

Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, June 2023

MEETINGS REMINDER – see below for further details

Thursday 8 June 2023 via Zoom – ‘Sons of the Soil’

Thursday 22 June 2023 – Swindon Branch outing



Coronation Day 6 May 2023

A ceremony incorporating
both ancient and modern.

Do you remember the 18th century satirical ‘parlour’ song ‘The Vicar of Bray’ which starts “In good King Charles’ golden days ...?” Evidently Bray lies on the River Thames, south east of Maidenhead. The author of the song is unknown but certainly had a great sense of humour!

8 February 1952 The Advertiser noted that for the first time in more than 50 years, the people of Swindon sang ‘God Save the Queen.’ Several hundred people gathered outside the Town Hall to hear the Mayor of Swindon, Alderman A Leonard, read the proclamation of Elizabeth II as the new queen, following the death of her father, George VI, two days earlier.

FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN

I am going to be very brief this month. Firstly, I am off to Yorkshire in a few days, secondly, I will come to that in a moment.

What a fabulous month May has been and not just because the weather is getting better. We had an incredibly informative zoom meeting with Ian Waller with plenty of ideas that could help our research. Then a fascinating talk from Ray Nethercott. His research took us right back to the Vikings, William the Conqueror, including knights, fighting bishops and then the Irish famine. A really interesting time travelling tale.

We also had our first face to face committee meeting.

The other reason this is short is because right at the end of the newsletter, Yvonne asked the question does anybody know about Westcott Street? Yes I do because number 7 was where the Mills family lived when they moved from Brokenborough. My great aunt Rose was a neighbour of the Uzzells, see below. So, I will have a lot to say next month.

JOHN MILLS

WHAT'S COMING UP

Thursday 8th June 2023 Zoom meeting 'Sons of the Soil' – researching our agricultural labouring ancestors - Janet Few

Janet is an experienced and qualified family, social and community historian who lectures regularly on these subjects both in the UK and overseas. Her talk will cover a range of sources, many of them under used, which will help to shed light on the working lives of our rural British ancestors.

Thursday 22nd June 2023

Members of Swindon branch outing.

MARGARET NEAVES

As usual for our Zoom meetings, Glenys (our Zoom host) will be inviting you to join with us if she already has your details. For others who would like to join in, please email Glenys on glenys.bettley@ntlworld.com

Our Zoom talks are allowed to be recorded sometimes. Please email swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk if you would like to receive the invite to these recorded sessions.

TRIP DAY – Saturday 3 June 11.00 am – 3.00pm

Step back in time at Swindon's Railway Village Museum at 34 Faringdon Road, and find out how Victorian railway workers lived.

You can also join in one of the walking tours around the Village at either 11.30 am or 1.30 pm. These tours can be booked by contacting katie@mechanics-trust.org.uk or by visiting <http://allevents.by/RVWT>

17 June from 11.00 am at the GWR Park

Come along to The Armed Forces Day event. There will be military displays, a fun fair, entertainment, food stalls, kids activities and more.

GWR MEDICAL FUND (NHS75) – Saturday 8 July 11.00 – 3.00pm

Again for this special occasion the Railway Village Museum will be open on Saturday 8 July between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm.

Also why not pop in to the Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square for **NHS75 GWR Medical Fund Exhibitions**. Free entry.

4.00 at the Central Community Centre: GWR Medical Talk by Adam Busby. 50p for members and £2 for non-members. Tickets for this will be available.

More about the NHS75 in our next Newsletter.

REPORTS

Saturday 22 April was the day of the WFHS outing to St Fagans. A great day, organised by Jenny Pope, and this time the weather was kind! The previous visit to this wonderful place was wet – very wet! Here are a few reminders of St Fagans, although taken during the previous visit:



This round house was surprisingly large inside and so organised.



Swindon Branch AGM took place on **Thursday 27 April 2023** when we heard the reports from various committee members. The chairman thanked all the committee for their ongoing help. New committee members would be most welcome, as would additional help of various kinds. There was just one change of committee as, due to health reasons, Glenys Bettley felt she needed to relinquish the position of Vice Chair, but is still willing to take an active part within the Branch. Grateful thanks to Glenys for all she has done, and still does, for Swindon Branch.

