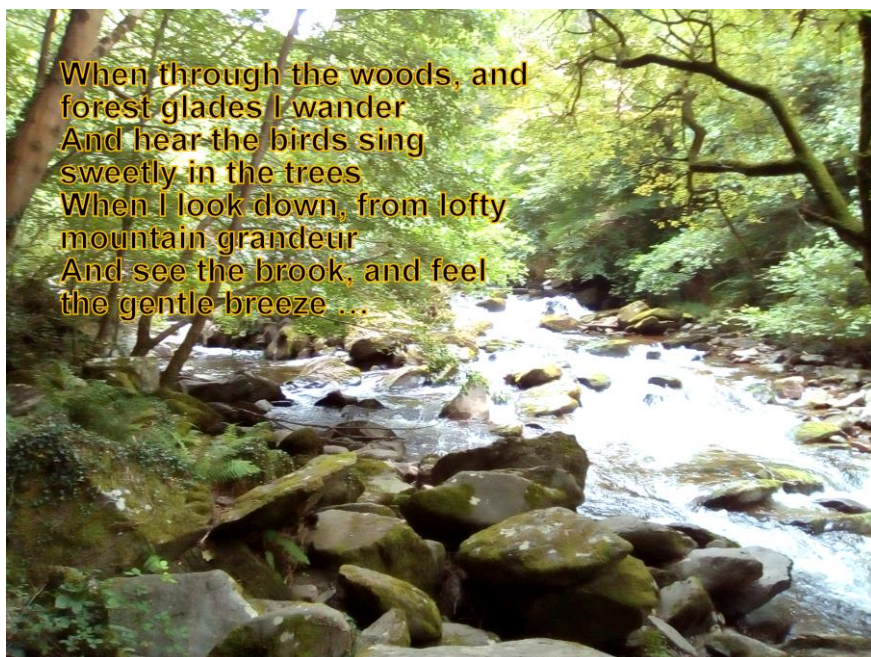


Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, May 2022



JOHN'S MAY MESSAGE

In the previous newsletter I said Yvonne always gives me things to think about, this time she has caused a traumatic flashback.

Yes Yvonne I do remember Maypole dancing (see below) and yes I did do it. The flashback took me back to the late 1950's and Rodbourne Cheney School. Here the maypole was dragged out of the school hall and onto the playground on May 1st, with us hapless children asked to perform for our parents, well mothers really.

I was useless, totally uncoordinated with an ungainly skipping action. In and out we weaved, avoiding, but not always, other children coming in the opposite direction. I always seemed a bit slower than the other dancers so the gap got bigger and bigger between me and the person in front, with a bit of a traffic jam building up behind me. Once the criss-cross pattern was formed we stopped and did everything in reverse to unwrap the damned thing.

So thanks again Yvonne for the newsletter, even if I do have to go and lie down in a darkened room! **JOHN MILLS**

WHAT'S COMING UP

Thursday 12th May 2022 – Zoom meeting

British Widows of the First World War – The Forgotten Legion by Andrea Hetherington

Andrea is a writer with an interest in the social history of the First World War. She will talk to us about the widows of the First World War and their battle for state support. The outbreak of the First World War prompted the British government to introduce a national **War Widows' Pension scheme**. All war widows were eligible, be they on-the-strength, off-the-strength, or widows of volunteers. Yet, the weekly payments made to them under this scheme were far too little to cover their living costs, and hardship increased as the war continued and inflation rose.

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

Thursday, 26th May 2022 – Central Community Centre

We are holding our very short annual AGM on this evening. Following this could members please bring along an object which belonged to an ancestor so that we can share a few memories.

FRANK & ERNEST – THE LIFE AND ART OF FRANK ERNEST QUINTON – with John Stooke: 24 March 2022

Another wonderful evening with John Stooke. This time to keep the memory and work of watercolourist Frank Ernest Quinton (1922 – 2019) alive. There have been other Swindon artists of note whose work, over the years, have been mainly forgotten, and John is determined that this shouldn't happen to Frank Ernest Quinton. John brought some original paintings with him for us to see.

