

THE SWINDON SOCIETY

Newsletter

November 2012

Wednesday 10th October 2012

Swindon Borough Council Conservation and Urban Design - Peter Garitsis and Liz Gibbons Smith

Summetime came and went, but Summer weather didn't come at all....the fans stayed in the attic and brollies and wellies were prominent, but they now come in bright trendy colours, remember when they were always black.? By the time you read this the clocks will have been put back, I found a crumb of comfort when I realised we get seven months of British Summer Time and only five of Greenwich mean time. Kevin was unable to be with us owing to his late shift, so Andy welcomed us all and thanked all who made the 40th Anniversary celebration a success and assisted at the 'Made in Swindon' exhibition at the Library. He then introduced Peter Garitsis and Liz Gibbons Smith. He had spotted them taking photo's while he was doing the same and introduced himself, and apologised to them for getting them involved to come to us tonight to tell us of their work.. Liz is the Conservation Officer of Swindon Borough Council, and told us of 1,000 listed objects in the borough, not all buildings by any means, they include old water pumps,telephone boxes, milestones and signposts, AA and RAC boxes and graves of prominent people, such as G.J. Churchward in Christ Church graveyard. The Society for the Protection of Architectural Buildings S.P.A.B. oversees the maintenance of Inglesham Church where many artifacts of William Morris can be seen. It is estimated that there may be at least a thousand more of less importance not yet listed. Anyone can forward a building to be considered for 'listing' with as much information as possible why it should be preserved. The bridge that carries Ermin Street over the railway is undergoing urgent preservation work at the moment. Swindon also has 28 conservation areas,and 3 parks and gardens, Lydiard Park, Queens Park, which was once a brickworks with a clay pit which is now the lake, and the Town Gardens, formerly a stone quarry, the bandstand was moved and preserved when the Bowl was built in the 1930s the Tea kiosk, also listed was once a portable exhibition stand to publicise the railway company.

After seeing and hearing about our past and its preservation, Peter Garitsis Swindon Borough Council Urban Design Officer told us about the present and future building designs.. He works closely with the developers planners and designers about the use of the site, provision and access of car parking spaces, safety and security. also the proximity to existing homes and what effect the proposed development is likely to have on them. In Swindon we have good examples of development over nearly 200 years. Some very old properties still exist in Old Town, cottages for working class people and larger houses for the business and upper class families.

The Railway Village was considered very desirable when it was built in the mid 19th century as homes for the Railway workers, although bathrooms were not included or mains sewage till sometime afterwards, it is recorded that some families of ten or more shared one small cottage.

The terraces of Old Town, Rodbourne and Gorse Hill developed in a hotch potch manner, with builders coming in from the surrounding area and building houses in blocks of five or six then leaving a space and building another block the at the other end of the street leading to confusion of postal deliveries. Houses were not numbered until around the 1890s when it became law.

Pinehurst, built in the early 1930s was the first council estate, built around an open circle with four shops, but no pub and no church. The first school was in huts, soon replaced by modern airey building with classrooms opening on to a verandah with large windows. A branch Library followed later and a number of small bungalows for elderly residents. Private building was developing along Marlborough Road in what was called 'ribbon' development as far as Coate Water, then in 1936 Park Estate was built on what was Park Farm to the east of the main road. Consisting of detached and semi-detached houses and a few bungalows there were no shops schools pubs and no bus route through it. At £750 a semi-detached home boasted an Ascot water heater. Similar estates were built in Northern Road and at Walcot. With the start of the war in 1939 all building ceased and

recommenced in 1945 when labour became available and housing was urgently needed, some pre fabricated Houses built then to last five to ten years, (we were told) still exist 65 years later. In more recent times we see the Village Centres, with shops, schools, church, pub, library and sports facilities.

The town has spread on to surrounding green field sites and most of the brown field spaces within the urban area and has now begun to rise upwards with multi storey homes and apartments such is the need for affordable housing.

New Local Magazine .

The first edition of a new quarterly magazine, Swindon Heritage, will be available in Spring 2013. Local and family history enthusiasts, local history groups and members of the Swindon & District History Network are invited to contribute articles, photographs, 'remember when' pieces, society news and forthcoming events. This glossy, all colour magazine will be available in a number of town outlets, by subscription and online. Mark Sutton and Graham Carter will be giving a slideshow presentation about this exciting new venture at the next S&DHN meeting at Swindon Central Library on November 26 at 7pm. 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 Choral Society

present

Handel's MESSIAH at

Holy Rood Church

Groundwell Road

Swindon on

Saturday 15th December 2012

at 8 pm.

Tickets and Information from our member David Parks

Tel. 01793 481951

or fartherwell@aol.com

Committee Vacancy.

So far we have had no applicants to fill the vacancy on our committee, if you consider joining us you would be most welcome at one of our meetings to see what is involved, Please see one of our committee members.

Christmas Greetings.

Would you like a short personal Christmas Greeting printed in the December Newsletter? If so please e.mail, phone or post it to me to arrive by Wednesday 28th November.

