

Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, January 2023

MEETINGS REMINDER – see below for further details

Thursday 12th January 2023 via Zoom - Migration through the UK – Debbie Bradley

Thursday 26 January at 7.30 pm at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square
'Extraordinary Women in Wiltshire – Ruth Butler



January derives from the Janus — the God whose two faces look back into the past and forward into the future.

Until the Romans, there was no generally accepted date when the old year ended and the new one began. January was first declared the beginning of the year by Julius Caesar in 46 BC.

PERMACRISIS

Hope that doesn't apply to 2022 for you. Evidently that is the word-of-the-year for 2022 as revealed by the Collins Dictionary and defined as 'an extended period of instability and insecurity'. The word was chosen because 'it sums up quite succinctly just how truly awful 2022 has been for so many people'.

So the time has come to look forward to better things in 2023. **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

JOHN'S FIRST MESSAGE FOR 2023

A New Year begins, and Yvonne continues to get me thinking through this newsletter. She writes about "first footing", see below. Immediately I am transported back to the 60s and Cypress Grove. The Welsh also believed in this tradition. If we were at home on New Year's Eve, just before midnight mum, born in Bridgend, would open the back door then the front (to let the old year out and the new year in) then invite the talk dark man, carrying the coal she had left on the doorstep, into the house. His reward a shot of Whisky. The tall man being my Uncle Ernie or a neighbour, usually Mr Mabbett. It was never my dad. He like my grandfather went grey prematurely in their 30s, so he wasn't a suitable candidate for first footing. Just as well he wasn't a great fan of Whisky.

As well as going back to Cypress Grove Yvonne also sent me back to Mcllroys (again see below) not for the shopping but the disco or dance, can't remember what it was, they held in the cafeteria. Sometimes they had local "pop" groups who played for 30 minutes during the interval. My mate, Martin, persuaded the management to give his "blues band" a spot. After 2 numbers the DJ booted them off stage. Mcllroys wasn't ready for the blues. Martin was the lead singer and played the harmonica, Pete played the violin and some guy called Andy Partridge played the guitar. I wonder what happened to him?

They also had some well-known bands who played there, including the legendary Fairport Convention. In the late 60s they appeared at Mcllroys with the late great Sandy Denny along with Richard Thompson, Ashley Hutchings, Simon Nichol and Iain Matthews all greats in the folk-rock genre. Also, Martin Lamble a great drummer who died shortly afterwards on the M1 when their van crashed. He was 19.

I am still a fan and looking forward to their return to the Wyvern Theatre this February. Only Simon remains from the original line up.

Thank you Yvonne for bringing back those memories. Please, dear reader, if you have memories triggered by any article please share them. **JOHN MILLS**

What's coming up ?????....

Thursday 12th January 2023 - Migration through the UK – Debbie Bradley

For our first Zoom meeting of 2023 we welcome Debbie Bradley. She is a professional genealogist and an Associated Member of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives. She will be talking about tracking her ancestors' movements around the UK and the difficulties involved in tracking them down. Hints and tips are included to inspire and assist others who are doing similar research. **MARGARET NEAVES**

Following her recent accident, Glenys is willing and able to host this Zoom meeting in January. As usual, therefore, she 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

**Thursday 26 January at 7.30 pm at The Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square
'Extraordinary Women in Wiltshire – Ruth Butler**

Some future meetings – at a glance



SWINDON BRANCH MEETINGS 2023

Face-to-face meetings held at the Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square at 7.30 pm (come a bit earlier for a cuppa and biscuit).

Everyone welcome – and it's free!

12 Jan	Migration through the UK – Zoom meeting
26 Jan	Extraordinary Women in Wiltshire

9 Feb My Ancestor was a Miller – Zoom meeting
23 Feb Cellars, Towers and Tunnels
9 Mar Ancestors who were Civil Servants – Zoom
23 Mar Where residents of the Railway Village would have shopped in the 19th century
13 Apr Historic Wiltshire and Wiltshire Memories – Zoom

Contact: swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

PLEASE NOTE: We are also involved with the Swindon Historic Railway Village Cottages project. Please send stories, memories, photos etc to add to our growing files.

swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk 01793 822310

SWINDON HERITAGE – first of a series of talks (postponed from November) by Dr Michael Smith.

