

VCH Wiltshire Newsletter



INSTITUTE OF
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF
ADVANCED STUDY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON



WILTSHIRE VICTORIA
COUNTY HISTORY TRUST

WILTSHIRE

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The Newsletter of the Wiltshire Victoria County
History Trust, keeping you in touch with news, events
and fundraising

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Women's History Month

The month of March has, since 1987, been observed as Women's History Month and coincides with International Women's Day, which was on March 8th this year. It was felt that women in history have been overlooked and so Women's History Month endeavours to correct this oversight by highlighting the contributions of women to events in history and to contemporary society.

Starting in the United States (the first Women's History Day was 28th February 1909 in New York), but now an international event, it is not surprising then that our editors' contributions in this issue of the Newsletter feature women prominent in Wiltshire's history.

Some of the women associated with Wiltshire are very well-known; Florence Nightingale, for example, had close links with Salisbury Infirmary; the family of Jane Seymour, wife of Henry VIII, owned Wolf Hall near Marlborough; and Queen Camilla has strong links with Wiltshire and still owns a home at Reybridge, Lacock.

Some, however, are lesser known or perhaps known by association. Millicent Fawcett, the sister of Elizabeth Garret Anderson, was a suffragist well-known in her day. Married to Salisbury man, Henry Fawcett, she is perhaps eclipsed now by her better known sister and blind Postmaster General husband. Arguably the most famous site in Wiltshire is Stonehenge, but what would have happened if Mrs Chubb had not refused the well-meaning gift of her husband, Cecil Chubb, and he had not subsequently given it to the nation?

And some came a close second! Dame Elizabeth Neville was the second woman to become Chief Constable when she was promoted to that post in Wiltshire in 1997. And Florence Hancock, the Chippenham born trade unionist, was the second woman to become President of the TUC in 1948.

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Blue plaque commemorating Florence Hancock, unveiled in
Westmead Lane, Chippenham in 2021

Work in Progress

REVISED CHIPPENHAM TEXT NOW ONLINE

For many months John Chandler has been engaged in revising and reordering the text for Chippenham Borough and Parish, contributed by no fewer than six researchers over as many years.

The work was completed in February and has now been posted on the central VCH website -

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

It replaces the sections posted there previously and combines them all into a single account of Chippenham's history.

Please take a look and send in comments.

This will constitute around half of the forthcoming red book and so is an important milestone on the road to publication.

Now work has begun on editing the other parishes, and then the volume introduction, so that everything can be submitted to VCH central office for review later this year.



The building outside Chippenham railway station used by Isambard Kingdom Brunel whilst supervising works in the town and surrounding area

Meet the Trust

TEAN DALLAWAY, TREASURER



Tean* has lived in Wiltshire for most of her life. Her childhood was spent in a village on the Hampshire border and she attended South Wilts Grammar School in Salisbury.

Her love of history came from her mother who was a history graduate. From an early age Tean was brought up on a diet of tales from the past which caught her imagination.

Even the choice of physics as a degree subject at the University of Bristol was partly due to an interest in people like Newton and Faraday who gave their names to scientific advances.

After graduating, Tean went on to study accountancy and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. She gained her professional qualification while working for Price Waterhouse in Bristol.

Tean is now the finance director of a large employer in west Wiltshire and lives with her husband and children in a small village in the county.

She volunteered to be the Wiltshire VCH treasurer at the start of 2020.

*Tean's name derives from one of the largest uninhabited Isles of Scilly. The correct pronunciation, Tee-an, often causes problems, especially as the pre-digital spelling includes a grave accent over the a.

Local History Research

A series of 'how to ...' workshops



There will be ten workshops to be held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham, from 9.30 - 13.00, fortnightly beginning Monday 7th October 2024 and continuing until 10th March 2025.

Each workshop will divide into two sessions with a refreshment break. Tutoring and discussion will be led by historians from the Victoria County History and the University of the West of England in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Open to all, from beginners to experienced researchers, the cost is £10 per workshop.

The ten topics covered will be The Historian's Craft; The Local Historian's Toolbox; The History of the Landscape; The History of Buildings; Working with Documents; Ownership and Government; Movement & Migration; Community, Society and Welfare; Working Lives of Men and Women; and the Influence of Religion; with an extra session on Conservation in December.

Arranged by Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust (VCH) in association with Wiltshire Council and the Regional History Centre, University of the West of England.

