

Hello

Wiltshire Family History Society Swindon Branch. February 2021

Swindon Branch Zoom Meeting: On Thursday 11 February 2021 we welcome Sara Kinsey, who is Head of Historical Archives at the Nationwide Headquarters in Swindon, to tell us about the records which they hold in their archives. We do hope that you will be able to join in with this talk via Zoom. Please register ASAP with Glenys Bettley on glenys.bettley@ntlworld.com



*Sir Winston Churchill
in 1942 said:*

*“Now this is not the
end.*

*It is not even the
beginning of the end,
but it is perhaps, the
end of the beginning.”*

*Can we also relate this
to Coronavirus?*

FEBRUARY THOUGHTS FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN MILLS

Welcome to our newsletter. We had a zoom committee meeting recently and made the sad but practical decision to suspend meetings until September (fingers crossed). There is a proviso, that should the vaccine be successful in suppressing Covid and life is back to near normal before then we would arrange to meet informally. In the meantime, we will continue with the newsletter, excellently produced by Yvonne, and Zoom talks in collaboration with other branches. If you think you could do a talk with suitable material to illustrate then please contact us.

We are now well into our latest lockdown. The first lockdown I thought I used quite constructively as regards my family history research, filling in those gaps that inevitably occur in the tree. So I thought this lockdown I could tie up those loose ends, oh boy. The harder I try, these loose ends unravel more. The dining room table is just a pile of pads, sheets of notes, copies of censuses from various sites, family tree time lines, different coloured pens and pencils. Lis and I are two confused researchers longing to serve a meal on our table. Having seen the Ancestral Mathematics chart below, I think I am about 1200 people short of tying up these loose ends. Oh well. **JOHN MILLS**

THERE WAS A PROBLEM

When circulating the January Newsletter on 31 December, there were seven 'return to sender' messages' which bounced back after a delay of about four days. They were all talktalk related email addresses and all seven were contacted again individually with the request to confirm receipt. Only two (now three) confirmations were received and some bounced back for a second time, again after several days delay.

So, if YOU didn't receive your January Newsletter, please let me know on nealy1@virginmedia.com and I should be able to attach it for you on the back of your email to me. Thanks. Yvonne

Ancestral Mathematics

In order to be born, you needed:

2 parents
4 grandparents
8 great-grandparents
16 second great-grandparents
32 third great-grandparents
64 fourth great-grandparents
128 fifth great-grandparents
256 sixth great-grandparents
512 seventh great-grandparents
1,024 eighth great-grandparents
2,048 ninth great-grandparents



Each FAMILY TREE has many Twists and Turns

For you to be born today from 12 previous generations, you needed a total of 4,094 ancestors over the last 400 years.

Think for a moment – How many struggles? How many battles? How many difficulties? How much sadness? How much happiness? How many love stories? How many expressions of hope for the future? – did your ancestors have to undergo for you to exist in this present moment...

NICE TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU

Our thanks to Margaret Neaves for arranging our Zoom Meeting on 14 January, and to Glenys for 'hosting' the evening. It was so lovely to 'meet' up again – must have been about 50 people in all.

'Changing Times' was the title of Julie Davis's talk. She works for the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre (WSHC) in Chippenham where there is a wealth of information - letters, photos etc – about how life was during WW2.

She took us stage by stage through the war years and various aspects and happenings. There were letters, for example, complaining about how the roads and countryside were affected by tanks and Army vehicles, and insensitive use of land.

There were photos, and stories, of Land Girls, and German and Italian POWs, a tank stuck in a lane, and one where a large number of signposts were stacked up, having been removed to thwart the enemy in the event of an invasion. Strangely enough just the night before, I had been reading about that happening in Swindon in a book 'Saucepans on Our Heads: Growing up in Swindon during World War 2' by Ron Burchell.

Julie told about, and showed us, photos of evacuees from London early in the war, some going back home because of lack of action (at that time) in this area. Accommodating evacuees, key workers and Army personnel, became a problem, especially in Swindon.

After the war, there was an even greater housing shortage. Disused camps were acceptable temporarily but families wanted their own space. It was mentioned, after Julie's talk, that Swindon also expanded because of the London overspill – and not for the first time in history. Little London in Old Swindon was perhaps the original overspill area.

Terry Lambourne (affectionately now known as 'our Terry' to some of us) wondered if anyone could remember seeing enemy aircraft flying overhead en route to bomb other places. He remembers, when he lived in Marston, Oxford, the Spitfires and Hurricanes going to work, shooting down Jerry aircraft. There is a similar memory in the book mentioned above, which is well-worth a read if you haven't already.

