



Friends of Wiltshire Victoria County History

The Victoria County History of England

Friends of Wiltshire VCH

WVCH Trust Registered Charity No 1102882

Newsletter No 18, December, 2021

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

All History is Local: Wilton, 1066 and the VCH Past, Present and Future

Another of our very successful online talks, hosted by the Wiltshire Museum, was given to around 50 people on the 13th October by Professor Catherine Clarke.

Catherine is the Director of the Centre for the History of People, Place and Community at the Institute of Historical Research and as such is also the Director of the VCH. She is a cultural historian specialising in the Middle Ages, but she also works across a wide range of periods on questions of place, identity, heritage and uses of the past.

Starting with the Battle of Hastings in 1066, on the face of it having no obvious links with Wilton, which settlement was already a Royal seat, location of a mint, on a convergence of routes and a market centre (VCH, Vol 6, 1962).

Edward the Confessor, whose death in 1066 caused a power struggle leading eventually to the Battle of Hastings, was married to Edith, daughter of Godwin of Essex, who was educated at the Benedictine nunnery at Wilton. Her namesake, Saint Edith who had been abbess at the nunnery, was revered at Wilton.

The 1066 Norman Conquest had repercussions in Wilton as it caused the collapse of the English elite: Wessex men had marched to Hastings; Wilton homes were wrecked.

This is where the VCH takes up the story: it fills in the gaps and silences in our understanding of the past. Parish by parish, from earliest documents to the present day, it describes our social, economic and religious history: a diverse community of historians, managed from London, but powered locally.

After outlining this link between national and local history, Catherine enthusiastically described how the VCH is moving with the times to keep people engaged.

The recent Red Box Project was a great success and the artefacts sent in by each county are now part of a permanent online exhibition. Research for the volumes is put onto the website as it becomes available, as are talks and seminars held at the Institute of Historical Research. This online content is read and valued all over the world.

On a more local level, the new Smartphone app and walks available on the website give people maps and information about places of interest near them.

Post Covid the national focus is on 'Levelling Up' and the IHR has taken this on board: focusing on the past, but as a resource for thinking about the future, informing their policy making and retaining a local sense of place.



Another Wilton Edith. The grave of author, local character and former Mayor of Wilton Edith Olivier

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Information available to all on the Website of the Institute of Historical Research...

In her online talk Professor Catherine Clarke mentioned just some of the information available on the website of the IHR - <https://www.history.ac.uk>

VCH Red Boxes Project of 2019

The items collected from 15 counties to celebrate the VCH's 120th anniversary are available to view in a permanent online Red Boxes Gallery at <https://www.history.ac.uk/research/centre-history-people-place-and-community/chppc-red-boxes-gallery>

Levelling up: Histories, Cultures, Challenges - a video.

What might a cultural history of Levelling Up tell us about the new political narratives being shapes around this agenda?

<https://www.history.ac.uk/whats/ihr-events-archive/levelling-up>

There are many other interesting lectures and seminars recorded on the website and available to watch for free.

VCH Latest Research

Founded in 1899 as a national project to write the history of every county in England, the VCH was dedicated to Queen Victoria, which is how it gets its name.

In the VCH section of the IHR website there is a Counties A-Z and all the latest research for each county.

A History of English Places: VCH smartphone app

VCH data is ideally suited to new forms of digital technology, including the smartphone app: A History of English places. Navigate more than 13000 English places by historical maps, linking to VCH content.

Instructions on how to download the app are available on the website.

...and much more!

Keeping in touch with Central Office

Catherine Clarke, whose recent talk is detailed on page one, heads up the central office of the VCH and as such is, with her staff, a very important contact for us. In November we had the latest in our annual update sessions with her and her colleagues, though this year it had to be held on Zoom. From our side we were able to tell her of our continued progress with volume 20, the Chippenham volume, which is now heading towards the end of its research phase, and also with volume 21 in south east Wiltshire, where our researcher Rosalind Johnson is close to

completing work on the parishes of Landford and White-parish. In response they were able to tell us about how they are planning to complete volume 19, covering the Mere area, and also about plans to revise the 'red books' so as to make this more cost-effective.

As usual, they were very complimentary about progress in Wiltshire.



Professor Catherine Clarke

The Vitae AEdwardi Regis

One of the original works used by VCH researchers is the manuscript *Vitae AEdwardi Regis qui apud Westmasterium Requiesit* (Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster), translated by Frank Barlow.

It is an historical manuscript completed c.1067 by an anonymous author, but thought to have been commissioned by Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor. It is in two parts, the first being about the family of Godwin of Wessex (father of Edith) before 1066 and the second part dedicated to King Edward and the lives of saints.

The manuscript is a retelling, rather than a contemporary record, but it describes Edith's personal loss and a cataclysmic historical event and gives us more detail than even the Bayeux Tapestry.

