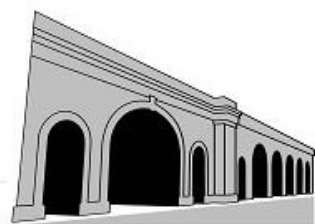


THE BUTTERCROSS BULLETIN



**Seeking Saxon Chippenham
2017 Excavation Report (page20)**

Issue No 167



**CHIPPENHAM
CIVIC SOCIETY**

February 2018

In this issue

From the Editor		Page 3
Planning Matters	Jennifer Rudd	Page 4
Membership Matters		Page 5
Stratford upon Avon Model Railway Club	Dr Alwyn Annels	Page 6
The Chippenham Project		
Unity and Loyalty		
The story of Chippenham's WW1 Auxiliary Hospital. Greathouse, Kington Langley	Ray Alder	Page 8
One Woman - Who Inspires the Next Generation		Page 13
News from the Museum	Melissa Barnett	Page 16
Sports Ground to The Park	Donald Little	Page 17
Seeking Saxon Chippenham 2017	Clive Green	Page 20

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From the Editor

Happy New Year and Welcome to the first edition of the Buttercross Bulletin of 2018.

In this packed edition Ray Alder tells us how a talk to the Civic Society led to new research on the care of WW1 Soldiers in the area (Page 8). We also look back to the 2017 summer excavation, seeking Saxon Chippenham. The temperatures soared for Clive, Mike and the team but their efforts were worth the discomfort! Read about their exciting finds on page 16. Find out about how the Civic Society will be celebrating a year of significant anniversaries which will bring women's history to the fore and read about One Women who is inspiring the Next Generation of historians (page 13)

Happy reading!

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Please contact me if you have any suggestions for items of interest relating to Chippenham, past or present, contributions of articles or photos or have any comments that you wish to make.

Deadline for contributions to the May edition is 31 March.

CHIPPENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY WEBSITE

www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk

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Disclaimer

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The Bulletin can be sent via email as an electronic PDF version - please let us know via the website at www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk

1 17/10585/LBC 1, The Causeway

We were disappointed to see the closure of this useful little haberdashery shop, A1 this will be reopening as a chiropractor's clinic, D1. No external changes to this listed building.

2 17/07443/REM Rowden Park

Approval has been given for the infrastructure for this new development.

3 17/09315/LBC The Museum, Market Place

Permission has been given for work to the front of the museum including a new entrance and disabled access. You will have noticed how much better the building already looks thanks to the removal of the unsightly and ill-placed telephone box. We look forward to the next phase.

4 17/10776/FUL Railway Station

Permission sought for the installation of ticket gates at the foot of North Car Park 'historic footbridge stairs'. Some of us can remember these being rebuilt!

5 17/10136/FUL 150, Sheldon Road

Change of use from old persons home to 2 flats.

6 17/00116/LBC Patterdown Farm

Permission has been given to redevelop the farmyard and wall of the listed barn within to build 4 new dwellings. This has long been a favourite building of mine and although inevitable in this day and age I was extremely sorry to see this. The farmhouse was built long before the railway embankment it now nestles against.

7 17/07793/FUL Parsonage Way, Wavin Plastics

Plans for a lot of changes to the road and layout sort in this area.

8 17/11178/FUL 40, Foghamshire

Plans to change the amusement arcade to a martial arts and fitness studio. Having saved and rebuilt 3 houses in this old street this is an area the Civic Society takes a keen interest in.

9 17/09366/LBC 9, London Road

Permission given to build 2 new flats with parking at the side of this listed building. This is the first building on the right as you go up the London Road towards Calne. Although in theory renovation work has already been carried out on the existing house it looks far from complete and it is to be hoped the new extension might mean the whole building, which is listed, will be finished to a much higher standard.

10 17/12007/FUL Station Hill Baptist Church

Permission sought to build a side extension and loft conversion.

11 17/12030/LBC 68, Market Place

This is the building where the gas explosion occurred recently and obviously requires serious rebuilding. It is listed so consideration must be paid to any new materials used. . It is intended to use existing materials as far as possible.

12 17/10289/LBC 44/47, Market Place

Permission sought to convert the office space on the first and second floors to 1 and 2 bedroom flats. These are the two buildings next to Iceland, one is Wootton the Undertakers. There is an important façade on these listed buildings. It would appear that the work will not affect the outside of the building.

13 17/12043/FUL Land at Methuen Park

There is a proposal to erect 66 buildings, roads etc. on this site.

Membership Matters

A warm welcome to our new members:

Mrs R Caddick, Mrs W Jones and Mr D Tinson.

A reminder to all members please don't forget to inform the membership secretary of any change of address including email addresses

Upcoming Talks

20 February *Bus Services in North Wiltshire & Surrounding Areas 1955-1985.*

Our speaker, Geoff Hobbs, has had a lifetime interest in public transport and has, over the years, recorded the many changes of both buses and services.

20 March *AGM and Members short talks.*

17 April *Trouble at the Mill - Problems and Solutions of the Cloth Trade in North West Wiltshire & Bath.*

Our speaker Stuart Burroughs is curator of the Museum of Bath at Works and has been studying the cloth trade. His talk will highlight the changing fortunes of the cloth trade based on machines and the changing markets.

