

# Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, December 2022

Please come along and join in the Christmas fun – see Margaret's notes below about our Christmas get-together on 8 December.

No Zoom meeting this month



Most of you will recognise this lovely picture instantly as being Christ Church – floodlit in the winter of 1962.

(Courtesy of Andy Binks and the Swindon Society.)

Daw ye mind of Christmas lang ago  
When we were only wee.  
There wurnae phones nur laptoaps  
In the presents neath the tree.  
We were happy wi a jigsaw  
An annual or a game  
A dolly fur the lassies  
An fur the lads a train.  
An then if we were lucky  
A big selection box.  
Then sometimes, no sae lucky  
Yer Granny's knitted socks!

Unknown

**Wishing you all a Very  
Happy Christmas**

## OUR CHAIRMAN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Firstly I wish Glenys a speedy recovery, see below. Secondly an apology for the late cancellation of the November zoom meeting. Our zoom meetings will resume in the New Year, hopefully with back up for Glenys.

Our "back to basics" sessions have gone really well attracting some new members and welcoming back some old friends. It's good to have these sessions, there is always something new to learn.

Christmas is fast approaching so I won't waste anymore of your time. Yvonne once again has produced an excellent newsletter with seasonal additions.

So on behalf of the committee I send you compliments of the season. **JOHN MILLS**

As many of you will know, our Zoom meeting for November had to be cancelled because our host, Glenys Bettley had a nasty fall at home resulting in breaking the second vertebra – the C2 for those who understand - in her neck.

We are pleased to report that Glenys is home and making good progress. She has to take things carefully and will need to wear a rigid stiff collar to support her neck for at least the next few months so has to get used to some discomfort and limitation. Her line of vision is restricted and her husband says she can't say 'No'! Luckily there was no nerve injury but it could have been far worse in that she could have been paralysed. Hopefully the bones in the neck will knit together without surgery.

Going by messages and telephone calls received asking after her, she is a very popular and hard-working lady who engages in various other groups and activities besides family history. We send our love and best wishes for a quick and full recovery.

## **REPORTS**

### **27 October – 'Back to Basics' – Census returns**

We were pleased to welcome some new faces at our October face-to-face meeting held at the Central Community Centre in Swindon on 27th October, when we held another session looking again at familiar sources, this time the census records.

Jenny Pope looked at the different online services we can use to access the census, whether in transcription or using the images, and the benefits and problems attached to each. She showed us examples of misleading transcriptions made because of errors by the transcriber, the census enumerator and also the householder.

Working from the earliest to the latest census, we looked at the changes to the information sought and how this could help build a better picture of our ancestors' lives. Using the images now available and revisiting the census returns - which we may have looked at last some time ago - can yield information which we overlooked before or which we can interpret better in the light of our greater family history knowledge.

### **COACH TRIP TO KEW AND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

Swindon members and friends as usual made up more than half the party on our trip to Kew on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Those who visited Kew Gardens enjoyed (mostly) sunshine and blue skies. The rest of us who made use of the archives were surprised at how few people were actually there. This had the added bonus that those of us who wanted to access the 1921 census could do so easily and we were able to spend as long as we wanted on the computers there without feeling that we were stopping access for others. However if you wanted copies of the census, you have to have them emailed to yourself and there is a limited time in which to access and download the material.

More and more documents held by The National Archives are available digitally, either through subscription websites or directly from TNA on their website. The good news about the latter is that you can still download the images at home for free; the bad news is that while you can view them on screen while you are at Kew, you can no longer get a printout there of the image or of the original document, or request to view the original document. **JENNY POPE**

The 1921 census is now available at local libraries.

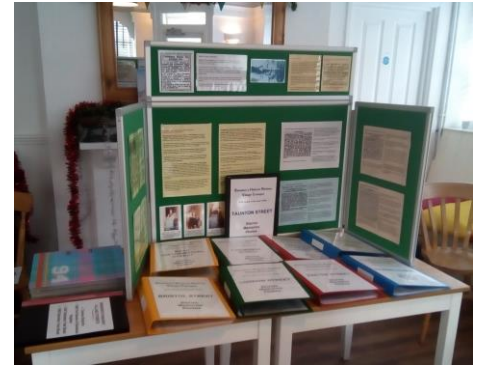
## PEOPLE – Christmas Fayre 26 November



Getting ready to open

What a privilege to be at The Baker's Café for the Central Community Centre Christmas Fayre.

