



Hello and Welcome to the Wiltshire OPC Newsletter

This is the first newsletter for some time, since the passing of Christine Brooks, and I have some amazing boots to try and fill.

Just a quick introduction to myself.

I have been researching family History since 1969 when I worked in the cataloguing department of the County Library in Winchester. My last job before retiring was as an Archives Officer at the County Record Office in County Durham.

My ancestry on my father's side has been traced through all lines back to the beginning of the parish registers. His ancestry is split between Hampshire and Wiltshire so I have feet in both camps. I joined OPC a few years back and volunteered as OPCs for a couple of parishes I had an interest in, this now runs to several parishes. I became involved with the Soldiers on-line mapping project with Teresa and have transcribed some parish registers for the OPC.

When Teresa suggested the Newsletter could be revived, I seem to have found myself volunteering. I am hoping to run the Newsletter along the lines of some informative articles, some chat, some progress and pitfalls that members have encountered, and I am open to suggestion as to content for future newsletters

This is pretty much a trial run so please dive in and hopefully enjoy.



My own personal Journey into family History

Sandy Mursell

I have been researching my family history for about 20 years, thinking it could become an interesting retirement hobby. It would get us out of the house and standing up to our knees in wet grass in a churchyard instead! We also had a purpose in life of visiting places that were of specific interest to us - seeing where our ancestors lived.

Some of the most fruitful visits have been to local open days, some put on by small groups and other by the county Family History Societies.

One particularly springs to mind and that is the Copythorne Local History Society. They hold an open day in March. This is in the New Forest area so, as in all small villages, everyone knows everyone else. The locals display their family photos and anecdotes, Scout, Guide, W I and other organisations display an amazing amount of information and old photos. The locals love to talk about their memories of school and work and I find that I am related in some way to so many of them as my Granny came from that area. I learn so much and gather many photos.

Other nearby villages also celebrate different occasions - centenaries, local family get together, the list is endless and the information priceless. I have been to so many over the last few years and made many friends and new relatives. One back in 2007 was different - it was a King family reunion that I was invited to attend being a descendant of Benjamin King of 1663 from Landford. After the initial introductions with the 30 or so people there - the main question was 'are you a King or married to a King'. Answer was neither - this was a mystery to the rest of the room! The answer was - I am Benjamin King's 7th great granddaughter. From all of the people there I was the only direct line descendant. I suddenly became very popular.

Of course, but equally interesting in a different way are all the larger Family History days. They supply more of the historical dates, wills and other documentation. This year I will go to Wiltshire FH Open Day on 15th June and Hampshire Jubilee celebration on the weekend of 6/7th July where I hope to find many more interesting facts and people. Regrettable I am on holiday for the Oxfordshire FH Day on 26th October.

I could go on for pages of how I met various relatives in this country and abroad and swapped so much information, but I don't want to bore you all.

Sandy has mentioned various villages organising local and family history days, there are one name family groups who have regular meet ups and in the world of social media, many of these groups advertise online, if you have an interest in a particular village or name it may prove useful to join the group and share information.

WILTSHIRE FHS News

In collaboration with the Wiltshire Family History Society, The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre are excited to announce that from Wednesday 3rd of July, the Society will have a family history expert on hand to answer all your tricky genealogy questions. This service will be available on the first Wednesday of the month at the History Centre. 30-minute appointments can now be booked for the following dates:

- 3 July
- 7 August
- 4 September
- 2 October
- 6 November
- 4 December
- 8 January 2025

To book an appointment, please email us at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk or telephone on 01249 705500

Wiltshire OPC Census Project

John Pope



The OPC census team was formed in 2018 with the task of transcribing Wiltshire census decades which were not already free-to-view elsewhere.

This is overseen by me, who prior to joining the OPC was a census transcriber and validator for FreeCen.

To date 945 enumerator districts, transcribed by 36 volunteers have been published. and their efforts were very much appreciated, I must add that we have received many donations from outside the team which are always welcome.

Only one transcriber has been with me from the start, Julie Gerber who to date has transcribed 144 pieces, well done!

We are only a small team these days consisting of Gill Cannell, Julie Gerber, Stephanie Heuston and myself who plod along and hopefully will achieve the magic figure of 1000 by the end of 2024.



The Swing Riots in Wiltshire 1830

Val Everson



Do you have an ancestor who was involved in these riots, and were they transported to Van Daemons Land, perhaps you have a relative who disappears from your tree, and you can not find a burial for him in the U.K.

The riots occurring in 1830 were led by agricultural labourers who were protesting about the mechanisation of their jobs. But things are never that simple.

