

Wiltshire Family History Society, Swindon Branch, February 2022



Just remember in the winter
far beneath the bitter snow
lies the seed that with the sun's love
in the spring – becomes the rose
(from the song 'The Rose')

FEBRUARY THOUGHTS FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN MILLS

Some say love it is a river, that drowns the tender reed
Some say love it is a razor, that leaves your soul to bleed
Some say love it is a hunger, an endless aching need
I say love it is flower and you its only seed

Blimey Yvonne, the newsletters always get me thinking, but not as much as this one right from the start.

“The Rose” has been in the repertoire of Swindon Male Voice Choir for years so immediately I saw the closing words of that song {see top of page} I started singing the first verse (above). Not that I get the chance on stage, being a second tenor I only get to oooooo. A soloist or the baritones get all the glory.

Talking of the choir I visited The History Centre, in Chippenham, to deposit the first of many files containing the archives of the choir. This was my first visit since the lockdown. So different from my previous visits. Areas blocked off, equipment removed, table, chairs spread out and only about 6 people doing research. Not the vibrant place I remember. With restrictions being lifted I look forward to it returning to how I remember it, or as near as possible.

As for 1921 Lis and I decided to hold back until after our zoom meeting and feedback from users. We have fiddled with it looking up ancestor and seeing what appeared in the preview. Lis has struggled to find her great aunt, so it looks like, as reported elsewhere that, there may be a transcription error. Whilst I was preparing folders of SMVC memorabilia, Lis was experimenting with the 21 census when she screamed out “I did not purchase anything”. She had. She had pressed something, and a notice appeared “Thanking us for our purchase”. Now it wouldn't have been too bad if the transcript purchased had been for our ancestors, but she had managed to purchase a transcript for a fellow WFHS member. This purchase did however, as expected, smash through his brick wall. It was great for him but not for me, as it was my card that was debited.

The mention of the Wise brothers brought back memories, firstly my enthusiasm for speedway during the 1960s, when Roger was team manager for a short while. Secondly when, as a student, I worked in Wises during the summer vacation. I worked on the "Venetian Whirl" line straightening the boxes of biscuits, before they went through the sugar shaking machine. I have never eaten one of those biscuits since!

One criticism of Yvonne. Please do not mention the "Time at the Forge" as it will only encourage people to go there and I may not get a table the next time I visit this excellent tea room. **JOHN MILLS**

PS Lis wants me to mention that Thamesdown Ladies Choir also sing "The Rose"

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS: Zoom Meeting: Thursday 10 February with Jen Baldwin

A talk from Jen Baldwin from Find My Past about the 1921 census, released in January 2022. A detailed explanation of what these exciting new records hold with plenty of time for questions and discussion afterwards. **MARGARET NEAVES**

As usual, Glenys will send an invite to the 'regulars', but others are welcome to join with us by emailing her on glenys.bettley@ntlworld.com Please let Glenys know that it's the family history Zoom meeting you want as she is involved with other groups as well.

Meeting at Central Community Centre: Thursday 24 February with Jenny Pope

Now this sounds intriguing! Jenny will be sharing with us 'Sins of my Forefathers'. She says: "Researching my family I have uncovered some unexpected truths about what some of them did or didn't do, and how they sought to maintain respectability."

Come along and join with – everyone welcome. Doors open and refreshments from 7.15 and talk starts at 7.30.

THE SWINDON SOCIETY: Meeting on Wednesday 9 February

Doors open 7.00 pm for 7.30 start

Many people have been asking when Andy Binks will repeat his 'A Man with a Stick' presentation. This has been such a success in the past and now we can look forward to a re-run, having been premiered at a Swindon Society meeting in January 2011 at Broad Green Community Centre.

From a collection of 800 Ordnance Survey revision photographs held at Swindon Central Library, each small image shows 'a man with a stick' at particular locations across Swindon.



RP. 46A. Centre of inspection chamber

Because of the public interest in this subject, on this occasion we are opening up to non-members. Reservations are required please. You can reserve your seat by emailing: info@theswindonsociety.co.uk

Report on our Zoom meeting - Thursday 13 January with Sue Paul

Sue Paul played a recorded history of Henry Smith – a most notorious, naughty, false and lying fellow? Perhaps a global black sheep and much maligned character? Or a ne're do well? Was he, in fact, real? Were all the references to Henry Smith for one and the same person? There are various examples of his signature over the years.

