

# CONTACT

Autumn/  
Winter  
2019/20

Frome Society for Local Study  
Frome and District Civic Society



*The Somerset and Dorset Railway*

## Officers and Committee of the Society

**President:** *Post currently vacant*

**Chair: Sara Morris\*\***

4, Richmond Road  
Frome BA11 4EQ 463580

**Honorary Secretary: Pat Eames\*\***

49, Mendip Drive  
Frome BA11 2HT 464464

**Vice-Chairman:** *Post currently vacant*

**Treasurer: Brian Marshall (co-opted)**

17, Laburnum Close  
Frome BA11 2UB 454392

**Membership Secretary: Sheila Gore**

41 Milk Street  
Frome BA11 3DP 07810 833246

### Committee Members

**Liz O'Sullivan\*\*** 812201

**Jennie O'Kane** 467787

**Paul Truscott\*\*** 300141

**Mike Hobbs (co-opted)** 461768

**Administrator: Lorraine Johnson**

info@fsls.org.uk

07515 965778

### Chairman of Frome & District Civic Society

**Richard Swann\*\*** 831256

\*\* Trustee

## Annual Subscriptions from 1st January 2020

Single Membership: £10.00

Joint Membership: £15.00

Life Membership Single: £100.00

Life Membership Joint: £150.00

## CHEQUE PAYMENTS

The Treasurer asks that all cheques should be made payable to 'Frome Society for Local Study' or 'FSLs'. The bank does not normally allow cheques made out to individuals to be paid into the Society account. Each year the Membership Secretary sends a considerable number of emails and letters and also makes telephone calls to remind members that their annual subscription is due.

Members are reminded that the preferred method of payment of your annual subscription is by standing order to FSLs, and a form is available from Sheila Gore or may be downloaded from the FSLs website, <http://www.fsls.org.uk>

### Frome Town Walk Guide(s)

FSLs has been organising the Frome Town Walks for many years for which there are currently four guides. At least one of them will be retiring at the end of 2019.

Would any member who is interested please contact me to discuss this. Full training will be given.

Alastair MacLeay on 01373 836 595 or via [info@fsls.org.uk](mailto:info@fsls.org.uk)

## Report from the Chair

This is my first report for *Contact* and I feel very privileged to be your new Chair and to follow Julian, who has been an excellent mentor to me and Chair for you all. Since taking over in March there seems to be quite a lot going on with the Society.

There have been requests for grants and loans for local heritage projects which the Society has been pleased to fulfil. We have given £1000 to the Black Swan to fund a digital self-guided tour of the history of Frome, £1000 for Rook Lane Arts to take the Singers' history into local schools with sculpture workshops also for children, £1500 to the Weavers and Spinners to buy new looms to teach more people to weave plus the promise of a publication loan to local writer Mick Davis for a book on local archaeology. We are funding a plaque for Singers organised by committee member Sheila Gore and Phil Gryce, a new member of the Civic Society committee.

As for Frome Society committee, we have unfortunately had two recent resignations; from Ewart Baldwin and Treasurer, Judith Macarthur. Luckily Brian Marshall from Frome Museum has offered to be our Treasurer as well as the Museum's which is a bonus for us and I hope will lead to closer working relationships between our two organisations. We have one new committee member, Mike Hobbs, a steward from Frome Museum who has been in business in Frome for many years and is proving to be a valuable addition to our group. The rest of the committee members are working hard to keep the Society going. Jennie O'Kane is leading a stalwart group organising excellent trips. Whilst Janet Howard is no longer a member of the committee she and John Peverley continue to organise our lectures and we are looking forward to a new season of stimulating interesting Saturday afternoons in the autumn.

Finally Pat Eames, supported by Mike Hobbs, is organising a society lunch for us in the Assembly Rooms for Saturday 26th October, booking form is in this edition of *Contact*.

