

CONTACT

Autumn/
Winter
2021

Frome Society for Local Study
Frome and District Civic Society



Beckford's Tower in Bath: a Somerset Folly

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Annual Subscriptions from 1st January 2021

Single Membership: £10.00

Joint Membership: £15.00

Life Membership Single: £100.00

Life Membership Joint: £150.00

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 Liz Corfield 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’.

VOLUNTEER GUIDES REQUIRED: FROME TOWN WALKS

The Frome Town Walks are organised by the Frome Society for Local Study and take place on the second Sunday in June, July, August and September, and the first Sunday in July during the Frome Festival. They set off at 2.30 pm outside the Round Tower in Justice Lane and are designed to give an understanding of the development of the history and economy of the town from its foundation in 685 AD by St Aldhelm, through the middle ages to the present day. There is special emphasis on Frome’s listed buildings with their broad range of religious and vernacular architecture.

The Society needs to recruit more guides. Therefore, if any member is interested in volunteering for this role, please contact Alastair MacLeay to discuss.

Full training will be given.

Report from the Chair

Dear Members

It is with great pleasure that I write another report from the Chair, especially as I hope very soon to be able to meet face to face with you all.

I have been pleased to be able to meet some of you on a couple of occasions recently. Once was the Festival Society Talk at Rook Lane Chapel when military historian, Christopher Joll, talked about his recently published book 'The Spoils of War'. This was a controversial subject which provoked a lively discussion. Then on 14th July some of us went to the Russell Cotes Museum in Bournemouth where we were blessed with good weather. Unfortunately Covid restrictions were still in place so only 26 passengers could attend but I hope that for the September 6 trip to Southampton a full coach can travel.

This year has been dominated by Covid and unfortunately those not with computers could not enjoy what we could offer on Zoom, already mentioned in my AGM report, so let's hope our autumn programme of lectures at the Assembly Rooms can go ahead.

Fingers crossed, October should be a good month for the Society. On Saturday 9 October there will be the first lecture of the season by Jonathan Holt on Somerset Follies, and also the AGM, the first since I was elected chair in March 2019. For those of you who have not yet got a copy of this year's Yearbook, you will be able to collect one from the Assembly Rooms. Again please refer to my AGM report for more details about the Yearbook and why it was not delivered to your home this year.

On Saturday 16 October Pat Eames is once again organising a Society lunch. David Lassman has agreed to organise another quiz to entertain and stimulate you during lunch. The booking form and menu will be available with this edition of Contact.

Then on October 23rd there will be the second lecture of the season.

On a more serious note I and the Society Committee have come to the conclusion that we really want Members to pay their subscription by the end of March. Every year the Membership secretary and Treasurer, Brian Marshall, have to chase up the non-payers. Some people decide not to continue their Membership without informing the Society so from 2022 if we have not received your subscription (still £10 for an individual and £15 for a couple) by the end of March we shall assume you no longer want to be a member and you won't receive *Contact* or the Yearbook or be included on trips and lectures.

However, I hope you all enjoy what is left of summer, stay well and I and my Committee colleagues look forward to seeing you in the autumn..

With very best wishes to you all
Sara Morris

Alastair and Marie-Louise MacLeay at the Dissenters' Cemetery on Midsummer's day 21st June this year in very unseasonal midsummer weather placing a red rose on the grave of Katharine Ashworth, the Society's patron. In the 1970s Mrs. Ashworth donated her house in Wine Street to the Society. The property was subsequently sold and has provided the firm financial basis which has helped the Society to continue to operate to the present day and I hope for many years to come. The only recompense Mrs Ashworth requested was a red rose to be placed on her grave on midsummer's day.



FROME HERITAGE MUSEUM

Our coming activities will include: a joint venture with FSLs to display Cockey castings in conjunction with the placing of a blue plaque in Palmer Street; the planning of research into local history through our newspaper collections; the launch of a new website, giving internet access to the Frome Museum Catalogue; conservation of our famous collection of Singer images which are being included in our digital on-line Catalogue; and an exhibition to commemorate the centenary celebrations of Frome College. Here is a flavour:

Adlib Internet Catalogue	Christmas Display - Rich & Poor
Cockey Celebrations	Extracts from the Museum's newspapers
Frome College Centenary Exhibition	Frome Historic Buildings Trust Donation to FHM
Frome Photographed	New Website and Timeline
Singer Images Conservation	St John's Church Archives
Street of Shops	Wedding Costumes of the 40s & 50s exhibition.

Most importantly though, will be our attention to your safety whilst visiting the Museum. Please follow the guidance we will provide about safe distancing, movement, sanitising and masks.