This will now take place on Saturday 21 January 2023 at the Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square, Railway Village. 7.00 – 9.30 pm

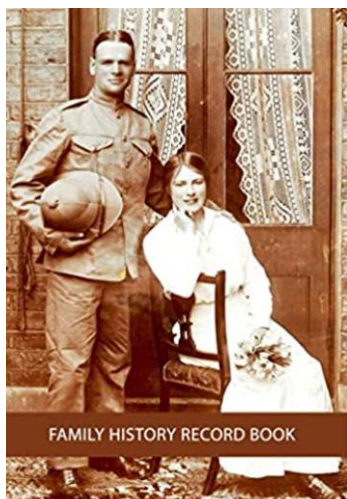
Dr Michael Smith, author & enthusiast, Former GWR apprentice, teacher & lecturer and consultant to Railtrack/Network Rail, will be giving a talk 1841 – 1861 Minard Christian REA, Isambard Kingdom BRUNEL, Daniel GOOCH and the Box Tunnel.

Members: £6 or £15 for all three events.) includes light
Non-members: £8 each or £20 for all 3 events.) refreshments

Please contact dan@mechanics-trust.org.uk for further information.

REPORTS

In the third of our 'Back to Basics' talks this autumn, on Thursday **24 November**, one of our newish members Natasha Brown explained how she records her family information. She has written the following for us:



In lockdown I was stuck in my one-bedroom flat alone and bored, so I thought it would be a good time to organise my research.

My family lives in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and when I go to see them, they always ask me questions which means I either have to all my research with me or take my laptop.

This then started the hunt for a record book where I could collate my information. I found this book - [Family History Record Book: Amazon.co.uk: Parsons, Sheridan: 9780993054280: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Parsons-Sheridan-9780993054280/dp/9780993054280)

Inside this book numbers all people in your direct descendants –

Copyrighted Material

(3) Mother

Mother of (1), daughter of (6) and (7)

i
 red birth name _____
 is given name _____
 names known by _____

So, I had an idea to number all the family members starting with me at 1 and going on. I then decided that I wanted to record both electronic and hard copies of all documents for that individual. So the paper copies are printed and placed in an individual plastic wallet and stored in the number order of the book and the mirror image on my OneDrive:

- 6. CLARK, George William 1913-1984
- 7. TAYLOR, Gladys Mary 1917-2004
- 8. BROWN, Arthur William 1885-1962
- 9. HIGHAM, Edith 1887-1963
- 10. METCALF, James Arthur 1894-1978
- 11. HORNBY, Gertrude 1898-1965
- 12. CLARK, George Brown 1882-1956
- 13. DIXON, Frances 1884-1968

Then in each folder is their documents:

- METCALF, James Arthur 1901
- METCALF, James Arthur 1911
- METCALF, James Arthur 1921
- METCALF, James Arthur 1939
- METCALF, James Arthur Baptism
- METCALF, James Arthur Birth
- METCALF, James Arthur Death
- METCALF, James Arthur Marriage

