

The Swindon Society
Newsletter
October 2012

Meeting, Wednesday 12th September 2012
An Evening with Joyce Murgatroyd

The word 'Autumnal' has already crept into our weather news, and there was a damp air for our first meeting of the new season, but it was a mild bright evening, with a very good attendance. Kevin welcomed us all to the new season of meetings, especially to first time visitors. After the regulation fire precautions, he told us of Mark Childs latest book 'Swindon Old Town' which has just arrived in the book shops at £14.99, but were on sale here at £10.50 as we have obtained some at a special price for our members, they all sold at the coffee break, and more are being obtained.

We also have maps of the area past and present which we can get a supply of. at around £6.50. He then introduced Joyce Murgatroyd our oldest member being interviewed by Andy Binks about her childhood and life in Swindon, illustrated by a presentation of photos and film . Joyce was born in 1916 during the first world war, to Agnes nee Simpkins and Ewart Bezer, at 3 Church Walk South, Rodbourne Cheney, having married the previous year Ewart was serving in the army when she was born and managed to see her when she was only a couple of months old, a photo of their wedding is followed by another, a year later with Joyce as a baby in her mothers arms, Ewart was then was posted to France and survived the battle of the Somme, she was about two years old before she met him again and didn't know who he was. There was a tradition in the families to use the names Agnes and Frances, shortened to Annie and Fanny, so dad had suggested both names be used but her mother named her Joyce otherwise she would have been called Annie Fanny or Fanny Annie! Apparently there is a small town called Bezer in the Middle East in Goalen Heights from which the name is thought to have come, but the family is thought to have come from Germany as refugees many years before which they were a bit reluctant to reveal in the first world war. While Joyce was just a toddler she often followed the other children to school, when spotted she was sent home with one of the children, but soon wandered off again and sat on the school door step, so it was that she was allowed in to start school at Rodbourne Cheney just before she was three years old. We saw a whole range of family photos, of weddings and anniversaries, events, and Trip holidays with Grandad and Grandma Simpkins, large family groups during the summers between the two wars, a school class at Rodbourne Cheney School in 1924 with Joyce age 8. Through all the pictures Joyce gave us a running commentary with interesting anecdotes, she told of a ruined windmill in Broadway and pointed out the boy who climbed on the sails, fell off and was killed, someone in the audience identified the lad as his uncle.

Coming out of school one day they heard that a plane had landed in Maundrells corn field, they ran along Moredon Road to see it, it was the first aeroplane they had seen, the pilot had run out of fuel and the children fetched someone with a motor bike who might know where he could get some, he took the pilot on the back of his bike and came back with the fuel, refuelled the plane and took off.....Farmer Maundrell was not well pleased, it had spoiled much of his crop of wheat.

Opposite Maundrells farm house stood the The Red Lion, now called the Boundary House. Some of us remember it being called Peter Chambers's after the ex Swindon Town Footballer

who was the landlord in the 1930s

We saw an aerial photo of the area showing the location of four houses within a stones throw of each other that Joyce had lived in. The roads of Rodbourne Cheney have had names changed and Whitworth Road has been re-named and re-numbered several times, it was once called Stratton Lane..The Borough Boundary was extended to include it in 1928.

There was no transport into Swindon , only Freegard's lorry which went in twice on Fridays . Joyce once owned a drop handlebar bicycle and Andy superimposed a photo of her, riding it alongside Bradley Wiggins. When she married Harry Murgatroyd in 1938 she stepped into the world of motor racing and they owned an open topped Austin 7 with the registration AAA884, Joyce once had to use her stocking to replace a broken fan belt to get them home....

Harry was an enthusiastic collector of cars, and raced at Broadlands. When we met at Drove School for our meetings they often came in a vintage Bugatti. One car they owned appeared to have a wide rear, and Joyce said it reminded her of the MP for Glasgow named Bessie Braddock, who was similarly endowed, so the car became 'Bessie'. Andy came to Swindon with Yorkshire Plastics where his father Ron Binks was a manager, Harry Murgatroyd worked there too so Andy and Joyce found they had a mutual connection of long standing.

When arranging to get Joyce to the meeting I remarked that'as she was the star of the show', she said "not a very bright star I'm afraid", but we all thought she was brilliant didn't we?

Although the Society has just restarted after the Summer break when we have been enjoying all the pageantry of the Diamond Jubilee, Olympics and Paralympics some of our stalwart members have been busy giving presentations and exhibiting our pictures.

More events are planned for the future, when we hope for some support to continue to spread our message. Over the last two years our membership has grown from these publicity occasions due to their dedication, thus ensuring the Society's future.

Saturday 11th August 2012.

