

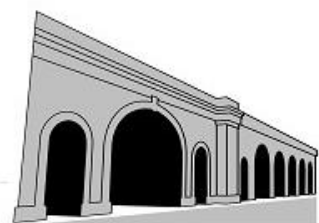
THE BUTTERCROSS BULLETIN



FOOTNOTES

**Putting their best foot forward for
Heritage Open Days (page 13)**

Issue No 170



**CHIPPENHAM
CIVIC SOCIETY**

November 2018

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Committee 2018/19

The following were re-elected to the committee at the March AGM

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Melissa Barnett
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Elaine Davis
Ryan Peare
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From the Editor

Welcome to the November edition of the Buttercross Bulletin.

We have experienced a wonderful summer, the weather has been glorious and the amount of activities and events that have taken place, promoting and celebrating our towns culture and heritage have been amazing.

This year's Heritage Open Days provided not just one weekend of events but two with an excellent packed programme. Hopefully you were able to catch one or two of the open doors or visits but if you didn't you can read all about what went on from page 5 onwards.

This edition will be my last as editor, I have very much enjoyed taking on the position during the past two years but it is now time to pass this job on to someone new. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped to ensure the Bulletin went to print on time, providing me with articles and much needed and appreciated advice.

Happy reading!

Elaine Davis

Bulletin Editor

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 about the next Bulletin edition please contact Civic Society Chairman, Mike Stone.

Deadline for contributions to the February edition is 31 December.

CHIPPENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY WEBSITE

www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk

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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

Planning Matters Roundup April 2018

Jennifer Rudd

1 18/03415/FUL

6-8 Station Hill

Extension to the second floor to accommodation and change of use from shop to micro pub. This is the shop next to the Baptist Church

2 18/02174/FUL

London Road Cemetery

Permission sought to build a compound to house skips and build a close board fence

3 18/01985/LBC

Parklands

Permission given for work on this listed building.

This includes a new window and blocking a door.

4 17/09445/FUL

Hungerdown Lane/Bristol Road

Permission given to build a new shop (Lidl) and 35 affordable houses.

5 18/0040/REM

Hunters Moon development, phase 2.

Scheme approved to build 72 homes, layout. Scale etc.

6 18/0424/OUT

Land at Showell farm

Outline permission sought for a care home.

7 18/04224/REM

Land North Hill Corner Road.

Permission sought to add to this site with 212 dwellings plus landscaping etc.

8 18/08786/REM

Rowden Park, Patterdown

Permission given for a further 114 dwellings, landscaping etc.

9 18/07035/FUL

Monkton Park School

The school has asked for permission to build an outdoor classroom in wood, to be used for outdoor learning.

-Sounds fun!!

10 18/07055/VAR

Langley Park

This is to vary the conditions already given approval, including the removal of conditions on energy performance. The plan is to build a 69 bedroom hotel, 22 residential units with parking etc. This appears to be the usual, rather tedious rendered/red brick/metal window construction blocks, 4 storeys high. I am not able to work out the impact of the removal of the climate change condition from the information provided. Perhaps someone else can?

11 18/07186/LBC

Goughs, Mill House, New Road

This is for internal changes and introducing a new exterior door.

12 18/06820/FUL

Causeway Garage, 16/17 The Causeway

This is the plan to build 46 apartments for the elderly on the site of the former Garage. We are pointing out the significance of the metal railings, designed and built by Mr Magdoz, a well-known local blacksmith who lived in the area. It is hoped these will be incorporated in the new build.

13 18/04080/LBC

Patterdown Farm

Permission has been given for 4 new buildings and the partial demolition of a listed building to form 1 dwelling. This building was possibly a stable but has been extensively changed over the years with modern materials.

14 18/04925/LBC

Monkton Cottage, Monkton Hill

It is good to see extensive work renovating this listed building, including a new roof and replacement windows.

I should also mention the plans to build a multi-storey car park and offices on the existing Olympiad car park. We are horrified by this proposal, yet another example of the insensitive way our Council treat the River Avon, the main asset Chippenham has in our opinion. Go to our website to see the letter we sent on behalf of the society. This has not gone to Planning yet but we hope if it does anyone who cares about the town will object.

Membership Matters

A warm welcome to our new members

Mr & Ms Lambert-Rose.

Chippenham Civic Society has held the annual membership fee at the same amount for some time, it was agreed at the AGM that the membership fee would increase to £15 per household and £20 for corporate/business. Your membership covers you for quarterly Buttercross Bulletins and monthly meetings with lectures, including our Annual Summer Heritage lecture in conjunction with St Andrews Church.

Just a reminder for members who pay by standing order, it would greatly assist the administration of the membership if you would ensure that you increase the standing order to £15 (or £20 for corporate/business) and that it is programmed for December.

We look forward to another interesting year and your continued membership.

Very best wishes - and dare I say Happy Christmas this earlier!
Marilyn - Membership Secretary

Social Programme 2018/2019

20 November 2018 - Bernard Purrier, who is the speaker for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Trust, which is based in Chippenham, will give an illustrated presentation on whales and dolphins entitled 'An Introduction to their World'. The WDC is 30 years old and our speaker will highlight all the excellent work that has been carried out around the world.

