

CONTACT

Autumn/
Winter
2020/21

Frome Society for Local Study
Frome and District Civic Society



Doris Hatt

Officers and Committee of the Society

President: Hilary Daniel

Chair: Sara Morris**

4, Richmond Road
Frome BA11 4EQ 463580

Honorary Secretary: Pat Eames**

49, Mendip Drive
Frome BA11 2HT 464464

Vice-Chairman: Mike Hobbs** 461768

Treasurer: Brian Marshall**

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

Bob Cuzner** 473220

Mick Davis mickdavisbooks@btinternet.com

Liz Corfield lizbvn@hotmail.co.uk

Administrator: Lorraine Johnson

info@fsls.org.uk

07515 965778

Chairman of Frome & District Civic Society

Richard Swann** 831256

** Trustee

Annual Subscriptions from 1st January 2021

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>

If you bank online please use the bank account details to set up a standing order or one off payment, the account name to be credited is 'Frome Society'.

YEARBOOK/CONTACT DISTRIBUTION

To make things easier for our distributors of the Society's *Contact* and Yearbook the Committee had agreed that from this year all members would be able to collect the Yearbook only from Frome Heritage Museum in North Parade themselves, with *Contact* being distributed as normal.

However due to the pandemic it has been agreed that for this year only the Yearbook will be distributed by our normal distributors together with *Contact*. This may mean that the Yearbook and *Contact* may not arrive together as our distributors are finding it heavy to take around these at the same time which is the reason for the change of distribution as of next year providing we do not have the pandemic problem.

Report from the Chair

This year has been unique in the long history of the Frome Society, as there have been no coach trips and regrettably our autumn programme of lectures and our Society meal are postponed due to Covid 19. Also cancelled was the Frome Festival talk organised by the Society, 'The Spoils of War' by Christopher Jolle but hopefully this will happen at next year's Festival. I have been able to keep members on email informed but unfortunately there have not been any opportunities to communicate with members without email unless they have been told by other members.

I received a very detailed email from the Memorial Theatre explaining that currently government guidelines do not allow gatherings of more than 30 people and the Theatre are required to impose strict social distancing regulations which would make a meeting very difficult. The Committee and I also feel concern about inviting you to a mass gathering indoors while the virus is still prevalent. We also don't know how the situation will be by October when the second spike could hit and we could be back in lockdown... hopefully not!

The Lectures Planning group are putting together a programme of Zoom lectures, some from speakers already booked for our next season and we intend to hold an AGM by Zoom on Saturday 31st October when we had hoped to have our annual meal. It has been decided to postpone the meal until October 2021 and the trips group hope to re-organise this year's coach trips for next spring and summer. We shall send out details, including a link, by email about the AGM nearer the time.

I realise that the Society programme for the rest of this year is reliant on members having access to the internet and also for the Society to be able to reach you. We are aware that some of you do have an email address but the Society does not know it so if you have not been receiving regular Mailchimp information emails and do have an email address please contact membership@fsls.org.uk and we can put you on our circulation list. I strongly recommend that those of you who don't have a computer consider getting one as during the next few months this could provide you with a vital way of maintaining contact not only with the Frome Society but with the wider world.

In view of this lack of service from the Society during 2020 the committee has agreed not to raise subscriptions until at least January 2022.

I apologise for writing such a bleak report but hope the Society can safely resume its normal programme next year. In the meantime I hope you all remain well and contentedly occupied.

Sara Morris

OTHER NEWS

Coronavirus Project

The Coronavirus project was started just as lockdown began, at the end of March. The idea behind it is to record the way the virus is affecting ordinary people in Frome. I've now begun to assemble the material that I have received so far so that when the time comes it will be ready to deposit at the Museum. Included will be:

- Over 150 photographs which have documented the town in lockdown and some in partial recovery. I've looked at the ones on the English heritage site and ours stand up well alongside them
- Copies of 100 letters sent from companies about how they're dealing with lockdown and how it affects clients
- Diaries
- 6 poems
- A recorded interview between Martin Dimery, Morag McLaren and Fay Goodridge from Cooper's Hall about the cancellation of concerts and the Frome Festival
- A Day in the Life of The Old Bakehouse
- Examples of home schooling, advice to parents, a risk assessment, newsletters, etc
- Business as Unusual reports from Frome Town Council about how businesses have been affected.
- An article in the *Frome Times* of 23rd July about the project
- Examples of rainbows, masks and scrubs bags
- Before and after haircuts

Census Project

As far as the census project goes there are 14 of us researching the following 18 streets: Badcox, Button Street, Castle Street, Catherine Hill, Catherine Street, Cheap Street, Coffin Spring Lane, Fromefield, Grope Lane now Trinity Row, Justice Lane, King Street, Naish's Street, Palmer Street, Paul Street, South Parade, Stony Street, Vicarage Street, Whittox Lane. There may be more in the pipeline if I can find more volunteers, or persuade those I have to take on more streets! Most people have either finished their transcriptions or are coming towards the end and are now looking for more information through newspaper, directories and photographs. Added to this I can also contribute the complete transcriptions of the Workhouse that I worked on last year.