Our committee now:

Chair	John Mills
Vice Chair	Kate Goodenough
Programme Secretary	Margaret Neaves
Treasurer	Stella Sheppard
Executive Representative	Jenny Pope
Secretary	Yvonne Neal

We also have four 'helpers'.

If anyone would like a copy of the full minutes or further information on becoming a committee member, please email swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

Following the AGM, we split up into small groups, as far as possible from similar areas and parts of the country. We must remember that many people now living in Swindon are not originally Swindonians – just as when the GWR Works opened in the 1840s.

MY AVERAGE ANCESTOR – Thursday 11 May Zoom – Ian Waller

Ian explained that, during our lifetime, we will each probably generate about 100 records – you just need to know where to look for them when researching ancestors. He gave many examples of records that exist but which we would perhaps normally not think of researching.

Here are some suggestions:

<p>Births and baptisms – not always C of E so not in parish records.</p> <p>Dr Williams' library register of births – register of protestant non-conformity births 1729 – 1837.</p>	<p>Family Bibles</p> <p>Parish and Church magazines</p> <p>Vaccination registers and log books</p> <p>Confirmation Records</p> <p>Child migration records</p> <p>Bastardy bonds</p>
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<p>Marriage banns – possibly in two parishes</p> <p>Marriage bonds and allegations</p> <p>Divorce and separation</p> <p>Wife sales!</p>	<p>Settlement certificates</p> <p>Change of name</p> <p>Assisted emigration</p> <p>Passport and travel documents</p>
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<p>Apprenticeship Indentures and Freedom certificates</p> <p>Parish/Guardian apprentices</p> <p>Tax returns and servants tax records</p> <p>Employment records eg police, railways</p> <p>Company record archives</p> <p>Employment and CVs</p> <p>Trade Union records</p> <p>Local Rates</p>	<p>Trade directories</p> <p>Street directories and electoral rolls</p> <p>Censuses</p> <p>Landed estate directories and log books</p> <p>Land tax records</p> <p>Specialist trade magazines</p> <p>Club/Society Records</p> <p>Identity cards and 1939 Register</p> <p>Newspaper cuttings</p> <p>Debts/bankruptcy records</p> <p>Friendly and benefit societies</p>
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Courts: will disputes, Ecclesiastical court cases, Manorial courts, criminal and prison records.

<p>Militia Orders</p> <p>Master merchant seaman tickets (big gaps)</p> <p>POWs/soldiers pension records</p>	<p>Officers' commission warrants</p> <p>Soldiers' personal diaries – some in museums</p> <p>Soldiers' effects ledgers</p>
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<p>Workhouse records and desertions</p> <p>Workhouse deaths and burials</p> <p>Asylum Records</p> <p>Overseers accounts/Poor relief</p> <p>Field Hospital Records/Hospital Admissions/Patients visiting orders.</p>	<p>Grave stones and memorials</p> <p>Cemetery and grave records</p> <p>Memorial cards</p> <p>Undertakers' records</p> <p>Coroners' reports</p> <p>Hospital post mortem and inquisitions</p>
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Thursday 25 May 2023 'All Because of a Bit of Bull' from Ray Nethercott

A family history with a difference. Ray's story of his wife's family started in the normal way but then

It all began with a challenge – the mystery of who Mercy Mercer, born Cranbrook, was and also Aunt Prim – and a discrepancy of 40 years in the records. Then a chance remark about a family member serving at the Battle of Hastings - on the French side. Also of someone going to Ireland and becoming one of the richest men. Some challenge, and one which Ray spent many hours researching with fantastic results.

Ray showed family trees to support his findings. There were connections to the Danish Royal Family, the legendary Ogier the Dane and Havelock the Dane. Also William Malet (Guillaume Malet de Gravelle) 1014 – 1071, who was with William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings, and who is depicted on the Bayeux tapestry.