Sue Paul came across him by chance and, although not found in any of the usual records, discovered over four years of research, an amazing amount of information about his career with the East India Company in the late 1600s and early 1700s.

Clandestine activities. treachery, piracy, mutiny and murder, possible embezzlement and debt, false witness statements, alcohol abuse, journeys to and from India and London, more than one dismissal and suspension, slavery, and so the story continued. It started from the time he was an apprentice and followed his progress through various occupations including keeper of accountancy books. He married a rather feisty lady, was thrown into Newgate goal and was somewhat ungrateful when given financial help and support along the way. He was sent to Scotland at one stage before returning to London.

Sue Paul was keen to stress that information can be found 'out there' with persistence and perseverance even though 'normal sources' may not be available.

NOTE: To add to the last paragraph, I recently discovered that we have a small book (limited edition) – a narrative concerning the Blacksmith, William Houlbrook, of Marlborough. Published in 1957, it was written by Raymond Lister with copious quotations from Houlbrook's own narrative. As with Henry Smith, the blacksmith was also taken to Newgate gaol, having been tricked into admitting to be a Royalist for Charles II at the time of the Restoration of the Monarchy. It is an intriguing insight into conditions and events in the 1600s, including some quite comical accounts of everyday life at the time. He did eventually return to Marlborough.

I wasn't very successful at discovering his family history but wonder if he was the William Holbrook who married Mary Burgess at St Peter's Church, Marlborough, on 6 January 1667. There was a Mary Burgess, daughter of William who was baptised 11 April 1631 at St Peter and St Paul, Marlborough.

Opposite: No ... this is not William Houlbrook!! This is Marc Hart at The Forge, Aldbourne. See the timeattheforge.co.uk website for further information. The 'Time at the Forge' teashop there is something not to be missed!
(Printed with Marc's permission)



A TOAST TO OUR QUEEN

Her Majesty The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a **Platinum Jubilee**, seventy years of service, having acceded to the throne on 6th February 1952 when 25 years old.

We've all heard the mnemonic (yes, I had to look it up!) for Henry VIII's wives: 'Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived' But have you ever heard this one?

Willie, Willie, Harry, Steve,
Harry, Dick, John, Harry Three,
Edward One, Two, Three, Dick Two,
Henry Four, Five, Six, then who?

Edward Four, Five, Dick the Bad,
Harrys twain and Ned the lad,
Mary, Bessie, James you ken,
Charlie, Charlie, James again.

William and Mary, Ann of Gloria,
George (four), Will Four, Victoria.
Edward Seven, Georgie Five,
Edward, George and Liz (alive).

The early reigns are probably a little optimistic for our own family histories, and the whole thing perhaps a bit long to memorise.

WALKING ON DINOSAURS – another glimpse back in time

In past newsletters we've talked about when bones of the 'Swindon Dinosaur' were discovered at the GWR Works dating from the time when warm sub-tropical Jurassic seas covered what is now the Swindon area. Mike Stone came and spoke to us about life in Roman times and exciting findings, quite literally, under our feet.

We now learn that amazingly-preserved skeletons of five ice-age mammoths have been unearthed near Swindon. Moreover, this family of mammoths from around 220,000 years ago weren't the only creatures found, which ranged from ice-age giant elks to tiny creatures such as dung beetles and snails. Tools used by Neanderthals were also discovered, as were seeds and plant fossils.

It is very likely that more exciting finds will be unearthed at this vast quarry sight, as only part has been excavated to date. What will they discover next? Why did so many creatures die in this area? So many questions! What were our early ancestors like?

DID YOU ALSO HEAR...

Further north from Swindon, giant millipedes as long as a car and weighing 50kg once hunted across northern England. A 326 million year old fossil was discovered by a 'flake' on a Northumberland beach following a cliff fall.

AND SO TO 1921

(with thanks to Judy Rouse for her input)

The National Archives website has an article 'How Find my Past is helping us provide access to the 1921 census.' It is also on the FMP website and YouTube.

Have you experimented with the 1921 census yet? The most comprehensive of all censuses to date and the last one available until the 1951 census.

At one minute past midnight on 6 January the 1921 census went live on Find My Past. After a shaky start (the site was very busy and there were some problems and error messages during the first hour) the long-awaited 1921 records became available. Having been locked away for a

century, now each separate document tells a story and reveals more about our ancestors and their lives in 1921. It gives an indication of the impact of WWI on population numbers and make up, more females than males, orphan children etc. It also brings up attitudes to divorce, which was recorded for the first time.