Thanks to the organisers and all the volunteers and for asking Swindon Branch to bring along the Railway Village stories and memories such that we have at the moment.



It was the people who made the day special. There was Oscar who very recently escaped, with his wife and young daughter, from a dangerous situation in his country. I was able to wave to his grandma when she 'phoned him from the other side of the world. WOW!

There was Albert, Theresa and Jenny who had me guessing where they came from – turned out to be Hong Kong. They were practising their English on me and we chatted for quite some time. Such fun.

Then there was 8 year Louise, so fascinated that Swindon was once under the sea, that she got her Mum to take a photo of the sort of the marine reptile (on our notice board) to show her teacher. She likened it to Nessy.



Bones of such a creature had been found by a workman who lived just along the street from where we were.

Six year old Maisie decided to sit and chat to me while Daddy popped outside for a few minutes. What a sweetie. We discovered that she attends the school complex where my grandson goes and that her grandparents live in the street parallel to mine.



Little George (I think that was his name) likes teddies and apple cake!

The three year old twins, chalk and cheese evidently, were quite a handful and loved the model of The Baker's – a bit disappointed that the doors didn't actually open.

Freddie was on a mission and, aided by his Dad, told me why they had come to The Baker's that day.

The café was really busy at times and I have to say that no-one seemed to mind me interrupting their tea and cakes (lots of other goodies available) to chat about the Railway Village project. It turned out to be quite a cosmopolitan event and a most interesting experience. It made me

wonder about the people who had used these premises over the past 170 years – once a bakery and then The Baker's Arms public house. Wonder what their conversations would have been about.

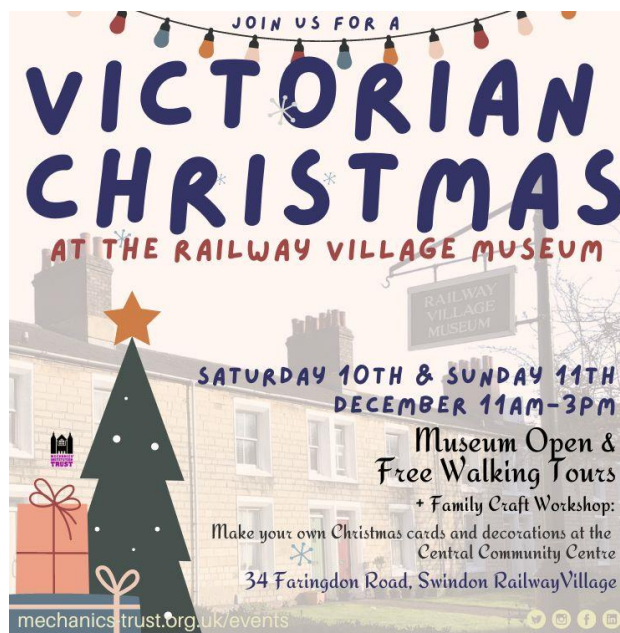
As Barbara was with me, supportive as always, I was able to pop over to the main Community Centre to browse the craft stalls etc. I said I'd only be a few minutes. Half an hour (at least) later I had chatted to the stall holders – so many different ideas and crafts and so clever. I also met two local authors and, again, such a privilege. On my return, Roy Cartwright had Barbara and me enthralled with his local stories and knowledge.

For me, there was just one big problem. My mind was absolutely buzzing thinking about the lovely families I'd met which made getting to sleep extremely difficult that night. Yvonne

## WHAT'S COMING UP ...

On Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 Swindon branch will hold their Christmas get together in the Central Community Centre in Emlyn Square. There will be a fun Christmas quiz and Christmas raffle followed by a buffet supper. We will begin at 7.30pm as usual but the party will last for a couple of hours. Please dig out your Christmas jumpers and bring along a small contribution to the shared buffet. We hope you will be able to join us. **MARGARET NEAVES**

## STEP BACK IN TIME THIS CHRISTMAS – at Swindon's Railway Village Museum



### Step back in time this Christmas at Swindon's Railway Village Museum.

Have you ever wondered when crackers were invented, or when we first started sending Christmas cards, or when Christmas trees first became popular?

