

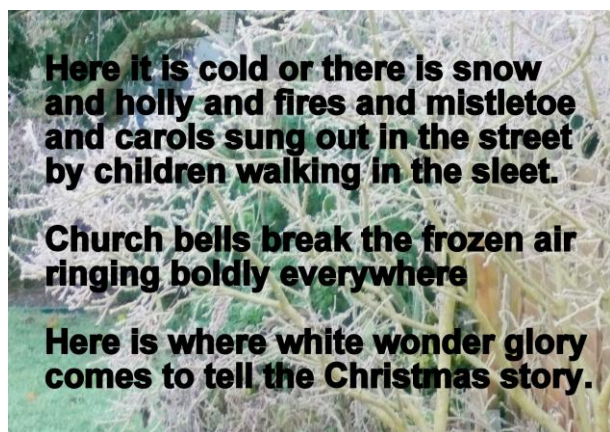
Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, December 2023



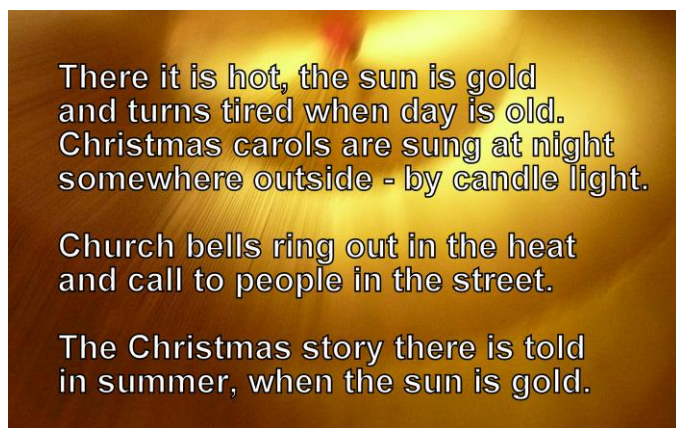
**MAY YOU NEVER BE TOO OLD TO SEARCH THE SKIES ON
CHRISTMAS EVE**

MEETINGS REMINDER – see below for further details

Thursday 14 December 2023 – Christmas Social



Christmas in Two lands



by Joan Mellings

JOHN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Yvonne and our lovely contributors have done it again, lots of stories that bring back memories which I could comment on. Although the poem did have me scratching my head at one point. Anyway, I expect you are too busy preparing for forthcoming events and if you, like Lis and I, are in choirs still learning the words of songs and carols you have been practising since September, you are far too busy to read my comments on the stories below.

So, here's wishing you a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS. **JOHN MILLS**

WHAT'S COMING UP

Thursday 14 December 2023 at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square – Christmas Social

Come and Join us for a light-hearted quiz and bring-and-share buffet, plus our special Christmas raffle. **MARGARET NEAVES**

SANTA'S ON HIS WAY – Christmas Fayre

Santa will be in his grotto on Saturday **9 December at The Central Community Centre**, Emlyn Square, waiting eagerly to hear what the kiddies want in their Christmas stockings this year.

There will be craft workshops, the Museum Cottage will be open with a Victorian Christmas theme and Swindon Branch, Wiltshire Family History Society, will be there as well. Hope to see you on the 9th and please come and say 'hello' to us.

REPORTS

THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER – 'I GIVE AND BEQUEATH' – Julia Hunt

With lots of great examples, Julia took us through the subject of WILLS – the formal declaration in writing for the disposal of property, personal estate, furniture, clothing, livestock and so on. A way of avoiding family disputes and arguments following a death.

A valid will must contain date, signature or mark, witnesses and nomination of executors, and they come in all shapes and sizes. Some were beautifully written and others practically illegible, even some in Latin. Some quite bizarre, and now quite comical, spellings and language. Early wills normally had a standard preamble which is a great help with deciphering poor hand-writing.

A Holographic Will is one written personally

A Nuncupative Will is one written on another's behalf, for example by a parish priest or educated local person.

A will can sometimes be a goldmine for family historians and may contain helpful hints about family members, division of goods and money and a person's wealth, livestock and possessions and who these items were to be apportioned to. Also burial requests and charity donations, for example to the poor.

Watch for any 'extra' information attached to a Will. Sometimes it could be an inventory, perhaps of personal possessions, or listing shop goods or livestock. These could contain values at the time, drawn up by an independent valuer.

Julia had translated wills for the village of Aldbourne, some very old. She showed many examples and divided the information into various categories. By the end of the talk we felt that we knew some of those mentioned quite well.

