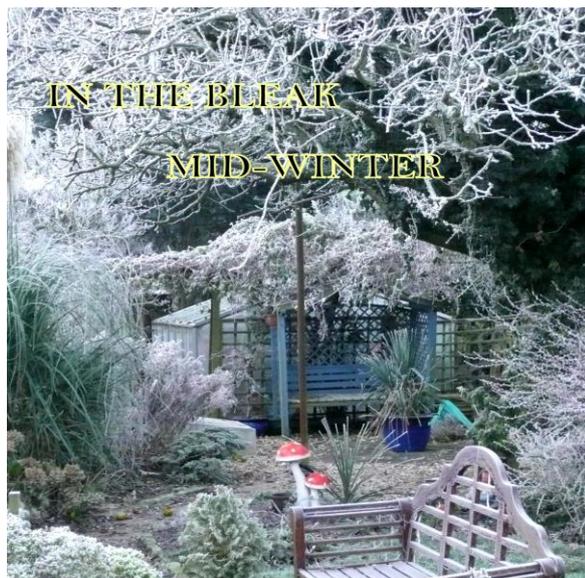


Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, January 2022



Snowflakes are Winter's Kisses.

Also known as Winter's Butterflies.

Snowflakes are beautiful
Pure and white
And just like us
No two are alike.

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE

NEW YEAR'S GREETING FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN

Where Lis and I live in Greenmeadow, sorry Haydon Wick, we have a view across Haydon Wick village, Abbeymeads, Ashbrake, St Andrews Ridge and (from the bedroom window) Penhill. So, when the clock strikes midnight we have quite a spectacular firework display to welcome in the New Year.

I don't remember fireworks to celebrate New Year in my childhood, but I do remember the detonators exploding on the railway lines, the factory hooter, steam engine whistles and a metallic sound which I imagined was my dad hammering on an anvil in the Springshop where he worked "on permanent nights".

My mother, being Welsh, was a bit fixated by "first footing" where a tall dark-haired man carrying a lump of coal should be the first person to pass the threshold on New Year's Day, to bring you luck. My dad was tall, there was always coal in the shed but unfortunately he went grey in his early twenties before he met my mum. A neighbour, (usually there was a gathering outside in Cypress Grove), or my uncle was invited in for a drink, providing they had a piece of coal.

As we enter 2022 there is still uncertainty about how Covid will affect our lives and that of the society. We will continue to monitor the situation. Zoom, thanks to Margaret and Glenys, will continue. Meetings have been planned but we await Government advice about "gatherings". Maybe, we need a "first footer" to bring us luck? Unfortunately, it won't be me, as like my dad, I went grey a long time ago and who has coal in their house these days?

Stay safe in 2022 and don't forget on the bright side, there is 1921 to look forward to.

JOHN MILLS

OUR FIRST MEETINGS FOR 2022 – Margaret Neaves, Programme Secretary

Zoom meeting: Thursday 13 January with Sue Paul

"My talk about Henry Smith is not area specific – the 'action' takes place in the East Indies, West Africa, Brazil, London and Edinburgh. Primarily it is a case study in research in more

unusual sources demonstrating how much can be discovered about someone from the early-modern period who does not appear in any of the usual genealogical records.”

As usual, Glenys will send an invite to the ‘regulars’, but others are welcome to join with us by emailing her on glenys.bettley@ntlworld.com Please let Glenys know that it’s the family history Zoom meeting you want as she is involved with other groups as well.

Meeting at the Central Community Centre 7.30 pm Thursday 27 January with John Stooke

The Life and Art of Swindon watercolourist FRANK ERNEST QUINTON 1922 – 2019. Following a very successful few days exhibition of the artist’s paintings in the Brunel Plaza, John will show pictures depicting Frank Ernest Quinton’s youth, war service and incredible contribution to local art and local heritage over sixty years. Besides being beautiful artwork, it is a meticulous recording of changing Swindon.

ROMAN TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN NORTH WILTSHIRE – talk by Mike Stone Thursday 25 November 2021

WALKING ON ROMANS? In our Newsletter some months back, we learnt that Swindon was, at some time in the far distant past, under the sea and that there could be more remnants of extinct aquatic creatures deep down under our feet – see ‘Swindon by the Sea’ in our May 2021 Newsletter.

Mike Stone came to tell us that we could also be walking on Roman, Anglo Saxon and even older sites – in Swindon and surrounding areas!