Experience the sights, sounds and smells of a Victorian Christmas as you explore the museum, then head to the Baker's café across the road for refreshments.

Christmas craft sessions will be running all weekend and you can try making Victorian decorations, crackers and Christmas cards to share with friends and family.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Free entry (donations highly appreciated)

## SWINDON'S HISTORIC RAILWAY VILLAGE COTTAGES

One of the latest 'stories' received is about 9 Bristol Street, 5 Taunton Street and also brief mention of 9 East Street and 28 Reading Street. The main families concerned are SMITH and HOOK – lots of photos and some family memories – ten pages in fact! Other Swindon-connected names mentioned are:

Mrs Toomes, Nellie Shaw, Dehany Ann Simpkins and son George – probably Taunton Street  
Charlotte Elizabeth Leach – Stratton St Margaret  
Ada Thompson – Theobald Street

If anyone is interested then please email [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com) or  
[swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

## FOLLOWING ON FROM OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE ...

- a. Ken White has written in to say that his great uncle Alfred Albert Maberley of Belle Vue Road was shown as being a **Gas Lamplighter** in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses.
- b. In connection with our recent GWR Village article, and Lilian Irene Ealey, Ken's brother-in-law was Ernest Walter John Roberts (1928 – 2000), brother of Ashley and son of Ernest John Robert and Lilian Irene Ealey. Small world!

These two brothers were brought up by their grandparents, who they thought the world of, and who lived at 9 Hughes Street, whilst their other siblings were at No. 33 with their parents.

Ken remembers many friendly banter meetings when Ernest (seems to have been known as Wally) and Ashley got together – Ashley a very strong Labour man, Councillor and one-time Mayor, and Walter a strong Conservative and Town Councillor for Rodbourne Cheney.



Thanks to Darryl Moody, Local Studies, we can see from an 'In Touch' poster issued by local conservatives in about 1980, that Wally presented himself as a Swindonian by birth, lived all his life in Moredon and went to Even Swindon school.

The poster mentions that he came from a 'politically active family' – his brother Ashley was a former Mayor of Thamesdown. Wally was a former Vice-chairman, and member, of the Rodbourne Cheney Residents Association.

He was also secretary of the W D & H O Wills club and his Secretary's Report of 1972 proudly announced that their once under-used sports ground had been turned into one of the most thriving in Swindon.

Ken White added that Wally was known by everyone. He spent his entire working life at Wills as Floor Manager, with the exception of when he was in the Royal Marines.

He had trials with many of the top football clubs in the fifties and was also secretary to the Wills Football Club. When playing, he won many trophies for Wills. On retiring, he was secretary to the Wills Social Club at Colbourne Street.

## ... AND ANOTHER RESPONSE ABOUT THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT

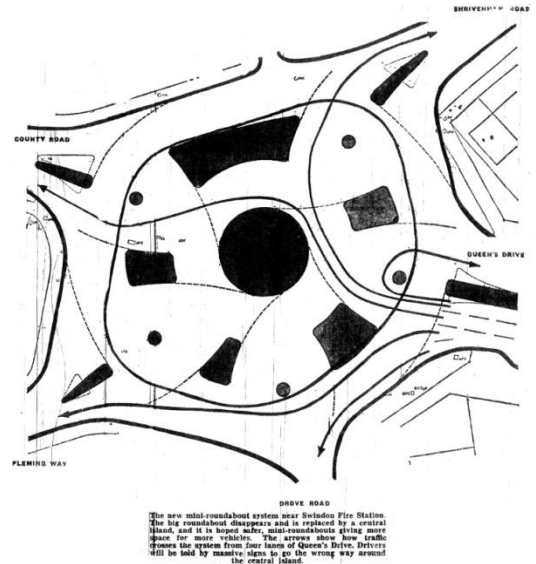
(There is a fantastic picture of the day when the layout was changed and, although permission was requested from the Swindon Advertiser to use it here, no reply received.)

Another of our members has written as follows: First Memory ... "I lived in Oxford till 1952. I can remember the **Gas Lighter man**, coming to the gas fired street light, just outside our house. This started, just after V.E. Day, 1945. He arrived by bicycle, with a ladder attached to the top frame. I was fascinated, watching him."