Don't forget that you can find up to date information on all the activities of the Civic Society on the website <http://www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk>

If you use Social Media don't forget to like us on Facebook.

Stratford upon Avon Model Railway Club The Chippenham Project

Dr Alwyn Annels

Whilst staying at the Angel Hotel last April, my wife and I visited Chippenham Museum. Here we saw a portion of a 19th century OS map of the area around Chippenham station which showed the extensive track-work and associated infrastructure that previously existed around the station, most of which has unfortunately been removed. We thus walked to the station armed with a camera and spent a couple of hours taking a large number of photographs of architectural detail on the platforms and station



buildings together with the remaining track. Also photographed were Brunel's office building, the viaduct west of the station and the old Westinghouse Brake and Signals office. On a more recent visit it was noted that even this latter iconic building had been demolished! Chippenham has lost so much of its industrial heritage. What I saw on this visit made me realize that the site had tremendous potential as a modelling project for the Stratford and District Model Railway Club of which I am Chairman.

The Stratford and District Model Railway Club was initially formed in 2010 as the Stratford MRC with a membership of 10 enthusiasts. However, this number gradually declined because of the lack of suitable facilities in which to build and operate model railway layouts. Moves from village halls to pubs eventually led to our finding a shed behind the local bowls club in 2012. Numbers recovered to 8 but, despite the greater space available, were unlikely to increase further as the shed was damp and cold during the winter. We battled on until April 2016 when the decision was taken to move to a commercial unit in a farm yard north of Stratford. Though much more expensive, it was warm and dry with plenty of space to build layouts. This resulted in a significant increase in enthusiasm and membership grew to its present level of 13. As well as the previous OO gauge layouts we have now branched out into O and N gauge, the latter being the scale of the Chippenham layout.

Clearly much research would be necessary if we were to produce a prototypical layout which truly reflected the glory days of Chippenham's railways. On my return to Stratford upon Avon, I contacted both the Museum and the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in order to track down old photographs and plans and they were both extremely helpful. Internet searches on the 'britainfromabove' website provided some superb oblique aerial photographs taken in 1934, 1938 and 1954. These further convinced me that this would make a worthwhile project for the club.

Planning is thus now well advanced for a new exhibition layout based on an 800m section of track centred on Chippenham station. The current plan is to make the layout

interchangeable between the 1930's (GWR) and early 1950's (Early BR). During these periods, the area possessed a large number of sidings for wagon storage and also access tracks to a large loco shed, even larger goods shed, the Royal Wiltshire Bacon Curing Company's factory and the Westinghouse Brake and Signals works. A classic Bath stone GWR station building serviced two very long platforms connected by two footbridges, one enclosed. Additional infrastructure that will be modelled includes two signal boxes, a smaller loco shed, a coal yard and most importantly Brunel's office building which still survives today in front of the station buildings. This was his base during the construction of the 118 mile long Bristol Temple Meads to Paddington line between 1836 and 1841. Unfortunately the accompanying work sheds have long since been demolished. A large structure, which will be modelled at a later date, is a 92m long viaduct, completed in 1841, under which the main access roads to Chippenham pass.



King Edward I passing through Chippenham Station

The layout will be N gauge (2mm to 1 foot) in order to incorporate all of the above infrastructure and will consist of five 4' x 3' baseboards. A second site visit has been made by club members in order to obtain old plans from the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, old photographs from the Chippenham Museum, measurements of platforms and buildings and finally to take numerous additional photographs to ensure accuracy of architectural details on the models. Design will continue through the winter and construction should be able to commence at the club during early spring 2018. Two baseboards will, however, be made prior to this in order to finalise track layout design in advance. The intention is to get these boards in an advanced stage of completion as soon as possible so that they can be taken to local model railway shows and hopefully Chippenham Museum as 'work in progress' displays. It is anticipated that the full layout with rotating fiddle yards at either end will take several years to complete.

Much more research needs to be undertaken to establish dimensions and design of many of the now demolished buildings and we are anxious to seek the help of local people who may have old photographs or plans of these buildings. In particular we need more information on the bacon factory and the Westinghouse offices, the main loco shed and Brunel's workshops. We would thus be grateful if this could be passed on to Elaine Davis at Chippenham Museum or me (alwyn.annels@btinternet.com).

Unity and Loyalty

The story of Chippenham's WW1 Auxiliary Hospital Greathouse, Kington Langley

Ray Alder

Author's note- after a talk to the Civic Society I was approached by Bryant Vincent who told me about his mother. This took my research in a new direction and led to the story of Greathouse.

When war was declared in August 1914 there was optimism that our boys would go to France, give the German aggressor a bloody nose, and return home victorious by Christmas. As in all wars casualties were expected, but they would come home to a heroic welcome. Wounds would be treated in the most comfortable of surroundings and many owners of country estates offered their houses as relaxed convalescent homes for recovering officers.

This is the story of one such house, Greathouse, in Kington Langley near Chippenham in Wiltshire, as told by one of its staff, Elsie Fortune.



Elsie was born on the 1st October 1894, the youngest daughter of James and Hester Fortune. The family lived in Foghamshire in Chippenham and father, James, worked for John Coles¹ who was described in the 1911 Kelly's directory as a "Pharmaceutical chemist, grocer and wine merchant." John Coles' shop was in the Market Place in Chippenham and James Fortune was employed as a grocer's porter², responsible for delivering prescriptions and groceries around the town.

