

## Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, August 2023

### MEETINGS REMINDER – see below for further details

**10 August** – Swindon Branch Members' Summer Social

**24 August** – No meeting this month



If only pictures could TELL their story!

So many interesting features in our local landscape – maybe even connected to some of our own ancestors. We'll never know!

This photo of nearby Wayland's Smithy was taken by Ken Mumford recently. Two more at the end of this newsletter.

Ken has added this explanation of the site: **Wayland's Smithy** is an Early Neolithic chambered long barrow located near the village of Ashbury in the south-central English county of Oxfordshire. The barrow is believed to have been constructed about 3600 BC by pastoral communities shortly after the introduction of agriculture to the British Isles from continental Europe. Although part of an architectural tradition of long barrow building that was widespread across Neolithic Europe, Wayland's Smithy belongs to a localised regional variant of barrows - found only in the south-west of Britain - known as the Severn-Cotswold group. Wayland's Smithy is one of the best surviving examples of this type of barrow.

### JOHN'S BIT

When I introduced Judy Rouse to the meeting on Thursday I said I had steam in my blood. My brother, uncles, father, grandfather and great grandfather all worked inside (the GWR factory.) I was looking for insight into researching these ancestors, but I wasn't prepared for the emotional journey I went on.

Various subjects or just words caused me flashbacks. For example the mention of "free passes". (GWR staff had a number of free passes each year so they and their families could travel free of charge on the railways), holidays in Blackpool, Penzance, Weymouth and numerous trips to Cardiff and Gloucester flashed before me. When Purton was mentioned it wasn't the village I thought of, no, it was LARDY CAKE, because most Fridays my dad would bring home this "delicacy" purchased at the factory gates produced at a Purton Bakery.

Many other things mentioned had my mind going to the extent that at one point I thought I could smell my dad's coat which hung in the hall in Cypress Grove, there was a distinctive factory smell. No one warns you how emotional, researching your family can be, but it is great journey and that's why we enjoy your contributions to our newsletter. Enjoy. **JOHN MILLS**

NOTE: Report on Judy Rouse's 'Railway Ancestry' talk will be in the next Newsletter.

## WHAT'S COMING UP

**10 August** – For Swindon Members only: Tour around the railway village house with Pam and Mike Stubbs, followed by tea and cakes at The Bakers.

**24 August** – No meeting this month

## WILTSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY – VIRTUAL MEETING – via ZOOM

The next in the series will take place on **Tuesday 29th August (7.30pm UK time; repeated on the 31st August): John Hanson FSG on “Understanding the 1921 Census”** – this is an excellent talk, as John has put together a comprehensive guide to the census, with ideas that most of us may never have thought of.

Anyone who would like to join the session should contact Graham Warmington on [warmingtongraham@gmail.com](mailto:warmingtongraham@gmail.com)

If you missed the talk by Mike and Pam Stubbs on the subject of : **‘Where Residents of the Railway Village would have shopped in the 19<sup>th</sup> century’** you can catch it again on Wednesday 30 August at 7.00 pm at the Even Swindon Community Centre, Jennings Street, when they will be repeating the talk for the Rodbourne Community History Group. Fee £2.00.

For further information of this and the RCHG's 2023 talks programme please follow the link below and click on the title of the talk.

<https://www.rodbournehistory.org/events/>

## UPDATE – Family History Session at Local Studies

On Monday 17 July we held an Open Family History Session at Local Studies, Swindon Central Library. We used to hold these sessions fairly regularly but had to stop because of Library cutbacks and then Covid.

The first session seemed to be quite successful and the four of us were kept busy for the whole two hours trying to help with various queries – and brick walls. It was a most interesting session, we met some lovely people, and we've been asked to do it again. So the next two dates will be:

Monday 18 September

Monday 20 November

PLEASE PASS ON TO ANYONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED

## REPORTS ...

### **DRAINPIPE TROUSERS TO ROCK ‘n’ ROLL – Graham Sutherland 13 July 2023**

Graham started by giving a very short background history of how things were world-wide following WW2.

Then – an amusing and packed trip down memory lane back to the 1950s.

There were still ration books around, issued by the Ministry of Food. There were anti-nuclear marches (noticing dress, baby being carried and map reading) – all rather different to today. There was also the 1951 Festival of Britain indicating the end of war austerity.