Second Memory .... "As to the **Magic Roundabout**, at the time I worked at the Highworth and Swindon Workhouse / Stratton St. Margaret's Hospital complex. My daily commute was via Drove Road, and Shrivenham Road. During this time, for ages, the flow of traffic was impeded by the removal of the roundabout. This produced a very large tarmac covered area.

On duty at the complex, travelling to work down Drove Road on a SUNDAY morning, a constable stopped me. I explained to him, that I was on call at the complex. He would not let myself, and the traffic build up. Proceed. There were a LOT of lorries, loaded with used tyres, being unloaded in different positions around the tarmac area, and also, a double decker bus had taken up a position. I did not get asked for my name. Shortly afterwards, the constable, came to my driver side door, and said I would be the FIRST vehicle to go.

Picture courtesy of Darryl Moody of Local Studies.



I WAS THE FIRST CAR TO USE THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT. There were queues of traffic at the end of County Road and Queens Drive. The queues were along Shrivenham Road, nearly to the railway bridge. The Workhouse closed just afterwards. I do not remember the closing date. The hospital remained open, for a time." Member No. 07186

### NOW A MEMORY OF THE RODBOURN CHENEY BAND

In our November Newsletter there was a programme, dated 23 November 1901 by the Rodbourne Cheney Brass Band, at the Board School, and we asked if anyone knew of the band and also the board school.

This lovely photograph has been sent to us of the Rodbourne Cheney Band.



Herbert John Tremblen (1881 – 1914) is third from left and seated behind the drum. Can anyone name the others? They look very smart but the date the photo was taken is unknown. Obviously prior to 1914 when Herbert died at a very young age.

The Board School is probably Rodbourne Cheney School

## **HERBERT JOHN TREMBLEN**

Herbert Alfred John Tremblin was baptised 21 June 1881 at Brinkworth.

Married after banns on 10 May 1903 at Rodbourne Cheney: Herbert John Tremblen 22 year old bachelor and Labourer of 29 Rodbourne Road, son of Robert Tremblen, Labourer, married Elizabeth Howse 19 year old spinster of Rodbourne Cheney, daughter of William Henry Howse, Machine Man. W: J Howse and Edith O Best.

There was an Elizabeth House, daughter of William Henry, Labourer, and Eliza Ann of Rodbourne, baptised 28 December 1884 at Rodbourne Cheney

Herbert and Elizabeth had five children, Alfred Henry being the eldest and Lilian May the youngest.

Baptised 26 July 1903, born 11 May 1903, Alfred Henry Tremblen, son of Herbert John, Labourer, and Elizabeth of Fair View, Rodbourne Cheney was baptised at the Swindon Regent Primitive Methodist Circuit Church. (Where was Fair View, Rodbourne Cheney?)

Lilian May Tremblin, daughter of Alfred John, Labourer, and Elizabeth of 27 Drew Street, was baptised 4 June 1911 at Rodbourne Cheney.

Herbert A J Tremblen died aged 32 during the March quarter 1914 registered Swindon.

Elizabeth Anne Tremblin, nee Howse, was then married on 12 February 1916 to Joseph Harry Smith (1893 Purton – 1967 Swindon) son of Edward Smith and Ada Jane, nee Davis.

## **TAXING HISTORY**

Listed in our October newsletter were a few taxes imposed over the years but, with the subject still quite topical, here are a few earlier ones. Such records have been in existence since the 13<sup>th</sup> century – in many guises ie subsidies, grants, loans, subscriptions and even gifts.

Lay subsidies (12-17<sup>th</sup> century) – charged on ordinary people's moveable goods

Poll Tax (1377-1703) – an unpopular head tax

Sheep Tax (1549) – a tax on flocks of sheep

Ship Money (1634-1640) – ostensibly a tax to support the Navy

Contributions for Ireland (1642) – funding for a Protestant Army to put down a Catholic rebellion in Ireland

Committee for Compounding (1642-1660) - a forced loan to the Commonwealth

Free & Voluntary Present (1661) – a tax to fund the newly restored Charles II who was heavily in debt

Hearth Tax Returns (1662-1689) – one of the better-known taxes. Raised on the number of fireplaces

Land Tax (1693-1963) – This replaced the earlier sporadic taxes

## **CHRISTMAS**

Although the shops are displaying Christmas goodies, what WE are referring to here is the surname Christmas and not the festive season!