With connections to Thomas a Becket, the Magna Carta, Curry Mallet and Shepton Mallet, this family played a prominent part in history.

Ray then 'took' us to Ireland, the Norman invasion, and Theobald Fitzwalter le Boteler. This later translated to the surname Butler. Theobald was the 1st Baron Butler, ancestor of the Butler family of Ireland, who brought stability and prosperity to the country. Kilkenny Castle was associated with the Butler family until 1935 when the family sold the property for £50. .

Interestingly the Butlers/Fitzwalters had family connections to Ann Boleyn and also Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Ray had been able to trace the family almost back to the time of Christ. Some achievement with records weaving in and out with various Kings and events, and certainly a family history with a difference.

FROM LAST TIME – CHARLES GOODENOUGH REMOVALS

A memory from Sue Constable: In 1947 my family were living in Shrewsbury. We had been in Liverpool (where we were born) during the May blitz, and my father was working as an auxiliary fireman in the city. He also worked in the aircraft industry and was eventually posted near Shrewsbury where there was an RAF Station. We don't know exactly what he did there – I was only a kid anyway and would not have understood!

After the war he was transferred to Vickers Armstrong and so we moved to Swindon. On moving day, the large pantechnicon arrived and packed in all our belongings. My mother and sister travelled by train, but dad and I travelled in the van with our beloved cat and dog. The cat had been shut in the bathroom while all the activity was going on and was not happy! He had to be held tightly until we were shut in the back. No cat carriers then!



I don't remember much of the journey, but we arrived in Highworth safely. We shut the cat in the bathroom again while the removal men unloaded our furniture – with great care – and we all had a cup of tea. The cat and dog were fed, and we started our new life in Wiltshire.

SUE CONSTABLE

FROM LAST TIME – HOBSON'S CHOICE

I hope you enjoyed the article, attached to our last Newsletter, about my great Uncle Charles Goodenough. Quite a character. And, on the subject of horses

I was lucky enough to be sent a book of poems 'I REMEMBER' by Susan Hatton. They are so lovely. Many of them depict village life and her special memories. She has given me permission to publish her thoughts about Hobson's Choice – hope you like it. See below.

Her grandmother and other family members were lace-makers, as were other women in her village, and she has written about them in her book. She has also agreed to write a little something for a future Newsletter about the old occupation of lace-making, so watch this space.
Yvonne

THANK YOU SUSAN

HOBSON'S CHOICE
Take it or Leave It - Thomas Hobson 1544 - 1631

**When Thomas Hobson died in sixteen thirty one
He left behind a legend which to this day lives on.**

**He kept a London livery yard with horses ready for hire
Available to local folks, doctor, labourer, squire.**

**There was one problem only - you took which horse he said
A fiery steed, a fox hunter, or a poor old hack half dead.**

**"I'd like a horse that's sixteen hands", said a lady in riding gear
"There's nothing but this Shetland - it's that or naught, I fear."**

**One specified an Arab steed, then a pony with pannier bag
Hobson brooked no argument – but offered a broken nag.**

**Another wanted a high stepper to trot as a matching pair
"No problem" said old Hobson "There's a carthorse ready there".**

