

Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, April 2023

MEETINGS REMINDER – see below for further details

Thursday 13 April 2023 via Zoom – ‘Historic Wiltshire and Wiltshire Memories’

Thursday 27 April 2023 at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square
AGM and Open Evening – see below



- Parasols appeared in ancient Egypt over 3000 year ago.
- The earliest may have been made from simple palm leaves to protect from sunlight
- Often a synonym of wealth
- Waterproof umbrellas were invented by the Chinese
- Once connected to culture and fashion – now a general utility

FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN

Yvonne sent me a draft copy of this newsletter and back flowed childhood memories. Harvey Groves writes about his father and grandfather and Groves Nursery. The nursery played a small part in my childhood, the reason being I saw it every morning when I opened the bedroom curtains.

My bedroom in Cypress Grove overlooked Pinehurst School field, half way down the field on the left hand side were the greenhouses of the nursery. At the far end of the field, beyond the groundsman's brick sheds, was a tall building that intrigued me, mainly because its lights shone late into the night.

I was later to learn this was a sports hall where they had a youth centre and some great sports teams like Pinehurst Badminton Club and Pinehurst Netball Club, both town and county champions in their time, but my favourite was Pinehurst F C. Great players like goalkeeper Ayres, captain McDonald, winger Jeffries and probably one of the best footballers Swindon has ever seen Dudley Tyler, who went on to play for Hereford and West Ham. One of my favourite players also had a brief time with Pinehurst, the most prolific goal scorer this town has probably seen, the Erling Haaland* of his day, Basil Fitchett. To see this great football meant climbing over or going under the fence at the top of the garden and then avoiding the steward. If caught he insisted you paid the 6d entry fee.

That sports hall became a major part of my working life as like Harvey I managed that facility for a while.

I have a Locarno story as well but that can wait because there are more interesting stories, including Harvey's, below.

*For non-football fans Erling Haaland plays for Manchester City and is on course to smash the record for scoring most goals in the Premier League in a season. **JOHN MILLS**

WHAT'S COMING UP

Thursday 13 April 2023 via Zoom – 'Historic Wiltshire and Wiltshire Memories' – James Archard:

James has set up a Facebook page for those with an interest in the historic county of Wiltshire. It is a rich source of information and photographs of the county and includes those little bits of local history that didn't make the history books and that would be lost if they weren't passed down through generations of family and friends by word of mouth. This is a wealth of information for family historians with Wiltshire connections.

Thursday 27 April 2023 at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square

AGM and Open Evening. Have you reached a stumbling block in your family history research or perhaps you are new to this and would appreciate some help in moving your research forward. We will put our heads together to try to solve any problems. If you have found out an interesting piece of information, please come along and share this with us.

MARGARET NEAVES

REPORTS

Thursday 9 March via Zoom – 'Ancestors who were Civil Servants' – Alan Ruston

(With thanks to Margaret Neaves for helping with this report as I had problems with Zoom that evening. Yvonne)

On Thursday 9th March we enjoyed a very interesting talk from Alan Ruston, a retired customs and excise officer, telling us about ways to find out about our ancestors who had been in the civil service.

Many records can be found at Kew including those of British nationals who served abroad. This also includes births, deaths and marriages which occurred at sea 1854-1891. There are also records in the Public Record Office relating to employees in the Home Office, Board of Trade, Admiralty and Navy Board, HM Treasury and the Royal Household.

Many of our ancestors were employed by the Post Office. Early postmen were known as letter carriers and an area could have as many as seven deliveries of mail per day. In rural areas the postmaster would appoint someone to deliver the mail locally. Records of postal workers are held in the Postal Museum in London. There are records which can be accessed from Ancestry of lists of postal workers on entering the service. However, if you ancestor reached retirement age and was still in their employment there are more extensive records to be found.

A customs department has been in existence since the 12th century and the excise department was founded in 1643. The two merged in 1909. There would have been a customs house in every key area, and again records of these are housed in the Public Record office at Kew. A wealth of information is available to give us more details of the lives of our ancestors.

23 April at Central Community Centre: 'Where Residents of the Railway Village would have shopped in the 19th century' – Mike and Pam Stubbs

Thanks to Mike and Pam Stubbs for such a well-researched, clear, concise, informative and interesting talk about life in Swindon's historic Railway Village. With the aid of maps, cross-section drawings, diagrams, photos and adverts we were taken back in time to experience how those who lived there would have shopped in the 19th century.