When the Romans invaded, one of their priorities was to build roads for troops and for trading. An aerial view of Ermin Street shows how straight the road was, and is, because it still exists today. The road went through what is now the Swindon area and on to Cirencester, the second largest Roman town. The Romans made good use of local natural resources - plentiful supplies of gravel for building roads, trees, rivers for water supply and for transport, chalk and clay for making bricks, tiles and pots. Ancient ditches survive and excavations have uncovered discarded broken pots, tiles, etc which can now be dated. Discovered along the route of the Thames were in excess of 50 Roman coins, of varying dates – wages for the troops.

It seems that there would have been a major Roman town around the Covingham, A419 and Wanborough areas, with evidence found of a butcher’s shop, bakery and pottery shop in the heart of the town near to the main road.

In the Whitehill area, millions of bits of waste pottery found so there would have been kilns.

In the Toothill area there is evidence of abandoned medieval buildings, beneath which there is evidence of Roman occupancy.

Old Swindon, Purton, Brinkworth, Bradon Forest, Chiseldon and Minety were also important in Roman times.

It is interesting to note that tiles and bricks for buildings and bath houses were made in standard sizes by different makers in different areas. Many were imprinted with the makers’ marks and some pots were quite ornate. There would have been many kilns operating in our Swindon area.

Fascinating – wonder what’s actually down there under our feet!

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

Well we made it this year – and it was a lovely, relaxed and fun evening. Just nineteen of us on 9 December at the Central Community Centre and Margaret had arranged mince pies and a fun Christmas quiz which had us racking our brains, lots of banter and a lot of giggles. Jenny kept us plied with hot drinks. Everyone agreed that it was a great evening.

TWO MEMORIES FOLLOWING THE LAST NEWSLETTER

We used to come to near the Vickers aircraft factory, to watch the Grass Track Motorcycle Racing. Leave Marston, Oxford, where I was born, and raised. On A420, by m/cycle and sidecar. Come through Coleshill, Highworth, and on to the Swindon Road, and take a right hand turn. We were followers of Eric Chittenden, Temple Motorcycles, of Oxford. We also enjoyed the Wise brothers, fighting it out with others.

Very painful memories of Great Western Hospital, Faringdon Road 1959. The rain had been pouring down for a long time, and on leaving the Park Cafe, Faringdon Road, by the Grapes Public House, I was offered a lift, by motorcycle, to Old Town. We got to the bend at the bottom of Kingshill Road, and we hit a pile of chippings, washed down, that had only just been used to re-surface the road. We came OFF. A blood wagon arrived, conveyed us both to the hospital. We were a bloody mess, clothes torn, and open wounds. In casualty, we were both bent over “tables”, and two nurses, were having great fun picking the stones out of our skin, saying – “He loves me, he loves me not”, for some time. We all had a good laugh. Dressings were applied and we were discharged late at night. **WFHS Member Number 07186**

AND ANOTHER FROM MARTIN ROBINS

John Kanes Cycles, of Bridge Street Swindon, was the premier cycle shop in the area although the shop was very small and always in a muddle.

John Kane commenced the business at the beginning of the twentieth century - not merely to sell bicycles but also to repair those of the thousands working in the GWR. Employees of the GWR would leave their bicycle with the shop in the early morning and collect in the evening. The trade was huge.

John Kane was very fortunate to recruit a gentlemen called Charlie Furze - who came to Chiseldon Camp at the conclusion of the First World War. Charlie had a wonderful engineering brain coupled with a lovely personality. He became ‘Kanes Cycles ‘as John Kane took a back seat. I can see him now sat on the stairs reaching out for a part and not even looking where it was.

My father, a Chartered Accountant, looked after the Kanes Cycles finances. Each Thursday evening a box would appear at the door of our house and my father would then work on the wages. Saturday mornings, myself and my two brothers, would go with my father to Kanes - he would collect the takings and bank them in the Midland Bank. We gazed enviously at the new bikes on display. I had to wait until I was eleven to have a Kanes bike and then had it stolen! My father was not impressed.

When John Kane passed away his son Ron took over. Times were changing - the GWR was shrinking. In the mid-1950s Charlie died relatively young from a blood disease. Ron moved the shop to bigger premises in Fleet Street, previously occupied by a Mr Thorne (another of my father’s clients) but the business fell away. He emigrated to Australia.