LOCAL STUDIES

Swindon Branch were invited again to Local Studies on Monday 20 November for another 'Open Family History Session' for anyone wishing to just drop in to talk to us about their family history. An interesting couple of hours yet again and, hopefully, we were able to point those who came to us in the right direction.

Thanks to Local Studies for inviting us.

FROM LAST TIME

Thanks to Paul Cole who wrote in about Ken Kitchen:

"I remember Ken Kitchen when he taught woodwork at Walcot Junior High School when I was there (1967-1970). At that time he had his own band, The Ken Kitchen Dance Band.*

He was also the woodwork teacher at Even Swindon School and taught my uncle. This would have been in the early to mid 1940s. My uncle was very good at woodwork and attributed his skill to Ken Kitchen's tuition.

However my recollection is we hardly did any real woodworking. Mr Kitchen carried out everyone's sawing and just left us with the boring part of sanding it afterwards, and possibly a bit of gluing. He was very strict and pupils tended to be scared of him.

Also at Even Swindon school at that time was another teacher Jack Maisey. He later became headmaster of Mountford Manor Junior School when I was there (1964-1967).”

*Does anyone remember this Band? Please let us know – swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

Paul was also curious about the 1891 census and was looking to find Stanmore Street. Although he was under the impression that land had been purchased for housing in 1883 it was not listed on the 1891 census. He discovered on an Ordnance Survey map of 1885 that the street seems not to exist at that time, nor most of Kingshill but just a few houses in Kingshill Terrace – as the 1891 census also shows. The next available map was from 1899 which shows that houses had been built on one side of Stanmore Street but not on the other.

GWR LADIES

A lovely lady came to see us at the Rodbourne Community History Group event recently. She had previously made contact saying that she had worked for GWR herself and very briefly told of some of her memories. She seems to have a really interesting family history also. Hopefully she will get in touch again and we may get more from her sometime. Are there any other ladies out there who have GWR memories? Please contact swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

PS – the lady in question has now made contact again and, hopefully, we may soon discover her story.

POPPIES AND THE CRICKETERS



Note the poppy window display at The Cricketers, Emlyn Square. The outside of the building has been beautifully spruced up.

A tour of the premises was an eye-opener. A warren! Much work and effort is being made to restore this lovely old building, which is so much a part of Swindon’s Railway Village heritage.

Photo courtesy of Roy Cartwright.

The Cricketers is in the process of being conserved and sympathetically preserved, to be brought back to life and will, eventually, be used to its full once again.

A Grade II listed building forming one of four corners on the buildings in Emlyn Square.

Built in 1846, originally one of eight shop premises in the Square (earlier known as The High Street) and was a pub The Cricketers/The Cricketers’ Arms, with living quarters above, since 1859 until it closed altogether in 2015.

It was the second pub to open in the Railway Village.





This poppy display by Helen George of the Mechanics' Institution Trust: approximately 2500 poppies, including white, purple and black ones, were hand-made and donated this year.

They were displayed on railings and street lamps near the Central Community Centre (the original GWR hospital), on table displays and even plant pots.

The significance of the number – 507 – slightly obliterated in the photo, represents the number of GWR workers who lost their lives during WW1.

The quilt in the background is a newly-made piece of Swindon's history in stitched pictures. It is part of a Create Studios project and feature 'Memories of the Mechanics'. The embroiderers are Sally Cole, Julie Wright, Sue Chalklin and Helen George.



Left: the beautifully decorated bay tree in the Central Community Centre garden.

Right: Helen George presented Fr Toby Boutle of St Mark's and St Saviour's with wreaths of home-made poppies.



Fr Toby was also presented with a painting of St Marks by Sally Cole.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM – from a different viewpoint

Last month we commemorated Armistice Day and many of us will have memories, or heard stories, within our own family histories.

But there have been many battles and wars through the years of our history and Judy Rouse found a poignant example of this during her recent visit to the castle at Mont Orguel, Jersey.



Judy wrote that in the outer battlements were laid out slabs with lists of men-at-arms, crossbowman and archers who were in the garrison at dates between 1337, 1342 and 1345, taken from the muster rolls which are in the Jersey Archives.



