



**Cricklade
Road
back then...**



**Bumper
Summer
Edition**

The Swindon Society Newsletter - Summer 2023



**...and
more
recently
April
2023**



Welcome to the Summer Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the summer newsletter.

Hurrah! At last we are just around the corner from the start of a new season of presentations. We hope you have all had a lovely relaxing summer and are eager to rejoin us as a member of the society.

We are really excited to reveal the 2023/2024 programme of talks and we hope you enjoy each and every one of them over the coming months. We are delighted to kick off the new season with a presentation from long-time committee member David Bedford. Most of you will know that David's talks are always popular, and with very good reason! This one is entitled "Around Swindon in 1999" and I am sure we will all be surprised at just how much the town has changed since then. Hope to see you all there!

Finally, as always, if you have a story or memory to share with us in the newsletter, whether it's yours or from someone you know, please get in touch. You can reach us on either of these:

- me - angie.phillips@ntlworld.com
- or - info@theswindonsociety.co.uk

Summer Outing Review

A Walk Around Rodbourne with Rodbourne Community History Group

14th June 2023



We needed a rest near Bruce Street
(Images courtesy of Roy Cartwright)



How lucky were we? The evening of 14th June was warm and dry, and as many of you will know, this hasn't always been the case.

We all met up in the car park opposite the Outlet Village in Rodbourne Road. Gordon Shaw from the Rodbourne Community History Group was there as our guide, with a couple of his fellow group members to assist him as we were quite a large group.

Once everyone had arrived, we started off along Rodbourne Road heading in the direction of Redcliffe Street. Inevitably, when we reached the corner, we came across the building that even today is commonly referred to as *The Monkey Club*. Gordon divulged some information about the venue, but unfortunately the

Rodbourne Road traffic was quite busy so I could not hear what he said from where I was standing.

Onwards we went down Redcliffe Street and as our group was so big, we split up either side of the street. If I heard correctly, we were informed that this street was built circa 1891 by four different builders and each builder displayed their own plaque on the fronts of the houses to indicate it was their work. Some of those



plaques can still be seen today between the top front windows. We also learned that the street has been renumbered over time and during the course of its development. We stopped at the junction of Groves Street, outside the Famous Ale House, which has now been converted into flats. This was once called the Groves Hotel, and some time before that it was known as the



2009

Courtesy of Google

Even Swindon Hotel. It seems that there was an objection raised against the conversion to flats which failed, but it has been nicely done and the flats do blend in nicely with the original building.

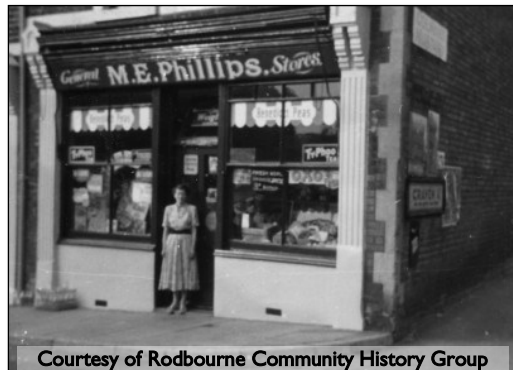
We turned the corner into Groves Street and a short way down Gordon pointed out the house at number 28 where there was once a general stores called M E Phillips. This shop changed hands several times over the years and finally ended up as Auto Digital (Wiltshire) Scales Co. Here was where weights and measures were tested and weighing scales and the like were checked for accuracy and calibrated.



Courtesy of RCHG

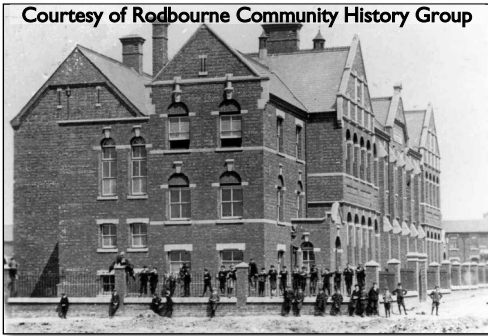
Moving

along, to the next junction we looked left down Linslade Street where the road seemed to lead to nowhere. Apparently, there were plans to build more houses along the street but residents wanted to keep their allotments and barricaded the site to save their plots from development.



Courtesy of Rodbourne Community History Group

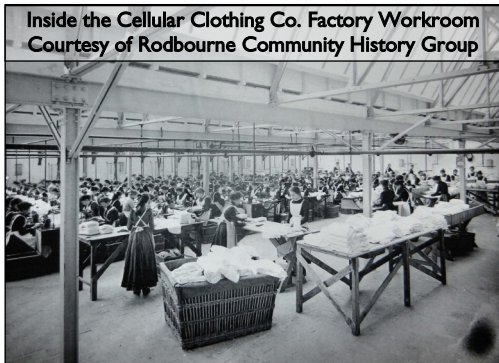
As a result plans were changed and no more houses were built along there.



which Gordon said is very well used by the residents of Rodbourne.