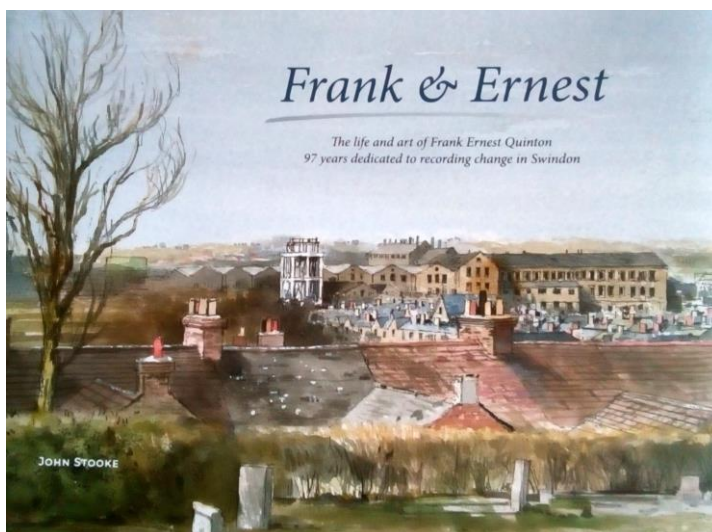
At one stage of his career, Frank painted murals in the 'Dome of Discovery' at the 1951 Festival of Britain. He has also painted holiday scenic post cards for Salmon & Co. Previously, whilst in the Royal Artillery during the war, he would sketch places, buildings and scenes of his experiences.

Frank and his wife Joan were inseparable and they had four children. As they travelled around together, Frank would sketch and then paint, sometimes commission work and often just what he saw of everyday Swindon life – the backsies, many of Old Town buildings, Churches, street scenes, historic buildings and even shop windows. When GWR was closing down and vast areas being demolished, he was commissioned to paint this phase, moments of time, in the town's history. The results were amazing and so evocative. He also painted scenes in Bath, Marlborough, Cirencester and other local places.

Frank Ernest Quinton was very versatile in his style of painting, using colour to express the mood of a scene. He could paint in quite an impressionistic style to almost photographic detail.

John Stooke's book is just wonderful, as was his previous book about local lost public houses – hours of browsing and reminiscing!

Anyone who visited the pop-up exhibition in the Brunel a few months back will definitely want to get this book, which includes a little personal history of the artist and many pictures of his paintings beautifully reproduced.



In a quite spectacular finale to his talk, and to gasps and giggles from the room, John unveiled the 'great reveal'. What a surprise! If you want to know what it was ... just email nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

John Stooke's book is available at various places around Swindon including the Central Library and Waterstones. Profits from this book go to the Motor Neurone Disease charity. Profits from

his previous book went to Women's Aid. Also available are a set of four limited-edition beautiful prints by the artist, very reasonably priced and worth taking a peek at.

UNDERSTANDING & DATING YOUR OLD PHOTOGRAPHS – Zoom meeting with Stephen Gill of Photo Consult – Thursday 14 April 2022

Another great talk arranged by Margaret Neaves and shared with us via Zoom organised by Glenys Bettley. Thank you both.

Steve illustrated his enthralling and information talk with example photographs. He stressed throughout that we should study the tiny details in our photos to understand their stories, look for clues and evidence and remember not to take anything at face value – photos can be 'doctored' or reproduced later. There are interesting discoveries to be made so we should be a photo detective – but don't jump to conclusions.

- Dress and hair styles give clues for dating eg severe ladies hair styles gave way to 'large' hair on which to perch large fashionable hats.
- Seek evidence as to the circumstances or reason why a photo was taken. Was it planned or just 'off the street'? Best clothes? Look for accessories but take into account that studio props may have been used.
- Outdoor photos can give clues as to date and place. Is there a notice or advertisement which may be of social history interest?
- Is someone missing from a family photo – ie who could be taking it?
- The type of photo will (probably but not always) indicate when it was taken. Dating can be evidenced by background, rounded or square corners, fading-out (1880s-1910 and again 1920s until after WW2), and photographers' advertisements which could include their address and other clues.
- Colourising a photo enhances details.