As stated above these are the same documents you will find in the paper copy. But why stop there I then decided that now, I am allowed back into the archives I could really do with a tracking document so have made the following:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
1	Surname	Forename	Birth	Baptism	Marriage	Death	Burial	F	M	19	19	19	19	18	18	18	18	18	18	Online	Paper	Comments	
3	CLARK	Elizabeth Ann	07/06/1953	12/07/1953	19/11/1970	N/A	N/A	6	7											<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
4	BROWN	Peter	05/06/1925	**	**	30/03/1992	Cremation	8	9	Yes										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WW2	
5	METCALF	Alvena	12/03/1923	**	**	24/08/2000	Cremation	10	11	Yes										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
6	CLARK	George William	20/10/1913	**	**	02/11/1984	07/11/1984	12	13	Yes	Yes									<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
7	TAYLOR	Gladys Mary	05/05/1917	**	**	08/10/2004	Cremation	14	15	Yes	Yes									<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
8	BROWN	Arthur William	28/04/1885	20/05/1885	13/04/1936	08/11/1962	**	16	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Probate	
9	HIGHAM	Edith	06/04/1887	**	**	11/04/1963	**	18	19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
10	METCALF	James Arthur	18/05/1894	03/07/1894	05/08/1906	12/10/1978	**	20	21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WW1	
11	HORNBY	Gertrude	25/12/1898	**	**	13/12/1965	**	22	23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
12	CLARK	George Brown	15/02/1882	28/05/1882	31/07/1920	25/10/1956	29/10/1956	24	25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WW1/Court	
13	DIXON	Frances	03/08/1884	**	**	15/02/1968	19/02/1968	26	27	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
14	TAYLOR	Joseph Wright	14/05/1883	**	**	06/07/1939	**	28	29	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Inquest	
15	CODD	Mary Ann Elizabeth	14/07/1884	10/08/1884	15/05/1907	08/06/1958	11/06/1958	30	31	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

This starts with surname, forename, Dates for Birth, Baptism, Marriage, Death and Burial. I have then added the numbers of that individual's parents so that you can easily track them. Then the next columns are the census 1939, 1921, 1911, 1901, 1891, 1881, 1871, 1861, 1851 and 1841. The tick columns are it a complete record for both online and paper and finishing with any comments. Did they serve in WW1 etc.

Here is a blank copy of the form:



MAIN Family record.xlsx

NATASHA BROWN

On **Thursday 8 December** we had our Swindon Branch Christmas get-together. Margaret Neaves got us working on two fun quizzes followed by a bring-along buffet. A great evening, lots of laughs and great supper. Thanks to Margaret for arranging such a lovely event for us.

On Saturday 10 December with grandchildren Sofia and Kian I visited Swindon's GWR museum cottage in Faringdon Road. It was all decked out as it would have been in Victorian times with the house itself furnished as at about 1900.

Incredible to think that perhaps a family of 10 (with possibly a lodger) had lived there.

Volunteers in each room explained the history and surprisingly both were able to interact and ask questions.

They even discovered all the robins secretly hidden around the rooms.



We then went over to the Central Community Centre where all kinds of craft-making were on offer. (Also refreshments.)

Sofia opted for making a clay penguin – to be dried out and painted later at home, and Kian made himself a crown, which he promised to wear on the bus going home – and he did!

We then had lunch in town followed by a browse around the Christmas Market stalls. A really lovely day. The museum house is so worth going to see. Details of opening times, plus a great deal more information on what is happening at the Central Community Centre (Swindon's original GWR Hospital) can be found in the 'Mechanic's Matters' newsletter. Contact dan@mechanics-trust.org.uk Yvonne

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

One hundred and five years ago, on 10 January 1918, the House of Lords gave approval for women over the age of thirty to have the right to vote. The historical political decision was passed under the Representation of the People Act. However it was not until 1928, a decade later, that another law would be passed allowing women over the age of twenty one to vote, in accordance with male voting rights.

I wonder what the reaction would have been to learn of our female Prime Ministers!

HOGMANAY

There are a number of not entirely convincing theories as to the origin of this celebration which, in Scotland, is as important as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. In fact Christmas Day did not become a public holiday in Scotland until 1958, and Boxing Day in 1974. This is thought to be partly due to Scotland's Norse roots where the winter solstice was marked with fire to symbolise the rejuvenation of the sun and the victory of light over darkness.

After 'redding' the house, all would be neat, clean and tidy to welcome in the New Year. Rowan tree branches above the door would bring good luck, mistletoe hung to prevent illness, holly to ward off those mischievous fairies and hazel and yew to protect home and householders. Juniper was burnt throughout the home before doors flung open to bring in fresh air and a New Year. Debts to be paid off before 'the bells' sound midnight – the sign of another clean break.

Immediately after midnight it is traditional to sing Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne". Burns published his version of this popular little ditty in 1788, although the tune was in print over 80 years before this.

