

FEBRUARY 2013 NEWSLETTER.

Meeting of Wednesday 9th January 2013

It had been a fine sunny day but a bit colder than we have been getting, as we set out for the first meeting of the new year.

Andy Binks opened the meeting and gave the statutory fire drill instructions. Then he drew attention to items in the Newsletter, the fact that we are still one member short on the committee and the appeal for you to adopt your area and photograph the day to day happenings and changes so that there is a record for future shows like the one we were about to see.

David started his presentation by trying out our memories, Who was Daphne Oxenford, who sadly died very recently, many knew she was an early T.V. presenter of 'Listen with Mother' in the late 1950s and 60s. then he asked what she said at the start of her programme....there was a chorus of 'Are you sitting comfortably? then I'll begin'. This was about the time all the changes began in the town centre, the plan was to move out all the housing and develop a business centre, shops and offices, car parks and bus routes....now offices and shops are being developed into apartment blocks and the town centre is becoming more densely populated than the old terraced houses which were replaced by the business premises.

We saw Princes Street when it was all terraced houses, and Gordon Road which has been relocated twice.. to the east of Princes Street there was Beckhampton Street,formerly called Page Street, Spring Gardens and Lowestoft Street; to the west, Regents Place, Cow Lane, Islington Street Edgeware Road and Gordon Gardens. Regent Street and Bridge Street formed the main shopping Centre with more streets between there and Commercial Road. Stretching through the area from east to west was the site of the Wilts and Berks Canal which joined the North Wilts Canal just in front of where Debenhams is now.

In 1986 the Railway Works closed and some of us were able to gain access to take photographs after the closure, then empty, the workshops were like the Mary Celeste, as if everone had just walked out not even bothered to sweep up. it was eleven years later in 1997 that Macarther Glen opened the workshops as a designer Outlet Village, later to be called *Centre* as Village sounded too 'rural'! Society Members were given a guided tour before the opening when David took photos of us wearing hard hats as it was still a building site. Much of the character of the 'works' have been preserved among the shop units. We saw the boiler shop and pattern store, now Bottelinos Restaurant. David showed the area known as Whalebridge when it was a huge expanse of mud with the Town Hall visible in the distance, it has undergone several drastic changes since then The Police Station was built with deep foundations, we heard it housed a cold war bunker! The underpass, H.C Preater's Ford showrooms and Garage were taken over by Walker Jackson then several other car dealers, all now demolished. In recent years Jury's Inn has been built and the underpass filled in to form a large traffic Island which we are still learning to negotiate safely. Office blocks have been built, used,then and converted into apartments on the east side of Princes Street, the Wyvern Theatre and Magistrates Court to the West, the College extension was built and held as a prestigious modern building, but prior to its demolition last year it was refered to as "the Old College " and an "eyesore". David took us back to the 1960s to see the town as it was, through the demolition which followed, then we saw all the modern buildings being built, now many of them have been demolished and once again building sites have taken over and cranes can be seen on the skyline again as they were in the 1970s.

If you enjoyed David's presentation, please remember, if he hadn't been there with his camera all those years ago, much of what he showed us would not have been available.... We need you all to carry on the work of recording today's changes for future generations to enjoy. Cameras are much smaller now, and dont even need films, we just need to be a bit careful not to venture in places we should'nt be without permission, it's better to ask than have your camera confiscated. My days of climbing to the top of car parks and talking my way into deserted buildings have passed, but there is a whole town full of passing history out there to be captured.....

Heritage Magazine Launch

January 21st 2013

Arkell's brewery is a place filled with history and long standing tradition, so this venue perfectly suited the launch of the new Swindon Heritage magazine. The cellar bar was a tad chilly as it has been minus something for over a week, but the room soon warmed up, as it was full of the great and good of local history. I was also there!

This project was the brainchild of Mark Sutton, and ably assisted by Fran Bevan and Graham Carter, and of course others, who as in all such operations are not seen or heard about much. The cheery threesome must have had some butterflies about this day, but need not have worried as it was a roaring success. There were some skating displays while parking, and some (not me) found the bar hard to find. We were warmly welcomed by George Arkell who's booming, and infectious tones opened the proceedings. Mark said a few words as the cameras clicked and the voice recorders whirred away, as did Tamara Dugdale who is the Great niece of Swindon's Edith New who was a huge part of the Suffragette movement that did so much to get equality for the fairer sex. This magazine has not happened overnight. Mark first put the idea to our Swindon and district history network meeting, about 18 months ago. His idea was generally well received, but I will hold my hand up now and say I doubted the venture would be a success, on a tight budget relying on family and friends and I talked about this with Mark. Enthusiasm was never in short supply, but now funding and grants are in place, and with luck this will see the venture blossom. A large glossy, well put together work of this nature, needs funding but it still needs family and friends to assist, and this could be witnessed all around the cellar bar. Mind you Mark's mum's homemade scotch eggs were delicious, along with the fine selection of ales that Arkells kindly refreshed visitors with (Not that I tried any of them)

All now that is required is the people of the Town to support, I mean buy it. You will not be disappointed at all. It costs £4.99 a quarterly issue. You can subscribe annually for £15 to get four copies, a saving of nearly a fiver. What can you get for £4.99 these days? A pint and a half in your local? No! A gallon of petrol? No! A haircut? No! Entrance to a stately home? Doubt it!