Photography dates back to 1839. Examples are:

Daguerreotype from 1840 – 1851 in the UK. Negative and positive depending on angle viewed. It would have been expensive to have a portrait taken. Long exposure time so could be fuzzy if subject moved or even blinked.

Ambrotype 1842 – 1885. On glass – wet plate photography. Brass mount and some very decorative later in Victorian times.

Ferrotypes 1860s – 1940s. Printed on iron and much cheaper to produce. Images are in reverse.

Carte de Visite 1855 – 1915. Relatively cheap to produce with the ability to create several copies. Printed and stuck onto card. Square corners – before 1870. Rounded corners - after 1870.

Cabinet Cards. These were larger and glued onto board.

Post Cards. These became very popular in the early 1900s. Be aware, however, that these photos could be altered – eyes, hair, colourised.

Posing for photographs could be long and uncomfortable. Special stands with rods placed up through jackets and dresses (eg crinolines) and clamped at the waist, helped to keep the subject still for the long exposure.

Kodak from 1888, started the amateur revolution for photography.

Steve taught us to look at old photos from a different perspective and to pay particular attention to the smallest detail. **PLEASE SEE 4 OLD PHOTOS AT THE END.**

ROBINSONS RECALLED

I was thrilled to hear from Julian White that he remembers Robinsons, the store in Curtis Street, and also to read John Mills' comments about Mr Robinson and the Swindon Male Voice Choir. Previously on the odd occasion I've mentioned Robinsons to people, I've just received a blank look. I left the area in about 1962 but Julian can remember going into the store with his Mum, who bought him a lovely multi-coloured blanket from there. Julian seems to remember that, after Robinsons had ceased trading, the premises were used as a store offering cheap products. Following that, it was turned into flats.

Julian went on to explain that he was born in Bowood Road (where one of my best school friends lived) and went to the Clifton Street infants and juniors (as did I). He remembers that in Radnor Street, almost where it meets Shelley Street, there was a shop named El Ski Fashion, or something similar, selling clothes for all sizes.

Does anyone else remember Robinsons store? There was a Co-op almost opposite on Cambria Bridge Road and the 'rec.' was very close by.

All this got Julian thinking about other shops that are now long gone. For example, there used to be a Southern Health Food Store in Havelock Street. He remembers going into the Spot and BHS – and loving it if his mum bought him lunch there. He seems to think that Fine Fare also had a place to eat upstairs?? His mum used to shop in Berry's greengrocers in Regent Street and there was a David Greig store also.

Wow – is any of this jogging YOUR memory? Yvonne

Please let us know – nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

THE HOGWARTS EXPRESS

The Hogwarts Express No. 5972, which served both the village of Hogsmeade and Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry located in the Scottish Highlands, travelled from King's Cross Station platform nine and three-quarters.





Thanks to Ken Mumford, very much a train enthusiast, who saw the article in our last Newsletter, and who sent in this photo – an artist's impression of 5972.

Ken commented: "BUT with a lot of licence that any of your members who had connections with THE FACTORY might lift their hands in horror when they compare the painting with what the REAL 5972 looked like when it was built at THE WORKS!"

STRANGE HOW ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

In the February issue of our Newsletter, John Stooke mentioned that the Kane (Cycle Shop) family lived just down the road from George Watts the barber, who lived at 509 Ferndale Road. Emily King made contact to say that George Edmund Lindsay Watt, to give him his full name, was her great uncle and brother to her grandmother, Florence Irene Watt. Florence married Wilfred W Nichols whose butchers shop at 190 Kingshill Road some of you may remember?

As for George and his barber shop, Emily has a letter, dated 6 May 1936, from the Borough of Swindon Town and Country Planning Act 1932 which says 'the Town Council hereby permit the change of user of the premises No. 509 Ferndale Road, Swindon, to business purposes' – ie for the barber shop. That letter was addressed to Mr Ernest G Watt, George's father. Ernest had served in WWI, possibly with the British Expeditionary Forces, in Egypt and with bomb clearance. His wife was Florence Maud Watt, nee Hook.

There is a lovely old photo of the marriage of Ernest's sister Charlotte Jessie T Watt to Henry Byett during the September quarter 1903 in the Swindon district.



