

## Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, December 2021



When Icy fingers tickle  
and Jack Frost becomes a frequent visitor

*I made myself a snowball  
As perfect as could be  
I thought I'd keep it as a pet  
And let it sleep with me*

*I made it some pyjamas  
And a pillow for its head  
Then last night it ran away  
But first it wet the bed*

### JOHN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

This time last year there were concerns about whether “Christmas would happen” due to a surge in covid cases and large sections of the country entering tier 4 restrictions (remember the tier system). This year things seemed more positive, until the Omicron variant appeared from Southern Africa, now there is doubt again. Still mustn't grumble!!!!

This time of year is an opportunity to reflect on the past year. We have met three times and hopefully a fourth. We have had the opportunity to promote the society at a number of community events. We have had some excellent zoom meetings with quite a healthy “attendance”. This (not so) little newsletter is going from strength to strength. So big thank you to Margaret, Glenys and Yvonne for organising these events.

Here's looking forward to 2022 for more zooms, more meetings and of course the 1921 census even if that will mean a lower bank balance.

In the meantime a Merry Christmas to you all from myself and all the committee.

### OUR CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

Our Swindon Branch Christmas event will take place at the Central Community Centre on Thursday 9 December at 7.30 – doors open at 7.15. Because of the Covid situation, we are not holding our usual American Supper, but there will be mince pies, time for a chat and Margaret is planning something else for us also.

Margaret is now arranging next year's programme – details of which will be in our newsletters as usual. February's Zoom meeting will be of interest to all those eagerly awaiting the 1921 census reveal.

### BLACK TEETH AND DIRTY FINGER NAILS – Zoom talk by David Allen on 11 November 2021 (The great unwashed of Victorian London)

David began his talk with a painting of Alexandrina Victoria as a young infant with her mother. That infant was to become Queen Victoria 1819 – 1901. We then saw her aged 18 in all her finery, and another with Prince Albert and all their children.

In 1801 70% of the population lived in rural areas but by 1901 80% lived in towns and cities.

London became the world's greatest city: the Houses of Parliament burnt down and was re-built. Also built were Nelson's column, Kings Cross Station, and Tower Bridge. Steam engines were improved, railways improved, all requiring miners to provide coal. New factories were built in towns, which became magnets for the unemployed in the countryside to move into. Also migration occurred from other countries. London experienced a population explosion resulting in congested streets and roads.

London became a city of the 'Haves' and 'Have Nots'. High mortality rates with many very young children not surviving. Life expectancy was low especially amongst the poor and those working in heavy industry. Many lived in shanty town/slums with open cesspits. TB was rife. Many others, known as 'crawlers', were homeless and moved from place to place, sleeping in streets, parks, workhouses and doss houses, where there would be cramped rows of wooden 'beds' like coffins, with a (probably not-too-clean) mattress. A cheaper option was sleeping over a rope line.

Few houses had a pumped water supply. The poor relied on street pumps where the lucky few had water available as and when required. Other street pumps were restricted to designated times, perhaps being turned on three times a week. Here water just spewed out, no tap, and everyone vied to get a supply.

The pollution was shocking and affected health. Records showed that men in the most polluted area could be almost an inch shorter than others. Blackened buildings and clothing dirtied by walking the streets, only a lucky few owned a horse. The streets were covered in mud, dirty, sticky and sooty, not forgetting the horse dung. This situation provided an opportunity of work for children, and some elderly, by becoming 'crossing sweepers' making the pathway ahead clear for people and hoping to be rewarded with a few pennies. Eventually, however, some became a nuisance – depicted in Punch magazine. Thus Orderlies came into being and uniforms introduced. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century two out of five workers were children with poor families relying on their income.

Children were also employed underground in mines. Some became 'shoe shiners' on the muddy streets, and others re-cycled anything they could find. 'Mudlarks' scavenged whatever they could find washed up on the banks of the Thames. This was a rather precarious occupation with some dying or drowning in the mud.