Elsie and her two older sisters, Florence and Edith grew up in the family home and attended the local schools, St Paul's and Ivy Lane. When they left school, this would be at the age of 14, like many girls they went into domestic work. Edith became a house maid at the Manor House, Castle Combe, while Elsie started work as a laundry maid at nearby Chippenham Laundry. Meanwhile Florence, the eldest daughter, married Bert Phillips in Chippenham in 1906 and they emigrated to Canada.

Elsie left Chippenham Laundry and went to work at Greathouse in the village of Kington Langley; three miles north of Chippenham. She was probably taken on during the major refurbishment and extension work at Greathouse which was completed in 1913.

Greathouse was the home of the Garnett family who had moved from London to Wiltshire³ a few years earlier. They had extended and remodelled the property

¹ John Coles was also a member of the Town Council and served as Mayor.

² 1911 Census

³ For a short time the Garnetts lived at Rowden House in Chippenham

extensively, turning a farmhouse into what was described as a mansion, large enough to warrant a number of indoor and outdoor servants. Charles Garnett was a barrister who practised in London and when he moved to Wiltshire he took an active role in local affairs, serving on the Chippenham Cottage Hospital committee, as a governor of Chippenham Secondary School and in 1922 he was appointed High Sheriff of Wiltshire.



Greathouse, Kington Langley about 1913 after the major renovations.

Elsie Fortune started work for the Garnett family as a scullery maid⁴, the lowest rank of domestic servant, but her life at Greathouse would soon change. She was obviously well thought of and was soon promoted to Mrs Garnett's personal maid. This meant that Elsie gained more responsibility and would join the family when they travelled or visited their other properties. At Greathouse her duties would have included keeping her mistress's clothing, personal rooms and possessions in good order, and generally assisting the lady of the house.

At the beginning of 1914, with building work at Greathouse complete and the Garnett family taking an increasing part in Wiltshire society, Elsie and the other servants could not have imagined how dramatically their lives at Greathouse would change as the storm clouds of war gathered.

At the outbreak of war In August 1914 a special meeting of the British Red Cross Society⁵ was held where it was decided to invite gifts from the public of bedding, men's clothing and bandages. A request was also made for the loan of empty warehouses and other suitable buildings to be used as temporary hospitals should the need arise. The response was immediate and collections of money and supplies were arranged in towns and villages across the country. The offers of properties to serve as emergency

⁴ Manor House, Life in an Edwardian Country House by Juliet Gardiner, Bay Books 2002, gives a good insight to the servant structure in the first decades of the twentieth century.

⁵ The Times 5 August 1914

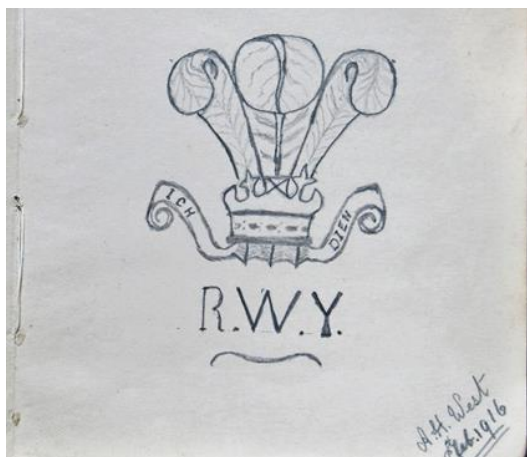
hospitals were plentiful. The Bath Chronicle reported on a number of grand houses that were being offered in Wiltshire saying:

Mr and Mrs E C Schomberg of Seend, have placed their residence, Seend House, at the disposal of the King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers as a convalescent home. Other Wiltshire residences kindly offered for similar purposes include Charlton Park (Lady Suffolk), Grittleton (Sir Audley Neeld) and Mrs Garnett's residence at Chippenham.⁶

At Greathouse Mrs Garnett decided to prepare for the arrival of wounded men by clearing a complete floor of the property and equipping it as a hospital ward. The outdoor staff were rallied and instructed to pack the family's possessions and move them to be stored in the attic. Mrs Garnett decided this was also the opportunity to dispose of unwanted family possessions, which were put aside to be sold at a garden party with proceeds going to the Red Cross.

The garden party, which attracted a great deal of interest in the area, was held in the grounds of Greathouse. Elsie, as Mrs Garnett's assistant, was responsible for much of the organisation of the sale and on the day she manned one of the stalls. Elsie's mother had also been invited to the garden party, probably to help her daughter, and decided to buy a picture which she later gave to Elsie.

There are no records⁷ that confirm Greathouse was used as a hospital and there are no details of recuperating soldiers. It is likely that the house was offered to patients on a private arrangement rather than through the Red Cross organisation. These private arrangements were aimed at convalescing officers, who would pay for their stay, although some country properties, possibly including Greathouse, were offered to wounded officers at the owner's expense. At the beginning of the war these private arrangements were quite common. Even small boarding houses offered special terms to convalescing officers. Mrs Howard of Lowfield Heath near Crawley in Sussex offered rest and quiet with good cooking and the added bonus of a nearby golf course. There were even offers to convalesce on the French Riviera⁸.