Presentation at Priory Manor, Wednesday 17th October

Bob Townsend and Diane Everett spent a very interesting afternoon with the residents of Priory Manor. "The Tour" from Haydonleigh Drive along Moredon Road, Cheney Manor Road, Rodbourne Road past the Park to the Railway Station, then proceeded to Old Town taking in well known buildings on the way. The residents enjoyed the hours tour and gave us a very generous donation

Made in Swindon.

An exhibition was held at the Central Library on Saturday 6th October of many products made in the town over the years. Many local groups took part and displayed items and photographs of workers and industries in their local area. Rodbourne featured the 'shirt factory' or to give its full title the 'Cellular Clothing Company' who made garments of 'Aertex' and employed many local girls through both wars, closing in the 1950s. Wroughton Group showed photos and stories of 'Listers' formerly 'Marine Mountings'. Our section attracted quite a bit of attention, with a display of photographs which Bob and Andy had spent many hours assembling and transporting, we also displayed items of Triumph lingerie and a Big Yellow Teapot made by Bluebird Toys which held childhood memories for 'thirty somethings'. Also popular was Swindon made sweets which we offered visitors. Many thanks to those who turned up to help man (and woman) the event all help was much appreciated.

Members Wedding.

Debra Edmonds and Peter Melsom were married on 21st September, We send them our very best wishes.

We would like to thank Kevin Bizley and the Swindon Society and also Diane Everett, Bob Townsend and Andy Binks for the cards received for our wedding on 21st September. It was very much appreciated. We had a lovely day. Best wishes, Debra and Peter Melsom

50th Anniversary Re-union of Railway Apprentices School.

During the depths of winter 2012, John Baker had the idea of a reunion for British Rail Apprentices who had attended the Works Training School from 1962, because this year would be the 50th Anniversary. Living in Somerset, he needed a little Swindon based help, and contacted a few of us through various sources.

The idea of a British Rail Apprentices Reunion was born. Opened in 1962 it out-lastred the Rail Works and trained lads until 1993. Some 2,800 lads and a few lassies went through the school, trained as Coachbuilders, Fitters, Electricians, Carpenters and many other trades. When the idea of a reunion came about, and a Face book attracted 30 or 40 eager ex-apprentices we decided to give the Reunion a go. We banked on around 60 or 70 coming, and then thought we may get 100. The Steam Museum was booked, too large we thought. Facebook grew to 300 and the rolling ball of interest from ex apprentices grew and grew. After much hard work, local papers, radio interviews and the best way, word of mouth, the said date 22nd September 2012 arrived and we held our breath and hoped. How many would arrive to do their "time inside" again in the great hall of the fine Steam Museum. We need not have worried, a sunny bright and cheery day greeted us and former apprentices aged from 35 to 70 rolled in through the door. Everyone was issued with name and year badge and proceeded to meet many colleagues of many years gone by, over 500 turned up. Twenty came from Plymouth, others from London, South Wales, Reading etc. One from Malta and one from Australia, even old Isambard would have been proud. Mind you not many would fit in to a pair of apprentice green overalls again and some of the trendy 60s and 70s hircuts had dissappeared, just like the 1962 built training school has done since.

Early on the day much tea and coffee was consumed, later in the day when the specially brewed beer came on track "Western Apprentice" by RCH Brewery at 5% ABV, a full head of steam in a glass, got the tongues wagging much more. A fantastic day was had by one and all and many asked when it would be re-run, Who knows? not for a while thats for sure! This event was a meticulously planned operation and we think we pulled it off well. Many thanks to all who helped promote the day, the Steam Museum and most of all, the hundreds of former apprentices who pitched up. It has been said many times that the folk who worked "inside" were like a huge happy family and this gathering certainly proved that to be true.

Andy Binks October 2012.

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 26th November.

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 26th November Tracing your Non Conformist Ancestors,
Moles.

Margaret

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 now received a full and interesting programme for the new session. Our members would be welcome to attend as visitors, just take your Swindon Society membership card along with you.

Programme of Meetings 2012/2013.

Sunday 11th November Armistice Day Service in the Museum at

3.0 pm.

Details to follow.

2013.

Saturday 12th January The Inheritance of the Great Western

Railway between the

Wars - Tim Bryan.,based on his 12th book a portrait of the GWR 1918 to 1939.

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

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, take your Swindon Society Membership card with you.

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 November 15th The Great Eastern (Brunel's Ship) Alan Kirton.

Friday December 7th Members Christmas Social.

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

2012

Thursday 13th December The Olympic Games - Bob Townsend.

2013

" 10th January Mesolithic and Neolithic Britain -
Bob Clarke.

First in a series of six talks on a Prehistoric journey from 10,000 BC to 43 AD. Talk 1 Islands 10,000 - 4,500 BC

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.

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 28th November Graham Mac, Radio Wiltshire.(Cancelled owing to BBC re-organisation, alternate speaker being arranged.)

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 26th November Courts Martial World War 1, Steve Williams.

" 27th December Open Forum, Bryan Lawton, Glenys Cox and Jo Clark, Panel of questions.

Display of some Archives. Wine.

2013

" 28th January Awakening the Blade, Dr. Robert Jones,

A practical approach to medieval swordplay.

" 25th February The Life and Times of Swindon Photographer, William Hooper,
Paul Williams.