Then there were the chimney sweep apprentices (the 'Climbing Monkeys'). Young children, some as young as 4, climbed chimneys clutching hand-held brushes, within very narrow confines up through the various storeys. They breathed in soot, sometimes got lost and some even suffocated. These children often came from workhouses or were sold by their families. The plight of these children was debated for decades. London Society considered their chimneys were best cleaned by children. Not until 1875 did an Act of Parliament enforce a law to prevent this. Dust and soot collected was re-cycled and 'dustmen' sold to farmers to use as a fertilizer.

Then there was the inevitable problem of human waste: chamber pots under beds or in cabinets, cesspits and the privy. 'Night soil men', collected sludge - good for growing tomatoes! Water closets connected to cesspits and waste disposed of through service pipes draining into the Thames, which was also a source of drinking water. The result was cholera, 'the great stink' and the Thames becoming blocked. This in turn resulted in a great engineering project to build new sewers. And health improved. 'Flushermen' were employed to clean sewers to avoid blockages.

Teeth often became blackened and diseased. Dentures were advertised and sold, often being made from hippo ivory, elephant tusks or human bone. Some were even teeth taken from fallen soldiers.

Then came the age of change: photography, traffic lights, phonograph (Mary had a little lamb), telephone, the Edison light bulb, safety bike and motor car. We shouldn't forget the Tooth polisher complete with metal rod!

## THANKS TO ROY CARTWRIGHT FOR THIS LETTER and also for the pictures

Further to your wonderful piece on the NIGNOGS in the Advertiser I have found a few more details for you.

The name Nignogs meaning was broadly all silly fellows together and it replaced the Tinker Bell Club in her Wendy Hut.

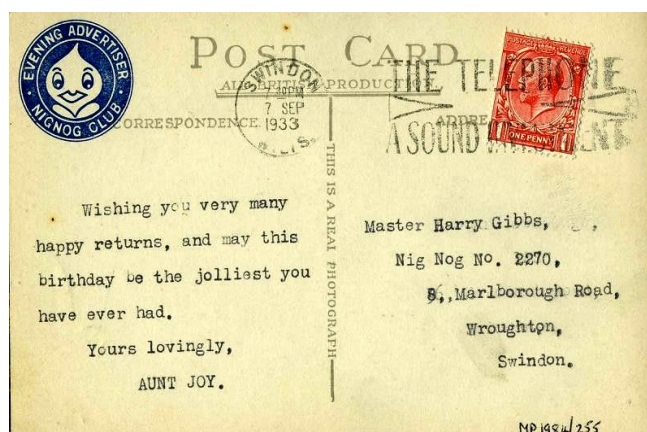
Vi worked in the newspaper sales department and always referred to the members as her nephews and nieces. Vi was quite a character with a few funny ways so we were told. Whenever she got a headache she would wrap her head in brown paper soaked in vinegar.

The Swindon Nignog badge was made out of tin and plastic and could be had in either a stud fixing to go into a button hole on a jacket, or a brooch so you could pin it onto a coat or dress.

*We don't have a picture of an actual Swindon badge but it would have looked rather like this.....*



Soon after the Advertiser launched it in the early 1930s they had their first outing, which was to The Cadbury Chocolate Factory in Bourneville, and cost each child two shillings and six pence. Not cheap as a bottle of Guinness was one shilling a pint, so I make that to be about £10 in today's money.



On 13 April 1932 the first list of names was published in the paper – all 106 of them, and just six days later it had well over 500 members.

It ran for about another 28 years, closing in July 1958, and many of you will have been member.



Letter welcoming new members ....

Dear Nignog

I am very pleased indeed to welcome you as a member of the Children's Nignog Club. Now that you are a fully-fledged Nignog I hope you will try to make your friends Nignogs as well.

I enclose your Nignog Badge and your Card of Membership, with your name, address and your Nignog number. Of course, you will obey the rules. The chief points are

- 1 Send in the Nignog Entrance Coupon without delay
- 2 That you should always go out of your way to talk to other children and tell them about the Nignog Club.
- 3 That you should always try to help other children; particularly those from foreign countries who might need your help or advice.
- 4 That you should sometimes write a letter to a lonely child.
- 5 That you should always look after animals.