Full details will be posted on our website shortly.

<https://www.wiltshirehistory.org/news/local-history-research-a-series-of-how-to-workshops>

Side-lights on history from our researchers

Schooling in Crime

In a classroom in Salisbury in 1910 the schoolmistress was teaching her girls French. One of them, brighter than the rest perhaps, would go on to win a scholarship to read modern languages at Oxford two years later. Her teacher would remain at the school until 1914, when she left suddenly for a complete change of career.

Her name was Florence Mildred White and she was 41 when she decided to leave teaching and become, firstly a volunteer patrol officer in Bath and Bristol, safeguarding women, and then in 1918 a policewoman. In fact, she was one of the first policewomen in England when she was appointed to the Salisbury force, and the first to enjoy the same rights and status as her male counterparts. Almost next door to her office in Endless Street was a religious hostel, St Michael's Home for Friendless Girls, which supported 'juvenile girls on the brink of dissipation'; and it was this aspect of policing, protecting and representing vulnerable women who came to police attention, that would have been her main preoccupation.

Promoted to sergeant, Mildred White remained in Salisbury until 1925 and then moved to Birmingham, where in 1930 she was promoted to the rank of CID inspector, probably the first woman in the country to reach that level. She retired in 1937, at the age of 63, with a police pension (again the first woman to do so) and went to live in Bournemouth, where she died in 1957.

Meanwhile, her modern languages pupil back in the day at the Godolphin School in Salisbury, had been making a name for herself in a different, but curiously related, career. She was Dorothy L Sayers, later dubbed one of the 'Four Queens of Crime', who created the upper-class sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey. He appeared in her first book in 1925 and then in a string of novels over the next decade, ushering in the so-called golden age of detective fiction. Dorothy retired from imagining fictional crime at around the same time as Mildred stopped detecting the real thing, but in Dorothy's case it was to turn to writing about religion. She too died in December 1957, 12 days before her old teacher.

John Chandler

Elisabeth Frink's Walking Madonna strides away from Salisbury Cathedral towards the city.



The 'Rambling Recollections' of Emily Wyndowe

The famous diary of Francis Kilvert (1840-1879) is a great source for historians of the Chippenham area in the 1870s. His father, Robert Kilvert, was rector of Langley Burrell at the time of the diary, but he had been rector of the neighbouring parish of Hardenhuish when his son was a child. Francis Kilvert often returned there to visit his father's former parishioners and, on occasion, to take services at the church.

What is less well-known is that Kilvert's sister, Emily, 'Emmie' in the diary, late in life wrote her memories in which she recalled her childhood in Hardenhuish rectory. What she referred to as 'rambling recollections' are in fact a fascinating account of a clergy household in rural Wiltshire during the 1840s.

The living of Hardenhuish was poor: to supplement his meagre income Robert Kilvert took in private pupils. He did not do all the teaching himself: tutors were recruited for the boys, including specialist tutors in subjects such as music and French. The Clutterbucks, patrons of the living, had a large house and grounds in the parish, where the boys could play cricket.



Hardenhuish House, former home of the Clutterbuck family, now part of Hardenhuish School

There was another school in the parish, which seems to have been for girls only, kept in a lodge house in the Clutterbuck estate. This had been, Emily believed, the initiative of Emma Clutterbuck, who taught at the school herself until her health failed. (Emily does not give her date of death, but she died in 1845 at the age of 23.) The school continued after Emma Clutterbuck's death. Emily recalled seeing the procession of children coming up the hill on Sunday mornings to Hardenhuish church. In winter the girls wore grey duffle cloaks with capes over merino wool frocks; in summer white tippetts (short cloaks or capes) over print frocks, but, winter or summer, always white straw bonnets decorated with bands of scarlet braid.

There was no shop in Hardenhuish, but a 'dog pedlar' would travel around the villages with his dog pulling a cart full of all kinds of easily-transportable goods. The rectory was less than two miles from Chippenham market place, but the convenience of the pedlar's cart was undoubtedly appreciated, and his visits were clearly a highlight for young Emily.

As a rectory daughter, Emily took part in her mother's monthly 'missionary parties' at the rectory, sewing items for the 'Mission Field' in Southern India and Africa. Mrs Kilvert would send out two boxes of items each year to foreign missions. These sewing parties were important social events, with women coming in from the surrounding area to participate, not only from Hardenhuish, but from East Tytherton, Allington and Chippenham. While the women worked they listened to readings from missionaries' reports and letters, no doubt often read by Emily and her sisters, but there would have been plenty of opportunity for chattering during the tea, which was served after the sewing session had finished.

