by the VE day weekend. Julie has received mixed feedback and suggests that any future event could be led by a sub-committee of WLHN members taking a lead in choosing speakers, planning and publicity. Julie noted she would be happy to support with booking the venue and refreshments.

The total proceeds: £40.70 from the day were split between WSHC and Wiltshire VCH.

John Chandler proposed whether it might be possible to consider a joint meeting with British Association for Local History? BALH has a programme of regional conferences in conjunction with county societies – they might help to organise something with more publicity (had some in Taunton which have been successful). Julie agreed this may be something to investigate, and John was happy to liaise about it. Julie did a write up of the day for the BALH newsletter.

Action: Julie to liaise with John and investigate a possible study day with the BALH

4. Charter 800 - the planned Salisbury celebrations of the 800th anniversary of its charter in 2027 (Anne Trevett – to be shared at the next meeting or via email update)

Information provided by Anne following the meeting:

2027 will be the 800th anniversary of the granting of Salisbury's city charter by King Henry III, confirming the relocation of the cathedral from Old Sarum in 1220. The Charter granted certain rights and freedoms to its citizens, and establishing the Charter Market and the annual Charter Fair.

Salisbury 800 will celebrate the anniversary through a programme packed with events, activities, sports, music and talks. It will feed the soul, inform, educate, excite and above all, entertain people from far and wide.

Please see the attached PDF with [further details about current plans for Salisbury 800](#).

Susi Mason Chair Salisbury 800 Project Board also notes:

“It would be lovely to hear from anyone who would like to find out more about the Salisbury 800 celebrations as we are still filling the 6 month long programme of events” You can do so via this form <https://forms.office.com/e/wLy0njgYsn> or contact Susi on experiencepillar@gmail.com

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

Jane Howells (shared in absence):

The conference for the West of England & South West Wales Women’s History Network on “Historical perspectives on Women and Food” will take place on Saturday 11 October, Programme, booking form, and further details are now available on the website: <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/>

Brian Edwards (shared in absence)

I have an 8,000 word chapter titled 'Forever Changing Avebury' in a book remembering 3rd Stone which is edited by Neil Mortimer and due out this summer I believe. Title to be confirmed. Julie will add this to her stock list.

He has also shared an event which might be of interest to members – Ken Follett speaking at Salisbury Cathedral on 4 September about his latest novel ‘Circle of Days’ about Stonehenge [Ken Follett: Circle of Days - Salisbury Cathedral](#)

Christina Staff, Malmesbury History Society (in absence)

Sent some complimentary comments about a recent visit Malmesbury History Society made to WSHC when they came for a tour. The Society are celebrating their first 10 years this evening and so aren’t able to attend this meeting.

Julie highlighted this offer by WSHC for local societies to make visit to WSHC for a tour.

Sue Lewis came with Warminster U3A who were blown away and not stopped talking about it. Sophie Bunce and Ian Hicks were complimented for their sessions (Julie noted it was Sophie’s first event - she is training to be an archivist - and she loved it so thanks from her to the group too).

Lucy Lewis and Jean Belt, Purton Historical Society

1. Since our last meeting members of the Purton Historical Society have heard talks on “The Bells of St Mary’s Church”, “Extraordinary Wiltshire Women” and “Steps to Victory, the final years of WWII” – to coincide with the 80th anniversary of VE Day.
2. A short service held at the War Memorial on 8th May was arranged by the Royal British Legion and supported by the PHS.
3. The Museum reopened on 5th April. This year’s special exhibition is entitled “Purton in Photographs”.
4. The summer outing was to Arkell’s Brewery. The 2 hour guided tour was impressive; some of the brewing methods have not changed in 180 years.

5. At 2.00pm on Saturday 6th September Keith Allsop will lead a walk around the area to view WWII remains.

6. The "Romans in Purton" project has expanded to include "Searching for Saxons". Digging has resumed, but in May evidence of WWII activity was sought, to commemorate VE Day, and a footpath believed to connect huts of a small Prisoner of War camp, housing Italians, was found in the Hyde, while from a garden in the Fox the anti-tank ditch constructed in 1940 is clearly visible.

7. David Mitchell has researched the North Wessex Way and discovered that Purton was once an important place on the route from Oxford to Bristol. He has launched his own website and also produced a video on "The History of Purton" in which he acknowledges the help he received from Purton Museum and Lucy Lewis, our archivist, in particular!

Julie asked if they have seen the WW2 layer on Know Your Place historic mapping site. Jean will talk to the walk leader.

Sue Lewis, Warminster U3a Local History Group

The programme continues to well received by the group. They have around 22-26 members coming each month. They have also been on local trips including to Dents factory museum, and a day at Warminster school seeing behind the scenes (they are looking at opening other parts of the school to group tours next year). They will be going on a Tudor Trowbridge walkabout next spring alongside visiting the Museum. Julie noted it is nice to see firm foundations for Society being established.

Tina Richards, Tisbury Local History Society

They are having a successful year, membership up to 100, with an average 62-65 to each talk every month. The summer month talks are replaced by outings; recent outings included a visit to Beckford Tower, Bath.

They have been able to fill a couple of resignations from the committee with new people, although would like to attract some younger people.