So please can all of you think about signing up for it, because if we don't it won't last long

Please remember that if you fancy contributing in any way, large or small. Fran, Graham and Mark whom are all members of the Swindon Society would be very pleased to hear from you

The Swindon Society wishes all concerned the best of luck for this venture

Andy Binks January 24th 2013

This glossy, all colour magazine will be available in a number of town outlets, by subscription and online. For further information contact Mark Sutton on 01793 535281 email sutton5110@hotmail.co.uk and/or Frances Bevan 01793 875416 email francesbevan@outlook.com.

Swindon Scouts talk and presentation

January 2013

On behalf of The Swindon Society I recently gave a presentation to the leaders of our local scouting organisation, at their Headquarters in Milton Road. The weather was miserable, but I hope that all

who attended enjoyed the images and words I had to say. Our society collection has plenty of scouting related images and I showed a few of these to start with. They included visits by the founder Lord Baden Powell, and I ended up with some Beaney photographs, which was worthwhile, as we got some more names, of people who featured in them. In between the scout sandwich I showed lots of images of New Swindon as well

Swindon scouts have a long and very interesting history. All the ventures they take part in require volunteers, and it would appear that scouting, along with cubs, guides and brownies etc are still as popular today as in days gone by. They have a lot of archive material, which they were proud to show to us on the evening. We hope to have a closer look at this in the future and perhaps given a chance, we can add some to the Society collection. They kindly gave me a donation, which I have donated to the Society funds

Andy Binks January 2013

Just before leaving for the January meeting I had a 'phone call to tell me Pat and Terry Crewe would be unable to come as Pat had been taken ill in town that morning and was resting...They have had two years of worrying illness and were both just beginning to feel better and able to be with us enjoying the Christmas Party. Pat is feeling much better now, still being monitored and having medication, they hope to be with us tonight. If you hear of any members who have had more than a minor illness or hospital stay, please let me know so that I can pass on our good wishes and hear of their progress and keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

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:-

Monday 25th February 2013.

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.

Monday 25th February 2013

"Recording Wiltshire in Print, the output of Wiltshire Record Society" by Steve Hobbs.

All talks at **1.00 pm.** on these dates. unless otherwise 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 463238 from 2 weeks before.

Friends of Swindon Railway Museum

Members of this group have a full and interesting programme for the new session.

Our members would be welcome to attend as visitors.

Programme of Meetings 2013.

2013.

Monday 18th February Annual General Meeting. Followed by members slides.

Monday 18th March Australia Part 2: Edward Stansfield .

Saturday 13th April Great Central, Part 2: Chris Youett.

Details of May meeting will be advised in due course.....

3

All meetings will take place in the Daniel Gooch Lecture Theatre at Steam.

Please Note, the Monday evening meetings will commence at 7.15pm and Saturday afternoon meetings this season will start at the earlier time of 2.0pm to comply with the new Museum opening hours.

Meet at the Steam Museum, Kemble Drive, Swindon.

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

Purton Historical Society.

Please note, meeting dates vary from month to month.

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

Thursday 21 February History of the Harp, Chris Kinder.

Mrs. Helen Dixon ,Secretary 01793 770648

The Historical Society of Royal Wootton Bassett.

'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, Royal Wootton Bassett. SN4 7TZ First Floor, upstairs.

Annual membership £10.00. Visitors always welcome : £2.00

Further Information from Vivien Sumner 01666 511195

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| Thursday 14th February | The Romans in Swindon - Mike Stone.
Introduction to some Roman
settlements uncovered around Swindon. |
| " 14th March | Industrial Archaeology in your Garage
Shed or Attic - Bill King. |

Visits

Early June The most Noble Order of the Garter Procession at Windsor Castle.

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).

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| Wednesday 27th February | Flying is not for Women, Peter Donovan. |
| " 27th March | History of Old Town, Cilla Slipper. |
| " 24th April | Life in the East End, Martin Collinson. |

Highworth History Society

All lecture meetings are held in the United Reform Church, High Street, Highworth 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

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| Monday 25th February | The Life and Times of Swindon
Photographer, William Hooper,
Paul Williams. |
| " 25th March | 18th Century Private Theatricals,
Alan Ledger. |
| " 29th April | The Mechanics Institute, Swindon,
Daniel Rose. |

Chiseldon Local History Group

Meet at at Holy Cross Church Room, Butts Road, Chiseldon.
at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

Visitors Welcome. small charge.

2013

Wednesday February 20th Nelson's Navy. Chris Scott,
Writer and Historian.
" March 20th The End of Roman Cirencester. Neil
Holbrook. CEO Cotswold Archaeology.
" April 17th Making the Cauldrons. Hector Cole,
Blacksmith and Historical Ironworker.

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.