Marriage of Charlotte WATT and Harry BYETT 1903. Names as written on the reverse of photo.

Front: Mrs Emma Nippress (mother of bride, formerly Watt, nee Wise), Florence M Hook, **Harry & Lottie Byett**, ??, Mark Nipress.

Rev. A V Watt (bride's brother) and his wife Gertrude immediately above bride and groom.

Ernest H G Watt (bride's brother) above Mark Nipress (his step-father).

Photo of Lower Rodbourne Farm from an original watercolour by Ernest H G Watt – late 1920s.

Ernest Horace Gavin Watt married Florence Maud Hook in 1909.

At the time of the 1901 census Florence's parents, Charles E and Henrietta Hook lived at Lower Rodbourne Farm where Charles was a farmer.



There are various photos of Florence Maud – a beautiful elegant young lady aged 17 posing by the stream in front of the farmhouse, another with her young children and, later in life, in a wheelchair as an invalid.

On 15 April 1970 (exactly 52 years ago to the day as I'm writing this), 86 year old Florence Maud Watt was attacked (attempted murder) and taken to hospital – as written in her daughter's diary for 1970. But that's another story which, hopefully, we may be able to bring you in a future newsletter. The court case was very unusual in that, because Florence was bedridden, part of the court proceedings were held in her bedroom at 190 Kingshill Road. It was reported in the Swindon Advertiser at the time 'the last occasion when a court sat in Swindon in a private house to hear evidence was in 1953'. (Wonder what that was for!) Yvonne

MAY DAY

Does anyone remember dancing around the maypole? Possibly not, but at one time the Maypole was the definitive symbol of the end of winter and the anticipation of summer. Eventually it became more of a school tradition as opposed to part of community life.

The actual pole could be quite high – taller than some buildings – and said to represent a tree reaching upwards from the dark earth toward the life-giving sun.

May Day itself was celebrated as far back as Roman times. In medieval times, sacrifices may be made to the gods. Later, when maypoles became popular, they would be painted and decorated with flowers and, more recently, ribbons were attached and intricate patterns weaved as revellers danced. This would be a collaboration between male and female residents and it is said that much wooing would take place beneath the maypole.

IN THE NEWS ...

In May 1969, the Swindon Advertiser proclaimed the 'imminent death of the car'. A small team at the Military College of Science, Shrivenham, built their own hovercraft (designed for land rather than water travel) saying "If we have our way, the prototype model will be a death sentence for that Sunday jaunt in the family saloon car."

Also that month, Mayor Alf A J Bown, in his last week in office, took to the air with the Swindon Gliding Club and 'disappeared in a large black thundercloud'. With still no sign of the glider's return, forty minutes later a light aircraft took off from South Marston in search of the missing Mayor. He was found safe and well in a field near Acorn Bridge on the Oxford Road, having been forced down by the sudden foul weather. Mayor Bown, it was reported, was 'no stranger

to such adventures, having flown in many aircraft as a Royal Flying Corps sergeant during WW1'.

Ten years previously, in May 1959, sight of a UFO had been reported over Whitworth Road in Swindon. 'Housewives dropped their dusters and brooms to gaze at a strange, silvery object in the sky'.

8th of May 1945 After nearly six years of war, the 8th of May 1945 - Victory in Europe Day - brought joy and relief to millions of people. It also brought back national weather forecasts for the public for the first time since World War II began.

In the first public weather forecast since 2 September 1939, the Air Ministry announced that frost is expected in SE Scotland, England and Wales, excluding western central districts.

WILL SWINDON MAKE THE LIST ...?

The home of the Great Western Railway – Swindon – but will we make the shortlist to host the proposed GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS headquarters?

A competition was held in March for towns and cities interested in becoming the new HQ (outside London) and 42 entries were received, including one for Swindon. The shortlist of the best applications will be published in May and then a public vote will 'HELP' to determine the winning location. What the word 'HELP' means is not clear of course but, should our town make the shortlist, it would be great if the local communities, and individuals, would pull together to vote 'SWINDON'.