The form was quite long, asked for specific details (quite different to the 1911 census) and instructions were in small print which was sometimes misinterpreted or misunderstood. Those working on that 1921 census would never have guessed that, one hundred years later, we would be eagerly awaiting that information.

We need to bear in mind that the information we can discover is only as good as that initially recorded and also, to a certain extent, that there are currently numerous transcription errors which can make it impossible to find information despite the various ways of searching, including using keywords and wildcards. It appears that after the initial stages to conserve the documents and enable digitisation (2-3 years), due partly to Covid delays, only fifty days were allocated for transcribing, which was split between three partner organisations for security reasons and some of which was done in India! Now, once again, the physical records are closed with access only through the digitised records that FMP has created.

Speaking personally (Yvonne), I have only had one encounter with the 1921 census and that was so disappointing. Firstly, Gramp (who was lovely) obviously did not like completing forms (who does) and four of the errors were due to him. However, two other errors could have been avoided with care and a little checking. The latter seems to have been sadly lacking, now resulting in thousands of errors being reported to FMP for amendment.

In contrast to my 1921 census result, I recently found a baptism for 1 July 1855 in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel records for Oxford, Berks and Wilts, showing that William Willis was one month, one week and four days old when baptised. Great information! Note: actual birth dates were listed on some of the other baptisms on this same page. Yvonne

And, just by-the-by on the subject of baptisms, Judy Rouse has discovered that on 15 March 1876 at Bermondsey, the local vicar had baptised **46 children!** She wonders therefore *if 'the vicar must have periodically rounded up the local families for bulk christenings, including four of the Rouse children'*. It is worth remembering therefore that the date of an ancestor's baptism may not necessarily be anywhere near the date of birth.

THE 1921 CENSUS AND A LOCAL HISTORIAN

One person who has been extremely busy and successful with the 1921 census is local historian Paul Williams. Paul was born and bred in Hinton, living there for 52 years. He has managed to piece together, from the 1921 census results, all 241 men, women and children in the 57 dwellings in Hinton Parva, Wiltshire.

The photo is of Hinton school junction in the 1920s.

(Courtesy of Paul Williams)



He has broken the records down into various categories and it's a great work-in-progress, demonstrating just what can be achieved with care and patience – and a little local knowledge!!!!. The latter because there were numerous errors on transcription lists. Paul has also created a list of many other facts and statistics of the village. A really superb effort.

Paul has added the following notes:

Out of the 241 individuals listed at least 122 had a transcription discrepancy. This included

- 1) misspelt/missing names
- 2) incorrect or missing birth locations
- 3) incorrect birth years

For this village, it is disappointing that there were almost 50% of transcribed errors made by transcribers from the original documents. This leads to the feeling that the records have not been checked, thereby minimising the number of discrepancies.

Using the “Advanced” search facility is a very helpful tool whilst looking for someone with only a small number of details known and for confirmation, in order not to make an unnecessary purchase of either the transcript or original document.

Using the Registration details in the “Advanced” search is also a help in researching a particular location as in this case of “Hinton Parva”. In reality it turned out to be “Little Hinton”. The village is known by either name depending on one's personal preferences. **PAUL WILLIAMS**

POST SCRIPT FROM PAUL WILLIAMS

Paul contacted FMP on support@findmypast.co.uk at 12.37 pm on 24 January to explain that he had purchased, as a local researcher, the whole of the Little Hinton 1921 census returns. He attached his list, as copied from the original screen view, and also sent his revised version, highlighting in red, more than 120 errors.

At 1.48 pm the following day he received a reply from FMP to thank him for taking the time to provide them with the corrections. They said that the Data Team would look into the matter and wrote ‘this will help us improve our data and in turn, make it easier for future researchers.

Well done Paul and well done FMP. Hopefully they may act promptly.

THIS IS JUDY ROUSE's EXPERIENCE – so far

Judy Rouse, well-known to us at Swindon and WFHS as a whole, has also sampled the 1921 census by obtaining both transcriptions and originals for three family households. Two local ones, for Purton, resulted in very little additional information to that already in her possession and included a GWR occupation transcription error.