This initial enthusiasm to provide for the wounded heroes was soon overtaken by the need for greater organisation and the War Office asked that the Red Cross should be responsible for coordinating all offers of help. As the numbers of returning wounded exceeded all expectations and the war spilled into 1915 it is likely that Greathouse came under the control of the 2nd Southern Command and Chippenham Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment.

⁶ Bath Chronicle 15 August 1914

⁷ A search of Red Cross records does not include Greathouse as a convalescent hospital.

⁸ Wiltshire Times 31 October 1914

A page from Elsie's autograph book

Although nothing is known about the patients at Greathouse, Elsie kept an autograph album during the war which includes entries from men of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry and the Royal Marines Light Infantry. Further research may identify

some of the patients.

In the early days of the war Mr Garnett decided his place was close to the front line in France. His wife, Clare, ably assisted by Elsie, was left to run the house, and of course the hospital ward. Charles Garnett volunteered for war work and joined the Red Cross headquarters in Ypres⁹. He drove his own ambulance to France and served behind the front line transporting wounded men to base hospitals for eight months.

In May 1915, on his return from France, he turned his attentions to the local Red Cross VAD hospitals in North Wiltshire. He provided his ambulance to transport stretcher cases from Chippenham station to Bowood hospital and from November 1915, with the opening of the Red Cross hospital in Chippenham Town Hall, his ambulance was regularly seen in the town.

Mrs Garnett was also closely involved with Chippenham Red Cross Hospital, both as a member of the Finance Committee and involving herself with recreation for the wounded patients. She and her husband would invite men to Greathouse for evenings of fun and amusement; Mr Garnett no doubt arranging the transport. Elsie recalled how men would enjoy evenings of entertainment by visiting musicians, entertain themselves with board games or simply sit quietly reading a book.

The original expectation to invite only officers, and therefore gentlemen, to Greathouse had long passed. The men from Chippenham hospital were all in the lower ranks, many having been servants themselves only a few months earlier, but this wasn't important to the Garnetts who were pleased to be able to help with the injured men.

Men from Chippenham hospital were sometimes offered a few nights away from the Red Cross hospital to relax in country surroundings. Greathouse, with its facilities and attendant staff would have been the ideal location. Elsie no doubt got to know these visitors well and again possibly her autograph book will help us identify them.



Volunteers and patients at Chippenham Red Cross Hospital

There is a further connection between Greathouse and the Red Cross Hospital in Chippenham. The Red Cross records list three ladies who served as mess room assistants at the hospital in the town. They are named as Miss Mary Aps (or Apps), Miss Bessie Browning and Mrs Caroline Everard and they all gave their address as Greathouse, Kington Langley. Caroline Everard was the housekeeper at Greathouse, but the other two ladies remain a

⁹ Wiltshire Times, 20 September 1924, Charles Garnett's obituary.

mystery. It is quite likely that Elsie joined the ladies to help at the hospital but unfortunately the Red Cross records are incomplete and therefore this cannot be confirmed.

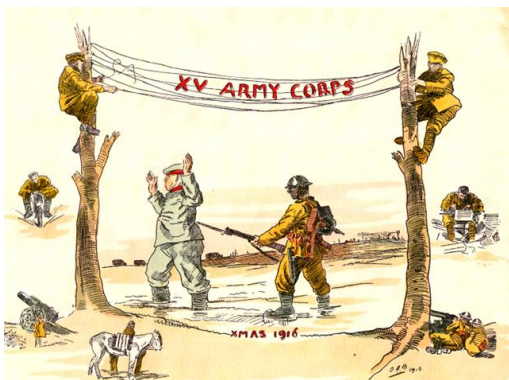
The indoor staff would often spend their spare time in the gardens of Greathouse, no doubt to enjoy the gardens and the fresh air but also to fraternise with the outdoor staff. Elsie met one of the gardeners, John, known as Jack, Pugh and they struck up a friendship that developed into a more serious relationship. Jack Pugh grew up in Clive, near Shrewsbury, and it is likely that he and Elsie first met when the Garnetts were visiting their estate in the area. By Christmas 1913 he had moved to Kington Langley and was employed as a gardener at Greathouse.



Jack joined the Wiltshire Yeomanry, later transferring to the Wiltshire Regiment and saw action in France. In March 1918 he was posted as missing and Elsie placed notices in newspapers for any information regarding the whereabouts of Jack. News eventually came through that Jack was well but had been taken prisoner. A few weeks after the ending of hostilities in November 1918 Elsie received notification that Jack had been released and would be returning home. Elsie was now able to plan for the wedding they had both been looking forward to. Unfortunately, the wedding never took place and Elsie never saw Jack. Following his release, weakened by malnutrition, he contracted Tuberculosis and died on the 5th of December 1918. He is buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery. The Debt of Honour Register includes the following dedication:

John Richmond Pugh, Private 203345.
6th (Wiltshire Yeomanry) Battalion Wiltshire Regiment.
Who died of phthisis on Thursday 5th December 1918, Age 26.
Son of William and Mary Ann Pugh of 10, Wem Road, Clive, Shrewsbury
Plot No. VII. E. 20 Cologne Southern Cemetery

He is also commemorated on the Kington Langley War memorial, at St Peter's Church.