Charlie Furzes’ other claim to fame was as the Sunday School Superintendent at the Florence Street Mission Hall. The attendance in the 1930s was in the hundreds. Scholars loved Charlie

and he loved them. A scholar, who subsequently went on to gain some distinction, told me that Charlie Furze was made of pure gold!

Charlie's son Bill lived a few doors away from the house George Sims occupied in Whitworth Road in the sixties and they became the closest of friends. **MARTIN ROBINS**

Since writing the above, Martin has now sent the following post script: Ron Kanes' great love was not bicycles but motor cars. In 1959 the Rover Car Company released a flagship model called the Three Litre. This model was beloved by the Queen and was allocated to four premiers.

Ron bought one right away from Haskins of Wroughton with the registration WMW 599. My father became aware of this car and was to become a Rover Three Litre man himself. When Ron sold the car it was purchased by one Arthur Blaylock of Blaylocks Shoes in Bath Road. He was, like my father, to become a life-long Rover devotee. One of his Rovers was previously owned by a farmer from Castle Eaton - it was caked in mud!

We have two of these cars in our garage and thus do our best to keep up the tradition.
MARTIN ROBINS

A GEORGE SIMS UPDATE

Just in ... an update from Martin Robins about George Sims. Martin has received a letter from a lady, presently in Canada but who lives in Johannesburg, who served as a missionary in the same area as George Sims. Although George Sims left Africa in 1963 after 56 years of service, his work there continues even after 114 years since he started. His house is now occupied by Ben and Dorothy Machimu, Ben being an elder at the English-speaking assembly in Mansa and Dorothy a qualified nurse. And so Mr Sims' missionary work continues.

TNA NEWS

Judy Rouse has shared some news with us from The National Archives. They are holding an exhibition at TNA from 21 January through to 11 June entitled 'Beyond the Roar':

"Do you have photographs of your family that were taken in the 1920s? If so and you are willing to share them, we'd love to include them in our exhibition, which opens on Friday 21 January 2022 at The National Archives.

'The 1920s: Beyond the Roar' is about what life was like 100 years ago for a population dazzled and deafened by the 'roar' of a rapidly changing society. People were living through the aftermath of a devastating international conflict, a global pandemic, and entering a significant period of innovation and social and political upheaval.

As the official archive for the UK government, our records represent the state perspective, so we've created space in the exhibition for you to share a snapshot of your family history from the 1920s. Do you have any photos of your ancestors at home or out having fun? We are interested in photographs of people who were living anywhere in the world in the 1920s, submitted by people who now call the UK home."

Also, on 8 January, there will be two expert-led talks to help get the most out of the 1921 census.

You can discover more by searching for : The National archives – beyond the roar.

CAN YOU HELP STEVE WITH INFO FOR HIS NEW BOOK?

Steve Beale will be publishing his book in June/July next year. It focuses on the history of primary school football in Swindon i.e. football played between schools with pupils aged 11 years old or younger. This includes all the schools inside the current Borough of Swindon boundary (so Cricklade, Purton, Royal Wootton Bassett are not included).

He says "I am keen to hear any anecdotes of incidents at matches, teachers who took charge of the school team etc."



Clifton Street football team from the 1921-22 season.
Photo courtesy of Steve Beale

If WFHS members have any team photographs that they are willing to share that would be fantastic. Please see the website for Swindon Primary School's Football Association www.swindonpsfa.org and contact me on swindonpsfa@gmail.com I look forward to hearing from you." **STEVE BEALE**

As we go forward into another year with Covid-19 ...

You may like to see the following which was sent to me some while ago now

Everyone PLEASE be careful because people are going crazy having been locked down at home.

I was just talking about this with the microwave and the toaster while drinking my tea and we all agreed that things have been bad.

I didn't mention any of this to the washing machine because she puts a different spin on everything.

Certainly couldn't share with the fridge 'cos he's been acting cold and distant.

In the end, the iron straightened me out.

She said the situation isn't all that pressing and all the wrinkles will soon get ironed out.

The vacuum, however, was very unsympathetic ... told me to just suck it up.

But the fan was very optimistic and gave me hope that it will all blow over soon.

The toilet looked a bit flushed but didn't say anything when I asked its opinion, and the front door said goodbye. I was becoming unhinged and the doorknob told me to get a grip.

You can just about guess what the curtains told me ... they told me to 'pull myself together'.

A TRAM DÉJÀ VU?