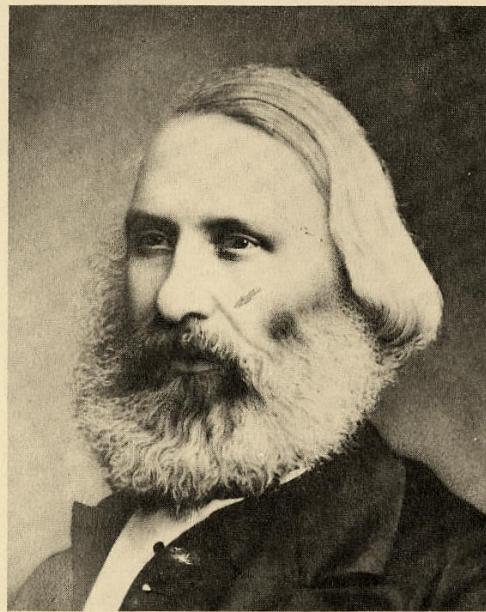
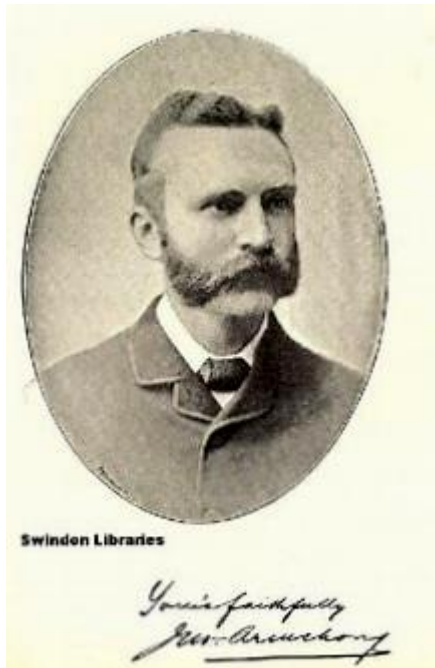
**A customer wanted a dapple grey, then a chestnut with white mane
"For goodness sake" said Hobson "All horses look the same".**

**Hobson, in his yard, was king. Horses were issued as he said.
No choice, no pointing here or there or the riot act was read.**

**So if you venture to his yard, just moderate your voice
And take whichever horse you're given –
Remember – Hobson's Choice**

SUSAN HATTON

FOND FAREWELL TO JOSEPH ARMSTRONG
One of the most memorable days in Swindon's history



Joseph Armstrong

Locomotive Carriage & Wagon Superintendent from 1864–1877. During his reign the “ Sir Daniel ” and “ Queen ” classes were introduced, whilst many diverse designs were acquired in the carriage and wagon stock by the acquisition by absorption of other Companies’ vehicles.

Photos courtesy of Roy Cartwright and Local Studies, Swindon Libraries*

The population of both Old and New Swindon in 1877 was about 16,000 and it was reported that about 6,000 entirely spontaneously ‘turned out’ to witness his funeral on **Saturday 9th June 1877**. 2,000 were probably railmen and special trains from London and Wolverhampton brought mourners into Swindon to a temporary platform erected outside his home in Newburn Place. (He grew up in Newburn-on-Tyne.)

Chief Engineer/Superintendent of Swindon’s GWR Works for 13 years, his death at 60 years of age shocked and saddened the town. The Advertiser wrote:

No man had ever before occupied such a position to which there were attached such momentous consequences.

During his time in Swindon

- The Works were transformed from mainly being a repair shop to a self-supporting engineering complex, the Carriage and Wagon works introduced and a huge expansion of the locomotive production
- The existing Mechanics’ Institute expanded and ‘Swindon men were probably the best educated manual workers in the world’.
- The most famous locomotive built in his time was ‘Queen’, built in the year he died – 1877.
- He had been a junior workmate of George Stephenson before coming to Swindon
- The famous Swindon hooter first sounded in 1872.

- He oversaw the development of the GWR Park and helped instigate the annual Children's Fete. MORE OF THIS IN THE JULY AND AUGUST ISSUES OF OUR NEWSLETTER.
- He was a leading figure in the Medical Fund and Sick Fund Society – and the building of the Accident Hospital.
- He helped fund, and was a director of, the Swindon Water Works Company, and was instrumental in the forming of the New Swindon Education Board.
- He chaired the New Swindon Board (town council).
- He was a Lay Preacher and very charitable, ever helping the poor.

Shops closed for two hours on the day of his funeral – Saturdays were the busiest day of the week. Those who had worked until mid-day, rushed home to change to join the crowds.

*Roy Cartwright also added the following:

Armstrong, Joseph (1816-1877)

One of the great names of the GWR – and thus, of Swindon – Armstrong took charge of “the works” from 1864-1877 during its early rapid expansion.

As well as designing and overseeing the introduction of new locos and rolling stock he became heavily involved in the wellbeing of the company's 13,000 employees and their families.