Best Wishes to you all

Sara

July 2019



*Singer's shop, workshop and home no 25 Market Place, c. 1865*

## OTHER NEWS

### **An important announcement from the Outings Team**

We always take on-board any comments given after our Days Out and try to act on them as and when possible. From 2020 it has been decided that when we calculate the costs of the Outings, people will benefit from not only being members of the National Trust or English Heritage, but also if they are in Historic Houses. We thought that by making this news available now, should you wish to join HH, in the same way that some of you are members of NT or EH, this allows the opportunity to have a membership given as a Christmas gift or to be applied for in time for next spring.

Currently, individual annual membership costs £54 and joint membership is £86. This includes the members' quarterly magazine in addition to free entry to the properties and gardens within the HH scheme.

Applications are made to: 2 Chester Street, London SW1X 7BB or 01462 896688

### **Project to re-gild the Singers' shop sign**

Frome Society for Local Study was pleased to be able to fund work to re-gild the Singers' shop sign. On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2019 the premises at 25, Bath Street, Frome benefitted from the talents of Camilla Rose who painstakingly restored the historic signage to its former glory.



*Re-gilding of the Singers' sign by Camilla Rose, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2019*

### **Society Lunch**

Members are cordially invited to the Society's Annual Lunch which is to be held at the Assembly Rooms on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, arrival from 1.00pm for lunch at 1.30pm. Menu choices are available and should be indicated, along with any special dietary requirements, on the booking form which should be returned to Pat Eames by Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October at the latest.

The booking form is enclosed with this issue of *Contact* and we hope that as many of you as possible will wish to be present.

## Civic Society News

### **Planning in Frome: a newcomer's perspective**

A few months ago, I joined the Civic Society Planning Panel, a group of volunteers with relevant skills and experience who review planning and listed building applications in Frome. Our role, whether considering a major development or a single householder application, is to represent the interests of the town and its people to the decision-makers. The panel's advice goes to the Town Council and directly to Mendip District Council.

I'm a newcomer to Frome and this has been a crash course in understanding how the town is evolving. Every three weeks the panel goes through the latest batch of applications with a fine-tooth comb to tease out the potential implications and ask the right questions. Is a proposed development over-intensive for the site or the access? What impact might a new home extension have on neighbour amenity? Can too many coffee shops or bars unbalance a town centre? How much should a listed building be altered to make it more sustainable? Where will residents park when offices are converted to dwellings? We have to be mindful of local and national planning policy, and if we agree to object to an application, we don't do so lightly.

Until recently I lived in Bristol, where I worked with local groups and councillors on planning, licensing, parking and other urban issues. One priority was to mitigate the impacts of university expansion on housing. The 'gold rush' to create student accommodation saw family homes being converted to houses in multiple occupation, and city centre regeneration dominated by purpose-built residences. Nothing is sacrosanct: in one newsworthy case, an intact Jacobean plasterwork ceiling was (lawfully) smashed to pieces, the night before assessment for spot-listing, just for a few more cramped but profitable student bed spaces. Meanwhile, the housing crisis for other sections of the city's population, in both home ownership and rental markets, was escalating. At the time I left, we were making headway in local plan policy on student housing – but facing a new threat in the rapid growth of short lets (less than 6 months) fuelled by 'airbnb' businesses.

All this taught me that planning conflicts are rarely clear-cut, and often involve balancing one 'good' outcome against another – in Bristol, the economic benefits of university and tourist growth vs. the housing needs of the broader community. Here in Frome, I can see a different but parallel conflict, between protecting employment space (a local priority for the town, to reduce levels of out-commuting) and building more homes (a national requirement which is reflected in Mendip District Council's priorities). This is especially evident in the current Saxonvale proposals, where stakeholders are struggling to bridge the gaps between them. There is no easy answer, but the resolution has to be in achieving a fair balance of interests.