**ROY CARTWRIGHT**

### **... AND FROM JUDY ROUSE**

Judy wrote to say that she was a NIGNOG and also sent pictures, as above, and mentioned the Morecambe and Wise website article about it. She said "Ernie started his career as a Nig-nog, when we all lived in such a much more innocent world, and NIG and NOG was just NORTH COUNTRY dialect for boy and girl". Judy's cousin said that she was also a SUNBEAM which apparently was another local newspaper club. Does anyone remember that one?

### **AND THE INTEREST IN THE JARMANS, AND SIMS CONNECTION, CONTINUES ...**

In our October Newsletter we printed a photo of a notice board commemorating the life of George Sims (a Rodbourne missionary) at St Augustine's Church. There is now an extensive exhibition within the beautiful Church.



This photo of Martin Robins and Gordon Shaw of the Rodbourne Community History Group was taken on Saturday 6 November.

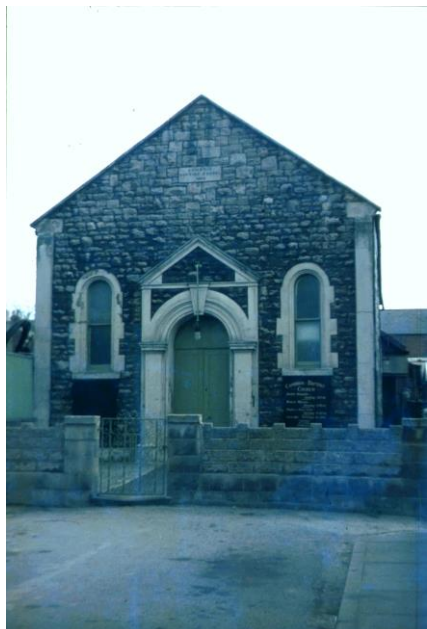
Martin Robins has sent a series of 70 photos taken that day, some of the Church and some of the exhibition. If anyone would like to see them, please let me know and I will forward to you. Yvonne [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com) or [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

### **A LETTER FROM THE JARMAN FAMILY**

We are the daughters of Ivor Jarman and the grand-daughters of Thomas Arthur Jarman and we all lived with him from 1947 until his death in 1953.

We now live in West Wales (Thelma) and in Swindon (Carole) but sadly our other sister Norma died 18 months ago from contracting Covid-19 in the Nursing Home where she was being treated for dementia.

Regarding the article on the Jarmans (see November Newsletter), other than John Jarman being described as a Sawyer (he was always thought to have something to do with rolling mills) everything seems to be OK.



He was a social preacher, and preached in his native Welsh in Swindon's Cambria Bridge Chapel\*.

Evidently there was a large Welsh community living in Swindon having moved here for work in the railways.



Photos – with thanks to the Swindon Society and Andy Binks.

Andy says both photos date to 1973, so rather later than when John Jarman was preaching in the Chapel.

The cycle shop, we agree, must have been Thomas Arthur Jarman's but we have no information about anyone apprenticed to TAJ. Also the shop must have closed when TAJ moved to 1 Guppy Street (1911 census) as his cycle business continued to operate from his workshops at the back of the house until his death in 1953.

According to our late Uncle Harold Jarman, his friends the Wise brothers Bakery business provided cakes for Marks & Spencer's. Both the Wise brothers were keen grass track riders with Harold and Ivor Jarman acting as mechanics for them.

Clearly a lot of this information is anecdotal but I thought you might find it interesting. Regards. Thelma and Carole (nee Jarman)

Since writing the above, Thelma and Carole have also sent the following:

Thomas Arthur Jarman, well known in Rodbourne as Pop Jarman, was a very popular Master of Ceremonies (MC) at dances held in the Co-op Hall, East Street, Swindon. As well as inventing and manufacturing his 'Mono-wheel Bush cars' to export to the Belgian Congo, Pop Jarman maintained many of the Police Constables' bicycles, and those belonging to our local cycle racing club, 'The Rodbourne Rockets'. The cyclists racing circuit was located on Brown's field in Rodbourne.