11 December 2018 - The Christmas event will take place again at the Cause in the Causeway. Doors will open at 7pm for a 7.30 pm start. Tickets cost £6 and can be purchased from the Museum towards the end of November. This includes mulled wine and seasonal snacks. Our speaker is Bill King, who has been to us before, and he will tell us the story of how the concept of childhood has developed with illustrations and examples of toys, games and pastimes from Victorian times to the present day.

15 January 2019 - Presentation from Melissa Barnett, Curator, Chippenham Museum. Melissa will talk on 'Chippenham People and Places'.

26 February 2019 - This is the changed date for the AGM of the Civic Society. After the formal business there will be a chance for members to give short presentations on topics relating to Chippenham or their interests. Please make contact with Mike Stone to discuss the format and timings.

19 March 2019 - Making a return to the Civic Society is Dorothy Treasure from the Wiltshire Buildings Record.

Dorothy will be talking about the ongoing investigation into Chippenham buildings and the stories that can be read from studying their construction and materials.

Bristol Museums – 19th Century Beginnings, 20th Century Expansion and 21st Century Reinvention

A talk to Chippenham Civic Society on 18 September 2018 by Ray Barnett Head of Collections & Archives, Bristol Culture, Bristol City Council.

Today the Bristol Culture team is responsible for five museums, the City Archives and also for the Council's arts and events activities. As Head of Collections & Archives, Ray manages a team of over 40 staff ranging from curators to archivists, from documentation specialists to conservators. They are the staff with day to day responsibility for the 2million museum artefacts and the 11 miles of archive shelving, making it the largest service of its type in south west England.

This talk described the history of the museums service from its early beginnings at the start of the 19th Century through to illustrating the process of creating a whole new museum with the example of M Shed.

The first museum was that of the Bristol Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature & the Arts which opened in 1823 at the bottom of Park Street, in a building now used as the Freemasons' Hall. The emphasis during Victorian times was on the new

science of geology (collections being amassed from the Dorset coast) and also biological material collected around the globe by sea captains trading out of Bristol around the British Empire.

The museum relocated to a purpose built building (now Browns Restaurant) at the top of Park Street in the 1870s and was taken over by Bristol Corporation in the 1890s. The early 20th Century was a time of expansion, firstly the Wills tobacco family paid for the construction of the 'Bristol Art Gallery & Museum of Antiquities' which opened alongside the natural history museum in 1905. Between the two world wars the art gallery was doubled in size and the Corporation acquired two period houses. Red Lodge is an amazing survivor from Tudor times with a stunning oak panelled room whereas Georgian House is preserved as it would have been lived in by Georgian sugar merchant John Pinney.

WWII saw both natural history museum and art gallery bombed. Specimens salvaged from the ruins of the former were moved into the latter, so creating Bristol Museum & Art Gallery as we know it today. Post-war, Blaise Castle House Museum and its nearby Kings Weston Roman Villa site, were added to the portfolio. Initially the idea was to create a folk life museum (akin to St Fagans in South Wales) at Blaise. One mill building was moved brick by brick to the estate but the idea then faltered. Meanwhile in the city centre the 1970s saw the creation of St Nicholas Church Museum – telling in short the history of the city but destined to be closed in 1991 due to financial pressures.



Mayflower, the world's oldest steam tug, moored outside M Shed and alongside the restored electric cranes, ready to take the public on rides around the Floating Harbour, Bristol.

Also in the 1970s, with the closure of the City Docks, the Bristol Industrial Museum was established which exhibited displays of transport items but also told the history of the docks and the city's trade. Working exhibits of steam locos, historic boats and steam and electric cranes were, and remain, unique exhibits on dockside.

With the coming of Lottery funds in the 1990s, Bristol Museums

decided that one site where the history and contemporary life of the city could be told, should be created. Consequently, the Industrial Museum site was closed in 2006 and refurbished to reopen in 2011 as M Shed.

M Shed was designed to appeal to a family audience, to be object rich, to be engaging and thought provoking and to involve local communities and individuals. Its interpretation is in the first person where possible and it takes the impossible task of describing the city's complex history and current life by using a thematic (rather than chronological) approach. It does not aim to tell particular histories in great detail but instead to point those who want more information in the right direction to do so.

How do you judge the success of a museum? A crude but relatively simple way is by examining attendance figures. The industrial museum before it closed was attracting c.125,000/year. In its first year, M Shed attracted c.700,000 and 7 years later is still pulling an audience of c.500,000/year. Some still hark back to the industrial museum displays but for a modern audience it seems the M Shed approach is doing something right.

The 21st Century has seen Bristol Museums become a more significant player on the national (and sometimes international) museum scene despite the years of austerity and belt tightening in local authority budgets. The service has remained owned and run by Bristol City Council (rather than move to an arms' length charitable trust) but it has radically changed into an organisation which balances core funding from the City with major Non-Portfolio Organisation funding from the Arts Council (the 2nd highest grant in the SW) and income generating activity which brings in 35% of its annual operating budget. New challenges await, with a revamp of displays happening at Blaise and planning towards a major refurbishment of the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery itself – watch this space!

Heritage Open Days 2018 – Event Review

Elaine Davis



Heritage Open Days (HODs) is England's largest festival of history and culture. It has been running for over 20 years and the Civic Society has supported it for many of those, being one of over 2,000 organisations in the past that have put on events in September to celebrate their heritage, community and history through open doors and exhibitions.

Three years ago the Museum took over as the lead organiser for the Chippenham HODs event. It has continued to grow, giving local residents and visitors to the town a chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences all for free.

