



Friends of Wiltshire Victoria County History

The Victoria County History of England

Friends of Wiltshire VCH

WVCH Trust Registered Charity No 1102882

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How Coronavirus is affecting WVCH: see pages 3 and 4

Work Starts on New Volume of Wiltshire Victoria County History

1st February 2020 was a red letter day for Wiltshire VCH, with work starting on a new volume of the Wiltshire series, covering the Alderbury and Frustfield Hundreds in the south east of the county.

Volume 20, for the Chippenham area, is now well advanced as is Volume 19, centred on Mere and being undertaken for us by the Institute of Historical Research at London University. We therefore decided it was time to start on one of the five remaining areas of the county not yet covered by VCH volumes. Fund-raising started last year and, thanks to some very generous donations, we have now been able to let the first contract for researching and writing what will be Volume 21.

The work is being undertaken by Dr Rosalind Johnson, well established as one of our researchers, and she will have as her consultant editor Professor Peter Fleming, recently retired as professor of history at the University of the West of England. The area to be covered will be that of the ancient hundred of Frustfield, equivalent to the modern parishes of Landford and Whiteparish, and the two year contract will involve researching the full history of this area and preparing text for the new VCH volume, totalling around 30,000 words.



The plan shows the area to be researched in this first phase and also the rest of the area making up the new Volume 21.

Launching work on a new volume is a real milestone for us and, we hope, a great encouragement to all our supporters.

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

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Dr Rosalind Johnson



As mentioned on p1, Rosalind has been both an editor and researcher for VCH Wiltshire for some time as well as producing research for VCH Somerset. Her research interest is in early modern religious, cultural and social history, particularly the history of non-conformist religions in the English provinces.

She is a visiting research fellow at the University of Winchester, where she was awarded a PhD in 2013 for her thesis on Protestant dissenters in 17th and 18th century Hampshire.

Rosalind has published several articles about religious history in the early modern period and has spoken on the subject to local history societies, academic conferences and many other groups.

Having recently worked on the social and religious history of the Chippenham area for Volume 20, Rosalind is about to start work on research for Volume 21.

Professor Peter Fleming



Recently retired as Principal Lecturer in History at the University of the West of England, Bristol and also a published author, Peter has agreed to act as consulting editor of Volume 21, working closely with Dr Rosalind Johnson.



St Peter's Church,
Clyffe Pypard,
WVCH Summer
Event, 2018

Nothing Changes...

In recent times development plans around the town of Chippenham have caused consternation amongst local residents, for example, the developments at Birds Marsh and Patterdown. We might feel that new builds appear at an alarming rate, but, as the two following extracts from the draft of Volume 20 show, this is not a new occurrence in Chippenham:

In 1958 plans were announced for 240 houses off the northern end of Hungerdown Lane, and a contract for the first 140 was drawn up in 1959. By 1961 much of the estate, centred on Pipsmore Road, Allington Way and Lords Mead, was built and occupied. Meanwhile, in December 1960 an ambitious plan was announced to build 616 council houses on the two 'prefab' sites over five years; this was not in fact achieved until 1970. The Brook Street estate was redeveloped first, and was completed in 1966. Much of the existing street plan was retained, including Brook Street and Redland, whereas the Ladyfield (or Westcroft) estate, redeveloped between 1966 and 1970, adopted a new layout. Elsewhere, the council in 1961 proposed a mixed development of council and private housing between Hungerdown Lane and Derriards Lane beyond the existing council estate. This, the Queens Crescent estate, was begun in 1963 and included plans for 130 council houses alongside extensive private development which continued until 1984.

The virtual doubling of Chippenham's population between 1971 (18,696) and 2011 (35,830) was achieved by a mix of housing strategies aligned to national trends and policies, including the creation of an 'urban village', Pewsham, on a greenfield site, residential development up to the line defined by the western by-pass (Cepen Park South and North), infilling small sites within the existing suburban area, and redeveloping brownfield sites near the town centre. It reflected also the switch from local authority provision to home ownership and was driven in part by wider commuting horizons offered by the M4 motorway, opened in 1971.

And, similarly, there has been much heated discussion in recent years about the funding of our police forces and the closure of police stations. As we can see, this is not just a 21st century problem:

Funding the police remained an issue. The investigation of the borough revenue in February 1866 considered whether it was improper to pay for policing from the borough fund given that it was not explicitly mentioned in the charter. In 1874, following a ruling by quarter sessions which increased police remuneration, the borough agreed to pay for two police constables instead of one and to take advantage of the treasury allowance of half the cost of police pay and clothing. The total cost of the new settlement to the borough was £118 of which £50 came from the treasury, against which the borough requested the resumption of a payment of £10 made every year from the county towards the police, which had been discontinued in 1864.

A police rate was revived in 1884. The corporation considered selling the Old Town Hall, which would have deprived the town of the 'police lock-up' (previously referred to as the blind house), and wrote to the county police to ask whether the loss of a cell in Chippenham would incur an extra police charge. A response from the chief constable emphasising the utility of the lock-up contributed towards the decision not to sell the Old Town Hall. In 1892 the lock-up was reallocated for the use of the Chippenham Yeomanry as a magazine for ammunition.

The full draft of this research is available to read at:

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/wiltshire/chippenham>



Lavender in full bloom at last year's summer event at Cadenham Manor.

The Coronavirus Situation

Over the past few days and weeks we have gradually seen businesses, venues and events close to comply with the Government's instructions to try to restrict the spread of Covid 19.

It is difficult to see our favourite places close down, but it is very important that we all take this seriously and follow the example of others and stay local and stay safe.

The result of this is that we have reluctantly had to cancel the proposed Walking Tour of Swindon on May 23rd and the Summer Event that we were well on the way to planning.

We had hoped, at the invitation of the current High Sheriff of Wiltshire Major General Ashley Truluck, to hold a talk and drinks reception as part of the Chalke Valley History Festival. Normally, we would now be busily printing and sending out our distinctive cream invitations, but you will probably be aware that the Festival has been cancelled, along with many other popular annual occasions, and so we must sadly follow suit.

Behind the scenes we are planning more walks and talks for the future and are looking forward to being able to reschedule the Swindon walk.

Obviously, as with all organisations at this time, our income will be greatly affected by the need to cancel events, not least our Summer Event, which is a major source of funds.

Our two researchers, Rosalind Johnson and Louise Ryland-Epton, are able to work from home for some time yet, using on-line resources, and we have enough cash reserves at present to carry on paying them, but the loss of our main Summer Event will significantly reduce our income this year and we are anxious to try to find other means to make good that loss.

In the mean time, please note our membership of Easy-fundraising, details of which can be found on the back page.

We hope that all our Friends and supporters are able to stay safe and well during these unusual times and look forward to being able to resume our normal activities.

Forthcoming Events

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

In line with other organizations who are all following Government instructions to deal with the outbreak of the pandemic Covid 19, **we are cancelling all meetings and events until further notice.** We hope that all our Friends and supporters and their families are able to stay safe and well and look forward to being back in touch with you all soon.



Swindon Corn Exchange, now derelict

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.

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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