The Effects of the Coronavirus

Due to the pandemic, there is a deeper understanding of how people engage in their locality and a new project brings together a number of organisations, including the VCH, to identify the needs of local communities and support them with investment.

The Government has identified 100 towns with a need for additional support in four key areas: transport, broadband connectivity, skills and culture, i.e. both social and economic issues. Interestingly, Swindon is the only Wiltshire town on the list. More information is available at <https://www.andtowns.co.uk>

Walks and Talks

We have now rescheduled our 2 walks in the Salisbury area, led by West Country Blue Badge tourist guide David Richards.

The first, on **Wednesday 23rd March 2022** is titled *The Hidden History of Salisbury*, during which David will invite us to look at about 20 buildings and works of art around Salisbury, asking questions like 'What does it represent?' and 'How old is it?'

The walk will commence at 10.30am outside the Tourist Centre in Fish Row, behind the Guild Hall in Salisbury, and will be over in time for lunch, at The Cosy Club in New Street, close to the end of the walk.

The second on **Wednesday 27th April 2022** is a *Tour of Stratford-sub-castle*. This walk will explore the village, church and fields beside Old Sarum, including the life and influences of the Pitt Family.

Again starting at 10.30am, this time outside the Reading Room opposite the church in Stratford-sub-castle. There is parking available, but, with no nearby pub, lunch has been arranged at The Wheatsheaf in Lower Woodford.

To book these walks, please email David Moss, saying whether you wish to book the tour and lunch or just the tour – wiltshirevch@gmail.com. Please note there are only 25 places available on each walk.

Payment of £15 per head for each tour should be made by BACS if possible, giving your surname as the reference. (Sort 40-52-40, Account 00033115)

Alternatively, cheques should be made payable to 'Wiltshire VCH Trust' and sent to Mrs Tean Dallaway, 15 St George's Place, Semington, BA14 6GB.

Payment for lunch will be on the day.

For the Salisbury walk, please book by Friday 11th March and for the Stratford walk please book by Friday 15th April.

Easyfundraising

Our 'star' Easyfundraiser has now raised over £100 for WVCH. We need more people who shop online to sign up. It may only be a few pence at a time, but it really adds up. Please take a look at how to join on Page 4 of this Newsletter. The more people that join, the more we can raise to wards our research costs.

Bremhill History Project Completed - History Festival and book Launch on 11th and 12th December

For two years we have been working with the Bremhill Parish History Group on a lottery-funded project to write the history of the parish.

Our researcher Louise Ryland-Epton has produced both the Bremhill chapter for the forthcoming volume 20 of the Wiltshire VCH series and a separately published village history of Bremhill, containing the same material but much expanded to form a charming and copiously illustrated book. Now the book is to be launched at the Bremhill History Festival on the 11th and 12th December.

On Saturday 11th there will be a series of presentations by well-known experts, including Julian Orbach who has just published the new edition of the Pevsner 'Buildings of England' for Wiltshire This will be followed by a Q & A session featuring Louise and also our consulting editor John Chandler and the official book launch.

There will be a children's event on the Sunday morning with lots of exciting activities for 6 to 12 year olds.

Full details can be found at Bremhillparishhistory.com



The Maud Heath Monument, overlooking Bremhill and East Tytherton



Finally, may we wish all our supporters and Friends a very happy Christmas and a happy, peaceful and Covid-free 2022.

Forthcoming Events

Diary Dates

Wednesday 23rd March—Hidden History of Salisbury Walk, led by David Richards

Wednesday 27th April—Walk around Stratford-sub-castle, led by David Richards

(Booking Details for the above talks are on page 3 of this Newsletter)

'Chippenham Origins'

Zoom Lecture and Town Walk , June 2022 (exact dates to be confirmed)

Join Mike Stone, VCH trustee, Blue Badge Guide and former Chippenham Museum curator for a Zoom presentation on 'King Alfred and the Origins of Chippenham'.

This will be followed up in a guided town walk around central Chippenham, visiting sites of excavations and surviving historic buildings. We will end the tour with a visit to the history galleries in Chippenham Museum.

RAISE FUNDS FOR US WITH YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING

Please support Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust by raising free donations when you shop online through **Easyfundraising**. In the lead up to Christmas it's the best time to support us and help ensure this year means more!

If you haven't signed up yet, it's easy and completely free. 6,100 shops and sites will donate to us when you use Easyfundraising to do your everyday online shopping—at no extra cost to you. Every donation you raise makes a difference to us so please sign up today.

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. Once you have done this the button will prompt you if you are browsing a company that belongs to the scheme, so you will never forget.

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

If you are reading this Newsletter but you are not yet a Friend of WVCH please contact our Hon. Treasurer, Tean Dallaway, at wiltshirevch@gmail.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.

Our newsletters are also available to read on our Web-site: <https://www.wiltshirehistory.org>
gilalder55@gmail.com