



# Friends of Wiltshire Victoria County History

*The Victoria County History of England*

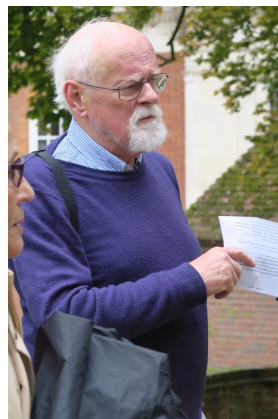
*Friends of Wiltshire VCH*

WVCH Trust Registered Charity No 1102882

Newsletter No 13, December, 2019

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

## Marlborough Walking Tour



David Chandler

On Monday 30th September David Chandler led a group of 21 on a walk along the main street of Marlborough, revealing highlights of the town's history as we walked.

Looking along the High Street from the Town Hall steps, David began with a description of how the 'Great Fire of Marlborough' in 1653 altered the layout of the town's centre. Originally two carriageways with buildings along their length, after the fire it became the wide thoroughfare that is so recognisable and much photographed today. The Merchant's House, now a museum, and St Mary's Church were rebuilt following the fire. The latter was reinstated as a dissenters' chapel in the time of Cromwell, resulting in its unassuming interior.

After a peek at William Golding's house the group left St Mary's, walking along the High Street, and David pointed out some of the Blue Plaques along the way, including those for the Hancock Brothers, who between them invented the vulcanization of rubber and the passenger steam road carriage; Eglantyne Jebb, who taught in Marlborough and was a founder of the Save the Children Fund; and Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal and Lord Chancellor, who was ordained at St Peter's Church in 1498. Formerly one of two parish churches in the town, St Peter's is now a gift shop and café.

Crossing the road to Marlborough College, we were guided around the grounds to look at the Memorial Hall, built to commemorate the 749 Old Marlburians killed in WW1 and later those in WW2, the Victorian Gothic chapel and the science block, which was built in 1933 and an example of shuttered concrete construction listed as architecturally significant in 1970.

Returning to the Town Hall we were shown the town regalia: two maces and the mayoral chain. The chain is a recent replacement following the theft of the original.

The morning concluded with lunch at the Green Dragon.



The Blue Plaque for Eglantyne Jebb which is much brighter than the other plaques: it was replaced to correct a mistake in the name

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## England's Histories: Unboxed

2019 marks the 120th anniversary of the Victoria County History (VCH): an ongoing project to write the history of every county in England, from the earliest times to the present day. Founded in 1899 and dedicated to Queen Victoria, the VCH is one of those great national projects, like the Oxford English Dictionary or Dictionary of National Biography, which help to shape our sense of collective heritage and identity. But it is also all about local communities and their stories.

This November, the IHR's Centre for the History of People, Place and Community is celebrating the anniversary with a crowd sourced project to tell the story of England – in 17 boxes!

Counties across England have each filled a special VCH Red Box – referencing the iconic VCH series of Red Books – with objects which tell the history of their place in quirky, surprising, and often personal ways.

The Wiltshire Red Box, which was sourced and filled by Melissa Barnett, one of our Trustees and Curator at Chippenham Museum, contains items which illustrate our county's diverse history; a Wiltshire flag; a weaver's shuttle; a butter pat; an Aldbourne dabchick; a recipe for lardy cake; and much more.

Selected objects are on display at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London (November 2019 – February 2020) and the full Red Boxes collection is available to view on the Red Boxes Gallery section of the Institute of Historical Research website (<https://www.history.ac.uk>) in a permanent virtual exhibition.

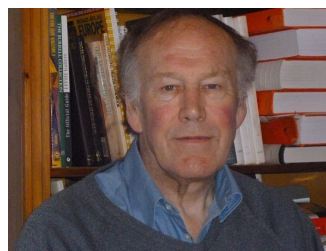


The filled Wiltshire Red Box

## Trustee News



Two Trustees announced their retirement at our last full meeting. Vicky Landell Mills, who stood down as Chair last year, has now retired completely from the Trust. Vicky has been active in the Wiltshire VCH Trust since 1989 and has seen many changes to the organisation, both nationally and locally, over the years. We will all miss her experience and knowledge and hope to see her at our future social events.



Professor Michael Hicks, who has been an active member of our Project Group for some years, has had to retire due to ill health. Again he will be sorely missed. A specialist in the Wars of the Roses, Michael has long been associated with the VCH and has been assistant editor of the Middlesex Volumes as well as serving on the central committee. Latterly, he has been a guiding hand in the production of the Wiltshire Volumes, travelling for meetings from his home in Taunton. We wish Michael a long and happy retirement.



We have been lucky in recruiting a new Honorary Treasurer, who will take over from James Holden in the New Year. To give James more time for his other role as Chair of the project group he will hand over to Mrs Tean Dallaway, who is a Chartered Accountant and has worked in the furniture industry as Finance Director and Company Secretary.