Having condensed these great plans into a list it is necessary to acknowledge the enormity of trying to fulfil them! Running a museum does require the traditional collecting of artefacts, but there is so much more: on-line cataloguing; conservation of images; identification; provenance; display and exhibiting; not to mention, maintenance; financial management, IT infrastructure; publicity and communication.

Do you have any skills that could contribute to these areas? Would you enjoy being part of the re-invigoration of Frome's own Museum? If you would be interested to attend an informal meeting at the Museum in September (date to be arranged) to explore these issues please simply send your name by e-mail to: info@frome-heritage-museum.org and head the message with 'Informal Meeting at Museum' and we will send full details to you as soon as possible.

Bob Cuzner, Chair of Board of Trustees

CIVIC SOCIETY UPDATE

Planning review meetings

Despite further lockdowns, our Panel has continued to review all the planning and listed building applications that come forward in the Frome area. Although working remotely, we have continued to discuss and debate online in order to achieve a balanced opinion, which we then submit to both Frome Town Council and Mendip District Council. The great majority of applications concern individual developments, especially house extensions or small new builds. We have been seeing more proposals to create space for home working. In general we encourage developments that increase the size and availability of much needed homes. However, we do object to applications where we feel that the development is over-intensive for the site, would adversely affect neighbouring properties, or fail to meet space or parking standards.

Greenfield developments south of Keyford

Three applications totalling 325 dwellings on fields south of Keyford were considered by Mendip District Council Planning Board on 26th July. The site is allocated under Mendip's Local Plan Part II and the examining Inspector had required that it be master-planned as a whole. Officers recommended that two applications be approved and the other refused. The Civic Society argued that there was no broad vision for a joined-up community, no clear design strategy for buildings or streetscapes, and no coherent infrastructure or access plan. We also asked that none of the house designs be approved, as the design and materials were totally out of character. The Board supported our views and also had concerns about impact on ecology and landscape, road congestion and safety, and the homes not being designed to zero carbon standards. The Board unanimously determined to defer decisions on all three applications, requiring the masterplan to be brought up to adequate standards and other issues addressed.

'Selwood Garden Community'

At the time of writing the application for a further 1700 new homes beyond the Keyford sites is imminent. Members may be aware of a campaign against this development, based on the proposals presented for consultation at the end of last year. The Civic Society has expressed its own concerns about the size and scale of the proposed development

and the impacts that the significant population increase this have on Frome's physical and service infrastructure. However we will be scrutinising the documentation in detail and until we have done so our stance remains neutral. If we do find that the proposals are harmful to Frome and its community, we expect to face extreme difficulty in opposing this development, against the new government planning policies on housing, Mendip District Council's drive to build as many homes as possible, and a well-funded promoter.

New planning policies

There have been around ten new pieces of planning legislation over the past year. These include new permitted development rights to add extra floors to blocks of flats, dwellings and commercial buildings, without full planning consent - although in general this doesn't affect conservation areas. There have also been changes that make it much easier for buildings to be converted from one use to another. Notably, a new broad Class E has been created, embracing most retail, service, food and drink, commercial and light industrial premises. It will be possible to switch freely between these uses and also – with certain provisions – to convert any of these to dwellings without full planning consent. This is likely to have a significant impact on high streets, including those in conservation areas. Meanwhile, we await the new Planning Bill based on last year's planning White Paper and covered in the Queen's Speech.

Pat Smith

YEARBOOK

I was asked to take over as editor of the Yearbook towards the end of 2019 which was a great honour involving much responsibility not least because I was following in the footsteps of only two previous editors since 1987, Michael McGarvie and Alastair MacLeay. Although my ancestry is Saxon rather than Celtic and although I have been a member of the Society since 1992, I had not been a very active one and I was both surprised and delighted to accept the challenge offered by Alastair and Sara.

Previous Yearbooks offer such a wide range of research and learning that it was difficult to know where a beginner should start. In this I was helped by a number of articles that had been collected by Alastair and his team and so I am unable to claim credit for all of the finished result.

My aim for the future is to increase both the range of articles and the circulation. I believe that the Yearbook started as a magazine for the Society's membership, a purpose which it served very well but I think that it could achieve much more and become a publication for a much wider audience. Just how this is to be achieved is not an easy question to answer and not something that will happen very quickly but as something to aim for I think it will be worthwhile. Frome has an excellent free newspaper, a very poor commercial one and no magazine covering the town's history and events. Perhaps this is a role that the Yearbook might strive toward. We could certainly start by finding more sales outlets and doing more promotion. An increased circulation will of course involve more cost and maybe we could think in terms of sponsorship by local organisations or even selling some advertising to local firms, but this of course is something that will have to be seriously debated. If you have strong views or ideas either way please do get in touch at the address below, I would love to get some feedback and ideas for the future both of the direction of the Yearbook and its contents.