Personally, I am frustrated by the limited leverage that even a large town like Frome can exercise in the three-tier Local Authority system. In Bristol, a unitary authority, the relationship between communities and decision makers is more direct and joined-up, with ward councillors representing their constituents across the whole gamut of city and county policy. We also had a Mayor, and the jury's still out on whether so much power in one person is a good thing. But I can say it always felt good to make a point in Full Council and know his response would be well publicised and followed through. Reasoned argument in the public realm, combined with 'quiet diplomacy' behind the scenes, helped us gain a lot of traction for our communities.

Dr Patricia Smith

## 2019/20 FSL Lecture Programme

All lectures take place in the Assembly Rooms at the rear of Frome Memorial Theatre (BA11 1EB). Lectures start at 2.30pm apart from the lecture on 21st March 2020 when the talk will be preceded by the AGM at 2pm. Visitors are welcome but are asked to pay an entry fee of £3.00.

### October 5th 2019. Clare Lyall – Trowbridge Museum: Onwards and Upwards

Clare has worked in the Museum and Heritage sector for the last 27 years and has had overall responsibility for managing Trowbridge Museum's £2.4 million expansion over the last 5 years. This has included a grant of £1.2 million from the Heritage Fund. Clare's talk entitled 'Onwards and Upwards', the project's mantra, will describe the process of getting to where they are with the project and how Trowbridge's expanded museum will look and the impact it will have upon heritage in the region.

### October 19th 2019. Richard Brunning - The Lost Islands of Somerset

Richard is an archaeologist with the South West Heritage Trust. He has particular responsibility for the Somerset Levels and Moors area. They form a natural floodplain at the heart of Somerset with deep deposits of peat and clay built up over thousands of years. 'Islands' of hard geology rise up above these deposits forming dry areas of land, safe from winter flooding, that have formed the natural focus for human activity over the last 10,000 years. Richard will talk about recent archaeological evidence for some of that human activity from the earliest Mesolithic hunter gatherers to the medieval period. Richard's books will be available to buy.



### November 2nd 2019. Annette Burkitt - Frome's Dark Age Landscape

Using information and research from a combination of sources including history, archaeology, folklore and place names, Annette will try to see if these can help us to peer into our landscape's early history. Who were its inhabitants? What do we know about the British Kingdom of Dumnonia? Can we discern anything about the pre-Saxon past and how important a place was Frome in Wessex? Annette's book 'Flesh and Bones of Frome Selwood and Wessex' will be available to buy.

### The Ashworth Memorial Lecture

#### November 16th 2019. Peter Wigley - William Smith's Geological Mapping in Somerset

Peter is a geologist with a long-standing interest in William Smith's maps. William Smith was born in Oxfordshire in 1769 but it was in Somerset that he did much of his early geological mapping and, while working as a surveyor on the Somerset Coal Canal, developed the concept of layering of strata, a science now known as stratigraphy. Peter will show examples of Smith's early geological maps around Bath. His original survey of the canal, together with Jeremiah Cruse's map of the canal, will be discussed using modern geology and high-resolution elevation data (LiDAR). Of all the counties of England that Smith mapped geologically it was Somerset that he knew best yet little of his detailed mapping of the county survives. One exception is a John Cary County Map of Somerset which includes some of his geological line work. This map has now been reconstructed and will be discussed during the talk with emphasis on the areas around Frome. As an illustration, Smith's geology will be overlain on Jeremiah Cruse's 1813 map of Frome. Peter has created an interactive website of Smith's maps [www.strata-smith.com](http://www.strata-smith.com)

#### November 30th 2019. Michael Hill - The Revised Pevsner for Dorset

Michael is an architectural historian and an expert on the historic buildings of Dorset. The 48 volumes of *The Buildings of England*, originally written by Nikolaus Pevsner, between 1951 and 1974, are being comprehensively revised and enlarged. In the original Pevsner for Dorset, one of the last to be completed, Nikolaus Pevsner visited all the churches and John Newman visited all the secular buildings. In the revised edition, Michael has visited all of them and will share some of his experiences with us.