Christmas card from Jack Pugh to Elsie in 1916

Elsie did recover from her loss and she married some years later. It is with thanks to her son, Bryant Vincent, that this story can be told. Thanks also to Chris Beezley for his information on the Fortune family history.

Pictures are with thanks to Bryant Vincent and Chippenham Museum

One Woman - Who Inspires the Next Generation

*Editor's note: This year marks a number of significant anniversaries which will bring women's history to the fore. February 6th is the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act being given royal assent. The act extended the vote to all men over the age of 21 and for the first time gave a vote to a class of women over the age of 30. November will see the 100th anniversary of the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, which allowed women to stand for election to the House of Commons and December will mark the 100th anniversary of the first general election in which women were able to vote. Many projects and celebrations have been planned across the UK to tell the stories of the suffrage movement and women's history in general. Chippenham Civic Society will be marking this special year with a series of articles on its website, The series called, **One Woman** will look at the contribution women connected to Chippenham make to the town, its community and the wider area both in the past and today. Co-organiser of the **One Woman** series will be Lucy Whitfield.*

Whilst 2018 is set to bring women's history to the attention of many for the first time, for Lucy Whitfield the contribution of women in the past has always been an important part of her research. Born in Bristol, Lucy is the eldest of two daughters. Both her parents were teachers, with her mother's specialism being French and her father being a history teacher and eventually head of sixth form at Chipping Sodbury School. Throughout her childhood history was an important part of family life, she was surrounded by history books and holidays were spent visiting historic sites and monuments.



Lucy Whitfield in Saxon costume at the recent Twelfth Night celebrations held at Chippenham Museum

"At the age of 5 I wanted to be an archaeologist," Lucy admits. "My dad had a book on Tutankhamun and I loved looking at the pictures so I wanted to be an archaeologist although I couldn't spell it."

Lucy's other interest at the time was music, reaching a level above grade 8 on flute. From the age of 13 she played in the Avon Schools Symphonic Wind Band and with the band toured the USA.

After A-levels in psychology, English and inevitably history Lucy went to Cardiff University taking, initially joint sociology and archaeology then in her second year a full archaeology degree.

However, despite her accomplishments and childhood interests, it was a children's show about a youth newspaper called *Press Gang* that inspired Lucy to follow a path towards a career in journalism. Whilst at university she volunteered at Gair Rhydd

the university's student paper and after she graduated went to work at the Western Mail and Echo in Cardiff. Through on the job training she learnt journalistic skills including hunting down a good story, worked as a researcher and as part of the design team and experienced all of the requirements for the production of a newspaper or publication, such as proof reading, picture setting and captioning.



Lucy and her daughter Verity

Lucy remained at the Western Mail and Echo for 7 years then in 2005 became senior sub-editor for the Gazette and Herald in Devizes. She worked there until being made redundant in 2011. During which time she had moved to Chippenham and given birth to her daughter Verity.

Following a number of shorter jobs including managing marketing for a small business and proof reading academic press releases Lucy made the decision to become self-employed.

"I now have what my mum calls a portfolio career," Lucy says. "This includes proof reading, small marketing projects and genealogy."

Lucy began researching her own family tree at the age of 11 led by the desire to learn about her family's place in the world and how they came to be where they were. She loved this kind of research and later began doing research for friends. Lucy turned this hobby into a business and runs a genealogy and local history research service *Once Upon a Family Tree* (<http://www.onceuponafamilytree.co.uk/>)

It was whilst doing a friends family tree that included a number of unmarried Quaker sisters that she began questioning the way that family history is researched. Why was weight given to the male line over that of the woman, and what was being missed? Women did appear in the records, but the emphasis was on marital status and how many children they had. In census records few professions are recorded for women, and these mostly come to light only because they were widows.

"I felt that women were not seen as valuable, they were insignificant, and viewed as just staying at home with children. We were being encouraged to see them as not amounting to much due to modern perceptions and the lens we were seeing them through," Lucy says. "So I set out to collect stories of women left behind. We may see the wealthy women, or those with status, and occasional women who broke the mould but I wanted to find the extraordinary in the ordinary."

Lucy started *The Women Who Made Me Project* which seeks to bring the lives of real women from the past into focus, against a family history background traditionally populated by their male contemporaries. Her blog includes the stories of women from many different backgrounds that she has researched and she also invites submissions.

One such story is of Chippenham's Marion Young. Marion was at the forefront of new art teaching in elementary schools in the 1930s, but her contribution has been eclipsed by that of her rather better-known colleague Robin Tanner, and her part in this teaching epoch has been buried – possibly as her medium, needlework, was not considered worthy of a traditional art focus either then or now, and instead is often viewed merely as a woman's practical skill. You can read the full story of Marion, along with many others, on Lucy's blog <https://thewomenwhomademe.wordpress.com/>

Lucy has passed her love of history and music on to her daughter Verity. At an early age she encouraged her to take an interest in things changing over time. "When Verity was 5 we were decorating the house and had no wall paper on the walls. I put a long strip of sugar paper up around the room and we stuck up pictures and made our own time line of important events," Lucy explains. "We also did cooking as a way of thinking about change. Everyone understands food, we have to eat, it's a basic need and we all have food we like and food we don't. We can use food as a basis for teaching history. For instance, making honey-sweetened cake allows us to consider why we may use something other than sugar as sweetener and think about when sugar was first introduced into this country and how it was used."