This is a family photograph taken around 1915 when our father, Ivor was a baby, shown seated on his Mother, Esther's, lap.

Family members from left to right include:

Thomas Arthur Jarman, Harold Jarman, Arthur Edward Jarman, Ellen Jarman ( Step-daughter), Esther Susan Jarman (nee Mittens), Ivor Jarman (baby)

Thelma Jarman    Ruth Jarman

PS: The house name of Thelma's home in West Wales is 'Ty Jarman' meaning Jarman House. Thelma says it was "chosen as a tribute to grandfather, Pop Jarman, who was a valley's boy born Ebbw Vale. His father also came from the valleys, Tredegar."

\*The Chapel was built in 1866 and could accommodate 250 worshippers, Cambria Place having been completed in 1864. Almost all of the Welsh immigrants coming to work for the Swindon GWR Works were resident in that area, as confirmed by the 1871 census of Cambria Place. For many years, services were conducted in the Welsh language.

## ANOTHER JARMAN MONO-CAR



Photo courtesy of John Hacker via Paul Williams

Paul Williams has sent another image of the Jarman's mono car/bicycle. It was on a postcard by William Hooper and David Lewis of the Rodbourne Community History Group has confirmed that it was taken outside 1 Guppy Street, which was the Jarman's address, from the Linslade Street\* end looking down towards Jennings Street. The house at the end on the right was a fish and chip shop, now possibly flats.

Martin Robins has identified Pop Jarman (Thomas Arthur) on the left and John Hacker's grandfather, Henry Hacker, is behind the 'chair'.

Martin explained that the Hacker family had a farm at South Marston and a corn merchants shop at the corner of Manchester Road and Corporation Street.

The family were generous givers to George Sims in Africa and Mr Sims conducted the last of the Henry Hacker's generation funerals - his sister who died in 1969 and did not marry.

(It was always said that in his time in Africa he was the first choice to conduct a funeral as he had that rare ability to say much in a few words.)

As we reported in the last newsletter, Pop Jarman 'manufactured and sold bicycles and exported them as far as China. To help Mr Sims on his travels in Africa he designed and supplied bicycles specifically for that continent.'

Janet Christie wrote to say that she thought the above photo was taken in Guppy Street. Janet had gone to Even Swindon school and then onto to Jennings Street school and remembers a family of Jarmans living in Rodbourne then. She recalls that Rodbourne was such a small community when she was growing up there when she had lived in Bruce Street. She is connected with the Robins family and possibly also the Sims/Simms family.

\*This information leads me to believe that the photo may have been taken from almost outside my father's family home in Linslade Street as the front windows faced directly down that road and possibly dated from when my great great grandmother lived at No. 7.

The widowed Sarah Poynter (nee Jordan, born Longcot) was there with son Samuel at the time of the 1911 census. Sarah, and husband Abraham, had 12 (possibly 13) children, four of which had died by 1911. Yvonne

Photo: Sarah Poynter 1837 – 1916. Not sure when taken but possibly not long before she died. Note that there is a child peering from behind the curtains.



## **EVERYTHING BUT THE SQUEAK!**

Judy has been busy and shared this memory with us. Do you remember the pork butcher in Wood Street? He just sold pork, all the normal pork cuts and bakes like sausages and pork pies but my mother went there for chitterlings (pigs intestines) which my dad loved and ate cold with HP sauce. She also bought Bath Chaps (pigs cheeks) and pigs trotters. My father said the pig was God's chosen animal - you could use everything but the squeak. When he was a boy, the footballs they used in the village were inflated pig's bladders!

**Paul Cole** wrote to say that the butchers shop next door to Western Cycles was just called 'The Pork Shop. He said ". I remember going there with my mum as she liked their faggots (which I thought were awful)." He remembers that it was the Pullen family who owned Western Cycles.

## **ANOTHER MEMORY ABOUT KANE'S CYCLE SHOP**

I can remember Kanes cycle shop, as I bought a Viking Tour of Britain racing bike from them, in 1953? with a set of Duralia gears, Tubular wheels and tyres, for £109-00. .. The canal, through Swindon centre, Compton Sons and Webb, and ad infinitum. Thank you very much. Member`s Number = 07186.