In our November Newsletter, we featured a photo, taken on 22 September 1904, of the crowds at the Town Hall eagerly awaiting the arrival of the new Swindon trams. There had been a delay as the first car, Tram No. 1, had rounded the corner at the Centre too rapidly and had dislodged the trolley head. Passengers on Tram No.1 had to transfer to another car. No mobile 'phones in those days, so the large crowd up at the Town Hall was puzzled by the non-appearance at the appointed time.

This reminded Phil Reilly, who used to live in Swindon but now lives in Fleetwood, near to Blackpool, of an article that appeared in the Blackpool Gazette back in April 2012. The headline was 'The first of Blackpool's new trams to set off from Fleetwood after a £100m upgrade has come off the rails.' The heritage vehicles, however, continued to run for tourists. It seems that the old trams are able to run on the new rails, but the new trams unable to run on the old ones. The upgrade to the seven miles of track, and the building of a new tram depot, had taken place over four years.

Just one day after the official re-opening, and with a new fleet of 16 computerised super trams, the first tram at about 05.55, had been de-railed – due to sand on the lines! (We've heard of problems with snow or leaves on the line ... but sand?)

It seems that sand was being blown onto the tracks as fast as Blackpool Transport staff could clear it, using brushes and trowels. The result was that a stretch of the new track at Fleetwood had to be temporarily closed.

Blackpool Transport pointed out that derailment may sound frightening, but actually not dangerous because the curve in Fleetwood was taken at low speed. It was more a matter of inconvenience and embarrassment.

Thanks to Phil Reilly for this photo – taken at the spot where the de-railment occurred.



They also reported that, although weather conditions had been taken into consideration, conditions that day had been exceptional with sand piling up quicker than it could be cleared away, and Blackpool Transport had been 'somewhat caught out'. Such conditions occur perhaps once only in every fifteen years. But, not to be caught out again, the tracks are now checked to ensure they are kept clear of deep sand.

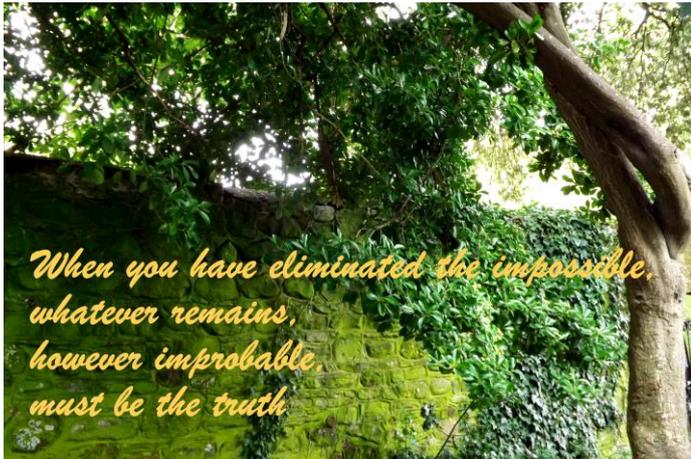
BRICK WALLS – again

Can I start the New Year with a couple of brick wall queries please? Not connected to my family in any way (at least as far as I know!) but there are a couple of items mentioned in the Chronicles of Swindon written some years ago by Graham Carter that stick in my memory. Can anyone throw any light on these or advise how to pursue further? Yvonne – nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

- c. 1848 Five children killed while scavenging for wood from a building site in High Street close to the entrance of The Lawn. The building, belonging to the Strange family, collapsed and Richard Tarrant had seen 'five dead and black as soot'.

1851

Continuous typhus fever was reported in Victoria Street. There was one house in Cricklade Street where five children died of fever in seven weeks. WHO WERE THESE CHILDREN?



Thus spoke Sherlock Holmes in 'The Sign of the Four'

or put it another way:

Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth.

COULD THIS RELATE TO FAMILY HISTORY?

LOST FOREVER

Mervyn Hewlett has already written about Victory Row – see the May 2021 Newsletter. So many of our Swindon streets have disappeared over the years and here is another one.

Both the Swindon Advertiser and the Swindon Heritage Magazine have featured articles about the now long-lost Providence Row, Swindon.

When Tydeman Brothers and Sons Ltd were demolishing the row of five early Victorian terraced cottages in 1957, they were amazed to find that the upstairs of one was, in fact, a railway wagon! Who put it there and how remains a mystery. Even the occupants did not realise that the 'upstairs' held a secret, as it was disguised with stonework on the outside and a seemingly normal roof.