Next, to the left of the community centre, we took a turn down Montagu Street. We passed Westbourne Court, which was built on the site of the old school playground. Onwards then, arriving at the junction with Morris Street. On our right, we could see the walls of the old vicarage garden that was part of St Augustine's Church.

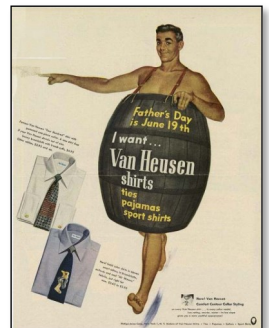
Looking left along Morris Street, Gordon told us that there were once brickworks down in that area where a boy sadly drowned in the claypits near Raybrook Crescent. We didn't go that way, instead we turned right along Morris Street, stopping at the junction with Rose Street. Houses now cover the site where the Cellular Clothing Company previously stood to our left.



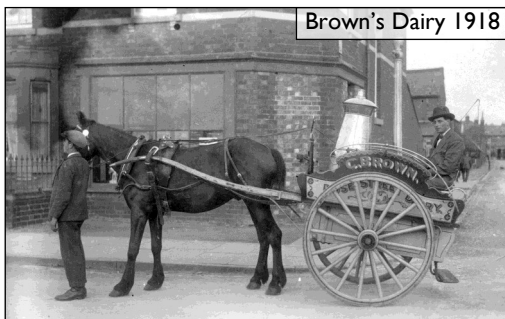
We carried on along Groves Street until we came to Even Swindon Community Centre, which was built on the site of the old Jennings Street School. The school opened in 1904 and at that time boys and girls were taught separately. The building was demolished in 1987 and replaced by the community centre



the site where the Cellular Clothing Company previously stood to our left. This was once the place where the well-known Van Heusen shirts were sewed together. Also, at some point, this building was occupied by Morses, before finally ending up as a warehouse for Kay & Co catalogue company.



On the opposite corner of the Rose Street crossroads was the site of Brown's Dairy, which operated from the rear of the building but also had a shop trading out of the front room that sold ice creams.



Turning right into Rose Street we walked along to the junction with Jennings Street where we found ourselves outside the site where Even Swindon Bakery was (later bought out by Castles). Gordon

told us the story of how Mary from Castles took cakes on a trolley to Jennings Street School and handed them through the railings to the children inside. Imagine that happening today!

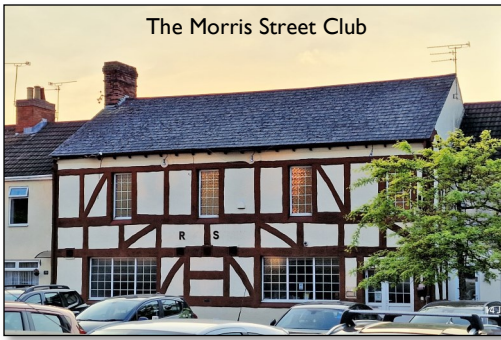
Turning left along Jennings Street we arrived at Horace Street. The garage now located at the end of this street was previously North Laines Farm. I believe Gordon said that Guppy Street was part of this farm until it was bought by the GWR along with some land situated near the Outlet Village.

Continuing along Jennings Street, then left down Morrison Street and right into Percy Street. Gordon told us how some of the houses in the street had been demolished to make is more pedestrianised. It was thought the houses were left to go to ruin before being sold to the council. Once in their possession the council

were able to proceed with their planned demolition and this area became a grass mound. Opposite is the Percy Street Club which opened in 1883 and is still going strong; it still has a skittle



alley located on the premises. We were informed that some years ago, there was a falling-out between members and subsequently, a break-away group formed a new club a couple of streets away in Morris Street, which was called (not surprisingly) the Morris Street Club.



The Morris Street Club

Moving along Percy Street towards Rodbourne Road we passed the Shaftesbury Centre where once a tin Methodist chapel was situated. From here we turned down a back alley that brought us back out into Morris Street and the working men's club there.



In a similar fashion to Percy Street, houses on one side of the street had been demolished and the area had been turned into a car park. It looked pretty scruffy though.

Continuing down the same back alley, we arrived at St Augustine's Church, still standing, and looking magnificent. We then ventured even further down the alleyway where we ended up at the new Aldi supermarket. This has been built on the site of the old Even Swindon School and Methodist Church, which were demolished in 2013 and 2003 respectively.

Through Aldi car park and past a row of shops on Rodbourne Road. At this point, Gordon reminded us of the awful stench that used to emanate from the nearby sewage works. The poor residents... they could do nothing but grin and bear it! Thankfully, this is no longer an issue. At the end of the row of shops we reached the shopfront which used to be the Terminus Café. This was the end of the line for the trams - and so it was for us too... in that direction anyway.