## **AND ANOTHER MEMORY OF THE ORIGINAL GREAT WESTERN HOSPITAL**

In our last Newsletter Mervyn Hewlett, sparked by mention of the original Great Western Hospital, shared his memories of being sent into Swindon as a young lad for lard. This time Judy Rouse shares her memories of the hospital with us:

I actually do have some memories of visiting what was by then the accident department at the Great Western Hospital in 1952 when I was just 7 years old.

I had disobeyed instructions from my parents and jumped from a standing position from my garden swing, and fell heavily onto the stone slabs hurting my right arm. When it didn't stop hurting my mother walked me up to Purton Surgery at the evening surgery to see a doctor. The NHS was only four years in being, and the surgery was in the stable block belonging to one of the 2 village doctors. There were no appointments, you just queued sitting on horse hair covered benches around the sides of the room until it was your turn. The doctor checked my arm and told my mother to take me into Swindon to the accident department, so we caught the "66" Purton bus which stopped by Milton Road Baths, and walked across the road to the hospital.

I can remember going into the accident department through a door at the Barracks end of the building and going into a large long waiting room area that had rows of chairs on either side of a centre walkway, and had to book in to see a doctor. We had to queue down the middle of the room.

Suddenly there was a commotion at the door, and an emergency stretcher was wheeled quickly passed us. My mother turned me to face her with my head in her dress so I shouldn't see, but not before I had seen a very badly injured man covered in blood laid out, the result I suppose of an accident in the Great Western Works.

We booked, sat and waited and eventually saw a doctor, who authorised an x-ray which showed nothing, and I was sent home.

My arm continued to hurt, and my mother took me back. I always remember the doctor asking if I told lies, and I was most indignant that I wasn't being believed that my arm really hurt.

Another x-ray was taken, and this time showed a greenstick fracture of the forearm, so we were taken into the plaster room for my arm to be plastered up with bandages soaked from buckets of liquid plaster of Paris and quickly wound round my arm and then a sling applied.



The next day I was back at school! The only rule was I wasn't allowed in the playground, so I stayed in my classroom with my friend Rosemary who was in plaster from her hip to ankle as a result of an operation. Her mother wheeled her up a steep hill to and from school every day on her bicycle. The other children used to enjoy rapping our casts, until told off by the teachers.



The plaster was still on by July Trip Week so I travelled on the overnight trip train to St Ives in the same condition, and judging by the holiday snaps it didn't prevent me building sandcastles, paddling or being a jockey on the men's backs when they raced on hands and knees on the sands.

One day we took a trip to Falmouth as a lot of foreign naval boats were in during Coronation year, and some French sailors on the quay felt sorry for me and gave me a bunch of black grapes, a luxury I'd never experienced before. I ate too many and that night I had bad colic, so I was in trouble again!

Eventually my arm was pronounced mended, and back in the hospital a nurse attacked the plaster with what looked like a large pair of shears to cut through and pull it off, which after the initial accident, I found the most terrifying part of the whole experience. **JUDY ROUSE**



## YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER – as Peter Field pointed out

My grandmother Dorothy Agnes Emily Shailes, 1901-1980 (nee Hobbs) lived with my family for the last 10 years of her life, and on starting a pursuit of my family history in 1975, I often asked her about her parents.



In short, she talked of her father, George Ewart Hobbs (1883-1946) as a respected local lay preacher in Rodbourne, a foreman in the railway works and a man who loved books and who wrote sometimes for the Swindon Advertiser.

My mother, Margaret (Marnie) Field 1928 - 1985 (nee Shailes), recalled a doting grandfather, who earned good money but gave much away.