A 1773 map showed there was nothing but fields below Old Swindon - up on the hill.

Edward Snell's clever and intricate watercolour aerial painting of the Railway Village depicted life in the early GWR days. It even included a wedding party going into St Mark's Church, children playing around a maypole and a Policeman complete with top hat. Note that, at that time, policemen would have operated signals along the line. Snell referred to those who came to work in the GWR as 'settlers'.

A pie chart indicated that the new GWR workers came from all over the country, although not many from Wiltshire as they probably didn't have the necessary skills.

So how did the word get around the country that Swindon needed workers and how did they travel to Swindon? Even if a train journey was possible, it would have cost 1d. a mile on open trucks and wooden seats. A difficult journey, especially with a family. When they arrived, there possibly may not be a job and house waiting for them.

Then there was the problem of dialect and slang. Mike and Pam gave some examples to twitters of laughter around the room. Understanding each other could have been problematic!

So .. where could they shop in those early days? There were a few shops up the hill in Higher Swindon, in Wood Street and High Street, and early shoppers would have puffed their way up the steep hill and returned laden with goods. There were a couple of routes – via Bleat Lane and Eastcott to traders such as butchers, bakers and an iron monger.

Cross-section drawings between New and Higher Swindon gave graphic indications of changes from census to census. Starting in the early days with the GWR, the canal and then just countryside until reaching Old/Higher Swindon up on the hill. Gradually the open fields became less and less.

Interesting to note that, in the 1851 census the east side of the Railway Village had numbered houses but no numbers for those on the west side. Diagrams of the Railway Village layout showed that the ends of each row of houses were units designated for shops/enterprises such as a grocer, baker, surgery and dispenser and a draper's where the Glue Pot is now.

By 1854 the New Swindon Improvement Fund had built an octagonal market onto the back of the Mechanics' Institution, providing additional shopping opportunities for local people and goods would have been brought in by horse and cart. The market accommodated 32 units and 30 stalls but opened with just 11 lock-ups. Some traders from Old Swindon seized the opportunity to set up here and included such trades as butchers, shoe/boot makers, and drapery. A 'hole in wall' provided drinks!

The new market caused Ambrose Goddard, who owned the market rights for Swindon up the hill, to want some recompense and demanded his dues - £15 paid and £1 per year. Not perhaps the best deal that he could have demanded.

A few Railway Village individuals were mentioned including the Laxon family who initially lived in No 1 Faringdon Street (now the Museum House) and then moved next door to No. 2 when the Hall family moved into No. 1. The Kelly's directory of 1895 also included some interesting Village dwellers.

By the 1860s, Swindon was expanding and some cottages in Regent Street took advantage of it being a main route from New to Old Swindon, and began trading from home.

By the 1870s the hospital and a 32 bath house had been built in the Village and shopping could be obtained from Bleat Lane and Regent Street. Mention was made that there was a live-in Hall-Keeper at the Mechanics' Institution on the 1871 census.

An 1890 map still showed much open space between New and Old Swindon. The GWR hospital had a garden in front and the Golden Lion Bridge over the canal had been converted into a foot bridge instead of the swing bridge. Thus GWR workers then had no excuse for lateness due to the bridge being in the wrong position.

1891 census shops in the Village included a Coffee Tavern in London Street, which would have pleased the Temperance Movement. The octagonal market no longer existed.

By 1901 High Street had become Emlyn Square.

We were shown some lovely old photos and pictures. One early one was of the Station Master's House, Works Manager's house and then St Mark's Church. There were also views looking over Swindon from a distance. A photo of Albion Terrace showed that it fronted onto the canal.



Keogh's Shop – Ref: 'A photographic Journey – Peter Sheldon & Swindon Society.

Keogh Bros. Hardware at 45 Bridge Street during their Opening Sale in 1901.

'This delightful shop absolutely jam packed with every household item survived well into the 1960's.

Other photos include the Co-op Providence Society and the Frank Bailey and Harry Bailey butcher shops. Also Tunleys.