In 1865 Emily Kilvert married Samuel Jardine Wyndowe, a surgeon and for much of the period covered by Kilvert's diary they were living in India, where he was practising. Nevertheless, brother and sister did meet when the Wyndowes returned to England for a time in the early 1870s, and Kilvert also recorded several excursions with his brother-in-law, 'Sam', before the couple returned to India in 1872.

Emily's recollections are little known, but the fame of her brother's diary eventually brought them to the attention of the Kilvert Society, who in 1971 published them in a book, *More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga*, along with writings by her father, Robert Kilvert, and the writer Augustus Hare, a pupil at Hardenhuish rectory school. The volume is difficult to find. There are no copies in Wiltshire libraries, but there are two reference copies at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.

Rosalind Johnson



St Nicholas Church Hardenhuish, a local landmark, with its bright blue door, perched on its hilltop. The Rectory was just across the road from the church.

Wiltshire Women in World War One

The first thing that comes to mind when we think of women in a war situation is 'nurses'; however, two Wiltshire women in particular proved that they had the courage and determination to have a far more influential role.

Mrs Helena Wilson could well have lived in the shadow of her husband. Becoming a surgeon at Salisbury Infirmary he then moved to Chippenham where, as well as having a private practice, he was the Chippenham and District Surgeon. In November 1915 he became the Principal Medical Officer to the Chippenham Red Cross Hospital.

Helena was well-known in Chippenham as she administered her husband's medical practice and had some medical knowledge. So she was an obvious choice when VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachments) were being organised in readiness for the First World War.

She became the Commandant of the Chippenham hospital and dealt with everything from hounding the Borough Council for buildings, arranging for the works needed to those buildings, arranging the furniture donated by local residents and training the Red Cross nurses and support staff into a well-oiled machine

Under her leadership the hospital was an efficient and even a happy place for the wounded soldiers being looked after, many of them leaving grateful messages in autograph books when they left.

Despite losing all three of her sons to the conflict, Mrs Wilson continued to run the hospital with devotion and was included in the Red Cross Roll of Honourable Service and awarded the OBE for her service. She retired as Commandant in 1925 and died in Chippenham in 1934.



The Wilson Window, St Andrews Church, Chippenham, Commemorating the 3 sons of Dr and Mrs Wilson, killed in WW1

In the south of the county, in Wilton, Edith Olivier was to have a similar impact on preparations for WW1.

The daughter of a clergyman, she served on the Women's Diocesan Council and also belonged to the Conservative Party and the WI. In 1916 Edith was involved in setting up the Women's Land Army and travelled the county persuading farmers to take women workers and smoothing out disputes, earning an MBE in 1920.

Edith continued to show an interest in public service and in 1934 was elected the first woman member of Wilton Town Council, later becoming Mayor from 1938 to 1941. As Mayor she was responsible for billeting evacuees from London. She also opened up her house to lodgers from the Army's Southern Command and was President of the local St John Ambulance Brigade.



The Daye House on the Wilton Estate of Lord Pembroke where Edith entertained her wide circle of friends in the Long Room.

Edith had lived with her sister and after Mildred died in 1923 Edith's circle of friends widened. Acquiring a prefab building from the Army, which she attached to her house and christened the 'Long Room'. Edith became hostess to local army officers, artists and writers, including Cecil Beaton, Rex Whistler, Siegfried Sassoon and William Walton, providing somewhere for them to relax and encouraging them in their artistic endeavours. They rewarded her with their friendship and loyalty, as well as gifts, both financial and practical.

Edith was a prolific letter writer and many of the letters she received are collected at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. Her correspondents include the great and good of Wiltshire and beyond: Vita Sackville-West, John Betjeman, Lady Ottoline Morell, Lord Pembroke, Lord David Cecil, etc.

An author herself, Edith wrote novels and non-fiction books, including The County Books 'Wiltshire'.

On her death in 1948 Edith was buried at Wilton Church, marked only by a simple wooden cross.

