



Friends of Wiltshire Victoria County History

The Victoria County History of England

Friends of Wiltshire VCH

WVCH Trust Registered Charity No 1102882

Newsletter No 16, April, 2021

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Wiltshire Victoria County History, keeping you in touch with news, events and fund-raising.

Hopes and plans for a post-Covid WVCH

Meet the Researchers

Like most other organisations we have had to change our methods and work out alternative ways to keep in touch with our Friends and supporters. To this end on the 25th February we held our first Zoom talk, which proved to be extremely successful.

Over 50 people gathered to listen to three of our Researchers talk about interesting tales they have discovered through their investigations and how they have managed to continue their work during the pandemic.

Firstly, Rosalind Johnson introduced the Frustfield Hundred, which is the focus of her current research, and which encompasses the parishes of Whiteparish and Landford in the south of the county. Explaining the resources that she uses, such as newspapers and census returns, Rosalind illustrated these with examples of the typical crimes and their consequences that had come to light, including poaching, arson and curiously missing children.

The second talk was by Mark Forrest, who concentrated on manorial records in Mere, on the western edge of the county. Explaining how the structure of manors and estates also influenced the social structure of the time, Mark showed how we can get an insight into the lives of the tenants and workers, as well as the landed gentry.

Next came Louise Ryland-Epton, who is researching events in the north of the county, especially Bremhill, Christian Malford and Chippenham. Focusing on the local family of the Bayntuns, Louise recounted episodes of apparent witchcraft in Stanley and Bremhill in Tudor times and the accusations against Agnes Mylles, who it was claimed, killed a child by witchcraft.

After a vote of thanks by our patron, Sarah Rose Troughton, the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, our Consultant Editor John Chandler took a turn speaking about the development of towns in the county, pointing out similarities in the layout of local towns and using Chippenham to illustrate the way they have changed from Anglo-Saxon beginnings, adapted to the coming and going of industries and the advent of the railways, to redevelopment in modern times.

St Paul's Church, Chippenham, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott: a design he used more than once, for example, at St Mark's in Swindon.



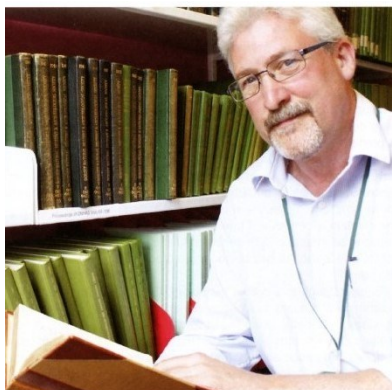
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Lockdown Progress

Meet the Researcher—Mark Forrest

If you joined us for our first foray onto the world of Zoom in February you will already have 'met' Mark Forrest, who recently joined the WVCH to research Mere and its environs for Volume 19.



Mark read history at Royal Holloway where he returned, after a spell as a secondary school teacher, to complete his doctorate on the estates of Chertsey Abbey in 2002.

As a researcher he worked on five counties for the Records of Lay and Clerical Taxation 1188-1688 ("the E179 Project") before completing three counties for the Manorial Documents Register. He moved to Dorset in 2004 to become an archivist at the Dorset History Centre and since 2019 has been an independent archive consultant.

He is the General Editor of the Dorset Record Society, Local History Editor for the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Dorset Editor for Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries and a member of the Publications Committee of the British Association for Local History.

Mark's publications include *Treswell's Survey of Purbeck 1585-6* (Dorset Record Society 2017), "Economic change in south west England in the fifteenth century: evidence from the reductions to the lay subsidies" *Economic History Review*, v.70 (2017), *Reading Early Handwriting, 1500-1700* (BALH, 2019).

His research interests include enclosure, tenures and the land market in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Thanks to the extensive availability of online records, our excellent researchers have managed to carry on with their investigations throughout the pandemic.

Research on our volume on the Mere area (Volume 19), as well as that covering Chippenham (Volume 20), is well advanced. For the Chippenham area we now have just two more research contracts to award and we have issued the first contract for our next volume, which will be on the Alderbury area (Volume 21).

Obviously, we are very keen to maintain this momentum, but being unable to hold any of our usual events over the last 18 months has meant no tickets to sell and so no income from them and VCH research continues to eat away at our limited resources. Typically, a contract for a researcher to prepare the history of a rural parish costs around £8,000. As the pandemic continues our modest reserves become depleted and we face the possibility of our work being disrupted.

Our Autumn Appeal was a great help and our thanks go to those who were able to help us by making a donation. But, more importantly, we are beginning to plan events for later in the year in the hope that we will be able to meet up with you all face to face and enjoy fundraising in the way we are all used to.

Obviously, we will be relying on the lifting of restrictions going as planned, but the prospects look good at present.



Bridge over the cycle path following the route of the former Chippenham to Calne branch railway, near the site of Stanley Abbey.

Website News—www.wiltshirehistory.org

Our new website, launched last autumn, has recently been updated by our new website manager, Gemma Humphris, who works as a project manager in the aviation industry in Bristol. She has considerable website experience and a keen interest in local history.