From this issue we are based at the museum courtesy of its committee which gives us a central hub in town and for which I am very grateful. Long may our collaboration prosper and grow. We are also trying to organise individual collection from the museum to save wear and tear on aged joints delivering on foot. This has had mixed results so far but it is early days and the situation can always be reviewed.

Presently, I have enough material to fill maybe half of issue 25, a large part of that is promised rather than actually in the bag and I think it would be a great disappointment to everyone if I had to write it all myself. Please think about contributing an article, photograph, reminiscence or just memoirs of your time working and living in Frome or any of the villages. I am proposing that the annual publication date should be 1 July as it was this year which should coincide with the Frome Festival. I would be grateful if contributions could be in by Christmas that would give plenty of time for organising the next issue.

If you have not collected your copy yet please do so from the museum. We know where you live but you don't really want someone turning up on your doorstep tired and aching from lugging multiple copies around.

Mick Davis

FSLs Winter Talk Programme. 2021-22

9th October 2021 Jonathan Holt - Somerset Follies after AGM

Jonathan Holt is the author of several books on the architectural follies found in Somerset and surrounding counties. He is currently adding to their number by building his own - a shell house - in his garden in Bath, a city that boasts more follies than any other.

He will offer us the results of many years' exploration and research by giving a wonderful tour of some of the more extravagant and interesting landscape and garden buildings in the county and others that don't seem to fit into any category at all. He will also tell some bizarre stories on the way.

23 October 2021 John Smith - The Battle of Britain over Somerset

John will explain the main actions over Somerset and how they fitted into the overall Battle of Britain. There were no aerial defences or radar installations west of the Purbecks at the time of the evacuation of Dunkirk but they were put in place in six weeks.

John will describe the main types of aircraft used by both the RAF and the Luftwaffe and tactics employed using small replicas made by members of his family.

6th November 2021 Robin Hungerford - The pride of man and earthly glory

Robin Hungerford has explored the history of his extended family, the Hungerfords, over 50 years and amassed a fine collection of books and prints. He has also assembled a family tree, a copy of which is in Farleigh Hungerford Castle and another in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington (through a link found between its founder, James Smithson, and the Hungerford family). He maintains links with family members in Canada, USA and Australia.

He will approach his subject through three different topics – History, Heraldry, and Heritage. These topics cover the Hungerford family from its early days to the decline of the senior branch in the 17th Century.

20th November 2021 Alison Bevan - Ellen Sharples and the Royal West of England Academy

Ellen Sharples had a remarkable life. Born 252 years ago, in 1769 in Lancaster, she died 80 years later in 1849 in Bristol, having made a living as a professional artist on both sides of the Atlantic. At the age of 17, she married artist James Sharples, and with him produced portraits of the founding fathers of America, including George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. She also raised and home schooled three children training them as artists. Alison Bevan, who is Director of the Royal West of England

Academy (RWA) in Bristol, will tell us about this indomitable woman and how, five years before her death, she helped to establish the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts, which later became the RWA, and how she donated many of the Sharples family's works of art to the Academy. Alison will also tell us about how the RWA, acclaimed as "one of the most beautiful art galleries in this country", is now being improved and enhanced at a cost of £3.8 million, part funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, which will transform the experience for visitors to the RWA and the communities they work with.

4th December 2021 Andrew Ziminski - A life in ruins: Secrets of a Frome stonemason

In his thirty year career, Frome stonemason, Andrew Ziminski, has worked on many of Britain's greatest monuments, including Neolithic monoliths, Roman baths and temples, the tower of Salisbury cathedral, and the engine houses, mills and aqueducts of the Industrial Revolution. Last year, his book *The Stonemason: A History of Building Britain* was published by John Murray. Andrew, who is a Director of Frome based Minerva Stone Conservation Ltd, a member of the Society of Antiquaries, and a William Morris Craft Fellow awarded by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, will tell us about his life and career as a stonemason and his experiences repairing and restoring Britain's historic buildings, including many of the old buildings of Frome. Copies of his book will be available for sale.

18th December 2021 Yvette Staelens - Folk Carols in the West Country

Yvette Staelens, a Research Fellow at Bournemouth University, is currently co-ordinating the pioneering Human Henge project. Her talk features the celebration of Christmas and the role of song in the festivities.

Christmas has always been a time of singing and giving, specifically the sharing of seasonal songs and carols. Here in the West Country there are rich traditions and carols of some antiquity, as well as the gleanings of a raft of collectors who went out to discover them. Yvette Staelens, has for many years researched folk songs and folk carols and organised the Voice of the People Community Choirs and singing workshops, and in this talk, she will explore some of these songs and traditions, identify source singers, and we meet collectors and composers who have gifted us a rich legacy of Christmas fare. CDs and copies of the Somerset Folk Map will be on sale.