'First footing' (or the 'first foot' in the house after midnight) is still common across Scotland. To ensure good luck for the house the first foot should be a dark-haired male, and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and a wee dram of whisky. The dark-haired male bit is believed to be a throwback to the Viking days, when a big blonde stranger arriving on your door step with a big axe meant big trouble, and probably not a very happy New Year!

...ON THE SUBJECT OF COAL

Do you remember the coalman delivering coal in sacks, slung over his shoulder, and emptied into the coal bunker in the garden or yard?

So strong – must have been back-breaking work.

Does anyone have ancestral connections with coalmen or coal miners? Do please share
nealy1@virginmedia.com or
swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk



FROM COAL TO THE GWR

We have covered a few old occupations in our newsletters, and more to come, but what about GWR occupations? We have smiths of various kinds, forgers, rivetters, boiler makers, coach builders and many more too numerous to mention. So ... **does anyone have any memories to share** please, perhaps members of your own families? There are, of course, those occupations which make you scratch your head and wonder just what they entailed, for example a Puddler.

Another thing – when the railways first came to Swindon, the town was a sleepy (well perhaps not quite) small community at the top of a nearby hill. Mostly agricultural labours locally and in nearby villages, so labour had to be recruited from elsewhere. The early census reports, particularly, reveal that workers came from far and near, although perhaps their children may have been born in Swindon.

Mike and Pam Stubbs have done a study into this for the 1851 census and discovered that Railway Village people came from such diverse places as France, Bay of Biscay, Jersey, Barbados, Antigua, Italy, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. One was actually born 'on the sea'.

Mike and Pam ask the question: *“How and why did they arrive in Swindon? Why did they and their families come to Swindon and how did they know of job opportunities here before the internet?”*

A further study by Mike and Pam for the 1851 census begs the question ‘was there a thriving night life in Old Town in 1851’? At the High Street, probably just lodging there on census night were four German musicians and a comedian from Birmingham. Mike and Pam believe they could have been staying at The Bell – a Coaching Inn. Were they performing locally or could they have just been resting midway on a stage coach journey?

Interestingly at The Baker’s Arms, 16 Emlyn Square, at the time of the 1939 Register, three Music Hall Artistes were staying there. Probably performing at The Mechanics Institute?

‘OVER-AND-ABOVE’ INFORMATION

Marcia Dancer, a regular contributor to our newsletter, has sent in some wonderful information about her mother-in-law’s cottage in Ermin Street. Included was a list of who lived in the house since 1798 which, of course, prompted some research. That research brought up a list of 5 sons (names and baptism dates) and also the following extract, taken from the Newport Street Independent Chapel baptism records for 1735:

“Sons and Mary Ann daughter born September twenty seventh 1832 of Charles Clack, Shoemaker, Swindon, Wilts, and of Mary his wife, who was daughter of Thomas Hutchison, Labourer of Lechlade in the county of Gloucester, were born at the above mentioned dates at the house of their father in the parish of Lechlade, county of Gloucester, and baptised by me at the chapel, Newport Street, Swindon on the 17 February 1835. Signed JB Moens (?) Pastor of the church meeting at the above Chapel.”

The 1939 Register brought up the following information:

“Previous to No. 20 was the Ayres family in ‘Caravan – east of Emin Street north of GWR main line. Postal address/o Mr Hill, 100 Ermin Street’. The district was Highworth.

Before that again were Nos. 2 and 1 but no street name.

Before that was 11 (Marsh House) Church Way. Then 10 and 9. No. 8 was Green Gables at Church Street. No. 6 was Chestnut Villa, No. 5 was Sydenham, then No. 7. Next was Tree Tops, Sylvitone, The Haven and then was Park Street.”

Isn’t it great when such information is found. Perhaps you have such an instance from your researches? Please contact nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

GOD SAVE THE KING

Last year we celebrated with our Queen Elizabeth II. Seventy years of service to our country and its people. Then came the bombshell that she had died.