This year, for the first time in its 24-year history, Heritage Open Days took place over two consecutive weekends in September, 6th-9th and 13th-16th September. This gave an opportunity for the Museum to work with many groups and bring together an even wider programme of events.



On Saturday 8th September Wilts & Berks Canal Trust held their Open Day at Pewsham Locks. This was a perfect opportunity to discover Pewsham Locks and meet the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust volunteers involved in the restoration of this once important canal which connected Chippenham with Bristol and London.

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust is a charitable organisation working to preserve, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks canal. HODs is not the only time they promote their work and Prue Backway's tells of her visit to the canal in May on page 16.

Also open on Saturday 8th was St Nicholas Church the only Grade II listed Georgian church in Wiltshire and widely considered to be a gem of its period.



St Nicholas Church open for Heritage Open Days

Visitors could view the church's interior, crypt, church records and war graves and enjoy welcome refreshments. Definitely a prerequisite for a HODs event!

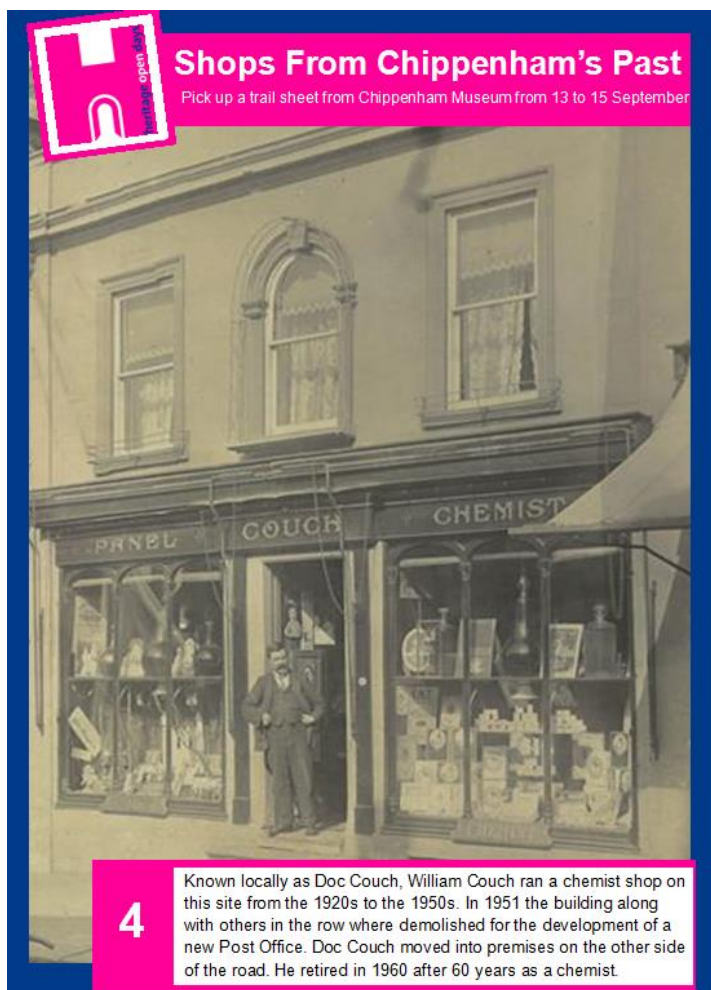
Although a prominent feature of the Chippenham landscape, many people drive or walk past St Nicholas Church thinking it

closed. Being part of Heritage Open Days was considered as “a great opportunity to tell people that though a historical building, the church is part of a worshipping community and open for business!” HODs can also offer the opportunity for people to see a building in a new way, one of the church parishioners was overheard to say, “I have been coming to this church for many years but I have never seen the crypt!”

As part of the Museums Georgian Session the other Saturday event, was dressing Mr and Mrs Andrews. Organised by the Friends of Chippenham Museum, costumed reenactors demonstrated the art of Georgian dressing. The event was well attended and even attracted a ‘flash-mob’ of other Georgian re-enactors!



A flash -mob of Georgian re-enactors visiting the museums Georgian exhibition



4

Known locally as Doc Couch, William Couch ran a chemist shop on this site from the 1920s to the 1950s. In 1951 the building along with others in the row where demolished for the development of a new Post Office. Doc Couch moved into premises on the other side of the road. He retired in 1960 after 60 years as a chemist.

Running over two consecutive weekends gave the opportunity to expand the Chippenham HODs offer. From Thursday 13th through to Saturday 15th you could pick up a trail leaflet from the Museum to help find the twelve photographs displayed in some of the shop windows. The photographs showed what the shops used to be and proved very popular with all ages with people commenting that it was interesting to contrast the shops from the past with what's there now and what they remember was there in between.

The activity proved so popular that the museum is looking to run something similar again soon so watch out for that.

On Friday 14th over 40 people took part in unique tours of the Siemens' Rail Automation Manufacturing factory in Chippenham. Read Roger Backway's account of his visit on page 14.

More open doors took place on Saturday 16th with The Old Baptist Chapel and the Masonic Hall both opening their doors.

Visitors were able to leave the hustle and bustle of Chippenham's High Street and go beyond the unpretentious Baptist Chapels exterior into the well-kept place of worship, greatly loved by those who have worshipped there for generations.