In 2012 Lucy approached Ivy Lane School for permission to work with Year Ones on a project to cook their way back in time. From eggless sponge of World War Two to bread made by early farmers, Lucy used food to give the children an understanding of history. The project was a success and Lucy produced a children's cook book which she is hoping to have published. In the mean time she continues to use



cooking as a way of introducing history to young people and led Saxon cooking workshops at the recent Twelfth Night celebrations at Chippenham Museum.

Lucy's energy and enthusiasm are inspiring. She is an active member of Hips and Haws female clog morris dance side, and seems always to be looking for a new way to bring history alive. Her latest job was teaching about pirates through the medium of dance and song. But it is her daughter Verity who sums her mum up best, when asked what she has learnt from her mum she replied, "History, Music and hugs."

You can follow the **One Woman** series on the Civic Society website from February 6th.

New Museum Entrance

It is a very exciting time for the museum as a new phase of development begins. The long awaited new front entrance is set to begin and we are busy preparing for the arrival of the workman. The work is expected to last about 8 weeks. Whilst we are trying to keep disruption to a minimum we may have to shut for short periods of time

Keep up to date on all of our activities by following us on Facebook or on our website.

Creative Wiltshire

To accompany our latest exhibition, the first in our new temporary exhibition space, we have organised a number of events.

Cleaning the Artist's Palette of Clifford Ellis

Thursday 15 February, 10.30 at Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre

A talk on the conservation of the oil paint palette of Corsham artist Clifford Ellis.

£3.00 per person, book in advance on 01249 705500



Modern Movements: Pre & Post War Art in Britain

Friday 23 February, 7.00pm

Antiques Roadshow specialist Marc Allum takes a look at 20th century art movements and the innovation enthusiasm of the post-war effect £5.00 per person, book in advance on 01249 705020

Next Exhibition

F.L. Griggs: Visions of England - April 2018 to June 2018

Chippenham Museum will be the final venue for the Ashmolean Museum's touring exhibition celebrating the work of F. L. Griggs (1876–1938). It is as a draughtsman and printer-maker that Griggs is best known and later generations of print-makers, including local artist Robin Tanner, were influenced by his work.

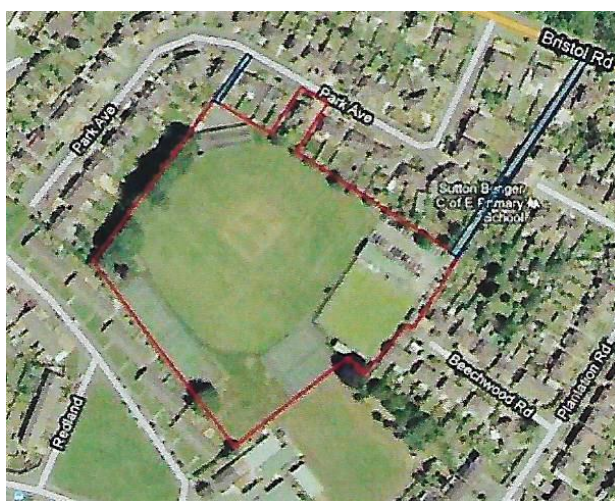
Sports Ground to The Park

Donald Little

Early in the 1900's Hardenhuish Estate was sold off in various lots and one of these was purchased by Saxby & Farmers. This was later to become Westinghouse Brake & Signal Company Ltd, after a takeover in about 1938.



This postcard shows patients from the V.A.D. Hospital in the Town and Neeld Halls enjoying an afternoon Sports Day with members of the Saxby & Farmers Sports Club. The flag flying over the pavilion shows the Saxby & Farmers name.

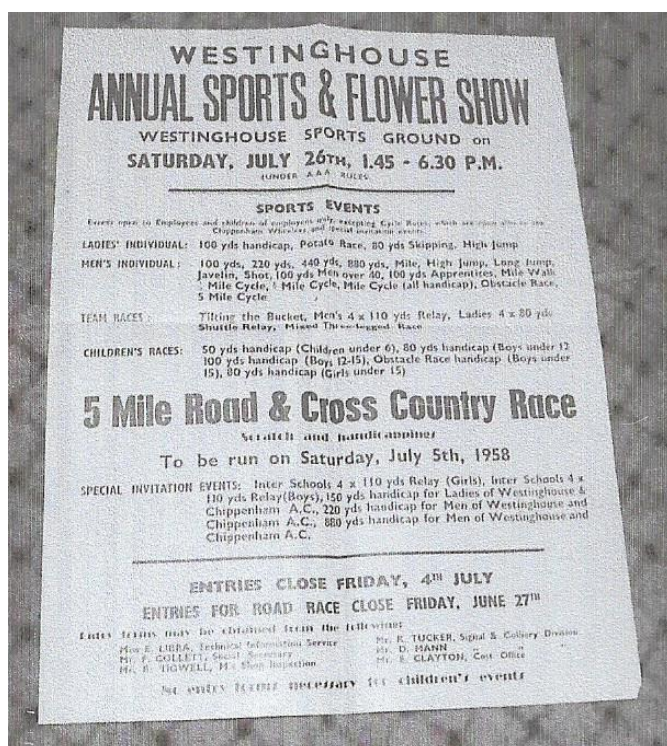


An aerial view of the sports ground showing the cricket pitch, bowling green and tennis courts.