The Swindon Society had a very successful afternoon at the "Southbrook Fete".

Bob and Diane were kept very busy from 1.0pm until 5.00pm in the back room of the Southbrook Inn, Ferndale. We were supported by a few of our members, Bert and Jean Evans , Colin and Chris Brown, Barry and Sylvia Odey to mention but a few. Numerous items of Local interest were on view with a slide show of images of people, schools, sport and places in and around Ferndale.

The Slide Show, a tour starting at the Railway Station , along Milford Street into Regent Street, up Victoria Hill to Old Town, back down Eastcott Hill, Commercial Road to Fleet Street to the old Tram Centre at Bridge Street (now Wilkinsons). (Phew).

A very tiring day for the two "geriatrics" but an enjoyable one.

Kevin our Chairman came along later in the afternoon and helped with the clearing up which was much appreciated.

Diane Everett and Bob Townsend.

Rodbourne Cheney Residents Association.

(Where Joyce Murgatroyd is still an active committee member).

Bob Townsend gave a presentation to this group on Monday 14th August in St Andrews Church Hall, This was very well received by a good audience which included Rex Barnett the ex Mayor.

Residents were taken on "The Tour" as described above.

While they were enjoying their refreshments Bob showed images of Rodbourne Cheney,

Moredon, and Haydon Wick, which included the spectacular demolition of the cooling tower of Moredon Power Station.

Wroughton Social Stroke Club, Ellendune Hall,

Thursday 20th September, Bob and Diane gave a presentation to this group, run by Mollie Newman and her band of helpers for over thirty years, quite an achievement. There was a very good turn out with many memories being revived, the usual ahh!!!! was heard when the slides of McIlroys were shown. Judging by the buzz of comment around the room the slide show was enjoyed and the Society received a cheque for £30.00 from the Club.

40th Anniversary Celebration.

Sunday 16th September 2012.

In 1972 a house at Eldene cost £9,600, local lad Gilbert O'Sullivan was number one in the charts with his song Clair and Pressed Steel was the biggest consumer of electricity in the town as

Swindon struggled to cope with power cuts during the three day week. These were just some of the facts and figures Andy Binks and Dave Bedford revealed at Sundays Swindon Society's 40th Anniversary celebrations held at the Southbrook Inn.

The local history society was founded in September 1972 following a series of WEA lectures by local historian Eric Arman and at Sunday's party one of the of those original members still taking an active role, Membership secretary Martin Vandervelde was presented with a framed print by Swindon Mayor Cllr Mick Bray in recognition of his long involvement with the Society.

Society members continue to give talks and presentations to local groups and are happy to share their resources. Most recently the Swindon Society collaborated with local author Mark Child in the compilation of his latest book Swindon Old Town Through Time.

But Sunday was an opportunity for members to indulge themselves and with more than 15,000 images on file there were plenty of photos to choose from. Bob Townsend tested members knowledge with photos of people and places in Swindon's history and chairman Kevin Bizley introduced the audience to the Swindon Golden Carp Angling Association founded by Railway workers in 1894. Society Secretary Diane Everett, responsible for so much of the organisation made sure the event passed without a hitch.

Frances Bevan.

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 29th October.

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 29th October Beginners Guide to Identifying/dating old Photographs, Terry Bracher.

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.

Monday 15th October Details to be advised.

Saturday 10th November Paddington to Birkenhead - Editor of 'North Star' Michael H.C.

Baker will present an illustrated talk on the Great Western route from London to Merseyside.

Sunday 11th November Armistice Day Service in the Museum at 3.0 pm. Details to follow.

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 October 18th Drinking glasses and Decanters of Georgian and Regency Period.
Martin Collisson.

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

Friday December 7th Members Christmas Social.

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

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 11th October Glimmer in the Dark, Part 1V, Martin
Way.

Final instalment of the journey through Saxon
and Viking cultures.

8th November Savernake at War, Roger Day.

Preparation for D Day.

- " 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
- " 14th February The Romans in Swindon - Mike Stone.
 Introduction to some Roman settlements
 uncovered around Swindon.

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).
 2012.

- Wednesday 26th September A History of Lydiard House, Mike Stubbs.
 " 31st October A Herbert About Town. Andy Binks.
 " 28th November Graham Mac, Radio Wiltshire

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 29th October To be held in St. Michaels Church
 A Lost Highworth Painting from St. Michaels Church, Dr. Ellie
 Pridgeon, University of Leicester and Roger Rosewell author of Medieval wall paintings in
 English and
 Welsh Churches, c.1250 - c.1500.
- " 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.

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 17th October AGM Swindon's Empire Theatre - Roger Trayburn

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.