Many then went on to step inside Chippenham's Masonic Centre to learn more about the ceremonial traditions and terminology of Freemasonry and find out about what being a Mason involves and the charities they support.

Members of the Chippenham Masonic Lodge welcoming visitors for Heritage Open Days



Adventurous visitors were able to take part in tours of St Andrews Church tower and even have a go bell ringing during the Saturday.

Those who preferred not to ascend the dizzy heights of the tower could enjoy organ recitals and learn more about the Church's fascinating history and admire its carefully crafted and much loved features.

Saturday also gave an opportunity to learn more about Avonbridge House, a distinctive building from Chippenham's industrial past. Avonbridge House has been at the heart of several large businesses first opening in 1873 as a factory for Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company.

Today it is home to Alliance Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and facilities Co-Ordinator and long-term employee Andrew Beint led walking tours of the

building exterior and riverside area illustrating the building's history and changes to the riverside and weir area.

Several informative talks were given by Antiques Roadshow specialist Marc Allum in the Jubilee Building, home to the Chippenham Borough Lands Charity. As Trustee for the charity Marc gave an insight into the valuable work of the Charity first established after Queen Mary granted a Royal Charter to Chippenham in 1554

Participants also learnt of the history of the building built in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and originally used as a literary and scientific institute

One of this year's themes for Heritage Open Days was 'Extraordinary Women', in recognition of the centenary of the Universal Suffrage Act. In keeping with this theme the Grade I listed Yelde Hall hosted 'The Women Who Made Me' exhibition which ran from Thursday 13th to Saturday 15th. The Women Who Made Me project is a national initiative focusing on finding the extraordinary in stories of "ordinary" women. The exhibition, supported by the Chippenham Civic Society, was curated by Lucy Whitfield and celebrated the contribution women connected to Chippenham have made to the town.



"While available records tend to focus on men, the women's stories are there if you look hard enough," said Lucy, a social, women's and local historian based in the town. Lucy has researched the women who kept Chippenham moving, growing and working and the exhibition included women such as Mary Spurling Clarke, one of the manageress's of the

Chippenham Sanitary Laundry in Ivy Road which was a huge employer of women for generations in the town, and Essex Lowndes a former mistress of the Ivy House.

Alongside the stories of the women, there were a host of family friendly activities supporting the exhibition and exploring women's lives and work including a chance to try the sort of gruel served at Chippenham Union Workhouse by long-standing matron Martha Gane. More of Lucy's research can be found on the Civic Society website <http://www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk/one-woman/>

'The Women Who Made Me' exhibition and the 'Extraordinary Women' theme of HODS were well supported and promoted on the Saturday by the FOOTNOTES Appalachian dance side, which performed in the Market Place during the morning.



Footnotes are a Chippenham based Appalachian dance team. They perform dances based on the Appalachian and flat footing traditions of North America, displaying dances brought over from the states as well as routines choreographed by members of their team.

The team started in 1995 as group of people interested in learning this style of dance from an American lady living in the area. The main aim has always been to dance and perform for fun. The team perform at local pubs and events as well as folk festivals further afield and can regularly be seen at Chippenham Festival along with other Appalachian and Morris dance teams..

The team currently have a 15 strong team of dancers varying in age from 9 to 60 plus. With 2 musicians providing a variety of traditional old time, bluegrass and gypsy jazz style tunes.

Performances are individual, vibrant and energetic. The group practice in the Old Road Tavern barn and welcome new members <https://footnoteschippenham.webs.com/>

The Heritage Open Days events were a huge success with around 600 people taking part in one or more event over the two weekends.

2019 will mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Heritage Open Days and Chippenham Museum intends to build on this year's success and join in with the 2019 celebrations. If you have any thoughts or suggestions for open doors or activities please contact the museum on heritage@chippenham.gov.uk

Siemens Rail Automation Visit

Roger Backway

One of the more intriguing visits on the excellent programme of visits arranged by Chippenham Museum was to the Siemens Rail Automation factory in Langley Park. Some members of the Society will probably remember when it was the Westinghouse Brake and Signal Company and many may well have worked there. For me it was an opportunity to see what was behind the mysterious fence that encloses Langley Park. There were two tours arranged at 0900 and 1100 on Friday 14 September. I booked on the 1100 visit and arrived to find there were around 25 for the visit, some having come from Bristol and Bath. After a Health and Safety briefing we were split into 4 groups for the tour.

Chippenham is the UK Headquarters for Siemens Rail Automation business – there are smaller facilities at Poole, Manchester and elsewhere. When it was known as Westinghouse it manufactured railway signalling, brake equipment and carriage doors. The site was then bought by Hawker Siddeley followed by Invensys who were taken over by German company Siemens. The brake business was bought by Knorr Bremse who moved it to a new factory in Melksha. The Chippenham factory now concentrates on railway signalling which includes level crossing equipment. There are around 800 staff employed on the site with 250 on manufacturing and the balance on IT, Sales and Marketing, Development, Installation and Product Support. 20 apprentices and 20 graduates are recruited each year. Some 22,000 products are supported from the site. The main customers are Network Rail, London Underground and many overseas countries as far afield as Taiwan and Indonesia.