Illustrated with numerous posters and advertisements it was brought to our attention just how things have changed. A good example - dance partners dressed in collar and tie and posh dress. Hats/scarves were normal everyday accessories.

No single queues in those days, you simply joined one in, for example, a post office and hoped to get served quickly. Remember inkwells and dip pens?

Families moved from slum areas onto estates, perhaps losing some of the community spirit. Homes were decorated with quite startling wallpaper and formica was the in-thing. Adverts showed fitted kitchens, large and well-stocked fridges and the lady-of-the-house complete with frilly apron and high-heels. Washing could be sent to a laundry, finances permitting, and washing machines were on the market for £25 plus £6 5s purchase tax. Washing powders, such as Tide and Rinso were advertised, often using catchy rhymes. Electric irons replaced the old flat irons.

Other innovative items included zips, stocking/nylons, sliced cheese, ice cream, Bachelors food, Bovril, instant coffee in tins, hot chocolate, and then there were the TV chef presenters such as Philip Harben and Fanny Cradock. Some adverts started using personalities.

Advertisements of the day give an indication of normal everyday life of the time eg scenes in front of a real coal fire and a midwife cycling off in the rain to work – and those hats! Some adverts were rather more showy like that for flamboyant bathing caps, Butlins holiday camps, there were also cigarette ads and the all-important Bronco and Izal T Rolls.

Then there were the radio/wireless programmes like Dick Barton, and the black-and-white war films. Teddy Boys came onto the scene – young lads now with a little money in their pockets – quite smartly dressed and tidy hair. That brings us to Brylcreem!

There were traffic jams, although not as we know them today, and road works that were started and completed relatively quickly and without fuss. Parking meters came into existence and various brands of fuel advertised. The milkman delivered to our doors, the first Eagle comic popped through our doors (as did The Girl). The word 'gay' in a wool advert had an entirely different meaning.

To those of us of a 'certain age' going back in time to the 1950s brought back so many thoughts and memories from 70 years ago. How things change!

### **VISIT TO SEVINGTON SCHOOL Thursday 22 June 2023**

Thanks to Paul Cole and Wendy Burrows for some of the photos. There is a more-detailed report if anyone wants to see it – contact [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)



Dinah, our guide, took us firstly to the lovely church at Leigh Delamere which dates from medieval times.

A beautiful little village church, enlarged with Joseph Neeld's inheritance and hopes of personal grandeur.

Joseph Neeld was not an aristocrat, but became 'gentry' when he inherited a fortune in 1827 at the age of 39 and purchased Grittleton estate. He married the daughter of Lord Shaftesbury who was in her early 30s, but the marriage broke up after only a very few weeks. There were accusations and counter-accusations.

Joseph Neeld lived on for a further 25 years as landowner and MP, having bought (!) himself into parliament in 1830. Because voting was 'open' rather than in secret, his estate workers would probably have felt obliged, or even been intimidated, to vote for him. We were told, however, that quite possibly he never actually spoke in parliament but the position gave him a certain 'standing' in the local community.

The School House was built, in the then fashionable neo-gothic style, in 1848 by Joseph Neeld for the children of his estate workers.

The building comprised a schoolroom with adjoining teacher's house which had a parlour, kitchen and two bedrooms. The bellcote above the school is striking and was salvaged, along with other things, from the Leigh Delamere church when it was reconstructed.



John and Mary Wilmot lived on the premises in 1851 when Mary was shown as being the schoolteacher.

Miss Elizabeth Squire was engaged as schoolteacher in 1860 at the age of 19 and remained in that position until the school closed in 1913 through lack of pupils. There were never more than 22 pupils, aged 5 through to about 12, although some boys left at 10 to go out to work. It was a regular occurrence for pupils to take time off school when required to help in the fields, harvest time and for bird-scaring. Attendance was therefore sporadic which would have been very concerning as inspectors required regular updates, and wages were paid on attendance and exam/test results.

The curriculum was narrow, to begin with the three 'R's, but was later expanded and designed to fit pupils for their station in life, probably that of the farm labourer on the estate, or for domestic service.



When Miss Squire retired, the schoolroom was left untouched and is still complete with books, desks with inkwells and benches, pictures (particularly of Queen Victoria), two small Union Jack flags on the mantle shelf above the original fireplace (the fire is lit in winter for visitors), a large abacus, a dunce-hat (only used for unruly children), moral sayings scattered around, and lots more.