The third record Judy said was frustrating. The family in question with an ever increasing number of children and having frequently moved around, she had hoped to discover an address for them in Bermondsey in 1921 at the time of her father in law's birth, but there were three transcription errors including the surname of the person making the return and the building address itself. As the enumerator had omitted to record the street, it took access to another source before she could confirm the family's whereabouts. Having subsequently attended the FMP Zoom presentation given at Devizes, she found answers to some of her other problems.

A POST SCRIPT FROM JUDY

A further Zoom meeting with FMP that Judy attended indicated that one million transcription errors had been received within 10 days and that teams were working flat out to 'clean things up'. Judy discovered why the top and bottom of transcription forms don't tally. For security reasons they were transcribed by two different teams. They then had only ten days to get them spliced together and in a format to put online. However inaccuracies on the original form, as completed by the householder, will not be altered.

So many questions for the experts, some of which were dealt with at Zoom meetings already held by Devizes and Westbury Branches. The Swindon Zoom meeting to be held on 10 February – see above.

So have YOU discovered lots on the 1921 census yet? Please do share your successes, or perhaps disappointments, with us on nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

But what was life like in Swindon in 1921? A 32 page 'Official Guide and Souvenir' was published that year aimed both at locals and for visitors. Does anyone have this publication? Coate Water was then Coate Reservoir, which perhaps didn't give the best portrayal of the 'charming picturesque lake of 72 acres and length of ¾ of a mile'. The local business advertisements were interesting and most of the telephone numbers were just double digits.

What will our descendants make of 2021? Should we all be writing down our experiences occasioned by the pandemic? What will go down in the annals of history about the last 2-3 years and especially as far as Swindon is concerned?

Capturing a Moment in Time: The National Archives were asking for photos taken in the 1920s – see the last issue of our Newsletter. I wonder if any of our readers have any such photos to share with us?

The 1920s brought new fashions, hair styles, prosperity and life style and people celebrated freedom following the harrowing years of WWI. Photography was becoming ever more popular, enabling us to compare likenesses and perhaps identifying a relative by name.

Hair, besides being a natural form of heat insulation, is also an important distinguishing feature. Hair and wigs can indicate status and identity, signify ethnic ancestry and fashion throughout the ages.

As shown on an ancient mummy case dating from c. 160-170 AD wealthy ladies dressed elegantly and fashionably – with equally fashionable hairstyles, sometimes with wigs. Their natural hair may even have been waved using a form of early heated hair curlers and dressed with scented oils.



We all probably have old photos of grandmas, grandfathers and maybe even previous generations, showing weird and wonderful hairstyles. A further identifying feature would be facial hair styles on men.

Photo: My gran with her half-brother

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME: Dating old photographs is an intriguing subject and one which has been discussed many times. It is for ever stressed to us that we should record names and dates on the back of old photos for the information of future generations.

Putting names to faces can be tricky and we've probably all tried to compare early and later photos. So many questions: where taken, a special occasion perhaps ie posed or snapped at an event or workplace. What stories, tragic or happy, can photos indicate, for example if in mourning attire – who had died? Mystery upon mystery with lots of detective work and researches necessary to solve them. Sometimes they just remain – a mystery.

Does anyone have anything to add please? nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

MORE WISE WORDS/MEMORIES

The Wise Brothers, of R & K Wise bakery fame and also local grass-track racing, have been mentioned a few times in our recent Newsletters. Incidentally, it is still a mystery as to whether R Wise, who seems to have been known as Roger, was actually Stanley Roy Wise. Can anyone throw any light on this please?

Heather Ody has written in with this lovely little story:

I'm not sure if this will be any help to you in finding out more about Roger Wise, but I remember my father, who was born in 1914, and lived with his family for a time in County Road, in the late 1920s or early 1030s, saying that they lived next to (near to) Roger Wise. My father was Leslie Baugh and his father was Thomas Percival Baugh. I haven't been able to discover where in County Road they lived. Incidentally my mother said that Roger was a boyfriend of hers at one time. She was Gwen Thomas and lived at the Drill Hall in Church Place. She was born in 1911.

Heather then sent in a little sequel:

“My husband, when he retired from farming in the early 80s, had an HGV licence and to occupy his spare time he took on some agency truck driving work. Three memorable journeys he made involved transporting goods for Wises.

The first was when he was required to move some empty 50 gallon drums, which had contained jam, and consequently had attracted a large number of wasps.

The second was on a very hot summer's day when he took a tonne slab of lard between the factories. The fork lift driver unloaded it from the lorry, but it had started to melt and slid straight off the pallet and on to the tarmac.