Dissatisfaction amongst the labouring poor who worked the land for the wealthy landowners began in the 1770s with the enclosure of common land, by 1830 nearly six million acres of land had been enclosed and distributed amongst the wealthy landowners. This was land that had been commonly used by the poorer classes to graze their beasts and grow crops.

Agricultural labourers relied on the Hiring Fairs to provide them with guaranteed employment for the duration of a year, but because of frequent poor harvests, landowners started to offer shorter contracts sometimes usually weeks or months, which led to insecurity.

From 1803 to 1815 Britain had been at war with Napoleon, this led to a shortage of labour and high corn prices, however when peace was secured in 1815, there was a flood of unemployed soldiers disembarking at ports across southern England, there were not enough jobs to fill the demand, and so wages dropped, and unemployment rose. Grain which had held its price during the war years also dropped in price, and the outlook became dire for the working poor.

The mechanisation of farm equipment including the threshing machine, led to more unrest and farm labourers were joined by political radicals whose leader was a man called William Cobbett. At this point things began to escalate, with landowners receiving letters from 'Captain Swing' notifying them of the intent to destroy the mechanised machinery.

Captain Swing was the 'titular' head of a movement of very disgruntled labours who made their presence felt first in Kent and West Sussex before spreading to Hampshire and Wiltshire. The most impact in Hampshire was around the Andover area. In Wiltshire the riots impacted quite heavily in the Salisbury area, November 1830 being the culmination of the unrest. There were 252 deaths and over 1000 people being transported to Australia. During the riots, it's thought around 100 threshing machines were destroyed, at least one cottage was burnt down and 20 instances of rick burning were reported.

Sadley for my relatives in the parish of Earldoms, Whiteparish, the Swing Riots were to have quite an impact on the family

John Thomas Mitchell Gange was born in 1809 at Earldoms, son of James Gange and Susanna Mitchell. He was the eight child and third son of nine children. That he took part in the riots is not at question, though perhaps his sentencing was harsh, as others arrested with hi were either released or had their sentence commuted to one years hard labour.

John Thomas appeared at the special Commission of Assize 27 December 1830 accused with other persons of riotously and tumultuously assembling and burning and destroying a threshing machine, the property of Mr Timothy Rumble. He was also accused of committing other acts of violence at West Grimstead. At the age of twenty he was sentenced and transported for 7 years.

"That the said Thomas Gange is one of numerous poor but industrious family all of whom have been trained by an aged Father and Mother to habits of honest labour and until the commission of this much regretted offence no charge or implication of improper conduct was ever alleged against either of them. That the said Thomas Gange has always contributed to the support of his aged parents and up to the time of committing such offence was distinguished for his Honesty Sobriety and general good conduct in the service of his Master, who, should your Majesty be graciously pleased to extend your Royal Mercy in this behalf, will again receive him into his Employment.

I have known his father and mother nearly fourteen years, they are very poor, but very honest, industrious people, and seventy years old, one of their daughters lived with me five years, and married from my house, her sister is now living with me and has been in my service nearly eight years, the family live in the parish of Whiteparish".¹

This petition to Lord Melbourne was written by Henry Rooke² of Whiteparish in 1831 but unfortunately had little effect.

¹ National Archives Collective petition HO17/50/85

² Henry Rooke, gent. nephew of John Rooke heir to ownership of land in Downton known as Throupe

According to the trial they state John Thomas Gange was aged as 23, single, 5ft 6 ¼, of fair complexion, brown hair and grey eyes, his occupation was ploughman, he could read and write, his religion was protestant and was from Earldoms near Salisbury.

He was transported on board the ship 'Eliza' to Van Daemons Land and was assigned to T.C. Simpson Esquire on his arrival in 1832.

It is noted in his record that he was granted a 'Ticket to Leave' on 4 February 1835 and issued with a Free pardon no 279 on 3 February 1836.

to be continued...

Ever Had An Awkward Moment?

Sandy M.

I have changed the names as there may be people on this site who, unknowingly, are involved. My granny, born in the late 1870s, lived in Wiltshire, one of 4 children.

Misfortune struck when her father's sister died in childbirth and the father didn't feel that he could bring up a child alone. So Daisy came to live as one of my granny's family.

Moving on to a few years ago and I am busy looking at this family on Ancestry and I found someone was researching Daisy. I immediately contacted this person who I have named Rose, and yes, Daisy was her granny. This made Rose and I third cousins. We chatted online for a while and I sent photos of Daisy as a young girl as she only had photos of her granny in her later years.