Manufacturing printed circuit boards

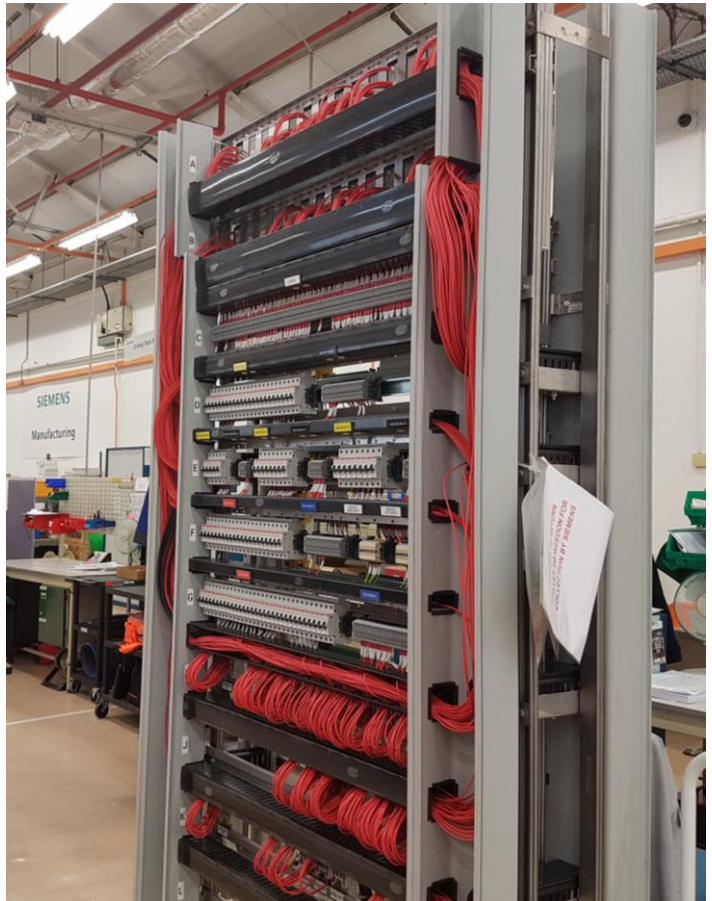
The manufacturing undertaken on site ranges from state-of-the-art printed circuit boards, relays and control boxes to a complete signalling control room. At each stage there are sophisticated ranges of manufacturing and automatic test equipment.

The tour began with a view of a Modular Points Signalling Unit, many of which are installed on the London Underground. We then saw a Level Crossing System in course of manufacture – this consisted of gates, flashing lights and the associated signals system. The main production facility was where printed circuit boards (PCBs) were

manufactured, assembled and tested. There was also a series of highly sophisticated automatic PCB manufacturing machines. Older technology was represented by the Relay manufacturing line – many thousands are still in use and they are very reliable. Around 30,000 are manufactured per year on the site. They tend to be replaced periodically as part of planned maintenance on rail systems.

The next section on the visit was the Wiring Area where units manufactured are integrated into a large cabinet with a mass of wiring to form a signalling control unit. This typically sits in a control room at a station or trackside. The final section visited was probably the most interesting – the Simulation Test Laboratory. Here there are complete mock ups of control rooms of the systems where equipment is to be delivered so that everything can be tested in as near an operational state before delivery to the customer. For example, there was a complete mock-up of the control room on the London Underground Victoria Line to simulate and test an upgrade to the signalling system.

This was a fascinating visit and thanks are due to Chippenham Museum and Siemens for making it happen.



Wiring section



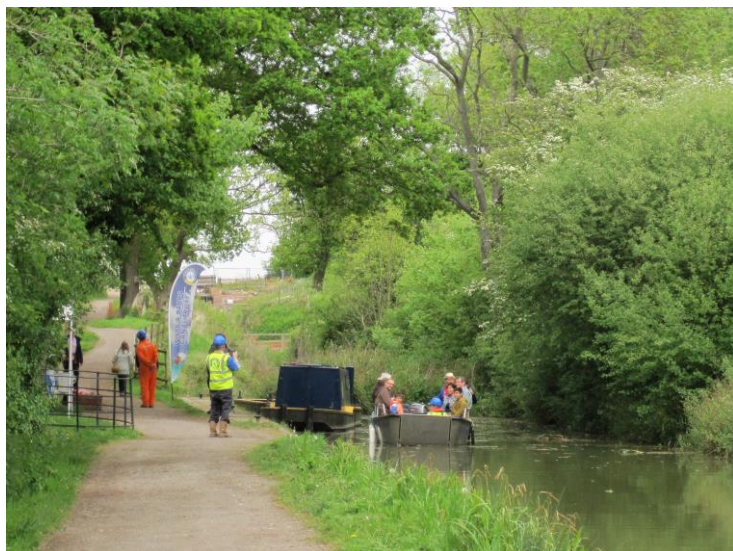
Victoria Line simulation explained

Afloat on the Wilts and Berks Canal

Prue Backway

We are keen on walking and saw in the Gazette that the Wilts and Berks Canal were having an 'Open day' with boat trips aboard the 'Mary Archard' on Saturday 12 May. We decided that this would combine well with a local walk and as the weather was good we packed up a picnic and set off for Pewsham Locks.

We were delighted to find an impromptu cafe serving teas, coffees, homemade cakes and biscuits and the boat ready for its first outing of the day.



It is an amazing craft that is very versatile and wheelchair friendly which was demonstrated while we were there. Three ladies (one a longstanding volunteer at the Museum) were accompanied to the 'landing stage' a little further along the canal bank where they were assisted into the boat via the drop down ramp. The boat then motored back to the start point where we embarked and joined them.