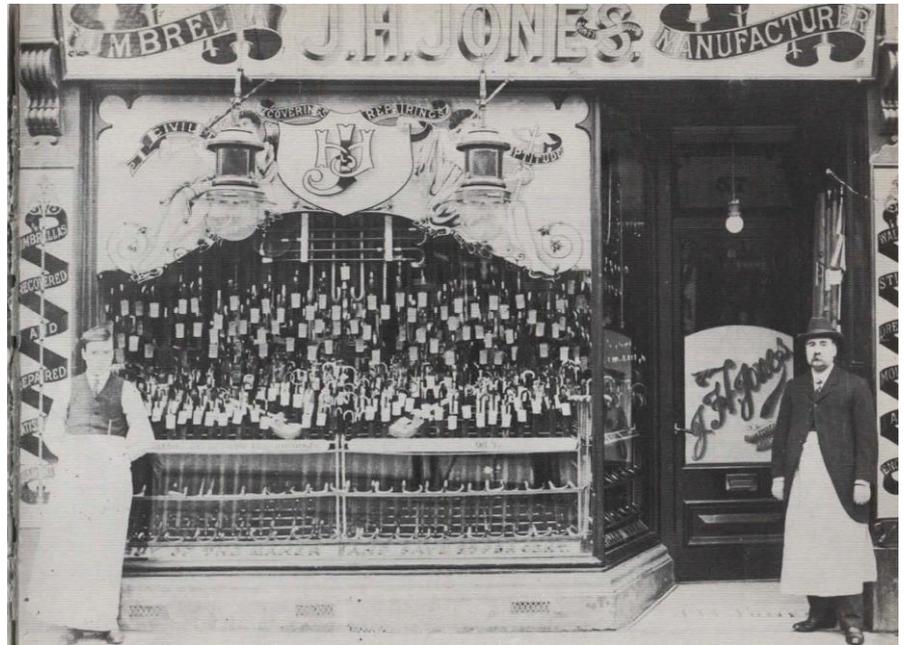
Umbrella Shop – Ref: ‘A photographic Journey’ – Peter Sheldon.

J.H.Jones 57 Regent Street
1910.

In his advertising slogan:

No self-respecting lady would venture far in Summer without an umbrella to shield her face from the sun - a suntan would be avoided at all costs.

(Thanks to Mike and Pam for providing the photos.)



Those early ‘settlers’ would be amazed at the way we shop today!

JOHNNIE STILES AND HIS BAND – any memories or stories brought to mind?
(Thanks to Jenny Ackrill, Local Studies, for supplying some of the information below.)

Following on from our McIlroys article in a recent newsletter, Mervyn Theobald wrote about the dance hall and the Johnnie Stiles Big Band. He remembers the saxophonist being Jock Walker, foreman at Victoria Garage, and Mervyn’s Uncle Vic Cave sang with the band before emigrating to Canada in the early 1950s.

Jenny has discovered that Johnnie Stiles was part of Harry Smith & his Band until 1940-41, playing trumpet. She has sent in the band’s personnel line-up 1943 -1958 which makes interesting reading. If anyone would like a copy, please contact nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

It is known that the Band played at The Locarno, McIlroys and The Majestic (Swimming Baths) and, as shown in the ad., at The Regal Ballroom/Playhouse Theatre*.

Date unknown



*Jenny has explained that the Playhouse Theatre was at the Mechanics Institute and the Regal Ballroom was on the top floor. It tended to be used more in summer when the Milton Road pool was in use.

On 15 November 1950 Princess Elizabeth visited Swindon on the 50th anniversary of the Borough of Swindon. She had been met at Swindon Station by the Mayor, Councillor James Bond (!), David Murray John (Town Clerk) and others, and they walked to the Memorial Gardens, Groundwell Road, preceded by Macebearer Fred Titcombe.

The tour included lunch at the Town Hall and a cuppa with Mr & Mrs Clifford Wilmot and their son and daughter, the new tenants at 22 Akers Way. Princess Elizabeth went back to London late afternoon but that evening a ball was held in the Town Hall with **Johnnie Stiles** music.

Gordon Talbot was pianist arranger. He worked at Swindon's Railway Works as a fitter erector for 44 years, and then became an inspector. However he was better known as one of Swindon's finest musicians. After the Johnnie Stiles band folded in 1958, Gordon formed his own group and, in the 1970s, created the Swindon Big Band.

Ronnie Grant, Roger Summerfield, Percy Harwood, Bert Hathaway, Peter Reddaway and Frank Clarke were band members at some stage. Don Stanley also played clarinet and saxophone with the Band.