## Volume 20

Work is well underway on the Chippenham volume and a large amount of draft text has been produced.

The following extracts show how important Chippenham was to the trade and industry of Wiltshire in the past.

*"The dominance of the cloth trade in the town continued well into the modern period. It is evident in the number of 'clothiers' listed in a 1783 trade directory; of 12 Chippenham tradesmen and professionals, six were clothiers, and two more involved in the cloth trade. The cloth trade was still buoyant in the 1790s, though by 1822 trade in the manufacture of cloth had fallen off, causing hardship to working people who depended on the trade for their livelihood. Nevertheless, a directory of 1875 still listed the principal manufactures of the town as broadcloth and silks, as well as an extensive tannery. The dairy industry remained important to the town, with regular cheese and cattle markets, and by 1880 the Anglo-Swiss (later Nestlé) condensed milk factory and Skurray's churns factory. By 1903 cheese and bacon factories had been established. New industries that had arrived in the town by that date included the railway-signalling works of Saxby and Farmer, and Westinghouse, as well as gun and cartridge works and wagon works."*

*"The canal ran from the Kennet & Avon at Semington to the Thames at Abingdon, and included a branch to Chippenham which was completed as far as Englands in 1798 and became operational in 1800. The main canal crossed the parish south-east of the town, through Pewsham and Stanley, with three locks at Pewsham, and a road bridge carrying the London road over the canal at Forest Gate. A brickworks was opened nearby. The Chippenham branch left the canal near Pewsham locks and, after a dispute with the borough council, it was extended, 1800-3, from Englands by a tunnel to a wharf built close to the market place. Trade principally in Somerset coal, but also in stone, timber and agricultural produce, was brisk at Chippenham and Pewsham wharves until the 1850s, but by 1875 had declined to such an extent that there were calls to abandon it. Despite leakages and damage resulting from neglect, some traffic on the Chippenham branch continued until 1904; but by 1916, following complaints of nuisances, it had been filled in and part was used as a tip. In 1970-1 the tunnel was closed up and the cutting leading to it filled in, and during the development of the Pewsham housing estate, c.1985-*

*95, its former course defined the edge of the estate along which its perimeter road, Pewsham Way, was constructed. In 2017 restoration work was under way at Pewsham locks and elsewhere as part of a campaign to reopen the main canal."*

For those trying to visualise where the canal terminated in Chippenham, the wharf was situated to the rear of the Rose and Crown, The bus ataton now occupies the site.

A full draft of the chapter so far is available on the Institute of Historical Research website.

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

## Save the date

One of our Trustees, Mike Stone, has arranged a guided walking tour of Old Town in Swindon for May 2020. Mike is a well known local historian and author in North Wiltshire and, as well as having worked at Swindon Museum, was involved in the excavations in Swindon.

Mike will outline the history of settlement on Old Town hill from prehistoric times to the present, taking in local places of interest, such as The Planks, The Lawns, buildings in the Wood Street area, Old Town Gardens and Christ Church.

The walk is expected to last from 10.30 to 3.30, with a break for lunch followed by a guided tour of the Swindon Museum and Gallery to view items relating to the morning's walk.

The walk will be on the 23rd May 2020 and details of ticket prices and booking arrangements will be in our next newsletter.

## Finally...

We would like to wish all our Friends and supporters a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



## Forthcoming Events

23rd May 2020, 10.30am—3.30pm

### Walking Tour of Old Town, Swindon and Visit to Swindon Museum

Visiting the following areas reflecting archaeological excavations and the pattern of settlement on Swindon hill:

The Planks—site of Saxon and Roman excavations

The Lawns—site of the manor house, mill and remains of Holy Rood church

Architectural buildings in Wood Street, High Street and Bath Road

Old Town Gardens and the remains of the Purbeck and Swindon stone quarries

Christ Church, Drove Road and Queens Park—the site of Thomas Turner's pottery and brickworks

Lunch break in Wood Street (not included) where there are numerous cafes and restaurants

From 2pm guided tour of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery

Included for each person will be a handout of the sites and a street plan.

#### Ticket prices and booking details to follow



Swindon Corn Exchange, now derelict

We are beginning to plan our annual Summer Event for next June and would be very grateful to anyone who would like to provide sponsorship for the event

If you are interested in helping in this way please contact

David Moss on [wiltshirevch@gmail.com](mailto:wiltshirevch@gmail.com)

If you are reading this Newsletter but you are not yet a Friend of WVCH please contact our Hon. Treasurer, James Holden, on 01225-869159 or [vjholden@gmail.com](mailto:vjholden@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.

If you are shopping on-line don't forget that you can raise funds for us through **Easyfundraising**

Simply go to the [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) website,  
select Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust as your cause,  
register and start shopping.

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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