The website has been welcomed as being both attractive and easy to use, and Gemma will ensure it stays that way, as well as keeping it fully up to date with our news.

Researcher Louise Ryland-Epton has written a short piece on Avon, a hamlet in the civil parish of Christian Malford, near Chippenham, which she is in the process of researching. It appears on the website under the title *A Tiny Hamlet with a Big History*.

The draft text for the Hardenhuish section of Volume 20 is also now available via the website and soon will be joined by the Bremhill chapter, which is now almost complete.



The church yard and Grove Building, Mere

Planned Fundraising Events for 2021

We very much hope that we will be able to hold the following events during the summer and autumn, covid allowing. Apart from the talk in May, they all depend on pandemic restrictions being lifted as forecast by the Government.

We hope that you will want to join us for some or all of the events and that you may wish to put the dates in your diary. Booking details for each event will follow nearer to the time.

Details follow and a list of all the dates appears on page 4 of this newsletter.

On **Wednesday May 19th** at 7.30 there will be a on-line talk by WVCH consultant editor John Chandler, hosted by the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, entitled *Trying to Understand Wiltshire Townscapes*: For nearly 70 years the Victoria County History has been researching and describing the history of Wiltshire towns and work on two of the last to be tackled, Chippenham and Mere, is under way. In recent years, as the study of landscape history has developed, VCH authors have tried to explain how towns have evolved into the shape and appearance they have today. John Chandler, currently working for the VCH on Chippenham, has both lectured and written extensively about Wiltshire towns, including Salisbury and Swindon, for many years. In this illustrated talk he will explain how the study of towns has changed since the 1950s, how this has helped us to understand and appreciate Wiltshire towns, and how these new approaches are reflected in the VCH treatment of urban history.

Booking is open now. Tickets are £9 each and can be obtained by visiting the Wiltshire Museum website and clicking on 'Events' or by copying and pasting this link:

https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/?event=online-talk-trying-to-understand-wiltshire-townscapes&event_date=2021-05-19

We are extremely grateful to the Wiltshire Museum for their assistance.

On **Thursday July 1st** Julian Orbach will give a talk, to be repeated on **Thursday July 8th**, on his newly published revision of the Pevsner volume on Wiltshire.

The first of these will be at The Salisbury Museum and the second at The Wiltshire Museum, Devizes.

On **Tuesday July 27th** we are hoping to hold our Summer Garden Party at Iford Manor.

On **Tuesday August 24th**—a walk looking for *The Hidden History of Salisbury* led by David Richards

On **Thursday September 23rd**—a walk around Stratford-sub-castle led by David Richards.

On **Wednesday October 13th** a talk by the Director of the Victoria County History central office at the University of London, Professor Catherine Clarke: *How to do History? A Conversation with the eleventh-century Life of King Edward, and pre-Conquest Wilton Abbey*. This talk will be given at the Michael Herbert Hall, Wilton.

Forthcoming Events

2021 Dates for your Diary

Wednesday May 19th—Zoom Talk: Trying to Understand Wiltshire Townscapes, by John Chandler

Thursday 1st and 8th July—Talk on the revised edition of Pevsner's Wiltshire, by Julian Orbach

(The first at the Salisbury Museum, the second at The Wiltshire Museum, Devizes)

Tuesday 27th July—Summer Garden Party at Iford Manor

Tuesday 24th August—Hidden History of Salisbury Walk, led by David Richards

Thursday 23rd September—Walk around Stratford-sub-castle, led by David Richards

Wednesday 13th October—Talk at the Michael Herbert Hall, Wilton, by Catherine Clarke, Director of the VCH Central Office, University of London, 'How do we do History?'

RAISE FUNDS FOR US WITH YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING

You may be shopping on-line more during this time of 'self isolation' and 'social distancing.' If so, please don't forget that you can help raise funds for us by joining **Easyfundraising**

Simply go to the www.easyfundraising.org.uk website, select Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust as your cause, register and start shopping.

You can also download a reminder button to your desktop, which will remind you if you shop with a company that is part of the scheme.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/wvcht/>

Many well known High Street and online shops take part in this scheme and it is a way of replacing some of the fundraising we are unable to pursue at the moment.

There is no extra cost to you. It is merely accessing the charity donations of the supplier.

If you are reading this Newsletter but you are not yet a Friend of WVCH please contact our Hon. Treasurer, Tean Dallaway, on 01380-871044 or at t.dallaway@outlook.com
Subscription rates are £20 pa single, £30 couple, £50 club/society, £100 corporate, £500 life

Considering making or updating your will? Please consider leaving a legacy to the WVCH Trust. A gift in your will is an excellent way to support causes which are important to you and, as charities are exempt from inheritance tax, it can also be tax-efficient for you.

This newsletter is distributed electronically to all those members and supporters who have supplied email addresses and given their express permission for us to contact them in this way, so saving on postage costs in the future and also ensuring that more of your contributions go towards the writing of the VCH.

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