Johnnie Stiles and his Band won the Melody Maker All Britain Dance Band Competition in both 1948 and 1949, held at the Belle Vue Kings Hall in Manchester. (Jenny has sent in the 1948 newspaper article if anyone wants a copy).

They came second in the Musical Express National Dance Band Championship finals in 1949.

Photo courtesy of Local Studies (Swindon Library & Information Service)

Can anyone name any of those on this photograph?

The band also broadcast on BBC radio and recorded at least two records with Regal Zonophone. One in 1946 included the songs 'Lady be Good' and 'Chloe' and another in 1948 with the songs 'What is this thing called Love' and 'Tea for Two'.

Apparently Johnnie Stiles, 'Swindon's King of Swing' became the resident band at The Majestic. The springy dance floor was actually Canadian maple boards which covered the large swimming pool in the winter months at the Milton Road swimming baths – now named The Health Hydro. Their signature tune was said to be 'Cherry Pink and Apple-blossom White'.

In 1958 Johnnie gave up his trumpet to become landlord of the White Hart public house at Stratton St Margaret with his wife Jean and his children. It is thought that he may have gone on to run the Queensfield Stores – can anyone verify this? Later again, he was landlord of the Freke Arms at Swanborough near Hannington.

One source indicates that he died following a car accident outside the Drove Road Fire Station. It is thought he had a heart attack. However an Ancestry site shows his death at Rabson, Winterbourne Bassett.

Research seems to reveal that Johnnie was Walter Robert John Stiles born 1914 at Marlborough, son of Walter Tom Stiles/Styles and Mary Ellen Maynard.

How many happy memories, and local romances, during those Johnny Stiles years? Do you have a story to share with us please – nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

WHO REMEMBERS THE LOCARNO?

Headlines in the Swindon Evening Advertiser of Friday 23 April 1965 read 'I'll throw lewd acts off stage, Locarno director tells court'. This was the assurance given by Mr Richard Reddaway, a director of the Ballroom Company, to Swindon Borough Magistrates Court. The Magistrates

granted an application for an occasional liquor licence to Mr E W Spackman, licensee of the Ball and Shoulder of Mutton public house, for a bar in the ballroom.

‘What would constitute an indecent show was not explained but Mr Reddaway promised that a steward would pull the plug on any performer deemed suggestive before ushering them offstage.’

The Who, the Small Faces, Gene Vincent, Cilla Black, The Animals, Georgie Fame and The Yardbirds were amongst those who performed at The Locarno.

A GRUESOME MUSEUM FIND – Apsley House – newspaper cutting

A museum assistant, noticed a brown paper bag in a dusty corner of the museum cellar. It contained a mummified hand, complete with ring. It appears to have belonged to an ancient Egyptian dignitary. This was not her first startling discovery – some time earlier she had discovered a cluster of hand grenades – two of which were still live!

MORE ON APSLEY HOUSE and auctioneer William Dore in the attached

In our last newsletter we featured the interesting family history of the Axford Family who lived at, and was the first lease holder of, Apsley House (later to become the Swindon Museum). The property was auctioned by William Dore. His family story is told in the attachment.

MORE RAILWAYS PHOTOS ... a little more unusual ones



Thanks to Ken Mumford – Swindon Station Security loudspeaker.



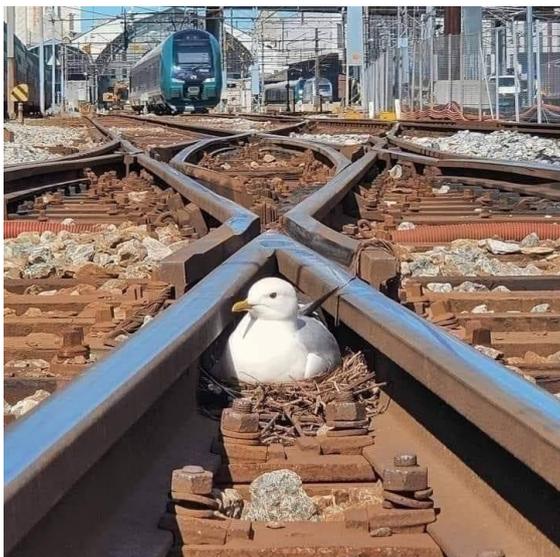
Another of Ken's at Swindon – a 'flying cucumber sandwich'



For a different kind of sandwich – Ken Mumford
A way of advertising a product.



