

THE SWINDON SOCIETY

Newsletter

April 2012

Meeting Wednesday 14th March 2012.

We were still getting cold frosty mornings, but as soon as the sun rose we had bright sunny days, and we were warned of a hose pipe ban from April 1st...and that wasn't an April Fool joke! Rivers and reservoirs were at very low levels. As I write this near the end of the month it is predicted that this will be the warmest March on record with temperatures in the last few days over 20C.

Kevin welcomed all members and the visitors they brought as it was our 'Bring a Visitor Free' night. After the regulation fire drill, he gave a short fashion show 'twirl' of his new Swindon Society Polo Shirt, ...mentioned the forthcoming AGM and the nomination forms, also our gifts to small charities, and the 40th Anniversary of the Society celebrations in September, this introduction serving as an index of items contained in this Newsletter.

Andy Binks then began to reveal the title of his show "A Herbert about Town" which, as with his previous one "The Man with a Stick" he kept under wraps till the last keeping us all wondering what on earth was coming.

At all exhibitions of our photo collection we appeal for photographs and at the Library last year a man named Bill **Herbert** offered his collection to be copied. As a member of Swindon Camera Club for many years, some shots were artistic local studies emphasising light and shade, sunsets and snow scenes, events and people, all very enjoyable and informative. At the end of last year Radio Wiltshire presenter Graham Mack went to great lengths to blow the works 'hooter' again. I reported this event in the January Newsletter, Andy was able to show us a photo of it in full steam to which he added the sound, now we saw the huge boiler which produced the steam originally and the wheel valve which released it, the radio demonstration was achieved by massive amplifiers and a recording.

In 1961 photos of Canal Walk with the original Golden Lion and the cottages about to be demolished for the first town centre refurbishments. We saw the bank in Queens Park where a railway tunnel was dug in the 19th century, but it caved in and was abandoned. Back in 1961 we could still find evidence of old projects in our collection, we have a picture of Cambria Bridge with rope marks in the iron support where the canal boats were pulled through.

There were still brewery dray horses delivering beer for Mann's Brewery as the Wadworth ones do in Devizes... I can just remember old gardeners bemoaning the fact that "the roses and rhubarb have never been as good as when we had horses on the streets"....

Still looking at Bill Herberts collection Andy began to stray into related 'Herbert' territory, whether it be first names or family name, and our member Colin Herbert contributed some of his collection, Swindon Town Football club was managed by ...Bert Head, Denis Herbert produced paintings, someone named Herbert Ponting took some black and white photos of fashionable Edwardian ladies at Coate water in 1905.

We were asked to publicise the 50th Anniversary of the Railway Apprentices Training School, Andy was closely involved with it and showed a picture of himself and the original Bill Herbert among a group of young 'Herberts' and a picture of their engineering workshop revealed that all the machines they used were made by Herbert.

A tour of Old town from Bill Herberts Camera Club collection showed us some very pleasant photo shots, revealing the character of the buildings rather than historic detail. The Bell Hotel once called The Lapwing apparently, Skurrays modern showroom where the Co-op Superstore is now with a large Vauxhall Royale basking in late afternoon sunshine, A thatched roof in Newport Street, (I believe the last thatch in the town was in Albert Street behind the Adver Office).

The Violet Cafe in High Street. The first fire at the Locarno was in 2003 I believe, although it had been derelict a long time before that, we saw inside the burnt out building where Buddleah

grew and butterflies flourished, strange how plants take over demolition sites, I understand Rose Bay Willow Herb took over London's bomb sites, in the 1940s, it is also called Fireweed! We saw the arched blocked up window of the Octagonal Church, which survived in a building long after the church had gone, I remember a buttercup grew from the sill and bloomed every summer. In Drove Road was Swindon Hide and Skin Market, a very smelly unpleasant building, one very hot summer the telephone kiosk opposite the building became infested with maggots from there, an unpleasant photoshot.....but interesting! Andy brought the show to a close with views of local art figures, the group of male figures at West Swindon, one of which he claims Perry Barrett, our Fire Warden modelled for, (without his yellow jacket).... and the rear of Diana Dors, followed by her equally shapely front view.

Local Radio Station on 105.5 invited us to appear in a their radio broadcast called "**Swindon People Talking**". We were asked to attend an interview on the air. Our appointed time was Tuesday 13th March at 10.00 am and were advised to arrive by 9.45. Bob Townsend picked me up in good time also Diane Everett and we made our way to their studio at The Bentley Centre, Stratton Road which is (I believe, on the site once occupied by Bamptons Coachbuilders), also occupied by many other business units. Previously when I visited the studio of this radio station they were in very cramped premises under the stand at the County Ground, they are now in much more airy surroundings.

After the formalities we were shown into the studio, but as Des Morgan was still 'on air' interviewing the minister of Rodbourne Cheney Baptist Church, we had to remain silent. The interview was just an informal chat really, and we all had a few words to answer Des Morgan's questions and share memories, we were impressed at his knowledge, both with us and his previous guest, he obviously does his homework, something another local radio station and the 'Adver' sometimes fail to do. They seemed quite pleased with our performance and asked us to come again!...

Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 9th May 2012.

No nominations have been received for candidates for the committee, but they can be made at any time before or during the A.G.M. All the present committee are willing to continue to serve another year, with the exception of Debra Edmunds who resigned early this year as she had been unable to attend meetings due to pressure of other work. Paul Williams wishes to remain a committee member if elected but to stand down as vice- chairman.

The Society has achieved our record membership in the past year, and held many exhibitions and events, forming valuable links with other local history groups, the library and museums, and look forward to being able to continue to do so with support from you all...