He strove to improve virtually all aspects of life in fast growing New Swindon, from the population's educational, cultural and medical needs to social issues and its water supply.

The creation of Faringdon Road Park as an area of relaxation and recreation was largely his doing.

Such was the esteem in which he was held, 6,000 people crammed into St Mark's churchyard for his funeral.

WERE YOU THERE?

Back in our March Newsletter we asked the question ‘Were You There?’, referring to Swindon's Brunel Rooms. Well, my cousin was and this is his story of how that came about.

Photo – courtesy of Roy Cartwright



My stage name was Tony Gee and I was the first DJ at the Brunel Rooms, much to my surprise, in 1973 -1976.

Here I was sat in the Shield and Dagger with a few of my mates who were reading an advertisement regarding a new night club opening in Swindon town centre.

My mates somehow persuaded me to go to the auditions - perhaps I did have more than a couple of drinks then ??? So off I went to carry out my audition with only four 45 rpm records I bought from Kempsters that day.

I thought my audition went reasonably well but didn't expect much as there were several other local DJ's from Swindon there at the time. During the auditions I met John Norman and Bill Reid, the owners of the new Brunel Rooms. I must admit they were excited as much as I was about the new venue.

The auditions meant talking into a tape recording machine and playing a couple of records on the DJ's console with voice over Introducing what the record was.

Thinking no more of it, and told it could take a few weeks to hear from Bill and John, and considering the competition, I had kind of forgotten about it all.

About six weeks later I had a postcard from Bill and John from, I think, St.Ives in Cornwall telling me, much to my surprise, "Congratulations you have got the job"! So I must have done something right !

What a wonderful opportunity this was.

The 70's was the decade of Disco with the likes of combining a mix of Motown and Disco together and 60's soul music. I grew up with Bill and John who were great entrepreneurs, getting and bringing in top Radio One DJs and the latest bands who had many chart hits at the time. I really couldn't believe I was involved in this. Suzy Quattro, Mud, 10cc, ELO etc etc and more and more.

I was lucky enough to meet several Radio One DJ's such as Tony Blackburn, Noel Edmunds, Dave Lee Travis and the most unusual Emperor Rosko ???

Bill and John Reid were always inventing new ideas and asking me what did I think of having a Heavy Metal night in the Amphitheatre on Tuesday evenings. So I went to see my good mate Gary Williams who worked at Kempsters and who knew more about the subject. Needless to say Gary did a fantastic night every Tuesday.

Finally, not forgetting "Nappy Nights" and all those fun things. What a great time of my life that was. Thank you Brunel Rooms. **TONY GEE**

SOME JUNE JOTTINGS

'A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon'.

Evidently the Anglo Saxons called June Sere Monath, which mean dry month, or Aerra Litha, which means before midsummer. Great celebrations took place at the Summer Solstice, which probably included bonfires and dancing.

15 June 1215 – **Magna Carta** (the great charter) was sealed by King John at Runnymede, Surrey. Drafted by Archbishop Stephen Langton and the English barons' in an attempt to curb the king's power and make him govern by laws.

7 – 24 June 1520 – **The Field of the Cloth of Gold.** Early in King Henry VIII's reign, there was great rivalry for ascendancy in Europe. Henry attempted to ally himself from Francis I of France, and arranged a meeting close to Calais. That meeting took place in tents made of luxurious materials and lavish entertainments were provided. Unfortunately very little was achieved.

18 June 1815 – The Napoleonic wars ended with the **Battle of Waterloo.** Although forced to abdicate in 1814, Napoleon tried to stage a comeback at Waterloo, was defeated by the Duke of Wellington's troops, and exiled to St Helena.

Can anyone throw light on this one sometime in 1923 seven children were taken to the GWR medical fund hospital, in fainting condition, after being gassed at the Central Cinema in Fleet Street.

And going back even further to 1850, it was reported that five children died of fever within seven weeks of each other in a house in Cricklade Street. What a tragedy for the family – wonder who they were?

THE WAY WE WERE

A front page ad in **June 1956** pictures a very suave, suited gentleman being admired by two onlookers, a man and woman, with the caption '**Be Sure of Yourself in a SQUIRE suit**'.