The sports ground catered for most of the summer sports and later on used for hockey matches in the winter. The company had 1st and 2nd eleven cricket teams, an apprentices cricket team and Hathaways Cricket Club. There were four tennis courts with teams representing the company and it also had an 18 hole putting course with two divisions of teams from the company. One of the outstanding facilities was the bowling green, one of the finest in the county, used for club matches and also used for County matches. International bowlers had played on the green whilst bowling for their clubs. In 1947 Westinghouse and Chippenham Athletic Club was formed and an athletic

track was marked out on the ground with just over six laps to the mile track. In the 60's a hockey club was formed by the company fielding a mens, ladies and mixed teams. Two pitches would fit into the ground.

The original pavilion shown in the first photo was replaced in 1936/37 by a larger pavilion built by a local firm Downing Rudman & Bent. This pavilion was opened by Lord Burghley MP on June 19th 1937. Lord Burghley won an Olympic Games Gold Medal in the 1928 Olympic Games.



For many years the company ran an Annual Sports and Flower show on the ground supported by hundreds of workers from the company.

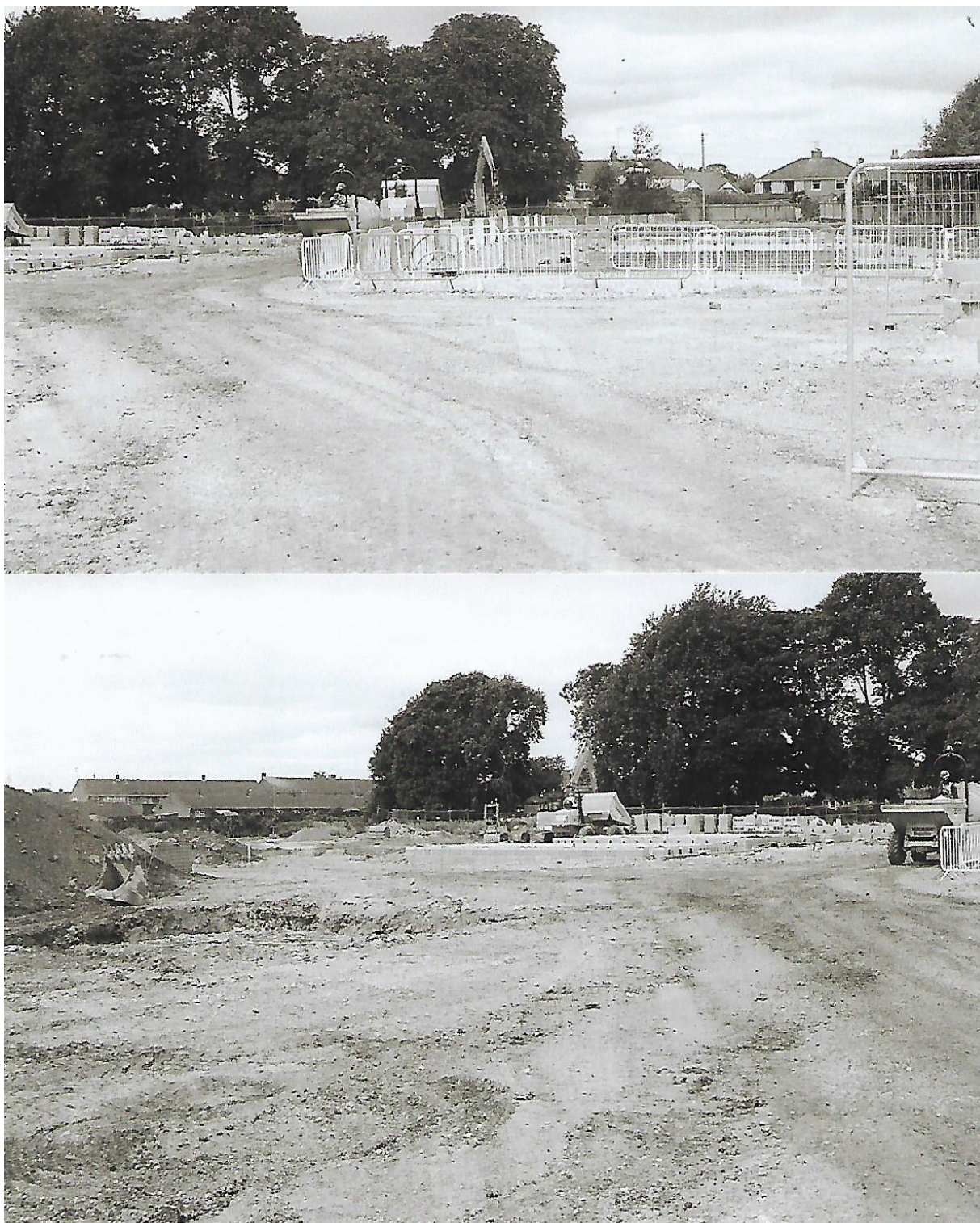
Between the years 2000 and 2005 Westinghouse was acquired by Invensys and in 2010 Linden homes proposed to build 100 homes on the ground. From the end of September 2008 Invensys decided to close the whole sports ground and lock the gates. The various clubs using the ground decided to put in an offer to purchase the ground but their offer was considered unrealistic by Invensys. The cricket club were allowed to use the ground for their 2009 and 2010 matches. The ground was then shut off completely.