Afterwards, Bob Townsend will give a presentation on "Early Olympics".

Polo Shirts.

We have arrange to obtain polo shirts bearing the Swindon coat of arms and our Society logo from Michael's Workwear at around £10.00 each The committee has purchased them to wear when representing the society at events or meetings. Members are welcome to purchase their own, details available and a sample will be on view at this meeting..with details.

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**40th Anniversary Celebration.**

*Southbrook Inn, Southbrook Street, Swindon.*

**on Sunday 16th September 2012.**

**12noon till 4.30pm.**

*Buffet Lunch, with guest speakers.*

*Members, £3.00 sponsored by Society.*

*to be booked by*

*Saturday 27th August Please.*

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Our June evening outing will be to **Inigo House, Highworth** on **Wednesday 6th June the first Wednesday in June** at 7.00pm. Numbers are limited, please give your name tonight or at the AGM

in May

Library News

Dates for Archivist visits.

An Archivist from the record office will be at the Reference Library in the Central Library Regent Circus 10am till 12 noon to give advice to researchers on Mondays, dates as follows:-

30th April

21st May

25th June .

If you have special research or require a particular document a telephone call to the Library would ensure whether it is available when you visit.

Telephone. (01793) 463238 which is the number for both the lending and the reference library.

Also on these dates, the Archivist will be giving talks on research,

as follows :-

Archivists Research Talks.

30th April 'Probate Records', Their Use and Interpretation Robert Jago.

All talks at 1.00 pm. On these dates. unless stated

Tickets £2.50 or £1.50 for Library members. Available from the Swindon Collection Help Point on the Second Floor of the Central Library, or ring 01793 463838 from 2 weeks before.

Friends of Swindon Railway Museum

The dates of future meetings have been arranged, but the speakers have not been confirmed so far. Monday meetings will commence at 7.15pm Saturday meetings at 2.30pm.

2012

Monday 16th April To be arranged.

21st May "

As soon as further details become available I will let you know here..

Meet at the Steam Museum, Kemble Drive, Swindon.

If you would like to attend these meetings, take your Swindon Society Membership card with you.

Friends of Radnor Street Cemetery.

Spring Walks.

Sadly ALL these events have been cancelled owing to insurance cover required and proving difficult to obtain, there is a possibility that the event in the chapel on 19th May could take place subject to negotiations being successful. Ring 01793 346514 for news .

Saturday Walks meet at the Chapel at 11am. **Cancelled.**

Saturday 14th April

" 19th May Local History Exhibition in the Chapel

Purton Historical Society.

Please note, meeting dates vary from month to month.

Meet monthly **back at St Mary's Primary School, Purton** at 7.30pm.

2012

Thursday April 19th The Early History of Wiltshire Constabulary,
Inspector Steve Bridge.

" May 17th God for Harry England and St George,

Martin Way.

No details of cost was included, Ring Mrs. Eve Booy for more details on 01793 770755

Royal Wootton Bassett Historical Society.

'Looking forward to the Past'

Visitors are most welcome, (£2.00); refreshments served before our main event which begins at 7.30. Do come along and join us in an entertaining and informative evening.- Vivien Sumner. Thursdays 7.30 pm. Civic Centre, Station Road, Wootton Bassett. First Floor,upstairs.

Visitors always welcome : £2.00

Further Information from Vivien Sumner 01666 511195

2012

Thursday 12th April Glimmer in the Dark Part III, Martin Way.

" 10th May Castles I Bob Clarke.

" 14th June Castles II Bob Clarke.

Rodbourne Community History Group

Meets monthly at 7pm at Even Swindon Community Centre, Jennings Street on the last Wednesday of the month. Admission Members £1 Guests £2 (including refreshment).

2012.

Wednesday 25th April The History of the Mechanics Institution, Daniel
Rose.

" 30th May TBA

" 27th June TBA

" 25th July A History of Canals, Martin Buckland.

Highworth History Society

All lecture meetings are held in the Community Room, Highworth Town Council Offices,Gilberts Lane just off the High Street, unless otherwise stated.

Meetings are held at 7.30pm on the last Monday of the month. Membership £10.00 (Renewable in September each year)Visitors £3.00

2012

Monday 30th April Village Country Ways, Customs and
traditions of 18th and 19th Centuries, Chris Viveash,

Accompanied by a "country maid".

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Chiseldon Local History Group

Meet at at Holy Cross Church Room, Butts Road, Chiseldon.

at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

Visitors Welcome. small charge.

2012

February

Wednesday 18th April Stonehenge, the Story so Far - Julian
Richards

" 16th May Silbury Hill and the Marlborough
Mound - Jim Leary

" 20th June A Load of Cobblers (a family history) - Mary Bedells

" 18th July Chiseldon, Street by Street - Elaine
and Sheila

" 15th August Visit TBA - Alan Morton

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Chiseldon Museum, The Old Chapel, Butts Road, is open from 11am to 3pm on the first and third Saturday each month from April to October.

Our June evening outing will be to Inigo House, Highworth on Wednesday 6th June the first Wednesday in June at 7.00pm. Numbers are limited, please give your name tonight or at the AGM in May

Programme 2011-2012

2012

April

Wednesday 11th Why Guppy Street? Gordon Shaw.

May

Wednesday 9th A.G.M. and presentation on Early Olympics. Bob Townsend.

June

Wednesday 6th Evening Outing will be to **Inigo House,**
Highworth.
Please note earlier date!

All meetings begin at 7.30 on the second Wednesday of the month from September through to May.

We meet at Broadgreen Centre, Salisbury Street, Swindon.