Terry also sent in this information following the Zoom meeting on the 14th: "As to WW2 rationing, one could only get this, if it was IN the shop you were registered at. Many is the time that we went hungry. I used to roam the fields, and eat leaves, we called them bread and cheese, from blackthorn bushes. Many trees were climbed, to get birds eggs, and, also streams or ponds, were waded, to get duck and moorhen eggs. They went down very well. Found a pheasant nest, once, with 22 eggs in it. What a feast! My paternal Grandma, born in Appleton, could locate what she called Wild Artichokes. Since found out, that these were Truffles. Unfortunately, where we dug them up from, was covered in housing long before I found this out.

We have been to Eden Camp* 3 times. We were there one time, and a group of Scottish school children were on a visit. (They came by coach, and stayed locally). In one room, a party of 6, and teacher, were by the Ration Books, and replicas of the amounts, showing what the amounts were. I told them that it was only available when in the shops. The teacher, and the boys, then started to quiz me. We had a good laugh together and at the end I was thanked by the teacher, who asked how I knew this. I also told them about the fact that, many times, we kids went to school with Lino in shoes because of holes in soles. When I told her my DOB, she was amazed. You are never too old to learn!"

*Eden Camp was a POW Camp during WW2 which housed Italians.

PLEASE NOTE: *Hunger led people to do things that we find unacceptable today but it was almost a necessity then to take opportunities when they arose. If you are tempted to steal such eggs today, you could face an unlimited fine and/or 6 months in prison.*

If YOU have a similar memory or story, please do share with us.

So much information available at the WSHC and perhaps well worth a visit when restrictions allow. <https://wshc.org.uk/> is their web address.

Just a reminder here that, although Local Studies at the Central Swindon Library is closed for visiting, staff are working from home and can still try to help with your queries.

FOLLOWING ON FROM JULIE'S TALK – A MEMORY FROM LIS MILLS

Julie Davis, from the History Centre, recent Zoom presentation, arranged by the Swindon Branch, on Changing Times (how life changed for Wiltshire folk towards the end of WW2), mentioned the deserted Wiltshire village of Imber.

This reminded me of my Aunt Rene Dark and her link with the village, which was requisitioned, during the war, by the army.

Working as the telephonist supervisor at Devizes telephone exchange she told me, with a glint in her eye, she was aware of “everything that was going on”. Connecting the military phone calls to the village, (I believe she said there were only two phones in Imber).

She was aware of the impact of the sudden forced move of the residents which had a devastating effect on their lives. She was convinced that they had been “let down badly, with the promise they would return to their homes when the war was over”. “Many died of a “broken heart”, she would say.



If and when we can, it is worth considering visiting the village on one of the designated open days, perhaps an event to consider for the future?

(For more information about Imber, look on the village web site imbervillage.co.uk Michael Portillo has written an excellent chapter in his book Hidden History of Britain). **LIS MILLS**

ON THE SUBJECT OF SURNAMES

The surname TOWNSEND brought several responses when we raised it in a back issue of our Newsletter. The next two surnames suggested were Simpkins and Avenell – Avenell because Chairman John had discovered it to be an old name within the Swindon area.

Unfortunately we had no responses from you regarding these surnames although the article about Joyce Murgatroyd in the January newsletter shows us that SHE had Simpkins connections.

I did a little research on the AVENELL surname (possibly of French origin and with many spelling variations) and WOW – I found a Philip Avenel mentioned at Even Swindon 1242-3, and a further mention of him in 1249. Between 1284-5 a Christine Avenel held land, and in 1313 Robert and Christine Avenell were listed. John wasn't kidding when he said it was an old Swindon name!

There were early Avenells in Highworth – originally, of course, bigger and more important than little Swindon on the hill.

Children of Thomas Avenell - baptisms:

17.09.1565	Ellyn
09.02.1571	Robert
20.03.1572	Alice
07.05.1574	Joanne
14.03.1577	Joyce

Children of Johannis Aveanell – baptisms:

02.11.1544	Agnes
28.10.1545	Agnes
19.11.1571	Agnes Avenell married
Jhon Palmer	
21.10.1595	Elizabeth Avenell married
Jhon Steevens	

There were also early Avenells in Chiseldon, Ramsbury, Old Swindon, Wanborough and Wroughton.

Does anyone have anything to add about Avenells and Simpkins? Please email nealy1@virginmedia.com or ring 01793 822310.

WFHS JOURNAL - REMINDER

Can I just remind everyone that Bethanie Afton, editor of the WFHS Journal is always interested in receiving your Wiltshire stories and memories. In our little Newsletter, we dabble in what may interest our Swindon Branch members. However, if you have a somewhat larger story you would like to share with the whole of Wiltshire, do write to Bethanie. I know she would be very pleased to hear from you. Yvonne

HARPING BACK TO THE SUBJECT OF BRICK WALLS AGAIN...