The community book – Eminent Tisburgers has won the Alan Ball Local History Award. Around 250 copies have been sold, and it has gone into second print run which have included a sticker of Alan Ball Award. Profits from book go to the Tisbury History Society enabling them to continue to rent a room at the Nadder Centre, training the Society archivist and other things.

A member has contributed to a book to be published as part of the Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnerships Railway 200 celebrations.

An exhibition for VE Day in church which went well.

Tina has had the manorial rolls for Tisbury (1343-53) translated from Latin by Dr Claire Jarvis with a view to writing about the Black death in Tisbury.

Julie enquired how they manage the organisation of a talk each month, and Tina confirmed it is normally just two or three from the committee who take most responsibility.

Jamie Wright

Microphone issues prevented an update to the meeting.

James Holden, VCH

Progress continues on Vol 21 for Alderbury and SE of County. Vol 19 Mere and surrounds is close to completion (around 18 months to 2 years behind volume 20 for Chippenham and surrounds). The publication of volume 20 is scheduled for launch in the autumn next year with a large programme of events. See John's update below.

John Chandler

Last week saw the submission of revisions to the VCH volume 20 which is now complete with the final work to be on images, maps, and indexing. Chippenham Museum and other

groups will be coming together to have a history festival in Chippenham next autumn – Chippenham: Our History – to also celebrate the 400 year anniversary of the birth John Aubrey near Kington St Michael.

HobNob Press: 3 Wiltshire related publications: 'Farm buildings in Wiltshire' (WBR) Pam Slocombe, Wiltshire and Somerset woollen weavers by late Ken Rogers. A companion to his Wiltshire and Somerset woollen mills, published 1976 and 'Made in Swindon: a Social History, 1840s – 1940s', edited by Philip Garrahan.

About to publish book on Rise of English Poltergeist by Dr Andrew Pickering which features some Tidworth drummer content.

A spin-off from VCH vol 20 on Langley Burrell and Kellaways will be written by Louise Ryland-Epton similar to the Kingtons edition, which itself followed the popular Bremhill volume. John will publish one for Chippenham. VCH is approving of this work based on the research for the main VCH volume, and they are badged as VCH publications. Julie agreed that they are a great addition – more accessible, less academic, easier to digest.

Wiltshire Record Society had its AGM at Kennet Valley Hall. The next volume is Stuart Raymond's on Avebury.

Nick Baxter, Malmesbury History Society

They have a full programme, 150 members. Nick has taken a lead on a project studying the Vicar's Library of St. Mary's Marlborough (bequeathed to the vicars in 1678). There have been various phases of poor storage, and the collection was deposited on permanent loan to Bodleian in 1985. Large numbers of manuscripts are in Latin or Greek. Nick to look at guiding a walk. Julie's memory box group covered background to the St Marys Library in one of their sessions.

The Marlborough Summer School did not happen, but the White Horse bookshop ran one and Nick delivered a guided walk.

Nick thanked Julie for her efforts in May. He celebrated the achievements of societies across the county, and the work of the VCH etc and the general active and exciting local history scene in Wiltshire. He also noted the value and benefit of the WLHN in bringing together societies and local history enthusiasts from across the county, where people may have less familiarity.

Julie agreed it is great to have the Network with its core purpose of sharing knowledge, skills and enthusiasm and its core active membership.

Arlene, Little Somerford History Group

Arlene has instigated a new history group in Little Somerford. The first meeting had over 20 people attend and Arlene delivered a Powerpoint. There is potential for individuals to make use of material gathered by Arlene to inspire talks or publications. Current plans include transcription of school log books from photographs taken by Arlene (she has discussed the logistics and legalities of this with Sophie at WSHC). A larger project is to produce a local history trail map which highlights buildings of historical interest in the village including houses, the Church, mill, school etc. The map will be drawn by Marilyn Trew, Wootton Bassett and the reverse will include QR codes which link to information and interesting nuggets about each site. The launch is planned for next summer.

Arlene is keen have guidance from other groups about the process of setting up and establishing a successful local history group. Terry and Julie suggested a group visit to the

History Centre had proved helpful to other groups just starting out; they would be happy to host the Little Somerford group.

Discussion also followed about increasing attendance to meetings of WLHN meetings given the mailing list goes out to over 100 people. Sue Lewis wondered about providing a recorded meeting so people could get an idea how it works. Julie thought this might be a good plan and attendees were happy with the idea. Attendees would be made aware prior to the meeting, and Julie could ensure setting were such that people joined with their cameras off and could choose to turn them on.

Terry Bracher, WSHC

The Explore Wiltshire App is available for groups to upload town/village trails. It is a location aware app hosted by Wiltshire Council. It ties to market towns, so for example, a Little Somerford tour would be accessible under Chippenham. It can host oral history, memories, cinefilm, photos, text, as well as treasure hunts and challenges.

The old quiet workspace in the History Centre has become the new Wiltshire Performing Arts library. They loan collections of drama sets and music scores to local groups (drama groups, theatre groups, orchestra etc) and can also book in browsing visits. Wiltshire Libraries are investing in it – bucking a national trend.

Congratulations to Tina on the Alan Ball Award going to the Eminent Tisburgers book. A reminder to submit any publication produced this calendar year. Dates for acceptance to Alan Ball award generally advertised through network.

6. Suggested date of next meeting

Wednesday 22nd October, 7.30pm via Zoom