Minehead Station – not one of Ken's or his friends' as you will see from the quality!



'Don't forget to duck' - photo via Ken Mumford.



Photo by Ken Mumford and information from Colin Pidgeon: The remains of the rails in the ground date back to the time when the Royal Mail unloaded mail onto barrows to go across to the station. They were barriers to stop the lorries reversing back too far and were originally about 4ft tall.

Does anyone have further information about this?

JUST TO EXPLAIN – from Ken Mumford

Top left: This one at the end of platform 2 was activated when Ken and Colin Pidgeon went ALMOST to the end of that platform. It told them to get back on the platform BUT they had not actually gone beyond this notice.

Oops – technology gone a bit wrong!



The top right photo is of a Class 47 diesel-electric locomotive which was attached but not working, only providing electricity for heating purposes and possibly to help when the train needed shunting.

W T GROVES (aka - to me GRUMPY GROVES) and SONS

Further to Harvey Groves' article in the September 2022 issue of our Newsletter, entitled A Family Story, as promised Harvey has now sent the next instalment.

This is a continuation of my memories of my childhood, this time of my father's family. My father Raymond was brought up with his parents, twin sister Joan, elder brother Lance and cousin Edwin on Whitworth Road where the family farm/market garden was. My earliest memories are of visiting at the age of 4 and having to sit alone, in the hall, on a bench whilst my dad talked to his father. I had the impression that 'grumpy' Groves did not get on with little children. I have been told since that this was not entirely true. I also remember the huge privilege of being allowed to watch the coronation on the A5 sized TV.

My grandfather was originally a farmer but most of his farm was 'compulsorily' purchased to make way for Pinehurst schools and Whitworth Road Cemetery, where incidentally he kept his pigs!! The family business hence became a market garden, much of which was under glass. It was my father's job to take the horse and cart around Rodbourne selling home grown produce. The site of the business is now a care home called 'The Groves'. My grandfather was respected locally and was a JP.

My grandmother's maiden name was Harvey, her family came from Rodbourne Green. There is a small road opposite St Mary's church called Harvey Grove. I have always wanted to confuse the constabulary by giving my name and address as Harvey Groves from Harvey Grove. One of our bridesmaids, a descendant of Edwin still lives in an inherited house on the Green.

My uncle Lance married Renie Harbour from Harbour Close, he took over the family business with my grandfather. My father joined the RAF as an electrician and married my mother, in uniform, at Butterworth Street Methodist Church. The Groves' were members of Rodbourne Methodist Church. I think the Methodist connection was how they met. My parents, shortly after the war, moved to Richmond Surrey where my dad completed a gardening apprenticeship at Richmond Methodist Ministers College and where I was born. My father's twin sister married and moved to Peterborough, a move that did not sit well with my grandparents.

As part of my career I was 'Head of Evening Centre' at Pinehurst schools and was pleased to be welcomed as 'a local lad come home'. **HARVEY GROVES**

"I COULD SLEEP ON A CLOTHES LINE" – aka the two-penny hangover (a cheap night out?)

No doubt you've heard the first saying – derived from the poor, having paid their twopence, being given a (small) space to hang over a line to sleep indoors. Not very comfortable but, if affordable, better than sleeping rough. No nice lie-in either as the rope would be cut 5.00 - 6.00 am and sleepers turfed out. Plus there was no guarantee of a WARM space and some were found frozen to death by morning.

Not only in Dicken's London did this happen – proof below that it also happened in Swindon, but at half the price it seems.

Following on from our Axford article in the last newsletter, Mervyn Hewlett wrote to say that his great great grandfather, Reuben Horsell, lived next door but one and would have known, Charles James Fox Axford, the surgeon. (Mervyn has already told us much of Reuben Horsell and his family in his article in our May 2021 Newsletter.)

Born 1793 at Wootton Bassett, Reuben was a plasterer by trade, also doing small building work for the Swindon Council digging sewers for houses off Commercial Road, subcontracting for the builder John Horsell. The latter connected with the firm Horsell & Crombey who were developing the area in 19th century. John Horsell may have been Reuben's nephew.

Charles Axford I think influenced Reuben to purchase two cottages in Cricklade Street in 1835, one of which he turned into a beer cum lodging house, which he modelled on the Lord Raglan establishment next door. That took in farmers, tramps, and travellers for their overnight stay and visit to the Old Town livestock market.