Do please keep sending in your own 'brick walls' to see if our readers can help you. But also can you share with us the REASON (if you know it of course) for that brick wall? There are so many factors that can affect this and a few pointers could make all the difference. So please send us your thoughts and ideas – who knows, you may help someone's brick wall take a tumble.

Did you see Linda Brown's excellent article in the January 2021 Journal? Linda says that "With the surnames Brown, Smith and Jones as grandparents, I need all the hints and tips I can get to break down my brick walls." I'm sure we can all relate to similar brick walls and the article was well worth considering in relation to our own researches.

Linda's article certainly makes you realise just how many obstacles are against us when trying to find our ancestors. Deed Poll is just one.

A further tip from Linda is to obtain a will. She stresses, however, that not every probate has a will to accompany it. Linda used the website probate.search.gov.uk and was pleasantly

surprised to discover that, not only did it cost just £1.50 but the will was available to download through the website in a matter of just five days.

UNUSUAL ENTRIES ON CERTIFICATES

For several years I couldn't find my 2 x great Grandfather and eventually decided to think 'outside the box' by firstly contacting a hospital where a local registrar had been based. I had an almost immediate response by 'phone suggesting I contact the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. Again, I got an almost immediate response suggesting that I order a marriage certificate, which was most unusual and would probably answer my query.

Can you rely on certificates being accurate? No way! Mistakes and even downright lies sometimes can throw us off the track. Sometimes, however, like in Linda Brown's experience, they can open up a whole new world.

ENTRY OF MARRIAGE
Marriage Act 1949
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.
[Printed by the authority of the Registrar General for England and Wales]

of Dilton Marsh in the County of Wilts

Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession.
Dilton Marsh	Legitimate daughter of Sarah Hillman	
Dilton Marsh		

by me, [Signature]

X of James [Signature]
X of William Goodenough

In my case, my brick wall was caused because of illegitimacies and this marriage certificate set me on the right path.

I could find my Goodenoughs on census returns but not on Parish Records. When I discovered (from his marriage certificate) that my 2 x great grandfather was born a Hillman, a whole new family opened up before me.

Conversely, of course, the Hillmans found Parish Records but no listings on census returns.

Do you have any unusual certificates that you'd like to share with us?

WHAT TANGLED WEBS WE WEAVE

(Another brick wall tumbled – or perhaps not)

I blame my cousin of course! A chance remark set me off: 'Did you know that Mary Jane's lodger went off to Australia taking with him her three daughters?' (well, two at least were his daughters also). This was a family story passed down, and came from a chap in New Zealand. Well you can't just ignore that kind of remark can you!

Mary Jane, surname Morse/Iles/Skeates/Purse and possibly Nicolle was born in 1852 in Lydiard Tregoze according to censuses, but baptised in Purton. She married my 2 x great grandfather Edwin/Edward Skeates in 1871 but purported to be a widow at the time of the 1881 census. But HE went on to marry my 2 x great grandmother in 1887 and said he was a widower. Was their marriage annulled? Did they divorce? Oh dear, what have we stumbled against?

That same year, we discovered that Mary Jane, together with her lodger of 1881 Francis Purse, and three daughters emigrated and, on reaching Australian shores, all their surnames had become Purse. Francis died young but there was another baby, frustratingly born and died in

1894 but no dates. Was the baby Francis's daughter? Mary Jane may have married again. Details of that and her death are sparse. You could say, yet another brick wall! Yvonne

MAYBE THE 'STRAYS' INDEX CAN HELP TUMBLE YOUR BRICK WALL Stella Sheppard has sent the following which could help:

Have you hit a brick wall in your research, if so have you looked at the **Strays Index**?

A 'Stray' is someone who has moved out of an area to another area. As Family History Societies are mostly formed by their County boundaries, the "area" referred to is usually taken to mean the County or Country.

Strays move both ways i.e. in and out of the County or Country. The 'Strays' index is a list of these people who have moved out of Wiltshire for any reason. They may have been born here and moved away to work or they could have strayed across the border to marry in the girl's parish church or to have a baby baptized. They may also have emigrated.

In recent years many Obituaries have been received.

In 2020 the index was included on the Wiltshire FHS website containing more than 20,000 entries.

Examples:-

Census - HARPER Marian Lavinia: The 1901 census shows that she was born at Wootton Bassett and was a 24 year cook for Lieut Col William Cleeve, at Government House, St Nicholas, Harwich.

Marriage – RUSSELL James of Swindon: On 26 Jul 1857, son of David, married Harriet GIBBONS of Oxford.