Because of the virus it has been impossible for us to meet, but by the time you read this we will have had our first outdoor, socially distanced meeting – weather permitting. Our discussion will hopefully have given us an opportunity to look at each other's work, help each other with any obstacles, decide how to progress, decide whether we will have an exhibition and whether we will add all of the information collected on to the internet. I hope that both projects have been fairly relaxed and that those who are participating have enjoyed what they've been doing. If you know of anyone who might like to join either group please do let me know, by emailing me: lizbvn@hotmail.co.uk It is not a pre-requisite for volunteers participating in the census project to have access to a family history site. We can work around that.

Liz Corfield

Of Mounds and Men

Mick Davis has written a fascinating description of his research into the barrows in the area surrounding Frome and Radstock. The Neolithic period marked not only the transition from a transient human existence to a settled one but also a most significant shift in how our species viewed itself – no longer as part of nature as the hunter gathers had been, but aside from, and able to control and master it. Settlement enabled huge increases in population along with the rise of organised societies and religion. One of the earliest known practices involved ritualistic activities resulting in the creation of the large earthen monuments known as long barrows; enigmatic creations connected with the death and the ceremonies associated with it.

The area around Frome in North Somerset is richer in these prehistoric remains than is generally realised. Many of the sites were first recorded by Rev John Skinner vicar of Camerton from 1800 to 1839. He was a fascinating and difficult man whose diaries have been stored away in the British Library since his shocking death in 1839. During his time as an antiquarian he sketched and opened many barrows from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and his descriptions and the drawings of local sites are reproduced in this book for the first time.

As well as making Skinner's research available to a wider audience, each site still in existence has been visited and photographed by the author, wherever possible, providing the first comprehensive guide to prehistoric barrows in this area. *Of Mounds and Men* is aimed at the general reader as well as the specialist and goes some way to explaining these fascinating and puzzling sites. It serves as an introduction to the history of the period and as a guidebook to be taken on visits.

Refurbishment of Thomas Bunn's Grave

Here are two Society members Paul Truscott and John Boorer standing beside Thomas Bunn's grave in Christchurch cemetery. They have just finished restoring it back to its former glory, repainting the railings, pruning the conifer tree so the plaque can be clearly seen and strimming the grass. This is a very generous contribution to Frome's heritage.

Thomas Bunn 1767-1853 was one of the great characters of the town. A wealthy solicitor, who took a big interest in the local architecture, he was a philanthropist endowing a school and contributing to improving housing for the



poor in the Trinity area. For some years the Frome Society has taken responsibility for the upkeep of his grave. It is great to see the grave looking so smart again.

An interesting postscript to this is the fact that Paul and John worked at the same firm at the beginning of their working lives and here in retirement are once again working together after a gap of many years. Many thanks to them both for doing this excellent job.

Yearbook

As some members may know Alastair MacLeay is retiring from editing the Frome Society Year Book and issue 23 will be his last, although he will continue to run the publications side for the Society. Alastair has done an amazing job as editor since he took over from Michael McGarvie with issue 14 in 2011 and has passed the job over to me from issue 24 for

2021. For me this is a great opportunity and responsibility and one that I am really excited about.

I have been a member of the Society since 1992 and although I have not been particularly active in its proceedings I have followed its developments closely. This brief note is partly to introduce myself and also to appeal to members for articles, photographs, reminiscences and pretty much anything that members and non-members alike would like to see or read about connected with the ancient hundred of Frome. Of course I lack the huge depth of knowledge and experience of my predecessors but hope to compensate for this with hard work and enthusiasm - and of course the support of the Society's membership in letting me know what they would like to see in future issues.

We now have a designated email address yearbookeditor@fsls.org.uk and all contributions should be sent here preferably in Word format.