We had a 15 minute trip down the canal amid peaceful scenery, wildlife and varying vegetation to Double Bridge where we did a graceful turn after going through the impressive structure.

On the return journey we passed walkers and families who waved and admired the boat. The three ladies were then carefully disembarked at the landing stage and accompanied back to the pop up cafe and we returned to base where there were more eager travellers waiting to board.

This bit of restored canal is more than a mile and a tribute to the volunteers of the Canal Trust. This event was organised by the Melksham, Chippenham and Calne branch of the trust.



The Mary Archard was officially launched last year and has been a popular attraction at various events but this is the first time it has been enjoyed by members of the public along this stretch of the canal. There is parking on the Pewsham estate and then a short walk to the wharf to board the boat for the 15 minute trip to Double Bridge. At the other end you can walk on to Lacock, walk back along the towpath or stay on the boat for the return journey.



Visitors can see the remains of the former locks, dry dock, sawpit and limekiln, as well as the restored spill weir and other structures – not to mention the lovely waterway itself.

We continued our planned walk taking us over the top lock and across the fields enjoying our picnic on the way. After a brief stop for a welcome post lunch coffee at the Lylsey Arms we climbed up to Knocketts Farm where Michael Tippett lived and

composed his music (a potential article for a future Bulletin?). The walk continued over the fields, parallel to the canal below, overlooking Chippenham in the distance until we dropped down again to cross the canal at Double Bridge. Walking back to the wharf it was interesting to see the same stretch of the canal from the path rather than the water. The Mary Archard was busy ferrying passengers as we passed by and we resisted the temptation to indulge in another drink and piece of cake!

We have lived in Chippenham for over thirty years and have watched the progress and developments undertaken on this stretch of the Wilts and Berks Canal. All those years ago we found it difficult to imagine what it might look like fully restored but the vision is emerging thanks to the dedication, hard work and imagination of all those who belong to the Canal Trust. They deserve our support.



One Women - Who Demonstrated Unity and Loyalty

Ann Brinkworth

*Editor's note: This year has marked a number of significant anniversaries which brought women's history to the fore. Chippenham Civic Society has marked this special year by supporting women's historian Lucy Whitfield with her Heritage Open Days exhibition and with a series of articles in the Bulletin and on the website called, **One Woman**. These have highlighted the contribution women connected to Chippenham make to the town, its community and the wider area both in the past and today. Below is another article in the **One Women** series.*

Helena Jane Wilson was born on June 2nd 1858 in Bottisham Cambridgeshire. Her father, Samuel Charlton was a vicar, her mother was named Amelia. Helena had four sisters and one brother. She was educated at a boarding school in Warwick (1871 Census). In 1887 Helena married Mervyn Seppings Wilson a doctor and they came to work and live in Chippenham. They had four sons Herbert, Rhoderick (who died in childhood), Evelyn, Geoffrey and a daughter Beryl. As the wife of a doctor Helena lived a comfortable life running the home and participating in town life becoming a capable and respected member of society. Like many other women at this time they did not know how much life was going to change.

This change came on a warm summer day on August 4th 1914 when war was declared against Germany. Not long after hostilities began it was apparent there would be a substantial number of casualties. Chippenham Town Council was approached by Helena who was the Commandant of the local branch of the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), Lady Walter Hervey of Derry Hill Red Cross and Mrs Thomas Briscoe, wife of the local doctor with regard to using the Town Hall and Ante Rooms as an auxiliary hospital for wounded soldiers. In September the War Office concluded there was no need to use these premises for a Military Hospital.

A year later on September 26th 1915 Helena received the devastating news that her son Geoffrey who was a Captain in the Wiltshire Regiment had been killed in France. Only three days later on September 29th another son Evelyn a Captain in the East Yorkshire Regiment was also killed at Loos.

Despite this Helena carried on doing her bit for the war effort and when in October 1915 it was decided to open the Town Hall as a subsidiary hospital. Helena as Commandant would be responsible for the day to day running of the hospital and the staff. At this time, she was giving Red Cross Ambulance training at the County School.

The Rooms in the Town Hall were converted to a fully functioning hospital by FW Hulbert, a builder and plumber, in the record time of three weeks. Donations of bedding, clothing and food were readily given by the townspeople. For entertainment a piano was donated by Mr Spencer owner of a music shop situated by the Bear Hotel.

The first patients arrived in the town on November 5th 1915, these were mostly convalescent patients. Helena directed the VAD's in nursing, cooking, and cleaning in fact

everything to help with the recovery of patients. This also included entertainments such as musical shows, plays and outings.

By the summer of 1916 demand for hospital beds had increased so much it was decided to extend the hospital into the Neeld Hall. The wards were called Unity and Loyalty reflecting the town motto. Two smaller wards were named Geoffrey and Evelyn in honour of Helena's sons.

On January 9th 1917 news came that Helena's remaining son had lost his life in Mesopotamia (Iraq). For any mother losing three sons in this way would have had a devastating and long-lasting effect, but she was regarded as a beacon of professionalism and continued to care for the hospital.

On the eve of the hospital closing the local newspaper described Helena as a 'lady whose qualifications well fitted her for the position she undertook'. It was also said Mrs Wilson made it 'a happy home hospital'. She was awarded an OBE in the 1919 New Year honours list.