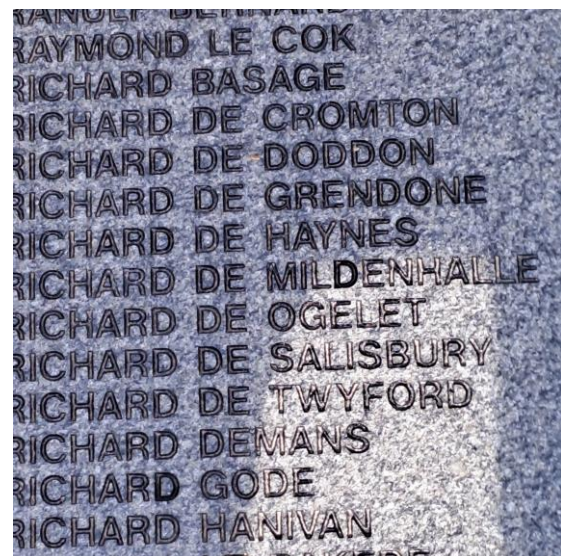
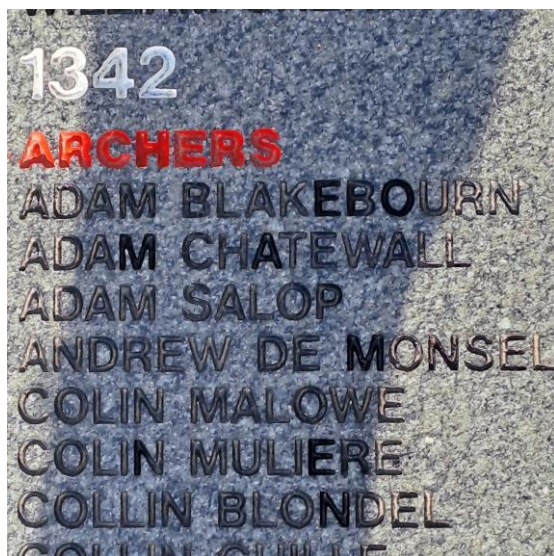
She was struck that so many of those listed had **place names as surnames**, with many originating from the West Country, Wales and the Midlands.



Judy listed a few of them:

1337 Henry of Gloucester William Ludelow

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1342 | John Cauntebre | Richard de Grendone | William Farnham |
| | John De Salisbury | Richard de MILDENHALL | Dexter de Couventry |
| | Joh De Stapleton | Richard de Salisbury | John de Haydok |
| | John Dertemuth | Richard de Twyford | Philip Wyncheleyes |
| | John Neubury | William de Granta | Richard Ruggby |
| | John Stokes | (Cambridge) | Richard Seford |
| | John Swanseye | William de Kendale | Robert de Stafford |
| | Richard de Crompton | William de Swetenham | |
| | | William de Twyford | |



1482 Adam Salop Andrew de Monsel

There were several 'occupation' surnames too: Fletcher, Seneschal Baker and some noticeably recognisable in the above names.

Judy finished by saying "Our medieval ancestors might have had more colourful lives than we imagine!"

One further little snippet from Judy – she wrote "Never be afraid to volunteer, because you never know where it might lead."

Judy explained that, when she was the Wiltshire Family History Society General Secretary many years ago, a lady from California wrote to join and, unusually, enclosed two photos of herself and her two daughters. Over the years Judy and this family kept in touch and met up on several occasions. Judy and Chris actually opened up their home to them and again now had one daughter come to stay in November and the other in December. That notches up in excess of 30 years of transatlantic friendship.

Judy did add a note about when she 'volunteered, saying' "in reality it was Richard Moore arm twisting on a coach trip who got me involved!"

We could certainly do with some volunteers in Swindon Branch – any takers?
swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

CHRISTMAS 1993 AT BEATTIES TOY STORE

This was THE shop in the town centre for kiddies to write up their Christmas 'wish list'. Remember it – on the corner of Bridge Street and Fleet Street?

For a few days in December 1993, courtesy of a firm named 'Virtuality' and for a fee of £3 per ride (proceeds to the local special needs charity 'Koalas') would-be supersonic fighter pilots could sit inside a cab and take controls of a virtual reality simulator for a Harrier jump-jet dogfight at speeds up to 550 mph, chasing enemy aircraft.

The aim was to shoot down three enemy aircraft before running out of fuel. If successful then a Hercules would refuel and the game continued. It was said that small children seemed to be well equipped for the challenge after years of playing computer games.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

18 December 1952 Bill and Ben, the Flowerpot Men, were first seen on BBC TV, along with Little Weed.

REMINISCING – a poem, author unknown

Back in the days of tanners and bobs,
When Mothers had patience and Fathers had jobs.
When football team families wore hand me down shoes,
And T.V gave only two channels to choose.