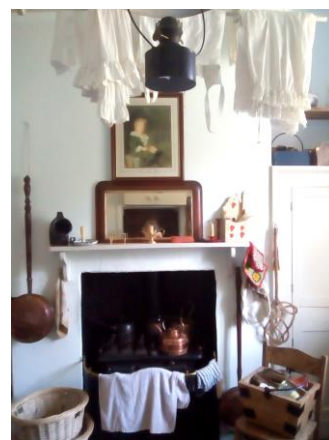
Sitting at her desk, Miss Squire, aka Denise, gave us a brief history of the school and we had a £sd maths lesson on the blackboard, complete with pointer.

We were given a small booklet (would have been a slate in Victorian times) in which to copy and form our letters/strokes in the correct manner. Then came diction and rote words and rhymes.



Elizabeth Squire died in 1927 and is buried near a tree in the Leigh Delamere churchyard.

Adjoining the school was the house, all perfectly preserved.



The afternoon was suitably rounded off with large teapots of tea (refills-a-plenty) with bone-china teacups and saucers, and home-made scones, with cream and jam, and shortcake biscuits. We could choose where to eat and drink – inside the parlour, in the garden or in front of the school.

## FROM LAST TIME

**From Paul Cole:** As an update on your piece about Red Cross/Radnor street, there have been flats built where the old electrical store was (can't remember what it was called). Anyway the road off Radnor Street into the entrance of these properties is called Red Cross Place, so the name hasn't been forgotten completely.

**Sons of the Soil:** In our previous Newsletter we reported on the recent Zoom meeting on the subject of agricultural labourers. One of points raised was 'health hazards – accidents etc.' It brought to mind an incident that caused the death of my great great grandfather Thomas Peck on 24 November 1891 and which was reported in a local newspaper. Here is the report ...  
Yvonne

## OGBOURNE ST GEORGE

**FATAL ACCIDENT:** On Tuesday afternoon between 4 and 5 o'clock a shocking accident happened to a man named Thomas Peck, 66 years of age, who had for many years worked as a labourer for Mr J H Gale. He got on a wagon in Mr Nicholls's\* yard to help Charles Caswell, another labourer, unload some coal. He climbed up from the front wheel and had just got on the wagon when he appears to have slipped and fell off at the place where he got up. He pitched on his head on a flint stone and, his neck being broken, he was killed on the spot. As he was falling he exclaimed "Oh dear!"

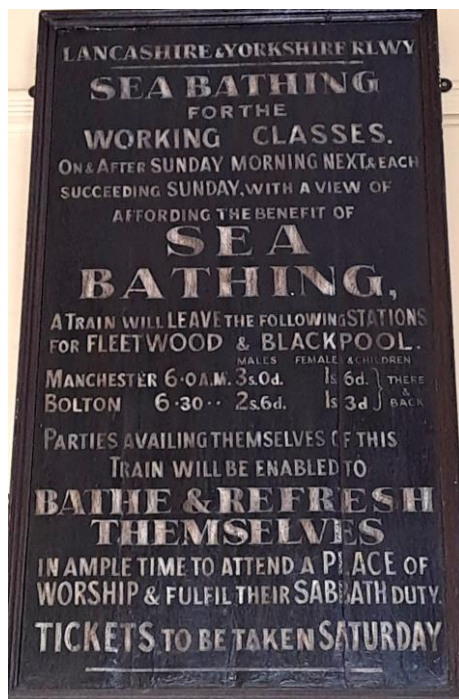
Caswell got off the wagon and found the deceased lying on the ground motionless with his neck doubled under him. He raised the deceased's head and found that life was extinct. He then placed him on some straw a few feet away, and sent for the doctor.

An inquest was held at the Crown Inn by Mr W E N Browne on Tuesday morning. The first witness was Charles Caswell who stated that he was on the wagon and called to the deceased to get up to help him. He got on the wagon but, just as he did so, fell back to the ground, as described above. The deceased was a little lame on one leg but could generally do a very good day's work. He was not subject to fits, nor was he the worse for liquor.

Dr Bedford from the surgery of Dr Maurice, stated that he was called to the deceased. He had an incised wound, about two inches by one, on the frontal bone just above the forehead. The bone was only grazed not fractured. On examining the back of the neck he found that the upper part of the spinal column had been broken, close to the head. Death must have been instantaneous. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

\*There was a Clarence Henry Nichols, 28 year old farmer born Chiseldon living at Ogbourne St George at the time of the 1891 census.

