

Swindon Society Newsheet.

January 2012.

Wednesday 14th December 2011.

Members Christmas Social Evening.

After a very wintry day, with heavy rain, wind and snow showers - we arrived without getting wet.

We were greeted at the door as we signed in to a warm festive atmosphere with the table already laden with food and another ready with bottles and glasses for the liquid refreshment, and yet another with goodies on for raffle prizes, everyone received a free raffle ticket at the door. Kevin welcomed us and wished us well for Christmas and the New Year and hoping to see us all again on 11th January, weather always permitting at this time of the year. There were the usual Quiz pictures around the walls several copies of each which we were invited to identify and enter on the sheet. Andy Binks presented the slide show which was also in the form of an informal quiz, with prizes being handed out as we went along. We then enjoyed the refreshments which Sheila had prepared for us. Gina had organised the drinks and acted as barmaid for us. This year we held a free raffle with a wide variety of small prizes the draw was made on a first out of the hat basis, I won a fluffy Teddy which was appropriate for me to give to my new great-grandson Archie, born late in November. We made a presentation to Sheila in appreciation of all the refreshments during the year and especially the wonderful buffet we enjoy at Christmas, As a change from the usual hamper of goodies, I made some enquiries and discovered she loves gardening so this year it was a garden voucher, looking forward to the brighter sunny days. Gradually we all departed with Christmas cards and wishes being exchanged all round. As our evening was fairly late in the month, Christmas was upon us very quickly and by the time you read this we shall be past twelfth night, recycling all the cards and paper, and still finding prickles from the tree.

The Hooter Blows again.

Graham Mack of Radio Wiltshire became aware of the existence of the Railway Works Hooter some months ago, and began a quest to get it to blow again before the end of the year. Many contacted the station with their nostalgic memories, and many more saying it couldn't be done, which of course only made him even more determined to make it happen. When the Railway Works were in full production with their massive furnaces for the molten metal and to form steam for the massive steam hammers there, the steam to blow the hooter several times a day was readily available. After many interviews with railwaymen "who knew" it became clear that steam was out of the question, electricity? no not powerful enough....so they borrowed the recording used in Steam, and hired two massive amplifiers used for pop concerts and on Friday 23rd December at 8.15am the recording was "played" I heard it quite plainly from the back of my home, but I live less than a mile away as the crow flies, Many rang the radio station to say they'd heard it and felt urged to hurry into the works for the next shift...I don't think it was as loud as on the last day back in 1986 when at the end of that day it blew and blew till no steam was left... I managed to talk my way into the works that last day, and was standing right behind the hooter man when he blew it at lunchtime that day, with one eye on the clock he stood with hands on the huge wheel and at the right moment turned it to release the steam, then counting the seconds he wound it back again to shut the valve and halt the sound.

Childhood memories of the Railway Works, from the shadow of the walls.

Cousin Perce worked nights on the steam hammer, we could hear it from where we lived, especially at night when all else was quiet, like a heartbeat with a gentle hiss, thud, hiss, thud, then a pause then off again, it never kept us awake. I'm sure Perce wasn't the only operator, but Granny liked to think so. She would say "Percy is working hard tonight!. I can hear the hammer".

From where we lived in Thomas Street, we could see eight tall chimneys between the chimney stacks of Hawkins Street, from that line of vision I could see a small object between the second and third chimney, that was where the tiny plume of steam came out of about two seconds before the hooter sounded, on fine days I often ran down the back garden path to the corner to wait for dad to come down Rodbourne Road for his dinner, before mum could catch me to lay the table for her!..

During the war years the Hooter was only blown as an air raid warning causing us to run home from school or scramble from our beds and go downstairs to shelter. Because of the blackout we turned lights off and used torches or candles. We sheltered under iron Morrison table shelters or in cupboards under stairs, said to be a safe place. Air raid shelters in the garden were cold damp and uncomfortable, not that five people in an under stairs cupboard was exactly cosy, but it was warm. There we sat, listening for the drone of planes and the long blast from the hooter sounding the "All Clear".

David Lacey has been unwell for over a month, he was at the Christmas Evening but not able to enjoy the food etc. Despite antibiotics and the usual dolly mixture of medication he is not much better so awaits hospital tests to find what treatment to give.

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.

If anyone has any news or items or an interesting presentation you have seen to include in the Newsletter, let me know it would be a great help when compiling your monthly Newsletter. My e-mail address is: jeanallen418@btinternet.com or use ordinary mail.

Date for your brand new Leap Year Diary:-

Wednesday 14th March Bring a Friend Free, to "A Herbert Around Town" by Andy Binks.

### 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 Programme not available at the moment due to Bank Holiday.

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, (See below).

Archivists Research Talks.

I don't have details of the Monday talks for January, future details in next Newsletter.

All talks at 1.00 pm. On these dates unless stated

Tickets £2.00 or £1.50 concessions, Available from the Swindon Collection Help Point on the Second Floor of the Central Library, or ring 01793 463838 from 2 weeks before.

Watch out for an evening talk in the New Year by Frances Bevan and Mark Sutton, Friends of Radnor Street Cemetery. Date to be arranged.

### Friends of Swindon Railway Museum

The dates of future meetings have been arranged, but only two of the speakers have been confirmed so far. Monday meetings will commence at 7.15pm Saturday meetings at 2.30pm.

Saturday December No Meeting.

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" 14th January Subject to be advised Ian Clare  
 " 18th February South Africa David Walker.  
 Monday 19th March Annual General Meeting  
 " 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.

Purton Historical Society.

Please note, meeting dates vary from month to month.

Meet monthly at Lydiard Millicent Village Hall, at 7.30pm.

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

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" 12th January Charles II The Merry Monarch, Chris Scott.  
 " 9th February The Quiet Engineer, Thomas Richard Guppy, Gordon Shaw.  
 " 8th March Living in the Shadow of a Factory, Bob Browning.  
 " 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 refreshments).

Wednesday 30th November Open All Hours, David Lewis and Gordon Shaw.

I was able to attend this talk, with then and now pictures of the shops off the main Rodbourne Road around the side streets, often started by wives in front rooms with the family living in the back, most have now been changed back into homes, some of them still bear clues to its shop front days...the presentation was interspersed with audience comments and memories revealing the odd childhood misdeeds and mischief...

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

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" 30th January Redlands and the Rampant Cat, Houses and People of Redlands, Christine Suter  
 " 27th February Fromelles, The finding, naming and burial of Australian soldiers in Northern France, Kate Brady and Helen Webb, Oxford Archaeology Dept.

- " 26th March Kelmscot and the Arts and Crafts Movement.  
David Walton.
- " 30th April Village Country Ways, Customs and traditions of 18th and 19th  
Centuries, Chris Viveash, Accompanied by a "country maid".
- "

#### Chiseldon Local History Group

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

Visitors Welcome.

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.

#### Used Postage Stamps

Have you saved the postage stamps from all your Christmas cards?

Our Chairman, Kevin Bizley collects British and foreign used postage stamps, stamps should have a margin of envelope surrounding them, he raises money by selling them for Local charities.

#### Programme 2011-2012

2012

January

Wednesday 11th Remembering Swindon's Sons and Daughters.  
Mark Sutton.

February

Wednesday 8th A Wiltshire Journey, Neil Lover.

March

Wednesday 14th A Herbert about Town, Andy Binks.

Members ! Bring a Friend Free to this Meeting

April

Wednesday 11th Why Guppy Street? Gordon Shaw.

May

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

June

Wednesday 13th Evening Outing. To be arranged.2011

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.