Death – SANSOM Bernard William born 1909 in Swindon: Died 28 Jan 1990. Newspaper obituary, Vancouver BC , Canada.

Prison – RICHARDS John from Purton, now Gloucester: 26 Jul 1853 – 18 year old Labourer.

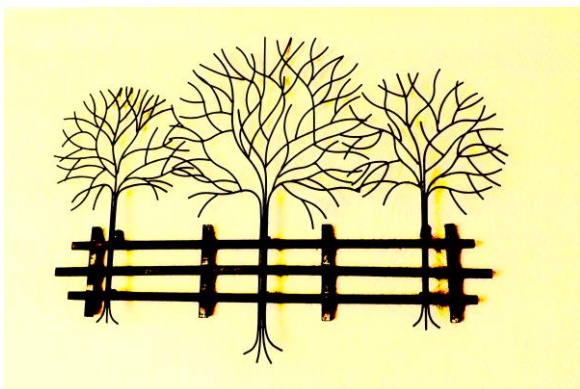
While researching if a 'Stray' is found please forward the information to:-

Strays Co-ordinator, Wiltshire FHS Resource Centre, Unit 3 Bath Road Business Centre, Devizes SN10 1XA

E-mail - society@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

STELLA SHEPPARD

GATEWAY ANCESTORS – A little gem from Linda



In an article I recently wrote for the WFHS Journal, I 'carelessly' chucked in the comment that HM the Queen is my 19th cousin.

Memo to self: Don't write throw-away comments if you don't want someone to ask you to follow it up!! ☺

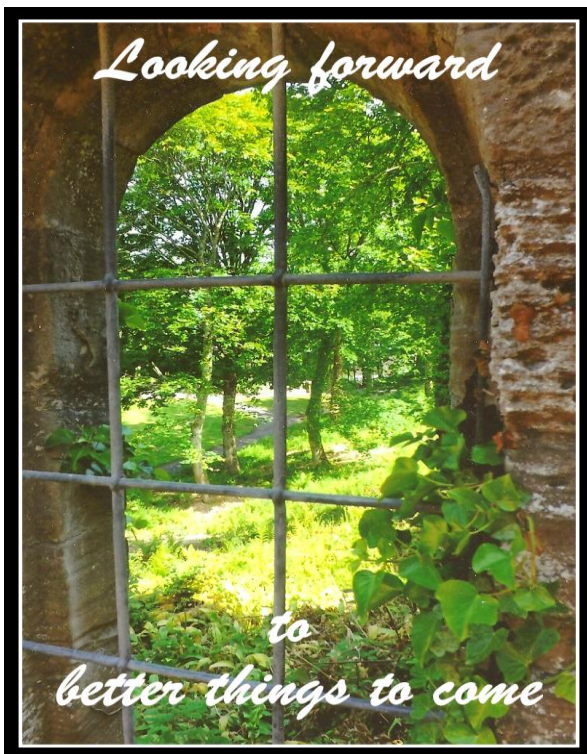
In the dim and distant past, I read somewhere that at least 25% of the indigenous population of England is related to William the Conqueror, he of 1066 fame, but only some 10% of those can make the connection.

The Wingfields were landed gentry from Suffolk and my ancestors were blacksmiths. Sometime around 1662, my 8x great grandfather, Thomas BAYLES married Elizabeth WINGFIELD, my 'gateway' to royalty ancestor. The Wingfield family were quite prolific, so any respectable match was acceptable for the youngest daughters. Although a dirty, physical occupation, blacksmiths were never out of work and considered reputable and highly regarded men.

Through the Wingfields, my lineage goes back to the previously mentioned William and includes Mary Hardwick, sister of Bess of Hardwick aka Elizabeth Cavendish (1527 – 1608), various Knights of the Garter and Lord Lieutenants, and Edward Longshanks, the Plantagenet king who reigned as Edward I (1239 – 1307) my 21st great grandfather.

Edward Longshanks is Queen Elizabeth's 19th great grandfather, ironically through her mother, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyons, the Queen Mother, rather than her father King George VI, as the Crown took a more torturous route to her head, think Princes in the Tower 1483.

Not quite sure why my genealogy programme has Edward Longshanks as my 21st great grandfather but Queen Elizabeth's 19th great grandfather but it shows her as being my 19th cousin. There is probably more than one relationship route between us due to the intermarrying of titled families. **LINDA BROWN**



BUT LOOKING BACK....

Some Malmesbury burials:

Wish there had been more entires by that same person!

03.04.1757 James Stokes/Stoker: the poor-ragedly(?) creature being drowned.

21.04.1757 Samuel Hudson: a burgess killed by drinking.

06.07.1757 Joseph Chamberlain: foolishly brought/sent from London.

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