On another occasion he had go to the M & S Depot at Hemel Hempstead with a load of mince pies, which were to be flown to Hong Kong for the Chinese New Year.” **HEATHER ODY**

So ... if you recognise any of the above names or have a story to tell, please email nealy1@virginmedia.com or swindon@wiltshirefhs.co.uk

JOHN STOOKE wrote in to say that he went to school with Jonny Kane's son, Roger, Ferndale Road, which is where the family lived, just down from George Watts the barber*. He believed that Jonny Kane had a further son.



Photo courtesy of John Stooke – wonder who the little lads were?

It seems that the building is now a night club, originally opened by Tony D'azzo who also owned Marios/Pashas before he returned to Italy.

John thinks that the old building may be owned by the Tunley family along with most of that block. Note the building work in the background!

Does anyone have connections with the Tunley family and therefore information on this block of buildings?

John has further explained that the building originally on the end of that block, before the area being widened for Fleming Way, was the Swindon depot for Ushers of Trowbridge. Ushers had wanted to relocate the Kings Head there from further along Fleet Street, but it came to nothing. John Stooke's excellent book 'Last Orders' includes more information as well as the plans they had drawn up.

* Does anyone remember George Watt?

According to the 1939 Register, George Edmund Lindsey Watt was born 7 July 1917 and, at that time, was a Hairdresser (Master) living with parents (Ernest Horace Gavin, retired Railway Clerk, and Florence Maud) and brother (Charles Ernest James Watt, Carpenter & Joiner, foreman for undertaker) at 509 Ferndale Road, Swindon.

There were additional siblings: Florence Irene, Dorothy Charlotte and Alfred Henry Bertram.

George E L Watt married Barbara E D Hayward c. October 1939 in the Swindon district.

I did once find a photo of George's barber shop online, but cannot seem to find it again now!
Yvonne

THE IRON LADY'S CONNECTION TO SWINDON

Following on from Martin Robins post script in our January Newsletter, he has sent in this delightful little anecdote:

In 1967 Denis Thatcher sold his business, Atlas Paints, to Burmah, who then gave him a directorship. In 1970 Burmah opened their new Swindon HQ and Denis was based there.

During the period 1970 - 1974 Mrs Thatcher was Education Secretary and my headmaster, M J Cammish, was the President of the Association of Head Teachers. They worked closely together.

Mr Cammish lived in Marlborough Road, Swindon, between 1966 and his death in 2018 aged 98.

He preached many sermons in Swindon and the surrounding areas.



Mrs Thatcher would often drive Denis from London to Swindon on a Monday morning and leave him there for the week. She would then call in at my headmaster's house for a cooked breakfast.

Photo: the entrance to Burmah - where Mrs Thatcher would have dropped Denis off.

Martin Robins' Uncle Stanley Robins, of Robins Joinery fame and husband of the Nig-Nogs' Aunty Joy', had an older brother called Leonard Charles.

He was born in Swindon in 1902 and trained in the GWR. In 1927 he left Swindon to work with the Nigerian Railways in Lagos. The GWR operated an Empire Scheme whereby GWR employees could move to any railway works in the Empire. There he served for thirty years in Lagos and then retired to the London area - living next to Mr and Mrs Thatcher. This was before she was before she became an MP in 1959.



Robins Joinery- built him a trunk out of beech with soldered joints. To accommodate the risks at sea the inside was galvanised.



This is Dorry's travelling case – last used in the summer of 1987 when staying in a hotel in Weymouth.

Leonard and his wife Dorry were members of the same bridge club as the Thatchers. Denis was impressed with Leonard Robins and engaged him as his overseas man and Leonard travelled extensively for Atlas Paints before retiring to the West Country. He passed away in 1976. Dorry, known as the Duchess, passed away in 2007 aged 100. **MARTIN ROBINS**

BRICK WALLS – I just want to say thank you to Judy Rouse for trying to help me with my two brick wall queries from our last Newsletter. Perhaps one day I shall discover the answers.
Yvonne

From Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle 15 February 1875

REPORT TO THE OLD SWINDON LOCAL BOARD re 1874 by John Blount Fry, Medical Officer of Health

Old Swindon, on the whole, has been healthy.

Birth rates: March quarter 44, June quarter 34, September quarter 31 and December quarter 49. Total 158 births.

1871 total births 135, 1872 147 and 1873 151. Possibly because increase of inhabitants – number of new houses erected.