Back in the days of threepenny bits,
when schools employed nurses to search for your nits.
When snowballs were harmless; ice slides were permitted
and all of your jumpers were warm and hand knitted.

Back in the days of hot ginger beers,
when children remained so for more than six years.
When children respected what older folks said,
and pot was a thing you kept under your bed.

Back in the days of Listen with Mother,
when neighbours were friendly and talked to each other.
When cars were so rare you could play in the street.
When Doctors made house calls and Police walked the beat.

Back in the days of Milligan's Goons,
when butter was butter and songs all had tunes.
It was dumplings for dinner and trifle for tea,
and your annual break was a day by the sea.

Back in the days of Dixon's Dock Green,
Crackerjack pens and Lyons ice cream.
When children could freely wear National Health glasses,
and teachers all stood at the FRONT of their classes.

Back in the days of rocking and reeling,
when mobiles were things that you hung from the ceiling.
When woodwork and pottery got taught in schools,
and everyone dreamed of a win on the pools.

Back in the days when I was a lad,
I can't help but smile for the fun that I had.
Hopscotch and roller skates; snowballs to lob.
Back in the days of tanners and bobs.

CAN YOU UNSCRAMBLE THESE CHRISTMAS CAROLS?

- 1 Tellit Yonked
- 2 Ees Madi eth Twiner Wons
- 3 Waay ni a Grnam
- 4 Tinsel Thing, Hylo Thing
- 5 Coen ni Loray Vidda's Tyci
- 6 O Moce lal ey Thalfiluf
- 7 Het Strif Lenow
- 8 Ew Ether Sknig fo Troine Ear
- 9 Gnid, Gnod, Rilymer no Gihh

CONCORDE – NOW CONSIGNED TO HISTORY



It's now 20 years since that 'big bird in the sky', with its iconic drop-nose, flew its final journey on 24 October 2003 with some wonderful pictures of it over the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Anyone who ever flew on it will presumably very proudly relate their experience to family and friends.

This is Phyllis Taylor's memory of her Concorde experience.

3 May 1979 was General Election Day when Margaret Thatcher followed Jim Callaghan as Prime Minister. My flight was at approximately mid-day on 4 May and I flew from Heathrow to Bahrain. My son, having come out of the Navy, together with his wife decided to work in Dubai.

My son had booked the flight for me and, as the opportunity arose, I paid extra and flew on Concorde. I had an in-flight meal and a memento Concorde address book which was blue with a gold 'C' inscribed on it.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a few memories stood out for me:

During that afternoon the Captain announced that Mrs Thatcher had returned from the Palace having been asked by the Queen to form the next Government. Everyone started cheering.

Whilst flying over the Alps, the Captain announced the fact for anyone wishing to take photos. I bent down to retrieve my camera (my seat was 12a by the window and over the wing) but the Alps had already whizzed by and were out of sight by the time I got the camera to hand.

I did however take a photo, when flying twice the speed of sound, of the monitor which showed '2 Mach'.

I stayed in a Bahrain hotel overnight and then flew on to Dubai the following day. Next to Concorde I tend to describe the second aircraft, from Bahrain to Dubai, as 'rubber band'. I found it scary. But what a memory!

Concorde's maiden flight lasting 29 minutes, took off from Toulouse on 2 March 1969 and its first commercial flight with passengers was on 21 January 1976 from Heathrow and France (some sources say Orly and others Charles de Gaulle Airports) simultaneously and had been created by British and French aircraft manufacturers. It flew faster than the speed of sound, which is about 768 mph.

KINGSDOWN HOUSE

A little while back a lady by the name Diana (named after Diana Dors, daughter of her father's close friend) rang. After just a few minutes it became clear that Diana has the most fantastic Swindon history – on various sides of her family.

Attached is a little of her history and memories of when she lived in the servants quarters at Kingsdown House, now the Kingsdown Crematorium.

Any feedback would be most welcome – swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

AND AN 'ahh' TO FINISH WITH – An 'X' in the Window

From Ken Mumford and originally from Faith Digest

Young Stevie was too young to write letters, but received them from his Grandma, who always ended with an 'x'. He was told this was a kiss for him.

With his mother, he attended St Andrew's Church, where the stained-glass windows contained the symbol of their patron saint – a St Andrew's cross. To Stevie this was the form of a kiss shaped in an 'x'.

When asked 'Which Church do you go to?' he answered 'The church with a kiss in the window.'



May you find joy in unexpected places.

May you feel at peace in your corner of the world.

May you find comfort in the little things.

May you always feel loved.

(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 swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk)