



# Friends of Wiltshire Victoria County History

*The Victoria County History of England*

*Friends of Wiltshire VCH*

WVCH Trust Registered Charity No 1102882

Newsletter No 15, December, 2020

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

Work goes on behind the scenes despite Covid 19

## New Website for Wiltshire VCH

The pandemic has affected everyone to a greater or lesser extent and charities, in particular, have been hard hit, both in raising funds and the carrying out of day to day tasks.

As well as managing to maintain a good level of research using online resources the Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust has spent the down time developing a new website and we are very excited to announce that it went live on the 9th November.

We are confident that, as well as being user-friendly, it is bright and attractive and contains lots of information about our research projects, progress on volumes, the Trust and its Trustees. It also has links to the situation in other counties and nationally at Central Office. Hopefully, it will not be too long before we can also use the new site to publicise events to replace those which have been sorely missed this year.

In the mean time, please take a few minutes to explore our fabulous new website on

[wiltshirehistory.org](http://wiltshirehistory.org)

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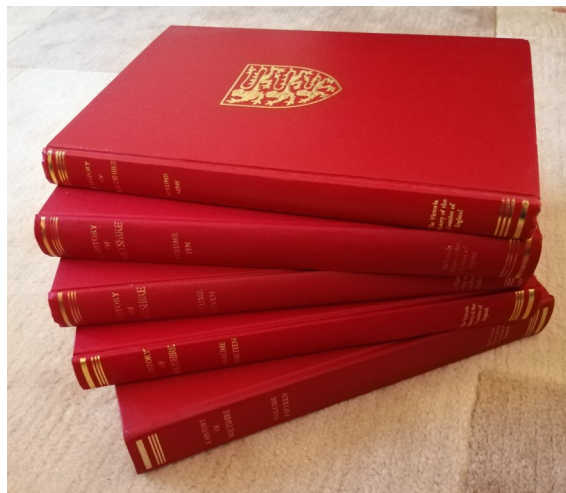
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### Rural Protest in historic Whiteparish

In 1881 William Small, painter and glazier of Salisbury, noted in his manuscript memoir some reports, probably gleaned from the *Salisbury Journal*, of a protest a hundred and fifty years earlier. In May 1737 about 60 people stopped a load of wheat near Whiteparish. One of the horses was attacked, the wagon damaged and the corn thrown around. The same treatment was threatened to any others who attempted to export corn, and indeed the same group was held responsible for stopping a load of malt and another of wheat in Salisbury a few days later.

In *Rural Life in Wessex*, Joseph Bettey says that throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, until the Swing Riots of 1830, rural protest was minor and uncoordinated, despite worsening economic conditions for many of the population. But throughout England during this period there were sporadic disturbances around the price of food and the events of 1737, as copied by Small, were not unimportant to those involved. They demonstrated a real concern by people in and around Salisbury about the high cost of grain.

Whiteparish, as a large rural parish with several farms and close to the market town of Salisbury, was a likely place for rural unrest. In February 1800, an anonymous letter writer threatened to burn the barns of Whiteparish farmers if they did not reduce their wheat prices. Soon afterwards an arson attack took place on the property of George Yalden Fort in nearby Alderbury. Fort wrote to William Hussey, then MP for Salisbury, enclosing a petition from 24 Whiteparish inhabitants, mostly farmers, which offered the substantial reward of £200 for the arrest of those responsible; Fort adding that the fire insurance company had offered an additional reward of £100. This was not an isolated incident. A letter was posted on the market house in Romsey (Hants) in the same month, demanding a reduction in the price of bread, and another threatening letter was received at Waltham (Hants).

The threat of arson and mob violence was most feared during the Swing Riots of autumn 1830: rioting, rick-burning and the destruction of threshing machines that threatened the traditional winter employment of agricultural labourers took place throughout Wiltshire and across much of southern England. In Whiteparish a crowd of 300 to 400 persons assembled, burnt a threshing machine belonging to Richard Webb of Melchet and reportedly went on to the home of magistrate Mr Matcham at Newhouse, between Whiteparish and Downton. A letter written by Webb only hours after the events notes that the crowd had offered no personal violence, but clearly shows Webb's anxieties for the

peace and security of the neighbourhood and his own household.

In 1831 three men, William Hayter, Charles Chandler and William Collins, were tried at the Special Commission sitting in Salisbury for the destruction of Webb's threshing machine. All were found guilty. Hayter was sentenced to seven years' transportation, Chandler to a years' imprisonment and Collins to imprisonment for 18 months. The severity of the sentences handed down to many of the Swing rioters throughout Wiltshire and beyond is reputed to have stifled rural protest for some years thereafter, though isolated cases of unrest continued to occur throughout southern England.

An extract from recent research by *Rosalind Johnson, Contributing Editor, Wiltshire VCH, now researching Landford and Whiteparish for Volume 21.*

### Bremhill's Online History Festival

We have been following with great interest the progress of the Bremhill History Project, which is in the process of producing both a book of local history and a chapter to go into the Wiltshire VCH Chippenham volume alongside a host of local activities to engage the Bremhill community. Wiltshire VCH has contributed to the project, which has been further boosted by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and funding from other bodies.

