

The Swindon Society Newsletter

March 2013.

Meeting Wednesday 13th February 2013

We woke to a wet wintry day with 'snow flurries', because the ground was so wet, it didn't settle, after having to cancel one of our meetings two years ago because of deep snow we are always a bit anxious, fortunately, all was well and we were able to arrive safely.

Andy welcomed us all with the usual fire instructions and reminding us about the need for more photographs in your area especially of present day happenings, for future generations to enjoy.

The Cemetery on the Hill, Radnor Street Cemetery.

By the mid 1860s Swindon was expanding rapidly and St. Marks churchyard was filling up, and the area was adopted as the towns burial ground. The first burial there was in 1881 and 33,000 interments had taken place there by the time it was closed in the 1970s.

Frances showed us an aerial view of the area which is divided into five sections with the chapel in the centre where services were once held prior to burials, it has never had lighting or heating, so when it is used for local history events a generator is used. In front of the chapel stands a handsome war memorial dedicated to the fallen of both World wars. There is a Caretakers Lodge on the site, also the old mortuary. We saw photo's of undertakers account books, still held by local undertakers A.E. Smith when a burial cost £6.5.6d

There are many war graves of the first world war, Mark also showed some pictures of cemeteries in France and Belgium and huge memorials bearing hundreds of names of those whose graves were not found. Joseph Walker was born in 1882, and survived many wartime battles but died after a minor operation soon afterwards. After the war in 1920 a serious 'flu epidemic caused the death of many of the few who had survived. Many local dignitaries are buried there including Mayors of Swindon, Railway Works managers, local tradesmen and shopkeepers.

Frances has done research into the family history of some of the people buried there...R.J.

Leighfield a local builder who built the Electricity Showrooms in Regent Circus in the 1930s when the old Catholic Church was demolished, it had the first neon flashing fascia lights in the town, soon to be blacked out in the wartime blackout and never restored. this is now Rudi's Bar. James Hinton died in March 1907 he was a very busy man, a Freemason, Councillor and Mayor who opened the tram service in 1904 riding on the very first tram, (which, incidentally broke down and was late arriving at the Town Hall). Mark told us that about 1,000 Swindon men served in the Royal Navy in the first world war.

Sadly many of the monuments have been damaged, some by vandals and others by deterioration and becoming dislodged by tree roots, badgers are also a menace burrowing beneath the ground and causing subsidence. The Cemetery is a designated nature reserve with areas left wild, but controlled, to encourage wild life, this includes patches of nettles where butterflies can thrive and plants for birds and small mammals to feed on.

Swindon Heritage

Barely a month after our official launch at Arkell's and Swindon Heritage is receiving fabulous reviews. We now have ten stockists in town, including STEAM museum and we have just had confirmation that Central Library will be selling it at their Information Point, which is great news. WH Smith is proving pretty impregnable though. If anyone has any ideas how we can interest them in taking copies, please let us know.

We are busy making links with local schools and recently took part in a Second World War day at St Joseph's Catholic College alongside Swindon Society members Bob and Diane. We gave our presentations to four groups of fifty students across an action packed, full on day. Graham and Mark are next off to visit Dorcan Academy to discuss how we can work with them. We are also hoping to extend our educational work to primary schools.

Submissions and suggestions for future articles are flooding in and we are busy compiling an archive for future issues. If you'd like to send in a letter for publication, please feel free, and don't

forget to update us on events for other groups you might belong to. You can email us - graham/mark/frances on @swindonheritage.com or pop into the office at 69 Commercial Road where Mark's wife Theresa is happy to take a message.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank society members for their wonderful support – for subscribing to the magazine and for spreading the word – Andy Binks, you are a star!

Frances Bevan Feb 2013

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 March 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 March 2013.

"Crime and Punishment in the 18th and 19th Centuries" Terry Bracher.

All talks at **1.00 pm.** on these dates. unless otherwise stated.

also

Wednesday 20th March Evening at 7.15pm Railway Memories: Local, Family and Railway History, Peter Timms.

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 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.

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.

Mrs. Helen Dixon ,Secretary 01793 770648

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

2013

Thursday 21 March, Annual General Meeting followed by
Titanic part 2, by Paul Booy.

" 18th April Feral and Racing Pigeons - a world apart.
Stewart Wardrop.

" 16th May An evacuee tells his story. Martin Vandervelde.

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

2013

- " 14th March Industrial Archaeology in your Garage Shed or Attic - Bill King.
- " 11th April The Story of Sudeley Castle, Winchcombe - Angela Panrucker
A story partly told through flowers.
- " 9th May Canals in Wiltshire - John Farrow.
The growth,decline and restoration of the canal system in Wiltshire.

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).

2013

- Wednesday 27th March History of Old Town, Cilla Slipper.
- " 24th April Life in the East End, Martin Collinson.
- " 29th May Deacon's Family Jewellery business.

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

2012

- Monday 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 March 20th The End of Roman Cirencester. Neil Holbrook. CEO Cotswold Archaeology.
- " April 17th Making the Cauldrons. Hector Cole, Blacksmith and Historical Ironworker.
- " May 15th Memoir of a Railwayman, Mary Bedells and Roger Trayhurn, Swindon Family History Society.

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.