Mick Davis

Civic Society News

Despite this wretched pandemic and the social distancing measures since March, our Civic Society Planning Panel has continued to contribute and respond to local planning applications. As the Council offices have been emptied of staff, the normal processes of the council's planning services have been disrupted and stretched, possibly resulting in fewer applications than we would normally have expected. There have still been some significant developments slowly moving through the planning application and policy process:

Land at Sandys Hill Lane

One of the most noteworthy is the mixed use proposal lodged in July 2019 for up to 235 houses, employment floor space of up to 4,050sqm, a 'Drive Thru' unit of up to 170sqm, a food retail building of approximately 1,800sqm (Aldi) and a non-food retail unit of approximately 1,400sqm.

The site lies beyond the town, between Keyford House and the Marston Trading Estate. It encompasses fields, a farmhouse and outbuildings. The proposed access is off the 'McDonalds' mini-roundabout. Sandys Hill Lane is to be closed off to access from Little Keyford Lane, except for emergency vehicles. We provided supported historical background information for an application by a neighbour to have Keyford Farmhouse listed. Regrettably the farmhouse was not listed, and is to be demolished under the current plans.

District Councillor for Frome, Helen Kay, a member of Mendips Planning Board, persuaded other members to defer the application at their June (virtual) meeting, to give time to further investigate the poor access and to look at the re-use of Keyford Farmhouse and outbuildings, rather than knocking them down. The application returned in July with the recommendation of the planning officer that "the public benefits arising from the development outweigh the harm arising from loss of Keyford farmhouse and associated outbuildings".

On the access issue, the planning officer stated “ Officers remain of the view that the access arrangements as proposed would not be harmful to highway safety” while acknowledging that the mixed use development would have benefitted from additional access points from the Estate that were potentially available.

At the Planning Board meeting in July, a proposal from Cllr Kay to have the application refused on the grounds of the ‘substantial harm’ to the Farmhouse failed on the casting vote of the Board Chair, and the application was passed.

Mendip Local Plan Part II and housing need: One of the most significant changes to Mendip’s Local Plan in recent months is that the allocation of land for housing has passed the government inspectors scrutiny under the Local Plan Part II process. An additional hearing is now due in September 2020.

The Government has meanwhile increased the housing supply requirement from Mendip under the New NPPF (Contact passim). The existing allocation under Mendip’s Local Plan cannot now demonstrate a 5 year new housing supply. This means that Mendip’s local planning policies carry significantly less weight when it comes to allocating land for housing and developers have more freedom to challenge development boundaries.

This situation is unlikely to change for some time according to Mendip’s planning policy department: “Although there are a number of housing applications under consideration, we are not suddenly going to get the five year supply back. “

Mendip - A New Plan

No sooner had the Local Plan Part II been approved, Mendip embarked on a new review of the entire Local Plan to make it fit for the future (2020-2040), starting with ‘changes in approach and policy detail to take forward the Mendip’s climate change commitment,’ and ‘ Revising and testing local housing need against national requirements’.

The starting point for the plan would be the current government housing numbers for a plan review running from 2020 – 2040. At 600 homes a year, this would require a further 4000-5000 homes to be identified through the district in the plan process, above existing supply and sites in LPpt2.

However the government is going to review the methodology for its top down housing requirements later this year. It’s too early to know what these will mean for the plan and five year supply. There may also be national reforms which affect the planning, plan process and sites over this period as well.

Saxonvale

I keep saying this but could it be that, finally, after many years of debate and frustration, the future of Saxonvale will be settled? This extensive site on the margins of the town centre has seen the rise and fall of many, often inappropriate planning applications spanning 25 years. The current application is for outline consent to create a mixed development of the entire site by Acorn Property Group, backed by Mendip as owner/planning authority. What could possibly go wrong?

Members of Frome Civic Society have been engaging with all parties throughout the development of the scheme in consultation with Acorn, their Architects and Mendip as well as the Frome Chamber of Commerce, Frome Town Council, and other local interested bodies.

There is a good deal of consensus among local groups represented at consultations, that this scheme has major flaws that have not been addressed.

We recently issued a press release calling on Mendip to refuse what is, in effect, its own application, on the grounds that it:

- does not comply with the core policy for Frome or the vision for Saxonvale set out in its own Local Plan;
- fails to provide the town centre facilities and employment opportunities set out in the Local Plan;
- proposes unacceptable building heights, mass and density that will harm Frome’s character and heritage;
- has not convincingly resolved the projected traffic and congestion problems of the present scheme.

There are unanswered questions surrounding Acorn and Mendip’s financial agreement and the due process of Acorn’s appointment. Not to mention the all-important but, apparently, non-existent ‘Viability Assessment’ that has been used to argue the necessity for so many dwellings with so few affordable, with so little employment space. Will these issues force the current Saxonvale application to stumble at the final hurdle? Although no official date has been set for the Planning Board to consider it, it is understood to be in a few weeks. It is not known what plans there may be, if any, for public engagement or the meeting venue.