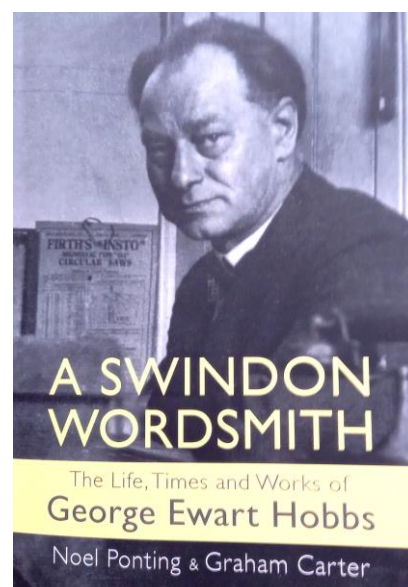
Photo: George Hobbs, probably in the late 1930s

Those were the central facts, though we had in our possession a booklet of poems he wrote in 1914 called *The British Soldier* and a letter from the Swindon Advertiser inviting him to become an honorary editor, which fascinated me, but I did not investigate further – births, marriages and deaths were what mattered!

Fast forward to January 2018 when I was contacted by Noel Ponting, a researcher and historian behind (the sadly now defunct) Swindon Heritage magazine, who was fascinated by the writing style of one George Hobbs who had written letters praising Noel's great grandfather, Henry Day, the first headmaster of Even Swindon School. Noel was convinced 'there must be more out there' because he saw George as an exceptional wordsmith.

Noel and local writer Graham Carter immersed themselves in the archives of the Swindon Advertiser. The result was 'A Swindon Wordsmith' by Noel Ponting and Graham Carter (2019), a 400 page journey considering religion, philosophy, astronomy, engineering and spiritualism alongside poetry, comic sketches and science fiction. So a Swindon voice had been discovered – well partially!

Noel and Graham discovered much of his later writing was archived in Oxford. The result this time was 'A Swindon Radical' (2021) and George's 1927 science fiction tale 'A Visit to Venus'. Noel believes these publications represent about 20% of the total researched output!



This experience has taught me much. Looking at old newspapers should be a vital resource for the family historian. Tenacity is everything and begs the question - how much does someone really know about their parents let alone their ancestors? Most importantly, when I see that inevitable phrase 'Ag Lab', it makes me wonder how many lost voices had something important to say. **PETER FIELD**

**Note:** How true is Peter's last statement! What would have been the 'norm' for our Ag. Lab. forefathers would have made fascinating reading for us today.

## THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS 1914

With Armistice Day still fresh in our minds and with Christmas soon upon us, I took a quick peek at 'The Long, Long Trail' website – Legends, myths and realities – the Christmas Truce 1914.

It contains graphic details of that Christmas Day on the Frontline, of no-man's land and of fraternising with the enemy. I must admit that I just skimmed through it all but it makes for fascinating reading. The situation varied and was very patchy along the Frontline, but it seems that some of the German soldiers could speak a little English and could communicate to some extent, exchanged gifts of cigarettes, chocolate etc, sang carols/hymns and had the opportunity to bury their dead – sometimes side by side with enemy casualties. Conditions were rough for both sides and the Germans were considered to be 'thoroughly nice chaps', sick of the war but having to obey orders.

It does seem that the legendary football match actually occurred, although footballs at the Frontline would have been few and far between. Accounts from both camps seem to indicate some truth in this happening.

I was once sent a short video song, by a few men dressed in uniform, singing a very poignant song about the Christmas truce. Please let me know if you'd like to see it.

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## CHRISTMAS FAYRE



On Saturday 20 November we were invited to join with the Central Community Centre for a Christmas Fayre.

Photos: Chairman John Mills and an unexpected visitor



After a slow start we had several 'spurts' and interesting conversations, including a couple of amazing coincidences concerning the 'Welsh Chapel' as in the photo above with the Jarman sister letter, and Cambria Place. Hopefully, we may have more to report on that in a future Newsletter.

Thanks to John and Barbara for 'manning' our table. Yvonne

## A DECEMBER DROWNING

Back in our August issue we spoke about little Raymond Cook who was drowned aged 5 at Stratton St Margaret. Another, rather strange, drowning and burial caught my eye – I suppose it bothered me somewhat. What do you think?

**Buried by Coroners Order: Theophilus George SKUSE.** Buried 31 December 1879 aged 5 years (on coffin) at St Mary's Church, Rodbourne Cheney. Found drowned in the well near his

own home. I tried looking for a newspaper report but found nothing. He wasn't on the 1871 census.