When the hospital closed on April 8th 1919, 1872 British and Commonwealth patients had been treated with the loss of only two lives.

After the war Helena would have settled back into a normal daily routine, giving her time to reflect and mourn the loss of three sons. In 1925 Helena resigned as Commandant as a token of appreciation she was presented with a silver Bon-Bon dish which was inscribed 'To Commandant Helena J Wilson, 1915-1919'. She continued to live in Chippenham with her daughter Beryl, who also served at the hospital, until her death in 1933.



Accolades for the town

Chippenham has turned purple over the past few days as the Town celebrates retaining its Purple Flag status. The Purple Flag accreditation scheme recognises excellence in the management of town and city centres to provide a safe night time environment. Chippenham is the smallest town in the UK to attain this tremendous achievement

The floral beauty of the Town has also been recognised, winning a Gold award in the South West in Bloom competition in the Town Centre category.

Remembrance - Chippenham's World War 1 Commemorations 2014-18

Melissa Barnett



'Unity and Loyalty' - re –enactment in 2015 of the first arrivals to the Red Cross Hospital
5 November 1918

“Chippenham had a second joy day, or rather evening, on Wednesday expressive of all their feelings at the fact that the war is at length over. A torchlight procession hurriedly arranged, but excellently carried out was held. The procession formed up in the Market Place (at 7.00pm), where a large concourse assembled, those taking part including the Volunteers, ..., the nurses from the Red Cross Hospital, the members of the V.A.D., the convalescent soldiers from the hospital, the munitionettes, munition workers and employees in other industries of the town. The march around the town was started about 7 o'clock, at which hour the Salvation Army Band, which has rendered such valuable service in many ways during the war, played the Volunteers into the Market Place to the

strains of "La Marseillaise". The procession moved off in splendid order, and presented a pretty sight in the clear moonlight.

Wiltshire Times 16 November 1919

On 11 November 2018, exactly 100 years since the Armistice that ended fighting on land, sea and air in World War 1, Chippenham Town Council will unveil a special commemorative tapestry in the town's museum. Two days later on 13 November the community will re-enact the peace celebration which took place spontaneously in the Market Place on that day a century ago.

These activities will conclude an eight year programme of educational, research and conservation projects achieved in partnership with heritage professionals, local schools and volunteers. Our aim from the start was that Chippenham's community should be involved as much as possible. The material assembled has led to exhibitions, events, talks, walks, publications, a restored War Memorial, a commemorative tapestry and even a memorial bench.

Schools, community groups and other heritage organisations have led their own commemorations. In Pewsham, where the streets are named after those who fell in two world wars, the Women's Institute has attached posters with photographs of the fallen on the relevant street names. Many of the town's schools have put on exciting projects too including a play originating from Hardenhuish School which was featured at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. 'Brotherhood' was inspired by real Chippenham soldiers who fought in the Great War. The Royal British Legion even organised a poetry competition in partnership with Sainsbury's. 'Wiltshire at War', an HLF funded project facilitated by Wiltshire Council, produced a series of interactive touring exhibitions about the Home Front.

Our own planning began in 2010 after a visit by local WW1 historian Richard Broadhead to search our collections for records of soldiers who served and died during the Great War. This was to be published in his book 'Chippenham Soldiers'. The information that he was finding was fascinating, often tragic but so significant that we felt it should be shared as widely as possible. Richard proposed that our education room should be transformed into a WW1 trench displaying some of the local stories he had found. This was our first experience of the evocative nature and power of Richard's exhibitions. Using sound, light and smell combined, with original film footage, the real recollections of those who had served, or who had lost loved ones, visitors could begin to understand the full horror of the war. The exhibition 'Great War 1914-18' was such a success that it was expanded the following year and displayed in the Yelde Hall.

Richard's work and his partnership with the museum continued during the next couple of years as he developed the HLF project 'Finding the Forgotten'. This provided information, and interactives, to the museum and local senior schools about those men who died during WW1. It also recognised and investigated those who had died but not been remembered. The award winning film 'Lost Generation' which featured original local stories launched in the Neeld Hall at the same time. The museum also remembered the anniversaries of Gallipoli and the Battle of the Somme.

On 4 August 2014 the start of WW1 was commemorated all over the country with a 'Lights Out' event. In Chippenham this was organised by the Royal British Legion who held a candle light vigil in remembrance. The Town Council followed this with the unveiling of a special commemorative bench which is sited outside the museum.



Funeral in Chippenham one of the few men who died at the Red Cross Hospital

We have uncovered many moving stories of loss and hardship but there are other happier stories to tell. The museums 'Unity and Loyalty' WW1 Exhibition told the inspiring story of Chippenham's Red Cross hospital. This HLF funded exhibition was held at the Yelde Hall over the summer of 2015 supported by a full education programme and even a re-enactment of the arrival of the first wounded soldiers to Chippenham. This was publicised widely and appeared on BBC

Points West. The volunteers who helped make the whole project such a success reached the finals of the national Museum awards for volunteers of the Year.



Soldiers, Nurses and the wounded outside the Town Hall during WW1

The hospital, which was sited at the Town and later Neeld Halls, was supported in many innovative and selfless ways by the community of Chippenham. It was the Nurses though who provided us with the most compelling accounts and we were delighted to be able to link objects already in the museum's collection to real people. The cruet set and autograph book presented to Sister Vicbourne by her grateful charges, the medals collected from hat badges.