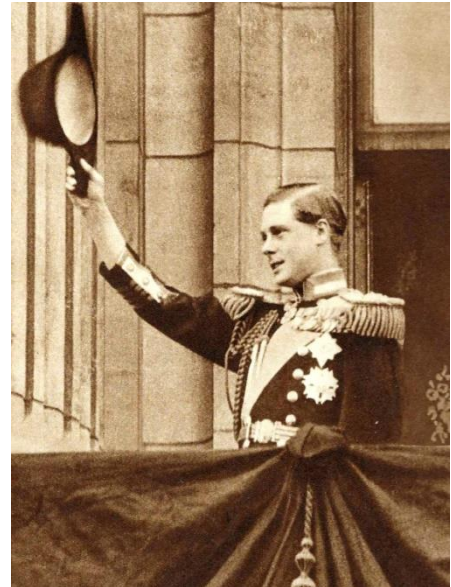
Back in 1935 there was both sadness and celebration. The accession of King Edward VIII was proclaimed on **22 January** 1935 – after the sadness of losing King George V. The same was felt last year when we said goodbye to our long-serving Queen Elizabeth.

1935 “The death of His Majesty King George the Fifth has taken a beloved father from his family and his people. It is still hard to believe, with the door closed so recently behind him, that he will not return and his voice be unheard next Christmas.

The Empire is not fearful of the future. King George’s sane courage and warm humanity are an enduring inspiration. The British people will progress steadily in his tradition of good sense and good will. They will be led along the road by King Edward the Eighth.”

Long live the King.

And so history trundles along and we look forward this year to the coronation of **King Charles III**.



25 YEARS AGO – END OF AN ERA FOR SWINDON

Photos courtesy of Local Studies, Swindon Central Library



123 years of serving the people of Swindon, everything from buttons to furnishings, came to an end with the announcement on **13 January 1998** that McIlroy’s, the iconic Swindon store, was to close.

Last day of trading was on 30 April but its memory lingers on.



The plate glass frontage, the imposing clock tower (demolished in the 1960s for safety reasons), the grand ballroom... and THAT staircase. Wonder where that is now?



Think how many of our own ancestors must have visited over those years.



That is until our traditional old department store could no longer compete with the more-modern influx of rival national stores. Yet still the nostalgia lives on even after 25 years.

I wonder what locals thought about this pioneer, purpose-built store when it opened in 1875. In 1943 the store housed Swindon's Library – the first public lending library for the town – according to the Swindon Advertiser .

We have every reason to be grateful to William McIlroy (once Mayor of Reading) an Irish draper who, with help from James Wheeler, his brother-in-law, and son Ewart, established the group of stores. The Swindon store was built by John Norman's firm, one of twenty-two branches which sprang up across England and Wales.

Ah ... those were the days!

TRAGIC DEATH 100 YEARS AGO – 7 January 1923

100 YEARS AGO - Evening Advertiser 29 January 1923

**DELAY IN NOTIFICATION OF A DEATH – Hospital Authorities Criticised by Coroner
WOMAN'S FATAL BURNS**

“Mr A L Forrester, coroner for North Wilts, sitting without a jury, held an inquest at St Saviour's Church school, Ashford Road, Swindon, on Saturday afternoon into the cause of death of **Ada Alice Titchener**, a widow, 44 years of age of 57 Omdurman Street, Gorse Hill, who died in the Victoria Hospital from the effects of burns. Evidence of identification was given by the deceased's daughter, Ada Alice Titchener, who said her mother had been a widow about four years. On Sunday 7 January about 8pm deceased went to the coal cellar to get some coal, and while putting it on the fire her blouse caught alight. Witness was out at the time, and on her return she found her mother in great pain from the effects of burns.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said her mother was wearing flannelette. Witness sent for a doctor, and afterwards deceased was removed to the hospital, where she died on Wednesday night. Dr Alexander Henry KcKendrick said he saw deceased at the hospital on Monday 8 January and found her suffering from severe fire burns on her chest and arm. Deceased had suffered from heart trouble, and she died from cardiac degeneration accelerated by the burns. The Coroner returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, and commented on the delay that had occurred in notifying him of the death.