Theophilus George Skuse, son of George, Labourer, and Eliza of Rodbourne, was baptised Rodbourne Cheney Church (St Mary's) 30 August 1874.

My first 'red herring' was discovering a George Skuse who married an Elizabeth Timbrell, but that was at Minety. Was it THAT George Skuse, aged 60 and born Minety that I found boarding with my husband's step-father's grandfather in 1911 at Percy Street, Rodbourne, Swindon? He was with William Henry Berry, wife Mary Ann (nee Hancock) and their family. Both George and Mary Ann hailed from Minety.

I then decided to try another George Skuse. That sounded much more relevant. But that George also seems to have been born at Minety: Married after banns on 25 November 1865 at St Mary's Church, Rodbourne Cheney: George Skuse full age bachelor of Haydon, son of Thomas Skuse, Labourer, married Eliza Woodward full age widow of Haydon, daughter of Robert Townsend, Labourer. W: Richard Townsend and Rosanna Townsend (x).

At the time of the 1871 census the Skuse family were living not far from St Mary's Church Sunday School, so perhaps on Rodbourne Cheney Road. George, 26 born Minety was a Railway Labourer. Wife Eliza was 22, born Haydon. Living with them were Benjamin Woodward, 7 born Purton – Eliza's son from her first marriage to John Woodward. They also had a daughter, Kezia Jane Skuse aged 3, born Rodbourne.

Note: When Kezia Jane Skuse was baptised, the family lived at Hurst Farm. Where was that?

Eliza was buried aged 40 on 23 November 1878 at Rodbourne Cheney. She was probably the daughter of Robert and Hannah, - little found for them but at the time of the 1841 census they were living at Haydon Wick next door to the Poor House 'now occupied in separate tenements'.

This George Skuse died aged 59 during the June quarter 1906 in the Swindon district. He had re-married and had another daughter, Ethel. They were living at Charles Street – is that Rodbourne?

Having discovered a little about the Skuse family, I am still no further forward in discovering what happened to little Theophilus. It appears that his mother Eliza died about a year before he drowned. BUT .... where had he been living and who with? How did he drown in a well?

All a little strange! Does anyone have any answers or suggestions? Please contact me on [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com) Many thanks. Yvonne

## **SOME CHRISTMAS DAY ANNIVERSARIES**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1066 | Coronation of William the Conqueror – King William I of England – at Westminster Abbey.  |
| 1176 | The very first Eisteddfod at Cardigan Castle.  |
| 1620 | The Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, after their epic transatlantic sea voyage.   |
| 1642 | Sir Isaac Newton was born at Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire. English physicist and mathematician remembered for the Law of Gravity and other scientific principles. |

- 1643 Christmas Island, an uninhabited island approximately 224 miles south of Java, was discovered by Captain W Mynars.
- 1800 Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, set in place Britain's first-ever Christmas tree at Queen's Lodge, Windsor.
- 1881 Birth of Charles Pathe (with an accent on the e), the French film pioneer who, in 1909, was responsible for the first newsreel.
- 1914 A unique truce between British and German trench soldiers on parts of the Western Front. Gifts were exchanged and a friendly football match staged before the grim reality of warfare resumed.
- 1932 King George V made the first Christmas Day radio broadcast by a reigning British monarch to the Empire.

### WHO REMEMBERS THE PEA-SOUPERS?

30.12. 1945 Freezing fog covers London, the Home Counties, the Midlands and the east coast. In central London bus conductors walk alongside the buses to find the way. Trains from the north reach London four hours late.

31.12. 1945 Dense fog blacks out London, part of the home counties, the Midlands and Lincolnshire. Visibility is down to 10 yards.

### CHRISTMAS COACH AND HORSES



Christmas cards depicting coach and horses may look very romantic, but the truth about coach travel is actually vastly different.

Even if people in those times could raise the fare, the coaches of the early Georgian period had no springs but swung on leather strap, lurching nauseously.

The inside seats (most expensive) could be very squashed, possibly against smelly strangers. Passengers could cling precariously to the roof, or ride in the open basket with the luggage.