Gil Alder

The 2024 series of On-line Talks

The Story of Clouds House: From a Palace of Art to a Home for Waifs and Strays

A talk by Caroline Dakers. Clouds House near East Knoyle, designed by Philip Webb for the Hon. Percy and Madeline Wyndham and completed in 1886, was described as 'the house of the age'. Professor Dakers will outline the commission of Clouds and the relationship between Webb and his clients; the Wyndhams' taste for Morris and Co., and the work of D.G.Rosetti, G.F.Watts, Frederic Leighton and John Singer Sargent. She will follow the story of the house through the First World War in which the Wyndhams lost 5 grandsons; the sale of the house and the estate in the 1930s; the reduction in size from 30 bedrooms to 10 and its subsequent use as a home for 'waifs and strays'.

The talk takes place on Wednesday 24th April at 7.30pm.

Recent Research on Clarendon Park

A talk by Rosalind Johnson. Clarendon Park in south-east Wiltshire is a former royal estate, esteemed by medieval kings for deer-hunting. The magnificent Clarendon Palace, now a ruin, was the setting for feasting and entertainment, but also for conducting serious matters of state. In the 17th century Clarendon Park passed out of royal hands and became a private country estate. This talk will discuss the latest research on Clarendon Park and the palace in the context of previous histories of the estate.

The talk takes place on Wednesday 26th June at 7.30pm.

Wiltshire Sport and Recreation

A talk by Ally McConnell. This talk will take us on a journey through recreational pursuits in Wiltshire through the centuries, as represented in the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, from the sports clubs and societies to school sports and hunting and shooting. We hear also about when it can all go wrong, using examples from the depositions and coroners' bills.

This talk takes place on Wednesday 25th September at 7.30pm.

Murder by Witchcraft

A talk by Louise Ryland-Epton. The year 1564 was a tumultuous one for the wealthy and connected Bayntun family of North Wiltshire. It started with the death of the head of the family, Sir Andrew Bayntun, owner of the manor of Stanley. Disaster then struck just before Easter when the infant, William Bayntun, new heir to the family fortune, died in suspicious circumstances. Soon afterwards a Stanley widow, Agnes Mylles, was accused and confessed to killing the child by witchcraft. Implicated by a witchfinder and tried under new witchcraft legislation, she was hanged.

This talk looks at the events surrounding the death of William and its aftermath. We will uncover a tragic chain of events involving a family at war and the murky politics of the Tudor Court. Surprisingly, despite circumstances leading to one of the earliest witchcraft trials, the story has largely been overlooked by historians.

This talk takes place on Wednesday 23rd October at 7.30pm.

The Country House Gate Lodge

A talk by James Holden. Country houses are often hidden from view at the centre of their estates and it is the gate lodge by the public road which announces their presence. So the gate lodge stands in for the house and in its architecture provides an advertisement for the taste of the owner. The result is a set of small buildings with big architectural pretensions, from the serious to the entirely fanciful, giving a fascinating insight into the taste of the last 200 years. James Holden's talk will trace this story, plentifully illustrated with examples from Wiltshire, a county which contains some of the finest gate lodges in the country.

This talk takes place on Wednesday 27th November at 7.30pm.

The cost for each talk is £10 per screen.

Booking links are now available on our website and that of the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

<https://www.wiltshirehistory.org>

<https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk>

Forthcoming Events

Dates for your Diary – 2024 season of online talks

The Story of Clouds House: from a Palace of Art to a Home for Waifs and Strays

By Caroline Dakers – Wednesday 24th April

Recent Research on Clarendon Park

By Rosalind Johnson – Wednesday 26th June

Wiltshire Sport and Recreation

By Ally McConnell – Wednesday 25th September

Murder By Witchcraft

By Louise Ryland-Epton – Wednesday 23rd October

The Country House Gate Lodge

By James Holden – Wednesday 27th November

All the talks take place on-line and are kindly hosted again this year by the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes.

The cost is £10 per screen.

<https://www.wiltshirehistory.org>

Booking links are now available on our website and that of the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

Please help Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust by signing up to support us for FREE on #easyfundraising. You can raise donations whenever you shop online with over 7,000 brands including John Lewis & Partners, eBay, Argos, M&S and more. Plus, once you've raised your first £5, easyfundraising will double it!

Sign up today - it will make a BIG difference to us this year:

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

Over £600 raised so far. Please help us raise even more.

If you are reading this Newsletter and would like to make either a one-off or regular donation please contact our Hon. Treasurer,

Tean Dallaway, at wiltshirevch@gmail.com

Subscription rates are a minimum £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

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 website: <https://www.wiltshirehistory.org>
gilalder55@gmail.com