The seller was **Weaver & Wearer** (of The Strand, London) at 41 Bridge Street, Swindon.

Two-piece, hand cut, to measure: £6 6 0, £8 8 0 and £10 10 0.
Immediate prices £7 7 0 and £9 9 0.

Does this advert bring back any memories?

An ad on the front page of the Evening Advertiser in **June 1962** reads:

MORE CAR – LESS COSTS (picture with family in car)

£532 - 8 – 2 (Exclusive of Road Fund Tax and Insurance)
Deposit £132 – 8 – 2 36 monthly payments £13 – 12 - 3

SEE THEM! TRY THEM! BUY THEM!

The Popular is the lowest-priced car in Britain, and you really get a lot for your money. You've a real family car, a genuine 4/5 seater with plenty of room in the boot for the family's luggage. Its powerful engine gives you nippy handling in traffic, and combines with the steady suspension to carry you in comfort with speeds up to 70 mph. With roominess, performance, wonderful economy and the advantages of low-price Ford Service, the Popular is unbeatable value.

FORD POPULAR – H C PREATER LTD – Main Dealer in all Ford products

Telephone Swindon 4071/2/3. Showroom open until 7pm Mondays to Fridays.

DID ANYONE HAVE A FORD POPULAR? (Does anyone have a photo?) - contact swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

HOW INCONVENIENT!

Swindon Evening Advertiser 8 June 1979: 'Post Office workers today banned the loos at their luxury office block – and now have to walk half a mile for relief. The critical shortage of lavatory rolls and paper towels in Queens Drive House – caused by a union picket line – is causing great inconvenience. Now up to 400 workers have to walk from Dudmore Road to public lavatories in Sussex Square.'

ANOTHER INCOVENIENCE - this time for Thamesdown Borough Council

You may know of Westcott Street, off Westcott Place? The area had been earmarked for redevelopment and the terraced houses and the Gardeners Arms would be demolished BUT the Uzzell family (perhaps others also) were not happy. For five years the family held out for what they considered to be a reasonable purchase price offer and the house was eventually demolished in 1984. Two years previously it had been pictured on the cover of XTC's Ball and Chain single. Does this story ring any bells with you?

LAST BUT NOT LEAST – have YOU any thoughts.

Here is a statement issued by the Friends of the Swindon Health Hydro:

Swindon has just a handful of iconic buildings, so it is important that we do the very best for them.

While being pleased that a significant sum of money is being spent on the Health Hydro we are frustrated, indeed perplexed, by some of the decisions that have been made with regard to the phase 1 plans. There is not much time to revise the plans for the refurbishment of the Health Hydro as the work is set to start in June. We would like to make the following points.

1. There has been virtually no community engagement regarding the phase 1 plans. We would like to see local groups and user groups consulted on the details of the design
2. The refurbishment of the Health Hydro should prioritise what people in Swindon want, rather than the private interest of the lessee, Greenwich Leisure Limited
3. Money should **not** be spent on a gym for which there is little appetite or demand but on the small / learner pool for which there is much support and a desperate need
4. The original wall dividing the men's and women's changing areas should not be demolished and the changing facilities should be kept separate
5. We would like to see a reception that is welcoming to visitors and more in keeping with the heritage of the building
6. The existing toilet and hand washing facilities that could serve the waiting area, gym, activity space and the staff should absolutely **NOT** be removed. There will be a significant increase in users so reducing these facilities would be incredibly short-sighted
7. The recommissioning of the small pool should be enabled by not blocking access from the changing area and by installing the necessary plant in phase 1
8. Visitors to this grade II* listed building should be presented with a full explanation of its unique history and heritage: its place in the history of the NHS, the Great Western Railway and of the town of Swindon.

9. The lift to the first floor of the building should be put in working order. This would help to enable full use of the building which is a sadly underused asset in the centre of Swindon.

If you feel strongly about the plans for the Health Hydro you can contact your councillor by following the following link:

<http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/mgFindMember.aspx>



(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)