Family stories relate that Reuben offered a bed at a lower price than the Lord Raglan, whose cheaper alternative to a bed was to hang over a washing line strung across the room for one penny rather than 6 old pennies for a bed.



Photo courtesy of Andy Binks and the Swindon Society

The above photo probably dates from around 1900 – and it looks very cold! Reuben also brewed his own beer and had a notorious relationship with the Swindon Magistrates Court up before Ambrose Goddard.

The 1871 census for the area tells us that the Lord Raglan accommodated all the members of a visiting German band and at the time there were 56 lodgers but only 40 beds!

(NOTE: Wonder why the German Band was visiting? No doubt there would have been numerous squabbles that night as to who got a bed, especially after a few drinks!)

In the 1860's Reuben had purchased ground (Home Close) and developed Albert Street.

After Reuben was made bankrupt he ceased trading and was forced to auction off some of the houses. He did manage to hold on to the Saracens Head beer house, by agreement with his creditors. However after he ceased trading, the company was operated by one of his sons George. His properties had been auctioned in the February property auction conducted by William Dore. *(Note: see attachment on William Dore.)*

After the auction and troubles with the magistrates, Reuben's son William took over the beerhouse and later purchased the lease on land adjacent to Short Hedge that was later to become Devizes Road, so called apparently because horses were tethered with rear ends out into the lane and fed on the perimeter hedges.

The 1886 map of the area shows the Saracens location as what eventually became Popes the decorators' yard. **MERVYN HEWLETT**

SOME OLD-SWINDON INFO FROM MERVYN HEWLETT

William Read did a survey of most of the houses in Old Town. Although not actually dated, information is from 1844 and into the 1850s. It lists the occupants and its owners in each house and location and can be a brilliant source of information. The terrier* can be found at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

*A document or book enumerating boundaries, acreage and conditions of tenure. Not a stuffed dog as John thought it was!

THE RODBOURNE PONG AND STRATTON STINK

Did you see the recent TV programme on 'The Great Stink of 1858' when Londoners (possibly some of our ancestors amongst them) suffered terribly from disease in that hot dry summer, all because there were no proper sewers? Well it seems that we've had our fair share of such nuisances locally. The Rodbourne Pong has been publicised frequently over the last few months in the Swindon Advertiser.

Perhaps a lesser-known, or remembered, similar nuisance was the Stratton Stink. Stink pipes were the result of that London Great Stink and several stink pipes had been constructed at Stratton and, until the 1990s there was still a stink pipe at the side of the railway line bridge in Ermin Street, a tall rusting solid iron pipe which, at the turn of the last century, was put there to take the smells of the newly installed village sewage system well above the roof tops of the houses. (Did they work? Did it depend on whether there was a wind or breeze and, if so, did the wind take the stink to other areas?) Initially there was a further pipe on the other side of the railway line. They were often quite decorative and elegant.

It seems that by 1901 the villagers of Stratton St Margaret, population of between 3-4,000, considered themselves to be part of Swindon and the Parish Council appealed to be amalgamated with the town. The main reason was to connect up to the modern Swindon services as the lack of sewage disposal caused major health problems.

The Rev. Frederick Fuller reported that, at the turn of the century (ie 20th), before piped water arrived in Stratton, water in most wells dried up each summer and water from 'The Pump' was carried in buckets on yokes for a mile or more. The village pump stood on 'the opposite side of Swindon Road' – a favourite play item over which children could somersault! Apparently West End Road was once known as Pump Lane, so the pump was probably in that vicinity. It was fed from a deep well, dug after a cholera epidemic in the early 19th century.

There were similar problems in Swindon in the mid-1800s when cholera, typhus and dysentery were rampant. Great improvements were made to the sewage system, the first sewers in New Town being laid in 1866 to replace cess pits. These early sewers simply emptied into a ditch and it was in 1872 when a sewage farm was built. (Can anyone enlarge on this?) Swindon's first public toilet opened in 1877.

And so Ermin Street, Stratton St Margaret, was closed in 1903 so that piped water and sewers could be laid. Dynamite was used and every window from the Crown to the Willow was blown out. Even up to the 1940s the sewage tunnel (which was under the railway tracks) needed to be served on a regular basis, and cart loads of sludge were wheeled along the Stratton roads.