At the time of the 1861 census William and Hannah Christmas were at 54 Bath (now Bathampton) Street together with their granddaughter Mary Jane Roberts. All were born in Wales. William was 58 and a Puddler. The Christmas family were lodging with Richard Fisher 34, Millwright born Wales, his wife and family.

The 1868 Swindon Poll Books and Electoral Registers show a William Christmas at 29 Exeter Street, New Swindon.

By the time of the 1871 census the family had moved to Bristol Street: William Christmas 68 (c. 1802) born Aberdare, a Puddler, with Anna Christmas 66 (c.1804) born Carmarthen. Mary J Roberts 17 (c. 1853) born Abersycan.

Within weeks William Christmas of Bristol Street was buried on 29 July 1871 at St Mark's Church. He was shown as being 69. Hannah Christmas was buried aged 70 on 27 March 1875 at St Mark's Church.

So who was William Christmas? At the time of the 1841 census there was a William 35 ... Plate Washing, with wife Ann and children George 6, James 4, Thomas 3 and Henry 1 living at Merridale Street, Wolverhampton. Could this be the same family?

NOTE: There were no Christmas families in Swindon at the time of the 1851 census, nor between 1881 – 1911 and on the 1939 Register.

### **Could the following be correct – so many red herrings!**

Mary Jane Roberts seems to have been the daughter of John and Martha Roberts, both were born in Chester. They were at 53 Wellington Street in 1891 but daughter Mary Jane was not listed with them at that time. However her marriage record gives that address.

Married after banns at St Mark's on 12 December 1891: Mary Jane Roberts 24 year old spinster of 53 Wellington Street, daughter of John Roberts, Smith, married Alfred Charles Booth 28 year old bachelor and Clark of 40 Wellington Street, son of William Booth, Engineer. W: John Roberts and Minnie Susan Harriet Booth.

At the time of both the 1901 and 1911 censuses Alfred Charles and Mary Jane Booth lived at 82 Clifton Street. They had three children: Dorothy born c. 1894, Amy c. 1896 and Marjorie c. 1898

Mary Jane Booth of 77 The Mall, Swindon, Wiltshire, widow, died 28 December 1958. Probate Gloucester 22 January to Marjorie Booth, spinster. Marjorie was Mary Jane's daughter.

As for Dorothy Booth, she married Charles P Jelly during the September quarter 1922 in the Swindon district and by the time of the 1939 Register they were living at 115 Croft Road. Charles Jelly was a Cashier. Dorothy Jelly of 115 Croft Road died 12 July 1982. No children found for them.

As for daughter Amy, Ancestry trees seem to suggest that she went to live in Canada and married William Alfred Winhall in Montreal on 20 July 1920. It is further suggested that they had one son.

Conclusion: If the above information is correct, then there are no relatives of William and Hannah/Anna now in the Swindon area.



## **CAN YOU HELP PLEASE? Do you know of this lady?**

On 31 December 1881 Hannah Winckworth (possibly Winkworth) of Rodbourne Lane aged 68 was killed at the Railway Crossing, New Swindon.

Hannah Winckworth of Rodbourne Lane was buried aged 68 on 31 October 1881 at St Mary's Church, Rodbourne Cheney. Notes on the parish records show 'By Coroner;s Order' and 'killed at Railway Crossing at New Swindon'.

### **Western Daily Press 4 November 1881:**

A Dangerous Crossing: By request of the jury who last week met to inquire into the circumstances attending the death of an aged woman named Hannah Winkworth, killed at the level railway crossing at Rodbourn Lane, Mr Coroner Baker has pointed out to the Board of Trade the dangerous nature of the spot.

Could she be the Hannah Winkworth, born Wootton Bassett, who was a 59 (not 69) year old widow and Needlewoman at the time of the 1881 census.? She was lodging at 15 Stanley Terrace, private house, with George (61 born Purton) and Cathrine (53 born Stratton) Townsend.