## LOVE THIS ONE FROM JUDY ROUSE ...



In response to the question 'Remember Trip?' last time, Judy Rouse has sent in this wonderful piece of history.

She discovered the poster displayed in a preserved railway station on the Isle of Man. It probably dates to the mid 1870s and relates to the summer period called Wakes Weeks when all the Lancashire and Yorkshire mills and factories closed for a week and everyone went to the seaside, more often than not Blackpool.

It seems to have been Lancashire's equivalent of our Trip week. The different mill towns staggered their Wakes Week over the July/August period because Blackpool couldn't cope with the influx of visitors if they all had the same week, hence the offer being for a number of Sundays over the period.

A further snippet of information from Judy comes from husband Chris's collection of Midland Railway day excursion handbills: *Fares seemed to stay stable at this period, and in July 1874 the Midland Railway were offering a trip from Cheltenham to Bristol Horticultural Fete for 3/- return, in July 1875 Sheffield to Leeds Fine Arts Exhibition 2/6 return, and in 1872 longer length*



trips from Sheffield to Morecombe, where you could stay over for up to 14 days, for 7/6 return from the July to the end of September.

Any comments? [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

## RECENT NOTICE ON THE UNDERGROUND

Thanks to Kate Goodenough for passing this on – her daughter spotted it at the Underground Station.

We probably all feel this way at some time, so perhaps a lesson for us all.



## NHS75



The name that has been applied to 815005 of set 800005.

The naming ceremony was held at Newport Station 4 July 2023.

Photo taken at Swindon 11.36 -11.40 on 4 July by Colin Pidgeon.

Unfortunately the poster to advertise the NHS75 event on 8 July came too late to include into our last Newsletter but we did mention it in our June edition.

It was a great day ...



The Central Community Centre (the old GWR hospital ward) contained a range of exhibitions by local historians and heritage experts.

Besides photos and relevant display boards telling the Swindon and NHS story, there were very old dispensary containers, a prosthetics example made in Swindon Works, old health centre notices etc and a wonderful little knitted/crocheted display of patients in a ward.

Unfortunately Fran Bevan's display and exhibition boards illustrating Swindon pre-NHS are not shown on this photo.

Mary Thornton led a guided 'health tour' of the GWR village which was packed with comprehensive snippets about the life and health issues of our ancestors who lived in early New Swindon.

The Railway museum cottage – A STEP BACK IN TIME - at 34 Faringdon Road was open. It is always extremely popular and a 'must' for anyone with GWR ancestors.

An illustrated talk 'Opportunity out of Crisis' by John Stooke, Maggie Brunger (video) and Gerry Hannon took place in The Baker's and related to how Swindon was one of the first places in the UK to have medical care open to all workers. The hospital was originally just for GWR accidents and had four beds for this purpose, but was eventually expanded. The Great Western Railway Medical Fund, supported and paid for by the GWR workers, provided 'from cradle to grave' support and had celebrated an impressive **101 years service** by the time the NHS came into being on 5 July 1948. Following on, was a further talk about Memory, Local Art and Swindon's Heritage from Philip Garrahan.

### **GWR MEDICAL FUND HOSPITAL**

We know that Stuart Keith Rea was the first GWR doctor and an article in the Swindon Advertiser revealed that Dr Rea received a fee of between 10-13s (50-65p) according to the number of patients, out of which he had to pay for all medicines, bandages, splints and leeches! His home, surgery and dispensary was on the corner of London Street and High Street (Emlyn Square).

Dr Rea died in 1848 and the second GWR doctor was Charles Whiston Hind, and his brother Frederick was surgeon's assistant. At the time of the 1851 census Dr Hind lived at 12 London Street. Edward Rogers, surgeon and apothecary lived at 28 Reading Street.

Next came Dr George Money Swinhoe and two of his sons followed him into the profession within the GWR. Doctors George Rodway (Roddy) Swinhoe and Astley Cooper Swinhoe, were also well-known names within the Railway Village community. There was also Dr Howse, Dr Bromley, W Boxer Mayne and T Percival Berry.

Others in the medical profession were Dispenser Thomas W Wrench and Nurse Mary A Parkes at 4/5 London Street at the time of the 1871 census with the Swinhoe family.