How our lives have changed.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ - Looking for Thynne LEAVER WHY YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT YOUR SOURCES FOR FAMILY HISTORY – Jenny Pope

I have been doing some research for someone in New Zealand who had traced their tree to a marriage in 1704 in Longbridge Deverill between John WHITLOCK and Mary LEAVER, the daughter of the wonderfully named Thynne LEAVER, and she wanted to know more about him.

My stumbling block was this marriage: it is shown in *Family Search* and also *Ancestry* and *Find my Past* (both of these quoting Family Search as their source).

The problem is that this marriage does not exist: it is not in the parish register; there are no Bishops' Transcripts for that year; it is not indexed for any other Wiltshire parish and it does not appear in WFHS's Surname Index (which does include marriages and marriage licence bonds). The only marriage between the two parties occurs after a marriage licence bond issued in 1718 in which Mary LEAVER is recorded as a widow. So if this was the case, she was unlikely to be the daughter of Thynne, and I have sawn off this possible branch of the family tree!

I wanted to know where Family Search had found this record, as the dissemination of the incorrect information and uptake of it has created false trails for researchers. So I emailed them, not really expecting a reply. But I got one, within a few days.

Thank you for contacting FamilySearch Support about the marriage record for John Whitlock 1704.

The record comes from the collection England Marriages, 1538–1973. The Research Wiki page (England Marriages) contains this proviso:

“This is a Legacy Collection

This collection is a partial index of records for this locality. The collection was originally assembled for publication in April 2010. Since that time only a few records may have been added. As no additional records will be added, or any corrections made to the data, this is considered to be a "Legacy" collection.

As this is an index of records compiled from various sources, it is strongly recommended that you verify any information you find with original records.”

There are a number of known issues for this collection which can be viewed on the Wiki page: England Marriages Known Issues

Unfortunately, the original record is not available, and it is possible that the date was transcribed incorrectly. “

So, the moral of this story is – don't assume that transcripts of records shown in *Family Search* (or anywhere else) are correct unless you trust and can verify the transcription methods used by the individual or organization (eg WFHS) or can check the transcription yourself against the original data! **JENNY POPE** 23 March 2023

THE SWINDON REGISTER OFFICE

Reported in the Swindon/Evening Advertiser on Wednesday 27 April 1977: 'Swindon register office is to open its new building in Temple Street on Tuesday May 3. The offices at Aspen House in the town centre are on the first floor, occupying one wing of the block. A public car park is only 200 yards away. They are considerably larger than the old building at Milton Road. The Milton Road premises had no car parking and parties had to be limited to 15. Originally the

register office was to have been housed in the new magistrates' court, but because of cutbacks Wiltshire County Council decided against providing purpose-built accommodation.'

Note: Was there a register office in Bath Road at one time?

02.04.1954 Britain's first TV soap opera, the Grove Family, was transmitted. (Does anyone remember this early series?)

16.04.1972 Mary Morris of Tilley's Lane in Stratton St Margaret, celebrated her 100th birthday. Mary who was blind and deaf, had begun crocheting blankets at the age of 91 and giving them to charity for use in disaster areas across the world. In spite of the challenges she faced, the centenarian rose daily at 8 am, washed and dressed herself and went for walks.

A FAMOUS 'HATCH' AND 'DISPATCH'

It is said that William Shakespeare, English playwright, poet and actor, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23 April 1564 (baptised 26 April). He died on the same date in 1616 ie 23 April.

EXCITING ANCESTRY NEWS

It appears that TNA have announced that Ancestry has been awarded the contract for digitising the military records which are being transferred from the MOD. This will cover three million records of personnel serving after 1920. Available 2024 – 2029.

... AND TO END – AN EASY EASTER TEASER – just fill in the gaps

Simon and	Scooby Doo and	Bill, Ben and
Andy Pandy, Teddy and .....	..... and Robin	Gilbert and
..... and Dean	..... and Watson	..... and Perky
The Blues	Fred Flintstone and Barney	Tweety and
..... and Clyde	.....	French and
Fred and .....	..... and Gromit	Eric and
..... and Costello	Dennis and ....	..... and Hutch
	..... and sweep	



SPRING

Little brown seeds so small and round
Are sleeping quietly underground.
Down come the raindrops
Sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle,
Out comes the rainbow
Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle.
Little brown seeds way down below,
Up through the earth they grow, grow, grow.
Little green leaves come one by one.
They hold up their heads and look at the sun.

(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)