“Why didn't the hospital authorities notify me or the police of this death?” he queried.”

Ada Alice Smith, daughter of Edwin, General Labourer, and Ann, formerly Bridgeman, was born 12 December 1878 at The Green, Stratton St Margaret.

1881 aged 2 with parents and siblings at Stratton Green, SSM

1891 aged 12 at Pump Lane, SSM (father's name Edward crossed through and Edwin inserted)

1901 aged 22, a Tailoress, still with parents and siblings at 161 Beatrice Street

1911 married and living at 57 Omdurman Street with children. Husband Arthur John serving in the Wiltshire Regiment

**BUT THERE HAD BEEN A PREVIOUS TRAGEDY IN THE FAMILY -
SAD STORY – SWINDON GWR WORKER KILLED ON THE MAIN GWR LINE AT CARDIFF
ARTHUR JOHN TITCHENER**

His granddaughter Poppy Moon wrote: 'In returning after going to get a look-out man to protect a gang of men working in Newtown yard, Cardiff, **Arthur J Titchener** of Swindon, was knocked down and killed by an engine.'

Saturday 3 May 1919 – Cardiff Western Mail

"A distressing fatality occurred on the GWR main line at Cardiff on Friday afternoon. The deceased man was **Arthur TITCHENER** aged 45 years, who was employed as a Water Fitter's Helper. The accident occurred at 3.30 pm opposite the Tyndall Street Goods Depot and a Western Mail reporter was informed by witnesses that Titchener was walking down the line when he was overtaken by a pilot engine and killed instantly, his body being dragged 26 yards. It was removed to the mortuary.

Titchener was a married man with five children and his home was at Swindon. He had been working at Cardiff about six weeks, lodging at the Packer's Hut."

Western Mail 6 May 1919 "Cardiff Railwayman's Death: A verdict of Accidental Death was returned at a Cardiff inquest touching the death of **Arthur John Titchener**, a Water-pipe Fitter employed on the Great Western Railway, who resided at 57 Omdurman Street, Gorse Hill, Swindon. Evidence showed that he was working on the line near Tyndall Street Junction when shunting operations were in progress, and he was struck by a train before the driver had time to pull up. Death was due to shock following injuries."

Arthur John Titchener, son of Richard, Farm Labourer, and Jane (formerly Smith) was born 23 July 1875 at Upper Stratton St Margaret.

1881 aged 5 at Hyde, Blunsdon, with parents and his brother William.

1891 at Swindon Road, 15 year old Agricultural Labourer, with parents and siblings.

1901 and 1911 serving in the Wiltshire Regiment

1911 wife Ada Alice living at 57 Omdurman Street, Swindon, with children Arthur W, Amy Florence and Edward Chas.

Arthur John Titchener joined the Wiltshire Regiment at Devizes in 1896 and served from then until 1912. Between December 1899 and June 1902 he was in South Africa having seen service in the Boer War. He was awarded the Queen's South African Medal, clasps – Cape Colony, Orange Free State & Transvaal. Also the King's South African Medal, clasps 1901 and 1902. He was re-engaged for four years 1908 -1912 and begun working in the GWR in 1914.

Married after banns at St Mark's Church on 24 October 1903: **Arthur John Titchener** 28 year old bachelor and Plate Layer of 161 Beatrice Street, son of Richard Titchener, Labourer, married **Ada Alice Smith** 24 year old spinster of 181 Beatrice Street, daughter of Edward Smith, Plate-Layer. W: Florence Ruth Smith and W G Titchener.



Photo courtesy of Kate Hart

Thoughts for New Year – from 'The Rose'
Written by Amanda McBrook

It's the heart afraid of breaking
that never learns to dance.
It's the dream afraid of waking
that never takes the chance.

It's the one who won't be taking
who cannot seem to give,
and the soul, afraid of dying
that never learns to live.

Birds singing their song loud and clear,
announcing to the world

A NEW YEAR IS HERE

Let's make the most of 2023

(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)