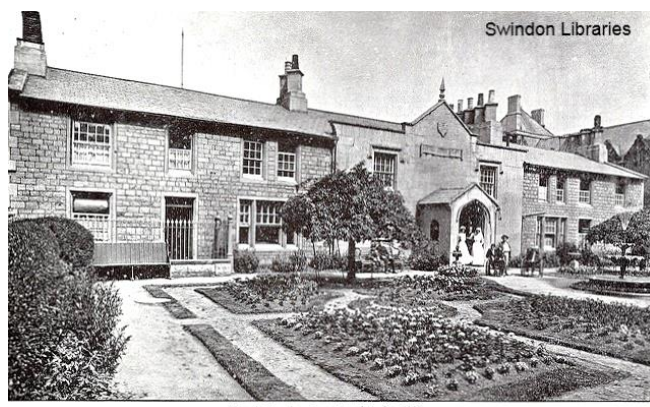
Two General Practitioners, William Rouse and Donato Barnes lived at 6 London Street at the time of the 1871 census

... and there will possibly have been others.

Mike and Pam Stubbs have been busy again and come up with this information about the Great Western Medical Fund Hospital on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS.

It is an indication of how the hospital would have been used.

Thanks for Local Studies, Swindon Central Library for the photo.





**On census day 1921 (19 June)**

Elsie Jane Richard 27 born Keevil was Matron.

There were two nurses, Selina Jane Hitchen 33 born Penzance and

Edith Maria Deane 39 born Northampton.

Lily Ann Jennings 20 born Swindon was a servant.

**On census day 1911 (2 April)**

Annie Stocks 30 born Huddersfield was Matron.

Florence Eugenie Bryan 28 born Wadford, Somerset, was the hospital nurse.

Hellen Winifred Cull 23 born Swindon was domestic cook and

Elsie Jane Clark 18 born Radcot, Oxon, was housemaid.

**On census day 1901 (31 March)**

Eveline M Boutell 33 born Byfleet, Surrey, was Matron of institution

Florence H Ward 27 born Netherton, Worcs, was the hospital sick nurse

Ellen Avenell 24 born Wanborough was domestic cook and

Florence E Cull 21 born New Swindon was housemaid.

**On census day 1891 (5 April)**

Annie Jago 28 born Dunmow, Essex, was the certified hospital sick nurse.

There were two general domestic servants – Kate Poole 27 born Downing, Glos, and

.Alice Porrell 18 born Tredegar.

**On census day 1881 (3 April)**

Mary Jennings 38 born Bicester was Matron.

Emma J White 19 born Salisbury was a general servant, and

John Todd 23 born Ayton, Berwickshire, was the dispenser.

Note that Mary Jennings and Emma White were listed as living in 44 Taunton (Hospital Cottage) and John Todd at 45 Taunton Street (Hospital Surgery).

Of interest - listed on the 1891 census in the Great Western Railway Medical Fund Society's Accident Hospital, is Annie Jago, Certificated Hospital Sick Nurse. This would presumably mean that there was formal training taking place at this time in larger hospitals in different parts of the country. Thus making a distinction between those who had Medical Nurse Training and those that operated under different Nurse titles.

*(It is quite probable that the very early nurses were actually household staff ie maids/domestic servants whose roles also included caring for patients.)*

Some questions for you from Mike and Pam:

- Does anyone have a 'certified nurse' in their ancestry?
- Does anyone have a certificate from the 1800s (or know how to get hold of one) that may show the awarding board or hospital?
- Would a job at the GWR hospital have been advertised in a teaching hospital?

Next time – the small list of patients that Mike and Pam discovered actually in the GWR hospital at the time the various censuses were taken.

Incidentally, there is a great publication, available from Wiltshire Family History Society, which lists and gives some information on hospital patents: 'GWR Accident Hospital Reports 1883 - 1916'.

**16 AUGUST 1929 – JUVENILE FETE – Swindon Kiddies' Joy Day – A Happy Throng in the Park (Thanks to Roy Cartwright for providing this newspaper cutting.)**

It was reported that the Park 'was transformed into a whirl of excitement' during the afternoon and evening at the Annual Juvenile Fete arranged by the GWR Mechanics' Institution, to which approximately 40,000 people attended.