Photo, taken in 1960 of Tydeman Bros. off Cow Lane.
Courtesy of Local Studies, Swindon Central Library



Mary Cox can tell us a little more about Providence Row. Her connection is through her grandfather's (Francis Heavens) second wife, Lilian Hester/Esther Webb, who was Henry Webb's daughter. At the time of the 1939 Register the couple were living at 33 Swindon Road, Old Town.

Photo, taken in 1957 of Providence Row.
Courtesy of Local Studies, Swindon Central Library

The house with the railway wagon upstairs was No. 67 Regent Place, Providence Row, Swindon. Regent Place does still exist today, albeit vastly changed and the old terraced houses have long since gone. Although Providence Row is not named on old maps of Swindon, there was a stone built into the small terrace showing the date of 1844.*

Henry (Harry) Webb lived at No. 66 Regent Place where he was listed on both the 1901 and 1911 censuses. The 1901 census shows him at No. 66, John Staines at No. 67 and then onto Princes Street. In 1911 John Irestone lived at No. 67.

The 1947 Swindon and District Directory shows:

No. 66 F G Carter
No. 67 T G Coleman
Next was the GPO Sorting Office

Harry Webb had worked for Tydeman's as a carpenter and it was Tydeman's who were tasked to demolish Providence Row having purchased the properties from Harry. So how did Harry become the owner? His estate, when he died 7 November 1926 was less than £100.

Could he have inherited the cottages from his father in law, Samuel Tarrant, who was shown as being a Proprietor of Houses at the time of the 1861 census and who died in 1866?

Henry (Harry) Webb had married Esther Annie Collier (nee Tarrant) on 10 May 1873. He was born 10 January 1848 at Marylebone, Middlesex, but by the time of the 1851 census the family had returned to Chiseldon where both his parents had been born.

At the time of the 1891 census Henry Webb was living at 11 Cow Lane.
At the time of the 1881 census Henry Webb was living at 28 Providence Row.

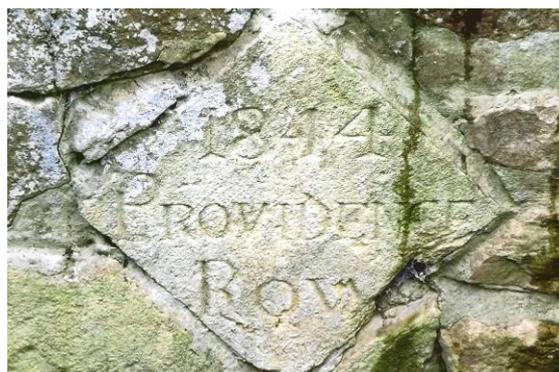
The 1881 census seems to dart around all over the place for that particular area and is very confusing. Note the numbering for the five houses in Providence Row.

1-13 Eastcott Terrace
1-6 Cow Lane
22-23 Eastcott Vilas
1-4 Regent Terrace
7-1 Regent Place
Old 'Red Cow' Inn
25-29 Providence Row – Henry Webb at No. 28
12-29 Regent Place
1-28 Page Street
8-11 Regent Place
1-66 Princes Street
'Whale' Inn and then Cetus Building and Medgbury Road.

*that stone is now in a wall of a local garden.

The big question is –

Why and How?



Please send in your own stories about lost/forgotten Swindon streets to nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk
We look forward to hearing from you.

..... AND SO TO SCHOOL

It was on 27 January 1895 (another source says 1897) that the purpose-built **Technical School in Victoria Road, Swindon**, opened. (Old and New Swindon merged physically and administratively at the turn of the 20th century.) This impressive and imposing building has become part of Swindon's history. Did any of you have a connection with this building?

On a personal note, I'm told that when I was about 4 and we walked passed the building, I used to say that I was going to go to school there one day. Years later that did actually happen as some of my College course classes were held in that building. Yvonne

RULES FOR TEACHERS 1872

- 1 Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
- 2 Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal, for the day's session.
- 3 Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.
- 4 Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to Church regularly.
- 5 After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
- 6 Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
- 7 Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
- 8 Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop, will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.
- 9 The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of two shillings and five pence per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

NOTE: Did this really happen – and in the UK? Note the spelling of 'labor' in the last paragraph.