After a few emails she mentioned that she knew nothing of father's background and she had this curious feeling that he just didn't look like his brothers. This is the awkward moment for me as I knew the story as told through the family. This may be an embarrassing conversation. After much deliberation, I replied yes I knew Daisy's history. As she had voiced concerns about her father's parentage I asked if she really wanted to know - good or bad.

Her granny had a child out of wedlock, the father was purported to be a local man, (not her future husband) - son no 1, she later married and had a further two sons.

Regrettably, her husband was killed in France. Eighteen months after his death she had another son, Rose's father, and on the birth certificate she named her late husband as the father, - interesting! There are also other unsubstantiated anecdotes.

Rose and I have met and chatted about the family and she was pleased to know more of the story, We are now searching for more information on her paternal line.

Featured Resources - apart from our own!

Wiltshire and Swindon Archives



The Wiltshire and Swindon Archives Centre is home to over 800 years of History with records dating to the 12th Century.

The Centre provides free access to Parish Registers (1538 - 1916) and Wills and Probate (1530 - 1858) as well as many other documents useful to historians. These can be accessed at the Centre or online in your own home by clicking on a link on their homepage, this link takes you direct to Ancestry.co.uk, which holds copies of the

original records.

You can also search their online catalogue with detailed instructions on how to conduct your search.

They produce a 'Wiltshire List' which shows books in their Local Studies Library and keeps you up to date with the latest additions.

A Newsletter is produced and is available by emailing heritageadmin@wiltshire.gov.uk the last one issued was Spring 2024.

They also have a WSHC blog and a page on Facebook.

Well that's it folks!

Our first Newsletter since 2017

We would seriously welcome feedback

If you have something to say that can be included in the newsletter - Up coming events,
A problem finding a page - just let us know

You can message us via the OPC Facebook page or by contacting us via the Website Contact Us Option on the Home Page.

Stop Press

News Received on 15th June 2024 via Amanda Wood-Woodley



Ruth Wood

It is with great regret and sadness that we announce the sad loss of Ruth who passed away on the 15th June. Ruth was a great supporter of the OPC Project adopting 6 parishes in the North of the County. Her loss as a friend and colleague will leave a huge gap.

For those of you who did not know Ruth in person. She was just an amazing lady willing to help anyone she could. Ruth I believe came from the Swindon area but had moved away for sometime to other parts. Ruth returned to her roots and

became more involved in the project. In 2018 it was decided to hold a meet up at Avebury. Ruth attended that meeting travelling by bus with a friend. You might ask why is that significant? At that meeting for the first time I became aware that Ruth was an amputee. You would never think it - she was just a whirlwind of laughter and happiness. It soon became apparent that despite her situation she would not let anything beat her. She loved everything North African and East Mediterranean. So much so that I was chatting to her via Messenger and she said sorry got to go my belly dance class starts in an hour and I need to prepare. That was Ruth always happy to try things to push her own boundaries. Ruth never saw her amputation as a disability even though she faced many uphill battles. Her home in Swindon was a sanctuary for her. Her balcony was turned into a festoon of colour since she loved to garden.

Ruth attended every meet up we held. Sadly I was unable to attend the one she hosted in Swindon but she put on a very entertaining meet with a guest speaker.

The only time I heard her complain was at the Salisbury meet apparently her hotel was a boutique one with no lift but the battler she was made her determined to climb those stairs to her boutique room.

The last time we met up was at Devizes. The resourceful lady that she was managed to get a friend to drop her off and pick her up again. After the meal the group went their separate ways to visit the museum. Ruth's lift wasn't due for a few hours so I and my daughter stayed with her in the hotel bar. I saw Ruth for the first time as the cheeky lady she no doubt was. You may be asking why what happened? Ruth and I were suddenly aware of this Adonis wandering around the hotel. He was tall, nice tanned skin, obvious worked out but oh boy his hair was just below his shoulders and his eyes twinkled. He had a very well kempt beard and perfect white teeth when he smiled. He looked a bit like Ryland Clark but the teeth didn't overwhelm his features. Ruth the cheeky lady that she was called the said Adonis over and said are you a waiter if so could you get me a long tall cold drink from the bar please. By this time I was under the table crying with laughter. Then, the coup de resistance Ruth calmly said I need the drink because if I didn't have hot flushes when I sat down I certainly have them now. Adonis took it all in his stride he wasn't a waiter just some lucky bride to be's intended. He actually went to the bar and brought her back a very large G & T.

Well that's Ruth and I know that we are going to miss her at future meet ups tremendously as well as losing a dear dear friend. Our thoughts are with her family and friends. May she rest in peace and I know for sure she will be causing mayhem over that rainbow bridge. All our love and thanks Ruth xxxxxx