### **AND A FURTHER REQUEST FOR HELP this time to recognise a Swindon building.**

Please see attachment to this Newsletter. Please contact [nealy1@virginmedia.com](mailto:nealy1@virginmedia.com) or [swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk](mailto:swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)

## **CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS**

**CHRISTMAS CARDS:** Sir Henry Cole (originator of the now-called Post Office) and artist John Horsley created early Christmas cards (at one shilling each) in 1843 to encourage people to use the post office at one penny per card. Advances in printing lowered the price of cards and they became hugely popular in the 1860s. By 1900 the custom had spread throughout Europe.

**CHRISTMAS CAROLS:** Songs and dances, praises and joy, from pagan times were carried on into the Christian era.

**HOLLY AND IVY:** Used in pre-Christian times to celebrate the winter solstice.

**MISTLETOE:** Associated with peace, love and understanding by the Romans and hung over doors to protect members of the household. The tradition of kissing under the mistletoe is English. Each kiss required that a berry be plucked until none remain.

**STOCKINGS:** Legend has it that St Nicholas, the gift-giver, sent bags of gold down the chimney of a poor man who had no dowry for his unmarried daughters. The gold fell into stockings left hanging to dry.

**TURKEYS:** Originated in Turkey and brought to Britain in 1526 by William Strickland. Enjoyed by Henry VIII, fashionable in high society in the late 19 century and made popular by Edward VII for middle classes. Even by 1930 a turkey would cost the equivalent of a week's wage.

**WREATHS:** Used to observe the Advent season and made up of evergreens, representing everlasting life, and circular in shape representing no beginning and no end. Made up of four candles, one lit each Sunday of Advent, and usually one white one in the middle, the Christ candle, lit on Christmas Day.

## **MINCE PIES – love them or hate them!**

Happy Christmas – have a mince pie! Tradition and made with mincemeat – a misnomer or what? In Tudor times they probably were made of minced mutton or beef, suet, dried fruit, spices and if sweetened that would be with honey. It seems that the earliest examples were large, for sharing, known as ‘shred pies’ and possibly a dish enjoyed by the better off.

PS When I used to make them, I preferred home-made mincemeat (not so sweet) and then popped a blob of soft cheese just before placing the lid on, then into the oven. Yvonne

Then there’s the question of sprouts!

It was said that eating 12 mince pies from 12 separate friends during the 12 days of Christmas, brings 12 months good luck. Might take a bit of organising?

## **1.30 PM ON FRIDAY 30 DECEMBER 1859**

So began the journey of a tornado across the north of Wiltshire. Its journey covered about 13 miles, with a breadth of 250 – 400 yards, lingering for about 2 - 3 minutes over any given spot, and causing damage and mayhem in the ‘rough embrace’ of its ‘sudden tremendous and deafening attack’.

The tornado’s ‘eccentric manoeuvres and wondrous feats of strength’, caused massive trees to be uplifted and thatched roofs lifted and deposited in the road.

It unroofed ricks, barns and chimney stacks, whole sheaves of wheat carried and strewn over a large area, a heavily-loaded waggon deposited on the other side of a hedge.

A cow was thrown into a pond, a cart horse was hurtled across its yard and dashed against a shed, a donkey discovered unharmed amidst a pile of timber and a pig crept un-injured from its crushed sty.

Mercifully not a single life was lost and not a serious accident to man or beast, although there were ‘hair-breadth escapes in abundance’.

The tornado’s furious, hurtling onslaught caused havoc within its tracks, but left surrounding areas ‘apparently unruffled by the breeze’.

The resulting hail stones were as extraordinary as the storm itself. Reports of stones almost half-an-inch thick and star-shaped – the rays of differing sizes 4 – 7 in number; wedges 3” long; irregular stones 2” in diameter; like the middle of a wagon-wheel. In Berwick Bassett they were measured – some 4¾ “, 5½ “ and even 6” with a ½ “ diameter.

The day of the hurricane was long-remembered for its sudden and violent gusts of wind and heavy rain and hail showers.



## TO FINISH – A BRAIN TEASER – see attached

This one is for the older amongst us, will bring back memories and get the old grey matter working. I wonder how many will have a go?



The 1908 Blizzard – photos courtesy of Andy Binks and the Swindon Society



# Happy Christmas Everyone

(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))