Given the impact of the pandemic, reshaping our outlook, it seems likely that future plans will evolve for this complex site, whatever the outcome of this application.

Richard Swann RIBA

2020/21 Zoom Lectures Programme

October 10th 2020. Nick Hersey – Emma Sheppard: Going where a lady should not go?

The talk will begin by describing the families of Emma Brown and her husband-to-be George Wood Sheppard and the way in which religion played an initial and ongoing explanation of the motivation of Emma Sheppard. The reasons behind the passing of the 1834 Poor Law and the concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor are also examined. The core of the talk will focus on Emma Sheppard's 'small deeds of kindness' and various groups that she sought to help: children, the elderly and prostitutes.

October 31st 2020. FSLs Annual General Meeting

November 7th 2020. David Wilkins – Schoolboy, Servant and GWR Apprentice

The talk is based on David's 2017 book of the same name. It is edited from a personal memoir bought at auction in 2014. The memoir described the childhood and adolescence of a Somerset lad in the late 19th century.

Although it described real events, the memoir was written anonymously and detailed research was necessary to uncover the identity of the original author – Alfred Plumley, born in Burrington in the Mendips in 1874.

The book tells Alfred's story in his own words as he goes to the village school, becomes a boy servant at the "big house" and eventually goes off to seek his fortune with the Great Western Railway. David adds short sections and footnotes describing the socio-historical context for the events in Alfred's life.



Using photographs from the book, David's talk will tell Alfred's story. David will also describe the 'detective work' necessary to identify Alfred and will talk about the editing process that was required to turn Alfred's original words into a book.

December 5th 2020. Yvette Staelens – The Lost Somerset Singers

In August 1903 when Cecil Sharp was visiting his friend, the vicar of Hambridge, near Langport, he heard the gardener, John England sing 'The Seeds of Love'. This was a catalytic moment, and for five years Cecil spent nearly every day of his spare time in Somerset travelling hundreds of miles by train and bicycle, meeting more than 300 singers and meticulously collecting and recording more than 2,000 tunes in his notebooks. Yvette Staelens has for many years researched the work of Cecil Sharp, and in 2004, with the help of the Somerset County Council, she published the Somerset Folk Map. Yvette also organises the Voice of the People Community Choirs and singing workshops and in this talk, will be telling us about the story of Cecil Sharp in Somerset and singing some of the songs that he collected from local people, who he also photographed. Copies of the Somerset Folk Map and CDs for sale can be found on her web site www.yvettestaelens.com.

December 19th 2020. Peter Clark – Winston Churchill and the West of England

There are thousands of books written about Winston Churchill. The Society's former Chairman, Peter Clark, is adding to the literature with an unexplored angle. He has written about the places in the UK (including Ireland) that have some association with him. Churchill's Britain: from the Antrim Coast to the Isle of Wight is being published by Haus in September 2020. Peter will focus on Churchill's associations with Somerset and Bristol. He will talk about Churchill's first political speech, where he was publicly whipped by a suffragette and will illustrate some lesser known aspects of the Churchill story.

Zoom lectures are new territory for both Frome Society and for some of our lecturers. There might be problems as we learn but please bear with us. A decision on whether the talks after Christmas will be by Zoom or face-to-face will be taken later and members notified in December.

The following talks have been planned and will happen either by Zoom or in person: Stephen Lisney – Doris Hatt: Revolutionary Artist; Michael Davis – Adelard of Bath; Amy Frost – William Beckford: The Extraordinary Collector

A trip to Southampton for the Mayflower 400 was planned for September 2020, this had to be cancelled but it is hoped that we will be able to run this trip in 2021. Tudor House Museum have organised a Zoom-only talk which we plan to show.

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE	£
<i>Of Mounds and Men</i>	12.00
<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>A History of Chapmanslade</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>	3.50
<i>Historic Inns of Frome</i>	10.00

<i>Rodden Church</i>	3.00
<i>Flesh and Bones of Frome, Selwood and Wessex</i>	12.95
<i>Woodhouse Castle</i>	10.00
<i>Frome Frolics</i>	5.00

Yearbooks

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, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 each	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
1886 map of central Frome (flat or folded)	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 website www.fsls.org.uk



Frome Society for Local Study

10% discount on book purchases
Please present this token at
Hunting Raven Bookshop
to get a 10% discount on purchases.