We were also delighted to be donated objects and ephemera from the public. A Red Cross blanket used in the hospital was found in a garage, the recipe book belonging to Ethel the hospitals cook was sourced via America and a decorative panel of WW1 hat badges which we had seen in a photograph of a hospital ward was found by a relative of a nurse in Calne. Most importantly we were able to record photographs and memories before they were lost forever.

The next book in the Chippenham Studies series will be dedicated to this hospital and will feature all the research collated during the 'Unity and Loyalty project.



Peace celebrations at the Neeld Hall. 19 July 2019

interactive screen. Selected pieces from each school have been chosen to be integrated into the main exhibition. Community groups have made their own responses to WW1 and this has resulted in textile squares which will also be on display.

This year as we celebrate the Armistice the exhibition, 'Remembrance', will feature a commemorative tapestry created by local textile artist Fi Redmond. This work, funded by the Area Board, Borough Lands and Chippenham Town Council is the result of a 6 month project in schools in which years 3-5 has been encouraged to design a small piece of art in response to local stories provided by the museum. This preparatory work will be on display on a small

Programme of Events to commemorate the end of the Great War

Exhibition- 'Remembrance'

Sunday 11 November – 26 January 2019- Chippenham Museum- FREE entry

Talk by Ray Alder -'Unity and Loyalty' the story of Chippenham's Red Cross Hospital

Thursday 22 November -7.00 pm 2018 at Yelde Hall. £4 in aid of the Friends of Museum

Conference - 'The Great War in Wiltshire-showcasing recent research to mark the centenary of WW1

Saturday 1 December - 9am -5pm at Tidworth Garrison Theatre. £30 Details and booking www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/events

Workshop with Fi Redmond - Meet the Artist

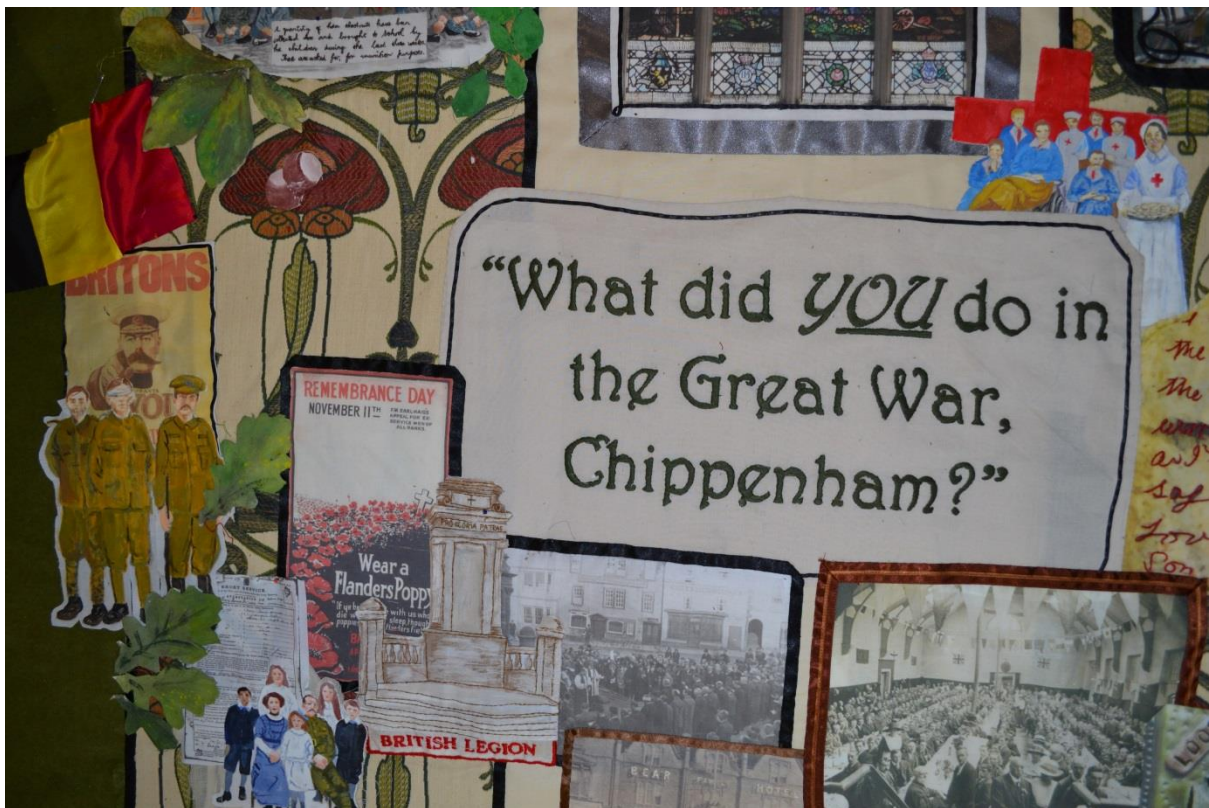
19 January- 2.00 pm 2019 at Museum – Free but please book to reserve your place

Talk by Richard Broadhead - 'Finding the Forgotten'

31 January -7.00 pm 2019 at Yelde Hall. £4 in aid of 'Finding the Forgotten'

For further details of to book a ticket please contact the museum on 01249 705027

www.chippenham.gov.uk/museum



Details from the Chippenham Commemorative Tapestry 2018 made by textile artist
Fi Redmond