Everyone was apprehensive about the effects of the lockdown on the project, but in fact the professional researcher, Louise Ryland-Epton, was able to make excellent progress. The VCH chapter is almost complete and the local history book is well on its way, with completion planned for February in advance of publication later in 2021.

The community activities, though, have been harder hit, especially the history festival planned for September. For obvious reasons this had to be postponed and is now timetabled for September 2021, but the Bremhill project group were determined that there should be at least some activity this year.



Statue of Maud Heath, looking down on her causeway from Bremhill

Their response was an 'online' mini festival over the weekend of the 11th-13th September. A history trail was set up around the parish that weekend with display boards at 12 sites giving historic information and the whole route set out with the help of a downloadable App. To complete the picture, four online talks on subjects of local interest were given by experts in the field. The speakers included our own John Chandler and Louise Ryland-Epton.

The talks can still be viewed on the project website—[bremhillparishhistory.com](http://bremhillparishhistory.com)—which also gives more detail on the many other community activities which will go ahead when circumstances permit.

We wish this innovative project a happy conclusion in the coming year.

## The Coronavirus Situation

At the time of writing we are in the throes of our second National Lockdown. For many of us it does not seem quite as bad as the first one. We have all been there before and many businesses have worked out how they can continue to operate while still complying with the Government regulations. We all continue to stay local and stay safe.

Our researchers have managed to keep going in very difficult times: research on our volume on the Mere area (volume 19,) as well as that on the Chippenham area (volume 20), is now well advanced. For the Chippenham area, we now have just two more research contracts to let and we have let the first contract for research for our next volume, which will be on the Alderbury area (volume 21), and work on this is under-way.

At the WVCH Trust we have continued to do what we can despite having to cancel all plans for 2020 that involve people gathering together. As you will see from the front page, we have proudly launched our new website and, if you receive your WVCH news by email, you will have receive a flyer about our current fundraising appeal, launched in tandem with the new website.

This is basically a gentle reminder to all Friends to re-new their membership, if they have not already done so, and to encourage new members. We also gratefully receive one off donations from those who feel they can support us when there are so many charities in the same situation.

The annual subscription is unchanged at £20 for an individual or £30 for a couple. If you are able to make a larger donation, we would be extremely grateful. Please contact our Hon. Treasurer Tean Dallaway on 01380-871044, or at [t.dallaway@outlook.com](mailto:t.dallaway@outlook.com). If you wish to make a donation, you can do so using the following details: Wiltshire Victoria County History Trust, CAFbank sort code 40-52-40, account number 00033115 or through our new website [wiltshirehistory.org](http://wiltshirehistory.org).

Also on a fundraising theme, please note our membership of Easyfundraising, details of which can be found on the back page of this newsletter. Many High Street and online shops belong to this scheme and make a contribution to your nominated charity when you shop online. With Christmas on the horizon it is an easy way to contribute to our funds whilst doing your festive shopping; Marks and Spencer, Lakeland, Hotter Shoes, CurrysPCWorld, Liz Earle, Cotton Traders, Whittards, John Lewis and many more—just a few examples of supporting companies.



St Laurence Church, Downton,  
From The Moot

2020 has been a very challenging year for everyone. Thank you all for your continued support as we deal with a life that is constantly changing and learn to live life differently.

We wish you all the best Christmas you are able to celebrate and a safe and healthy 2021.



## Forthcoming Events

### CORONAVIRUS

All meetings and events remain cancelled until further notice.

We hope that all our Friends and supporters and their families are able to stay safe and well and look forward to being back in touch with you all soon.

### RAISE FUNDS FOR US WITH YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING

You may be shopping on-line more during this time of 'self isolation' and 'social distancing.' If so, please don't forget that you can help raise funds for us by joining **Easyfundraising**

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

You can also download a reminder button to your desktop, which will remind you if you shop with a company that is part of the scheme.

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

Many well known High Street and online shops take part in this scheme and it is a way of replacing some of the fundraising we are unable to pursue at the moment.



**There is no extra cost to you. It is merely accessing the charity donations of the supplier.**



If you are reading this Newsletter but you are not yet a Friend of WVCH please contact our Hon. Treasurer, Tean Dallaway, on 01380-871044 or at [t.dallaway@outlook.com](mailto:t.dallaway@outlook.com)  
Subscription rates are £20 pa single, £30 couple, £50 club/society, £100 corporate, £500 life

Considering making or updating your will? Please consider leaving a legacy to the WVCH Trust. A gift in your will is an excellent way to support causes which are important to you and, as charities are exempt from inheritance tax, it can also be tax-efficient for you.

This newsletter is distributed electronically to all those members and supporters who have supplied email addresses and given their express permission for us to contact them in this way, so saving on postage costs in the future and also ensuring that more of your contributions go towards the writing of the VCH.

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