#### December 14th 2019. Amy Jeffs - A Picture Book for a Medieval Knight (in-training)

Amy has a PhD in Art History from the University of Cambridge for which she researched illustrated history manuscripts. Her main focus was on one in the British Library dated 1338-40 which is a compendium of somewhat swashbuckling British and French legends in vernacular verse with dynamic illustrations. It includes one of the earliest illustrations of Stonehenge and the earliest image of the tomb of Edward II in Gloucester cathedral. The book is thought to have been made for a young boy in the south-west of England. Amy will be especially concerned with how it can be shown that a book, 680 years old, was designed to be enjoyed, pored over and read at bed-time.

#### January 11th 2020. Chris Eldridge - The Normans in Wessex

Chris is head of history at Wells Cathedral School. Last January he spoke to us about Alfred the Great and the Somerset Connection. This time he will turn his attention to the Normans. His talk will include a description of the origins of the Normans, the part that Somerset played in the events of 1066 and how Wessex was reshaped by Norman occupation.

**January 25th 2020. Francis Greenacre - From Bristol to the Sea**

Francis was Curator of Fine Art at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery from 1969 to 1997. Most often remembered are the exhibitions celebrating the artists of the Bristol School, which Francis has done so much to promote. These have included a 1989 show of Francis Danby's works, which went on to the Tate Gallery and the exhibitions of Samuel Jackson's watercolours, W J Muller and the 'Marine Artists of Bristol'. The Avon Gorge has ensured that no other inland port has a more various and spectacular approach to its harbour than Bristol. This lecture will tell the story of a maritime city whose dramatic history and superb setting has inspired artists over the last three centuries. It will include the work of artists who visited Bristol such as J M W Turner, Thomas Girtin, J S Cotman, Albert Goodwin, the Nashes and Ravilious as well as resident artists such as Francis Danby and the artists of the Bristol School. Highlights will include Muller's remarkable sketches of the 1831 Bristol Riots, Jackson's watercolours of Brunel's alternative proposals for the Clifton Suspension Bridge and Walter's paintings of Brunel's Great Western and Great Britain.



**February 8th 2020. Andy Linham - Remembering the Somerset and Dorset Railway**

The S&D was a line connecting Bath and Bournemouth, with a branch from Evercreech Junction to Burnham-on-Sea, and connection to a ferry across the Bristol Channel to Wales. Known as the 'Slow and Dirty' or the 'Slow and Doubtful' it was closed in 1966 as part of the Beeching cuts despite protests from the local community. Andrew will tell us about the history and development of the line and show his original film footage of a journey across the Somerset Levels and one from Bath to Bournemouth.



**February 22nd 2020. Adrian Tinniswood - Behind the Throne: A Domestic History of the Royal Household**

Adrian's book, 'Behind the Throne' is a history of royal families. Charles I maintained a household of 2,000 people while Victoria's medical establishment consisted of thirty doctors, three dentists and a chiropodist. Elizabeth II has a full-time staff of 1,200. A royal household was a community, a vast machine. Historian Adrian Tinniswood, who last spoke to the Society in December 2016, will uncover the reality of five centuries of life at the English Court, taking us on a remarkable journey from one Queen Elizabeth to another and exploring life as it was lived by clerks, courtiers, clowns and crowned heads: the power struggles and petty rivalries, the tension between duty and desire; the practicalities of cooking dinner for thousands, or ensuring that the king won when he played a game of tennis. Adrian's book will be available to buy.