Total deaths 1874 = 62. Causes of deaths including Diphtheria 1, Croup 1, Whooping Cough 2, Typhoid Fever 1, Puerperal Fever 1. Plus Pthisis 5, Pneumonia 1, Bronchitis 8,

Diseases of the Nervous System 7

“ “ Digestive Organs 6

Decay of Nature 4

Premature Births 4

Accidental Deaths 4

Other Diseases 5

A large proportion of the deaths were of children under 10 – caused partly by ‘injudicious feeding’ and ‘neglectful exposure’. A large number of children had whooping cough in the early part of 1874 but the death rate was relatively low.

Tribute was paid to the success of the sewerage of the town and attention paid to the sanitary state of the Board. A very different condition on the outskirts eg Regent Square ‘will be a constant source of concern to the whole town from the frequent presence of typhoid fever’.

The accidental deaths all occurred in young children. 2 at 3 and 5 years died of burns and a third scalded to death.

FEBRUARY FACTS

24.02.1945 Cambridge won the boat race by two lengths – in a boat they borrowed from Oxford.

In February 1945 the Family Allowance Bill proposed that family allowance be paid to the father, except if the mother could prove why that shouldn’t be the case. Edith Summerskill was asked to raise the matter in the Commons.

By the time of the second reading of the Bill in early March, there was almost unanimous support for paying the weekly allowance of 5s, to come into force after the war, direct to the mother.

The Family Allowance Act 1945, in favour of paying family allowance to mothers, was ‘quietly amended’ in **June 1945**. It seems that Edith Summerskill (a British physician, feminist, Labour politician and writer) helped to instigate this Act.

(Dr Edith Summerskill also had her say back in January of that year. Women in Australia had been knitting woollies for children under 5 in Fulham but Edith said that the mother must surrender clothing coupons for them.)

WILTSHIRE MUSEUM ONLINE LECTURE: Staging the World of Stonehenge

(Sent in by Judy Rouse)

Neil Wilkin is Curator of Early Europe (Neolithic and Bronze Age collections). His research focuses on grave goods, votive offerings and the relationships between different strands of archaeological knowledge.

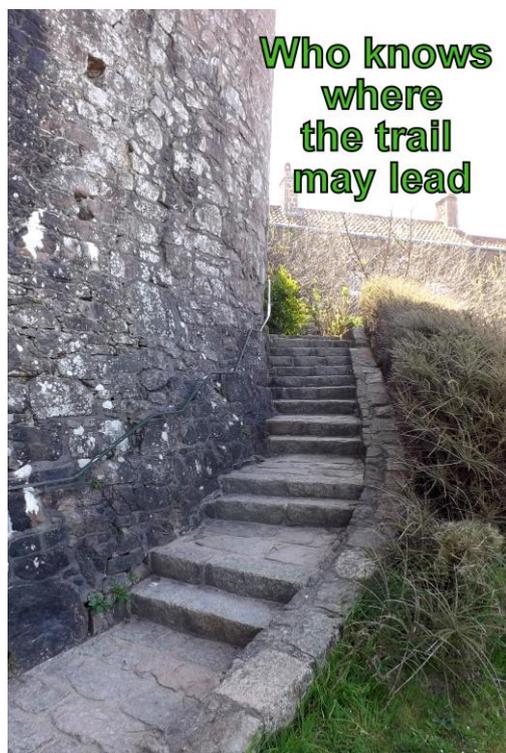
The Wiltshire Museum is lending important objects from our collections (including the Bush Barrow gold) that are of key importance to this blockbuster exhibition.

Thursday 3 March - 7.30pm

Tickets: £7 (£4.50 WANHS members) per screen – booking essential. Ticket sales close at 5pm on the day of the lecture.

The event is due to start at 7.30pm and will be held ONLINE using Zoom Webinars. The link will be sent to ticket holders on the day of the event.”

Book at: https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/?event=staging-the-world-of-stonehenge&event_date=2022-03-03



Small steps in the right direction can turn out to be the biggest steps of your life



Does YOUR family tree tell a story?

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.
(Vincent Van Gogh)

(You are receiving this email from Yvonne Neal, Secretary of the Swindon Branch of Wiltshire Family History Society, as a member, or interested party, living in or near Swindon. Your email details are held securely and not divulged to any other persons or organisations. Please let me know if you want to be removed from the list by emailing nealy1@virginmedia.com)