Grant Shapps said "Our Railways have kept this country going for almost 200 years, but it's time to kickstart a new age that will shape our network for the next 200."

Swindon is possibly best known for its rich railway heritage (possibly the magic roundabout also) so let's all get behind our town should it be on that list. VOTE SWINDON!

OLD OCCUPATIONS



As promised last time, here is the photo of 'rat catchers' as they may have looked.

The rat catcher was actually a well-respected and very important person in society, especially considering the little creatures were responsible for spreading disease and epidemics like The Plague. In particular, black rats were feared as they would creep into wooden houses and hide in straw where poor folk would sleep. They would also, of course, rummage around amongst food and supplies.

Not a pleasant occupation, and not without danger, having to venture into dirty and unsanitary places – and to handle potentially disease-ridden vermin. They would use traps and even animals trained to hunt and kill them.

The most famous rat catcher was The Pied Piper of Hameln who, though his flute-playing, led all the rats in the town into a river where they drowned. Unfortunately other rat catchers did not have a magical flute to lure rats and mice into submission!

But back in 1898, with 25 years experience, Mr Ike Matthews of Manchester published a little book on the subject, with the suggestion that:

“You begin by strewing about the rats’ runs, say, thirty little heaps of fine sawdust mixed with oatmeal. The rats get used to playing in and out of the sawdust and oatmeal, and then one fine day you hide a steel trap in each little heap, and you will catch one rat per heap. But you cannot go on for ever catching rats in sawdust. They get tired of it. So after a little you give them their thirty heaps made of soot, and proceed in the same way; then after the soot you can make a change to shredded paper. You must be careful to handle the traps as little as possible, or the rats will be suspicious; and a good tip is to pour a drop or two of oil of aniseed or oil of rhodium on the trap—scents which attract rats beyond all others. “

There is a story told that of a ‘royal rat catcher’ by the name of Jack Black who worked as Queen Victoria’s personal rat catcher. I wonder!!

It is said that nothing was wasted. The fur, the fat (for candles perhaps) and innards all had their uses.

ADVERTISEMENTS from the North Wilts Herald 10 May 1918

WORLD’S STORES – Pioneers of Popular Prices in Regent Street, Swindon.

Best oatmeal or rolled oats	4d
Good Cooking Rice	3 1/4d

Don’t forget to REGISTER for TEA and BACON at the WORLD’S STORES.

BERTISH’S: BUY OF THE MAKERS ... FURNITURE! FURNITURE!

Before purchasing elsewhere call and inspect the quality and prices at BERTISH’S, 33 and 34 Regent Street, Swindon, who hold one of the largest stocks of HOUSE HOLD FURNITURE in the west of England.

All goods delivered and fixed free any distance by experienced workmen in our motor vans.

NO HIRE SYSTEMS. NO TRAVELLERS.

Illustrated catalogue post free.

All the latest in BASSINETTES AND MAILCARTS. In stock. Send for price lists.

Second-hand furniture bought for cash. Best prices given.

McILROY’S are showing this week BABY CARRIAGES AND FOLDING CARS.

Folding: cars (with carpet seat) from 15/11.	Folding: cars (with hood and apron from 59/6
Perambulators (with hood) from 79/6	Carette (with hood) from £4 19 6

Coach-finished carriage with large hood and best upholstery £5 5s.

Wm McILROY LTD “The Home of Economy”, Swindon. ‘Phone 21.

(I wonder who else had ‘phones then?)

Whilst over in Gorse Hill at the **ELECTRA PALACE**: All the week commencing Monday May 13th The Biggest Attraction ever offered .. D W Griffiths' mighty spectacle "THE BIRTH OF A NATION". The most wonderful film the world has ever seen. The film which drew thousands in New York and London. The masterpiece of all films.

Does the above provoke any memories? Please do let us know – nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

HIGHWORTH On Friday 16 May 1969, the Swindon Advertiser printed a small paragraph about 'The mysterious case of the steaming hole of Highworth'. It seems that experts were baffled for 8 months but the matter finally closed when Government scientists considered that the most likely possible cause was that 'rubble in the concrete aprons of Quarry Crescent contained a considerable amount of lime from the kiln. It is possible that carbon dioxide carried down by rainwater reacted with the lime.'

Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle 24 May 1884

Obstructing the road: Henry Iles, haulier, Upper Stratton, was charged with leaving a horse and cart in Bath Road, Swindon, whereby an obstruction was caused. On Wednesday 14 inst, Inspector Myall saw the horse and cart belonging to defendant standing by Mr Wiltshire's yard. The circus procession passed, and the horse would have bolted if he had not seized it. He stayed there 1½ hours before defendant came and claimed it as his. Defendant denied that the horse was there so long. The Bench pointed out to him that that did not make any difference. He was liable to a fine of £10. Fined 17s including costs.

Confusing information: Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle 24 May 1884: 'Edmund Arthur, son of Edmund Stourton, 7 weeks old, died at the Police Station.'

Edmund Arthur Stourton was born during the June quarter 1884 in the Highworth district and baptised at Swindon Christ Church with St Mary on 16 April 1884, son of Edmund, Police Warder, and Ellen of the Police Station, Swindon. He was buried 23 May 1884 at Christ Church.

Banns for Edmund Stourton, bachelor otp and Ellen Cowdry, spinster of Berwick Bassett, published 19 and 26 Nov and 3 Dec 1882 at Castle Combe.

Married at Castle Combe 6 December 1882: Edmund Stourton 26 year old bachelor and Policeman of Castle Combe, son of John Stourton, Stone Mason, married Ellen Cowdry 28 year old spinster and Servant of Berwick Bassett, daughter of Charles Cowdry, Labourer. W: George Brewer and Henry Cowdry.

The family had moved by the time of the 1891 census to Slab Road, West Wellow, Wiltshire:

Edmund	Head	34	c. 1856	b. Norton St Philip, Som.	Police Constable
Ellen	Wife	37	c. 1853	b. Allington, Wilts	
Ada Elizabeth	Dau	6	c. 1884	b. Allington	
May	Dau	3	c. 1887	b. Landford, Wilts	
Walter	Son	1	c. 1890	b. Landford, Wilts	

A Right Rumpus by three rival Italian organ grinders at Vitti's Lodging House, Albert Street, Old Swindon, at 9.30 pm on a Sunday night – recorded in the **Swindon Advertiser on 2 May 1896**. Two of the culprits were of no fixed abode and the third lived at Bath Cottages, Devizes Road.

About 7 or 8 Italian gentleman were drinking in a room usually frequented by Italians when a row broke out followed by a vicious assault. Luckily for Det. Sgt. Liddiard, Angelo Vitti, proprietor, was able to translate and eventually became bail for the two arrested men.

LITTLE LONDON - another street very changed over the years

(Photos courtesy of the Swindon Society and Andy Binks.)



Little London in Old Swindon – a branch from Albert Street (the red light district in mid-Victorian times), crossing Church Street, to continue until it meets Cricklade Street.

It seems, however, that there was some confusion as to whether properties were actually in Little London or Cricklade Street. The Goodenough Removals premises (also their home) was considered to be 25 Cricklade Street, but in various censuses and official documents referred to as 25 Little London.

The original London/Swindon overspill – or was it?

What was it really like? Possibly crowded, a bit dirty – vermin infected thatched roofs, cesspits – and a bad reputation besides.

But 300 years of Swindon history. Difficult for us to visualise - just open fields, cottage industry and countryside for miles around.



The GWR Works (and trains, even cars) were unknown words and would have been as impossible for old inhabitants to visualise as it is for us now, looking back. How Swindon has changed and how the world in general has changed. Its history spans many monarchs and inventions.



THE LAST THATCHED COTTAGE in Swindon, in Little London, in the 1960s.

But we still look back with nostalgia when, in 1964, the last thatched cottage at 4 Little London was demolished.

Even the street/lane itself had been re-named three times according to the Swindon Advertiser: London Lane, Little London Lane, London Street and then, as we recognise it now, Little London.

(We may be able to add a couple more names to that street – Back Lane was definitely one and possibly even Brockswell. Any comments please?)