**March 7th 2020. Dave Chapple - Somerset Coal Miners: a social and political history**

Dave Chapple is a socialist historian and active trade unionist. His talk will summarise the important landmarks in the long struggle of the Somerset coal miners for dignity and respect from their employers: with famous, or infamous, surnames including Waldegrave, The Duchy of Cornwall, Beauchamp, Rees-Mogg and Daisy Countess of Warwick. These landmarks include the riots of the 18th and early 19th centuries; the early efforts from the 1850's to 1872 to form a trade union, the serious strikes of 1874, 1889 and 1893, the long-drawn out move from Liberal to Labour support, the Dunkerton riot of January 1909, the bitter defeats of 1921 and 1926, right through to post-war nationalisation, 1950's stabilisation, 1960's decline and closure in September 1973. The talk will also touch on mine safety, mine accidents and disasters, and the coalfield social culture: quoits, anyone?



**March 21st 2020. AGM at 2.00pm followed by Phil Nichols - Securing the Shadows: Somerset Photographers 1839-1939**

The talk will focus on the lives of some of the photographers in Frome and the surrounding area. The earliest of these was Frederick C Bird, who ran a photographic studio in Market Place, Frome from 1856-1866 and his nationally known son Graystone Bird. Another Joseph Humphreys who worked in Frome from 1889-1900 handed himself in to Frome Police in 1895, asking to be charged (for what, will be revealed in the talk!)

*[FSLs publications will be on sale before the lecture]*

<b>PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Woad to This</i>	24.00
<i>The Butler and Tanner Story</i>	12.00
<i>The Book of Frome</i> (fifth edition)	15.00
<i>A History of Mells</i> (third edition)	7.50
<i>The Kings Peace</i>	6.00
<i>Villages of the Frome Area</i>	4.50
<i>The History of Nunney</i> (second edition)	7.50
<i>The Toll Houses of Somerset</i>	9.95
<i>Stoke St Michael in old Photographs</i>	7.50
<i>A History of Stoke St Michael</i>	8.50
<i>A History of Holcombe</i>	10.00
<i>The Book of Leigh on Mendip</i>	10.00
<i>A History of Wanstrow</i>	10.00
<i>Marston House</i>	3.00
<i>The Mystery of Fidele</i>	2.50
<i>Frome through the Ages</i>	5.00
<i>Willow Vale Frome</i> on CD	10.00
<i>Bath Street</i>	5.00
<i>The Sheppards and eighteenth century Frome</i> on CD	10.00
<i>Frome Street and Place Names</i> (fourth edition)	6.00
<i>Frome Heritage Trail</i> (third edition)	3.00
<i>Experiences of a nineteenth century Gentleman</i>	10.00
<i>Crime and Punishment in Regency Frome</i>	3.50
<i>Argyll House Frome</i>	3.00
<i>The Blue House Frome</i>	3.00
<i>The Buildings of Frome</i> (third edition)	9.00
<i>Future of the Past</i>	1.00
<i>The Bounds of Selwood</i>	2.00
<i>Historic Inns of Frome</i>	10.00
<i>Rodden Church</i>	3.00

<b>Yearbooks</b>	
FSLs Yearbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 on CD	10.00
FSLs Yearbook 5	3.00
FSLs Yearbooks 6 and 16 on CD	10.00
FSLs Yearbooks 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 each	6.00
FSLs Yearbooks 12 and 13 each	10.00
FSLs Yearbooks 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21 and 22 each	10.00
FSLs Yearbooks 19 and 20 on CD	10.00
1903 OS map of Frome (flat)	9.00
1838 Borough map of Frome on CD	10.00
1886 OS map of Frome on CD	10.00
Framed Painting of Frome by WW Wheatley	5.00
Painting of Frome by WW Wheatley (unframed)	1.00

Frome Society publications are available from:

Winstones Hunting Raven Bookshop, Cheap Street, Frome; Frome Museum; Frome Information Centre or from Alastair MacLeay, Prospect House, Trudoxhill, Frome, Somerset BA11 5DP (01373 836 595)

Postage & packing extra at cost.

e-mail: [info@fsls.org.uk](mailto:info@fsls.org.uk) website [www.fsls.org.uk](http://www.fsls.org.uk)



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