A view of the sports ground and cricket pavilion a few years after the ground was shut and the gates locked.

Despite local residents forming an action group to stop the closure and sending letters to The Prince of Wales, English Heritage, the local MP and even to Westinghouse in America the closure went ahead.





This was the picture of the ground at the end of 2016 and by today houses have been built and already up for sale. The estate is now called The Park.

Seeking Saxon Chippenham (2017)

Clive Green

Before writing about our amazing find in 2017, I need to update the previous Seeking Saxon Chippenham article that appeared in an earlier edition of the Buttercross. I appealed for information about some poetry, a fragment of which appeared on a sherd of pottery that we found in 2014.

“..h your gentle eye”
“to do your will.”
“..ave to sigh”
“..ill”

“How I would watch her gentle eye,
’Twould be my play to do her will.
And she would never have to sigh
Again for my behaving ill.”

The verse appears as part of a poem in a book called 'Hymns for Infant Minds' by an early 19th century writer, Ann Taylor. The poem was entitled: 'A Child's Lamentation for the Death of a Dear Mother'! Given such a title, it is possible, even likely perhaps, that the verse which appears on the fragment of cup was actually deliberately used out of context, as alone, one could easily believe that it was a simple verse from a love poem. Many thanks to Chris Dallimore for pointing out its source.



And so to the 2017 excavation at Marc Allum and Lisa Lloyd's house. We were not expecting to find Saxon remains this time round, but wished to explore further the foundations of the possible Tudor building we had exposed in 2015 and 2016. Accordingly, we re-opened the parts of the trenches where the foundations had appeared previously and extended further to the west to look for the continuation and possible end of these foundations. The extension uncovered more of the Tudor building platform foundations with two additional postholes (on the left between the bucket and Mike Stone in the picture) that aligned quite well with the previous years' (off to Mike's right).

However, the material at the base of the posthole at the edge of the trench was quite different to that in the others and so the decision was made to remove the building foundations from that part of the trench. Having done so, we began to uncover a stony layer and, as we went on, a small upturned pot lid was found in a shallow depression within the stones. The pottery was Roman, which came as something of a surprise, but not as much of a surprise as was to follow when we started to excavate what seemed to be a square posthole, shown under the 'north arrow' in this photograph.



About 15cm down, we began to find more Roman pottery which seemed to extend into what we thought might be a grave, a view shared by the County Archaeologist. Consequently, we began to lift the loose stones along its length and under where the first pot had been found.



The next pottery unearthed was a sherd of Roman terra sigillata, or Samian ware, decorated with the image of a gladiator. This type of pottery was mostly made in Gaul and was imported into Britain in large quantities; it dates to the late first to early second century.



And then the flood gates opened as fragments of pot after pot were encountered! In all, we found a total of 450 sherds of pottery in the feature, weighing over three and a half kilograms. Some examples are below.



We had expected to find bones or cremated remains in our 'grave' and indeed we did find bones, some of which were burnt, but no cremation. However, there were only 4 pieces of human bone and the rest, in excess of 250 fragments weighing 2.2 kilograms, were all animal bones. They were mostly from cattle, or rather, one cow, because 14 articulated vertebra were recovered along with fragments of associated ribs. It appeared someone had had a big barbecue!



All of the pottery and some of the bones were examined by experts at Wessex Archaeology in Old Sarum and they confirmed that there only the four human bones and that none of the burnt bone was human, so it seemed unlikely that we had a human burial. What they also said, having viewed photographs of the excavation, was that they thought our 'grave' was in fact a small T-shaped crop dryer (and you can see why from the picture below), although there were no signs of burning or grain remains within the feature. These are quite a common feature of Roman sites throughout Britain and ours had simply been truncated on one side by the later pits that had cut through it. They thought that the stoke hole for the dryer was under the part of the lawn where we had not excavated and that, if we returned in 2018, and dug there we would find it!



The main issue with this is the pottery. It all dated to the late 1st to early 2nd century, roughly AD 90-140, which conflicts with the commonly accepted dates for Roman corn dryers – the third and fourth centuries! So, we are left with a conundrum. Is it indeed a corn dryer? Hopefully with Marc and Lisa's consent we will find out on this years' dig. If not, how did a huge amount of 1st/2nd century material get deposited in a typically 3rd/4th century feature? If it is actually a crop dryer, then we have probably found one of the earliest examples in the country.

The Samian pottery was the star Roman find. Several more pieces were found and I was able to reconstruct, temporarily, two large parts of the bowl they would have formed. It is hoped that we will be able to raise sufficient funds for it to be professionally conserved and reconstructed.

Other, later, finds of interest were a deer antler tine that had been fashioned into a large weaving needle, probably dating to the 13th/14th century, and a copper alloy harness buckle and gilded lace tag, both also medieval in date.



Regardless of the outcome of any excavation in 2018, we can certainly say that we have found the first positive evidence of a Roman structure in the centre of Chippenham and have therefore proved that occupation here must go back almost two thousand years to Roman times. One further small find offers us a tantalising glimpse of what else may lay hidden in the area near Marc's garden - a solitary tessera from a mosaic floor.

Now I wonder where that is??



Roman Samian pottery decorated with the image of a gladiator found during the 2017 excavations