Highwaymen were a common hazard.

Coaches would stop to change horses every 8-10 miles and the ostler teams developed a changeover speed that would put Formula One to shame.

Little use trying to sleep on an overnight stop because of the endless clatter and shouting throughout the night in the courtyard as more coaches came and went. Beds would probably be none-too-clean!

Coach travel would take a heavy toll on passengers' health, and also the coachmen: for example in 1764 a coach arrived at Newbury minus its driver who, unbeknown to passengers, had dropped dead off his seat three miles back. The horse obviously knew the route well.

Do any of our readers have ancestors who drove, or were connected with, coach travel? There were coaching inns at Old Town, Swindon, and later there were local omnibus firms.

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## **LOOKING FORWARD - not long now**

We shall soon be able to browse the long-awaited 1921 census, albeit at a cost. We must make the most of this one as on **24 December 1942** a mysterious fire at the Office for Works destroyed the 1931 census returns. Ironically this tragedy is suspected to have been caused by a 'fire watcher' carelessly discarding a cigarette.

There is no record for 1941, understandably, given that the country was engaged in fighting World War II at that time. So there is a huge gap for family historians

Originally scheduled for 24 April, the 1921 census was delayed by 8 weeks because of the Black Friday Strike by coal miners, railwaymen and transport workers. June was decided upon as being less interrupted by middle-class holidays being taken, although there could still be surprises as to relatives being in places other than expected. Some additional details included in this census:

Age – month and year

'D' denoting divorce

For under 15s if either parent had died and whether father or mother

(indication of fathers having died in WW1)

Trade/employer/place of work

Previous employer for those out-of-work

Number of children under 16

The 1801 census of England and Wales listed approximately 8 million people. A further 30 million can be added for the 1921 census.

The 1801 census was taken to identify if there was a sufficient number of men to fight in the Napoleonic Wars. Taken also to identify numbers of Ag. Labs. and tradesmen – could we be self-sufficient and be able to feed ourselves? It wasn't until the 1841 census that individual names had to be listed.

Have any of you come across an ancestor appearing twice on the same census? It does happen (I have one example). Please let us know on [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com) or [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

## **TNA NEWS**

The National Archives (TNA) have been, and still are, arranging a brilliant programmes featuring the 1920s. Coming up at TNA next year and bearing in mind the imminent release of the 1921 census records, there will be an exhibition opening on 21 January creating 'the fascinating world of the 1920s through the lens of our vast and diverse collection'.

They write that 100 years ago a generation of people were recovering from the trauma of a world war and a global pandemic – the Spanish flu. There will be a special season of

exhibitions, activities and events connecting the 2020s with the 1920s. See the TNA website for further details.

Thanks to Judy Rouse for bringing this to our attention.

**and finally ...INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL YOU KNITTERS, especially if you are making pom-pom hats for Christmas presents. Taken from a pom pom making kit.**

Here's how to make a pom-pom – instructions (illustrations were included with the device)

1. As show in figure, A and B are overlap each other.
2. Open the blue part. (NO BLUE PART RECEIVED.)
3. Will be wrapped in blue plastic part of the wool. (WHAT WOOL?)
4. Operation in figure 3 repeated.
5. Cut the overlap part with the scissors (TINY scissors enclosed – quite blunt)
6. Use the single wool tied up the middle, hard taut.
7. Open deyce.
8. Take off the knitting loom.
9. Finally Clipp surface shape (illustration shows with blunt scissors!)

Obviously you will now have no problems when making your pom poms!  
(Thanks to my cousin Margaret for bringing this to my attention.)

## SO WHAT NEXT?

Do you have any suggestions for topics for next year? Your suggestions and input would be gratefully received – [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk) or [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com)

Lost Streets of Swindon .... Can you remember any? Did your ancestors live in any such street? Mervyn Hewlett has already shared some family memories with us. Mary Cox has a connection with Providence Row and she tells her story in the January issue of our newsletter. Would you like to add more?



Whatever you're doing –  
have a good one!

**See you all  
next year**

(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))