From SWINDON ADVERTISER 10 JANUARY 1891

A Mr G T Gwilliam (who seems to be from what we call The Met Office) wrote in the Swindon Advertiser "It may perhaps interest some of your readers to know ..." that there had been only one colder December on record and that was in 1788. The Royal Society records dated from 1771. He went on to list the coldest years. He finished by saying that every day in December had been below average which had not been the case (he believed) since February 1855.

HOW TO GET A BED FOR THE NIGHT! 11.15 pm PS Richard Salter was on duty in Prospect when Thomas Riley, Labourer from Newport IOW, asked him about lodgings for the night. He was directed to the nearby Lord Raglan inn but returned shortly afterwards and assaulted the police sergeant. He said he would get some lodgings somewhere or get locked up, whereupon he picked up a lump of ice and threw it at PS Salter, hitting him in the mouth. He also threw his hat and became so violent that he had to be locked up. Riley later denied the offence asking "How could I hurt a big man like that?" – he was gaoled for seven days.

North Wilts Herald 20 January 1933

Letter from Stenson Cooke, Secretary, The Automobile Association to the Editor

GIVE WAY TO THE HORSE: Sir – Whilst the present road conditions prevail, may I ask motorists always to give way to horse-drawn vehicles?

However difficult our brakes may be on frozen road, it will be a kindness to our four-footed friends to remember that they have no brakes. Yours etc. Stenson Cooke.

EXECUTED AT WANDSWORTH PRISON

On 3 January 1946 William Brooke Joyce (Lord Haw Haw) was executed. On 18 June the previous year he was about to face charges of high treason and was being held in Cell No. 6 at Bow Street police station – the cell once occupied by Crippen. On 20 September at No. 1 court, Old Bailey, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. His appeal went before the House of Lords on 15 December.

EMPIRE THEATRE, Swindon – originally named the New Queen's Theatre.

Refurbished and re-named Empire Theatre in 1907 when it re-opened on Boxing Day.

First opened January 1898 with 'Dick Whittington and His Cat'.

James 'Raggy' Powell, a rag and bone man, organised free shows and refreshments for families of those serving in WW1.

Much later, Molly Tanner's 'Little Swindon Sweethearts' were frequent performers.

Sadly, the building was closed down on Saturday 22 January 1955 and demolished in 1959. See Roger Trayhurn's book 'The Empire Theatre 1896 – 1959' for all details. A good read.

MORE JANUARY SNIPPETS

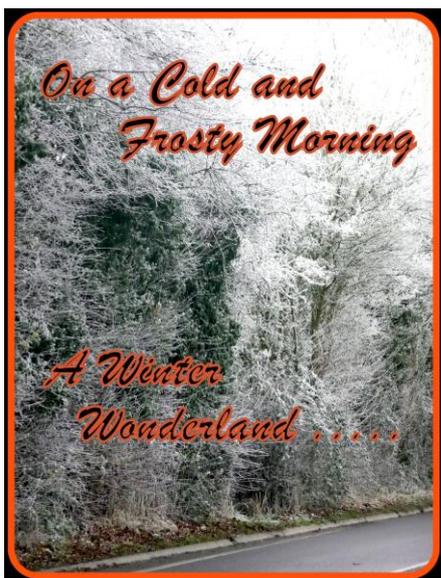
In January 1945 the weekly minimum wage for agricultural workers was increased by 3s to £3 10s .

NORTH WILTS HERALD 13 JANUARY 1933

SSM A New Constable. PS Painter left Stratton on Tuesday for Ramsbury, where he succeeds PS Harrison. He is followed at Stratton by PC Phillimore who comes from South Wilts, with a record of 18 years' service.

SSM Accident: Mrs Florence Mary Abrahams, wife of Mr S Abrahams of Ermin Street, who met with an accident on the Oxford Road last week, is making good progress towards recovery. Mrs Abrahams, who was wheeling a perambulator containing her 22 months old baby, was involved in a collision with a motor cycle, driven by Mr C Bailey of Manor House, Rodbourne Cheney. She was dragged several yards and badly shaken, in addition to suffering bruises. She was taken to the hospital but was not detained. The baby had a miraculous escape, the perambulator being smashed. The accident occurred at dusk and at a post where there is no footpath.

More about Stratton St Margaret in the attachment. Please do take a peek.
Yvonne



Another day
Another year
How time flies

It's not the job you have, or
where you live
or the things you have collected.

All that truly matters
are the lives you've touched
and the people you've 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 nealy1@virginmedia.com)