The event was organised by 'the energetic secretary' Mr G R Davis and his helpers: Mr F T Murray, Assistant Secretary and the council of the Mechanics' Institution:

Mr F J Adams  
Mr J Boots  
Mr F J Burry  
Mr Walter Butt  
Mr W G Butt  
Mr W Clarke  
Mr J Everitt  
Mr F H Garrett (Chairman)  
Mr W Granger  
Mr G L Mann  
Mr S O Nash  
Mr A J Pennell

Mr G Sheil  
Mr A H Sheppard  
Mr H G Sutcliffe  
Mr O Tidball  
Mr L Vines  
Mr R H Wood  
Mr W Tomkinson  
Mr C A Matthews  
Mr T Wall  
Mr W C Dew  
Mr J Sheppard  
Mr F Garrett



The gates opened at 1.30pm and there was a long queue of children waiting at the various entrances, and each child under 13 received a bag of cake and a ticket for a ride.

There were great stacks of cake at each entrance – 3½ tons in all and the Henry Street Co-operative Society had been tasked to cater – about 15,000 children.

Thanks to Roy Cartwright for the photo – and originally to Local Studies, Swindon Central Library.

The ingredients used for the cake:

One ton of flour  
15 cwt raisins  
6 cwt currants  
Half a ton sugar  
50 gallons milk  
Over 3,000 eggs

The fruit was cleaned by machinery and mixed. Cakes were baked in big draw-plate ovens and 330 baked at once – about 2,200 in all were made.

When cool, each cake was packed into a grease-proof bag and then 180 cakes at a time were placed into wooden cases and despatched to the park.

Children were given tea to drink during the afternoon, provided they bring their own cups. Mr E Hayball supplied the milk.

### **MORE ABOUT THE GWR PARK – this time from Mary Thornton**

Mary is a volunteer for the Mechanics' Institution Trust and can often be found in the Railway Village Museum, Faringdon Road on open days (8th July 2023, 5th August, 9th & 10th Sept). Like many other Museum volunteers, she also leads tours around the GWR village and GWR

Park. She has very kindly sent the following notes from her GWR Park History tour about W G Grace, who we talked about in our last Newsletter. She would like to acknowledge Barry Leighton's article in The Swindon Advertiser, 1st April 2015 "There but for the W.G. Grace... how Swindon railway worker humiliated cricket icon"

- The “father of cricket” Dr W G Grace is thought to have played around Swindon at least five times, including on GWR's Cricket Field aka The GWR Park. (He played first class cricket for a phenomenal 44 seasons, from 1865 to 1908)
- In 1869, playing for a UK touring XI United South of England (USE) against the GWR the young Grace, aged 20, became embroiled in an unseemly controversy. ...from contemporary accounts, one **Tom Hogarth** had already batted for GWR but when **his identical twin George** trotted out, Grace “with some heat protested strongly against the unheard of proceeding.”
- Never amiss to a spot of gamesmanship himself, **Grace** suspected Swindon GWR club of attempting *to play the same batsman twice* – an outrageous slur upon the spirit of the game. He called his team off the field but of course, after the inevitable identity parade, he had to concede the argument and walk his side back out into the middle. (Interestingly from an original Pavilion opposite St Mark's church; a later Cricket Pavilion was built on the West side of the Park.) Grace's team won.
- Revenge was sweet because one year later (1870) turning out for Bedminster (Bristol) against Swindon GWR at Bristol, Grace was caught and bowled for a “double duck” (for only one of three occasions in his extremely long career) by 25 year-old GWR worker John Laverick. Even so, Bedminster won the fixture.

More on John Laverick in our next newsletter – courtesy of Andy Binks.

**With ‘Long Lost Family’ and ‘DNA Journey’ etc on TV recently some wonderful stories and revelations have come to light.**

Have YOU taken a DNA test and discovered something significant?

So ... a few questions:

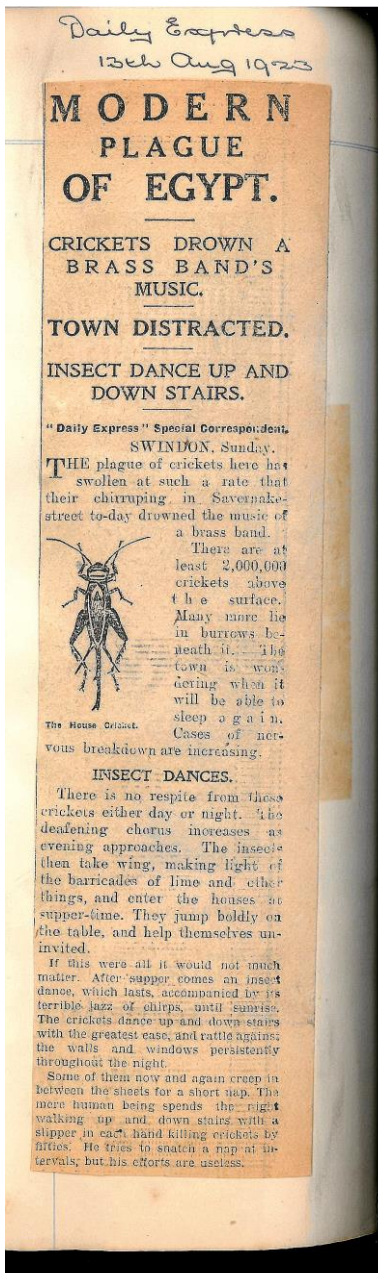
- 1 Was it worth doing and was it easy to interpret?
- 2 Did you discover anything useful or exciting?
- 3 Have you had contact with other family members as a result?
- 4 Did it help break down any ‘brick walls’?

We'd love to hear from you. Please write to us at [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)



## MODERN PLAGUE OF EGYPT

**Daily Express 13 August 1923 Special Correspondence:  
Crickets drown a brass band's music. Town distracted. Insect dance up and down stairs.**



### SWINDON, Sunday

The plague of crickets here has swollen at such a rate that their chirruping in Savernake Street today drowned the music of a brass band.

There are at least 2,000,000 crickets above the surface. Many more lie in burrows beneath it. The town is wondering when it will be able to sleep again. Cases of nervous breakdown are increasing.

### INSECT DANCES

There is no respite from these crickets day or night. The deafening chorus increases as evening approaches. The insects then take wing, making light of the barricades of lime and ether things, and enter the houses at supper-time. They jump boldly on the table and help themselves uninvited.

If this were all it would not much matter. After supper comes an insect dance, which lasts, accompanied by its terrible jazz of chirps, until sunrise. The crickets dance up and down stairs with the greatest ease, and rattle against the wall and windows persistently throughout the night.

Some of them now and again creep in between the sheets for a short nap. The mere human being spends the night walking up and down stairs with a slipper in each hand killing crickets by fifties. He tries to snatch a nap at intervals, but his efforts are useless.

(With grateful thanks to Sara Steel of Local Studies, Swindon Central Library, for forwarding this article to me following my recent visit to a Local Studies' event. Sara also provided this further information:

"The newspaper reports started on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1923. The 'plague' lasted a few weeks, and was caused by crickets breeding in the Savernake Street tip (according to the articles, dead animals and loads of mattresses were dumped in the tip, which attracted the first crickets, and they bred quickly in the heat). The Council brought in an expert to advise, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> August the Advertiser reported the tip had been treated with creosote which was killing the crickets in enormous numbers. On 4<sup>th</sup> September the Advertiser reported the Savernake tip would be discontinued."

Has anyone ever heard of this? Yvonne – [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

## ON 13 AUGUST 1910 – she died at the age of 90 ....

Who ? Florence Nightingale. At 10 South Street, Mayfair in London. She is buried in the churchyard of St Margaret's Church, East Wellow, Hampshire with a memorial containing just her initials and dates of birth and death. Her relatives had declined the offer for her to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Says a lot about her and her family doesn't it!

Our June Newsletter featured a poem by Susan Hatton and the next issue featured her lace-making ancestry. Now sharing this next poem with you on the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Florence Nightingale's death. Read through and be prepared for a surprise.

### MY BELL RINGING GRANDFATHER

My story begins in Maids Moreton  
When Victoria reigned as Queen.  
There was little money in most families,  
Evidence of poverty could always be seen.

Bur church bells pealed every Sunday –  
Six dedicated ringers, good men and true –  
Not only did they ring in St Edmund's  
Church  
But formed a band of handbell ringers, too.

As the winter nights darkened  
And Christmas drew ever near,  
These men trudged across lanes and fields  
Fuelled by glasses of home-brewed beer.

One winter they walked over to Stowe,  
And were invited into a very smart room.  
Well dressed people raised their eyebrows –  
The Duke of Buckingham and friends, I  
presume.

The ringers played their entire repertoire;  
They were skilled and practiced in the art.  
They were taken outside by a footman  
Who took the Captain, my Grandfather,  
apart.

"Do you know who that little old lady is,  
Sat in the corner with cap upon her head?"  
Gramp shook head. He had no idea,  
But was astonished by what the servant said.

"That is Miss Florence Nightingale  
Who nursed in the Crimea for several years.  
I think she enjoyed your ringing –  
Though now she has problems with her ears."

The ringers were served with refreshments,  
And given money to be equally shared.  
But to play before such a well-known person  
Was an honour for which they had not prepared

This story has been told and handed down,  
For these men were placed in a strange situation  
(Being men of very little learning) –  
And to treasure the tale, each new generation.

I can only say I am so proud of these men,  
Who had mastered the art of change ringing.  
I sincerely hope Miss Nightingale enjoyed their  
visit.  
It's with a very humble heart their praises I am  
singing.

### SUSAN HATTON

#### A FEW AUGUST DATES

**22 August 1485** The Battle of Bosworth Field was fought in Leicestershire and Richard III was butchered as he vainly tried to reach the usurper Henry Tudor.

**22 August 1642** The Civil War in England began between the supporters of Charles I (Royalists or Cavaliers) and of Parliament (Roundheads), when the king raised the standard at Nottingham.

**22 August 1952** A new television transmitter at Wenwoe in South Wales was expected to improve reception in Swindon and the surrounding area immensely. Many electronics shops took the opportunity to advertise their wares in the Adver. They included Rentaset in Victoria Road, which promised demonstrations of reception daily between 11 am and noon and 3 pm and 4 pm, and was willing to arrange evening appointments for potential customers. Sets could be rented for as little as the equivalent of 50p per week.

**22 August 1962** It was announced that the Corn Exchange clock in Old Town had struck its last note. It was said 'For 18 months it has neither struck nor told the time, because of a number of teeth missing in the clock's escapement mechanism.' The borough council announced it had looked into the possibility of a repair but decided not to proceed after being told it would cost £200.

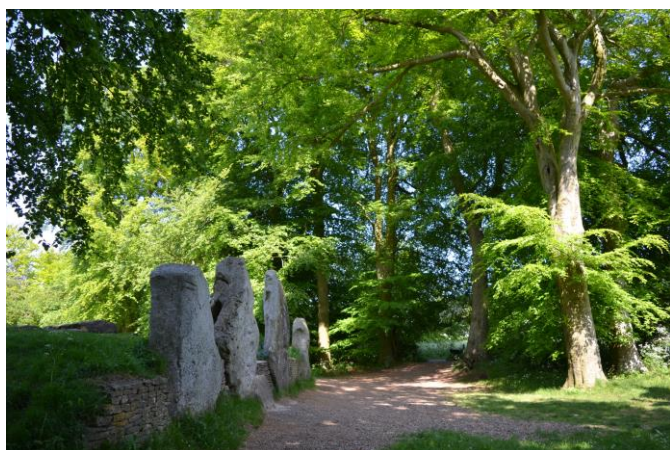
**31 August 1948** A runner bean measuring 20 inches attracted much attention at the Stratton St Margaret Women's Institute Flower & Produce Show. It was grown by PC X Vizard, the local constable, who is also county champion with the rifle.

**Advertised in the Swindon Evening Advertiser:** the AUSTIN distributors have pleasure in announcing that the new **A 99 Saloon** is here! The Car of the Year. **STEELS (Swindon) Ltd.**A Steels Group garage. Drove Road, Swindon. Tel: 4035.

But what year? Does anyone have a clue? Please let us know – [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

### JUST ONE LAST THING ...

If anyone is having difficulty in joining the Wiltshire Family History Society membership (only £12 per annum – and well worth it!) please contact me on [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk) and I will pass on to the Membership Secretary direct. Yvonne



Two more of Ken Mumford's photos of Wayland's Smith

(You are receiving this email from Yvonne Neal, Secretary of the Swindon Branch of Wiltshire Family History Society, as a member, or interested party, living in or near Swindon. Your email details are held securely and not divulged to any other persons or organisations. Please let me know if you want to be removed from the list by emailing [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com))