The 'Old Thatch' cottage was built around 1700 when William of Orange was on the throne and the population of Swindon was about 800. According to historian Mark Child in 'The Swindon Book Companion' the cottage is understood to have been occupied by the same family, the Lawrences – glovers by trade, for well over 200 years.

The last of the Lawrences was Alfred*, a bell ringer at Christ Church for 77 years who died in 1945 aged 90, after which the property fell into the hands of his granddaughter Ivy Liddiard, who married Edward Stanley Liddiard.

Alfred, born 1855, married Eliza Watts in about 1876. Their daughter Elizabeth married George Gibbs in 1902, and their daughter Ivy May Gibbs married Edward Stanley Liddiard in 1939. Edward Stanley came from a long line of Liddiards of Aldbourne.

We'd love to hear from anyone with connections, stories or memories of the area, or perhaps a name may kindle a memory. As always please contact nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk. If you feel you need help to relate your memory, no worries just send me an email and we'll sort it between us. Yvonne

FOR ALL YOU FOOTIE FANS

Dick Mattick, a local football historian, was busy during lockdown and has written a book, a copy of which may be obtained from the STFC shop or by ringing Dick on 01793 495206. In his own words:



With lock down meaning I was unable to see live football and thanks to Paul Plowman enabling me to borrow his Football Pink I set out to try to recapture the memories of that wonderful year.

I thought there were probably other Swindon fans of a similar vintage who would enjoy a trip down memory lane so I decided to try to write a book about it hence First Promotion. In it I have tried to include memories of the fans as well as the players as it was their first Promotion too. For younger fans hopefully it will explain something about how the game today is very different both on and off the pitch. In talking to players that played that season I learnt a lot and it is interesting that those players having read it discovered much they did not know about what was happening off the field in the Boardroom".

"I always thought if I could be able to go back and see all the matches of one season then it would be the 1962-3 season that I would choose.

Dick Mattick

CAN YOU PUT NAMES TO ANY OF THESE PLEASE?



Photographer: Maylott
Faringdon Street



Photographer: Fred C Palmer
Cromwell Street

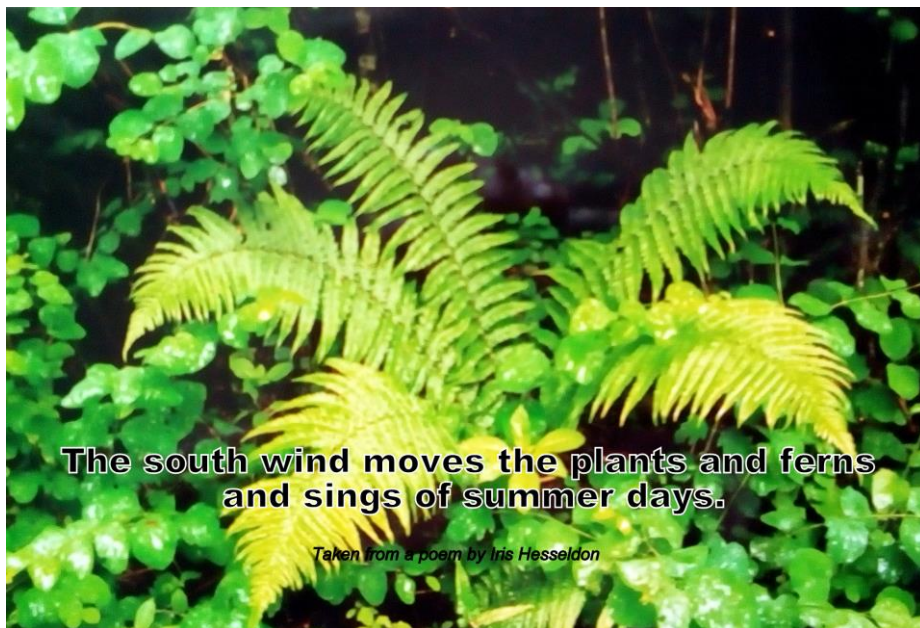


Photographer: Hooper
Cromwell Street



Blunsdon School Group II 1906

If you can help or have any comments, please email nealy1@virginmedia.com



(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)