8th January 2022 Jane Tapley - Risen from the ashes: the story of the Theatre Royal, Bath

Jane Tapley is an experienced lecturer and Arts Society speaker. She has been the Special Events Organiser for the Theatre Royal, Bath for the last 35 years interviewing

actors and authors as well as giving talks on many subjects including Jane Austen, Dickens and Agatha Christie. Her talk will cover the history of the Theatre Royal Bath from Georgian to Modern Times including the restoration after a major fire in 1862 when the theatre was completely destroyed apart from the outside walls and its planned recovery from the financial impact of the Covid pandemic.

22nd January 2022 Lee Young - Dore and Rees: the Frome Auction House

Lee may be a familiar face to some of us from the BBC Antiques Roadshow, where he specialises in Asian art. He is based in Somerset and has a career of over 30 years working for National and International auctioneers. He recently bought the Frome auction house of Dore and Rees earlier this year.

His talk will introduce us to his work in such well known auction houses as Sotheby's, Phillips and most recently Duke's of Dorchester as well as his many appearances on the Roadshow. Particularly of interest will be his plans for the future of Dore and Rees. He says there is a need to create new reasons for people to visit and to open doors to a wider audience while maintaining the magic of a bygone age and preserving the place of the saleroom as a cherished part of the Frome community.

5th February 2022 Gill Harry and John Payne - Working Memories

Home in Frome's 'Working Memories project' began in 2009. Its purpose was to record, share and celebrate Frome people's memories of their working lives from 1940s and 50s onwards, in a way that captured the original voices. From this, the book *Working Memories: Frome workers tell their stories*, was published in 2012. To help make the material as widely available as possible a small team then spent 5 years constructing a 'Working Memories' website which was launched in October 2020 along with a second edition of the book.

The talk will give an introduction to 'Home in Frome', an outline of the journey over the last 13 years and discuss the future use of the material collected. Copies of the book will be on sale.

19th February 2022 Colin Johns - The History of Bradford on Avon and the Hall Estate

Bradford on Avon, like Frome, owes its prosperity to the wool trade and like Frome, this is reflected in its architecture and buildings, but in 1848, Stephen Moulton brought from America a licence to process vulcanised rubber, on which the town thrived until the 1980s, supplying the world with rubber springs, seals, gaskets and hoses. Colin Johns, an architect and planner, long-time resident of Bradford on Avon and Architect to the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust, will tell us about the history and

development of the town, the growth of Wiltshire's 'Rubber Industry', the influence of the Moulton family on the town and their restoration of the magnificent Elizabethan house. This family house, rebuilt in 1610 as Kingston House, and now known as The Hall, is listed by Historic England as a Grade I building, and is where in 1962, Dr Alex Moulton invented the rubber suspension for the Mini and the famous small wheeled Moulton bicycle. This is the story of an industrial town, the way it has adapted to change and the family who shaped its destiny.

5th March 2022 Julian Orbach - Revised Pevsner for Wiltshire

The 48 volumes of *The Buildings of England*, originally written by Nikolaus Pevsner between 1951 and 1974, are in the process of being comprehensively revised and enlarged.

Julian Orbach, an architectural historian, talked to us in March 2014 about his work on revising the volume on South and West Somerset and in January 2016, he talked to us about his experiences and researches on re-writing the volume on Wiltshire, published in June 2021. Pevsner wrote the original Wiltshire volume, following an 8 week tour in 1962, but that was 60 years ago. Julian, who knew Pevsner, when they were both involved with the Victorian Society in the 1970s, will describe the highlights and experiences of more than five years travelling the highways and byways of Wiltshire in his exploration of its best buildings. Copies of the book will be available for sale.

19 March 2022 Roger Marsh - The Coaching Age in Somerset and Dorset

Roger Marsh's interest in the 'coaching age', which was at its height in the late 18th and early 19th century, was sparked by his hobby of postal history. His curiosity was aroused by the thought of how the mail actually got to its destination. Some old local correspondence that came into his possession served as an intriguing start to his research.

Coaching inns were built to accommodate travellers on horseback and the travellers and coachmen in the horse drawn coaches known as 'stage' coaches. Many coaching inns are still thriving albeit in 21st century guise. *The Archangel* in the middle of Frome is a great example. Many Toll houses were originally set up to recoup money spent on creating new roads and improve existing ones. Some have been transformed but many still exist. A few others still serve their original purpose. He will tell us about the roads, Turnpike trusts and toll houses of Somerset and Dorset and the coaching routes that began to open up the country for travellers and communication. We also hear of the passengers as well as the movement of the mail. We will be given a fascinating insight into the early days of modern transport and transportation in this rural area.

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
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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)

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