1975

We sat on the wall and had a rest (see Roy Cartwright's previous photos) and there was just enough time to point out that opposite where we were sitting was where the St George and the Dragon mural used to be, next to the location of Mike Knight Tyres.

Back in the opposite direction then, directly up Rodbourne Road, stopping to admire the beautiful red-brick building that is still known as The Reading Rooms, situated on the corner of Morris Street. Hands up - who knows anything about that mysterious boat-depicted stained-glass window then? Answers on a postcard please!





Then on to the junction with Hawkins Street where I believe Gordon said the Co-op on the corner is the last of three Co-op stores that traded in Rodbourne.

Onwards again to The Dolphin pub on the corner of Jennings Street which has been there since 1873. We were told that



during its early days, the pub would occasionally be granted a special licence for Trip week. This enabled them to open between 4am and 6am for the railway employees and their families to have a drink before they left en masse for their holidays.

To finish off our evening, we made our way back to the Percy Street Club where we enjoyed a drink and a natter. What lovely way to round off the 2022-23 season.

Angie Phillips - August 2023



A Heartfelt Appeal for Help

Can anyone please help with this enquiry that has come via Diane Everett?

The photo opposite is of Sam Cummings (nee Webb). It was taken at a meeting of the Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade at St Mark's Church Swindon.

Poor Sam... It seems that there was a house fire in which many family photos were destroyed and this is the only image she now has. Diane has given her

information where help might have been but unfortunately she has had no luck. Sam realises that there is a very slim chance of finding any more photos from her church days but wanted to expand the search to give it a try anyway.

If you can help in any way, please contact info@theswindonsociety.co.uk



Programme 2023 - 2024

September 13th	Around Swindon in 1999	David Bedford
October 11th	Beaney Revisited	Diane Everett & Jennie Bridges
November 8th	Making Plans for Swindon	Jon Ratcliffe
December 13th	Members' Christmas Party	Everyone
January 10th	Wiltshire Follies	Jonathan Holt
February 14th	Swindon's Interwar Railway Artists	Phil Garrahan
March 14th	Markets, Masons & Music	John Stooke
April 10th	Rodbourne - Out and About	Gordon Shaw
May 8th	Themed Selection of Swindon Slides - Preceded by the AGM	Committee's Selection
June 12th	Summer Outing (TBA)	Everyone

*We meet at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month
at Goddard Park School, Welcombe Avenue, Swindon SN3 2QN
(except for June, July and August).*



Swindon Soc.



**The Swindon Society - recording
the changing face of Swindon**

1.8K likes • 1.9K followers



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Message

FACEBOOK



Don't forget to like and follow our Facebook page.

Selected photos from our archive are posted for you to enjoy.

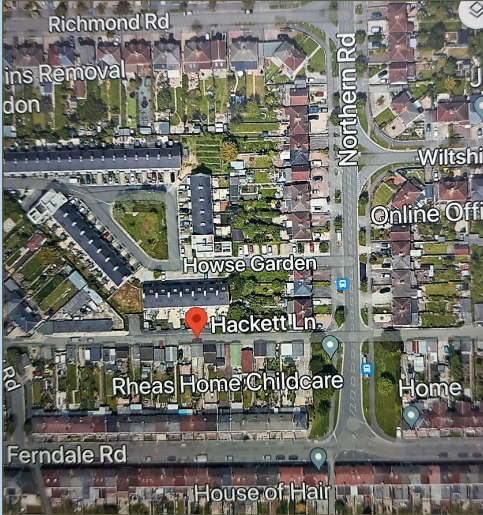
Go on... have a look!

[www.facebook.com/
theswindonsociety](http://www.facebook.com/theswindonsociety)



An Interesting Thought...

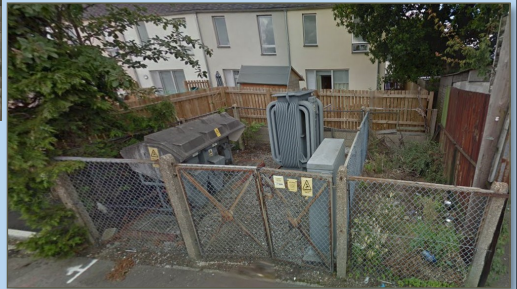
I received an interesting email from Diane Everett recently. She was looking at Google Maps and found an entry for Hackett Lane off of Northern Road, which is very close to where she lives. Funny thing is, although Diane knows this area extremely well, she had never even heard of Hackett Lane! Apparently, it is just a *backsie* lane and the discovery came to light when she saw this image.



Now, I have a theory (famous last words). I looked at Google Maps and found that there is an electricity sub-station along the *backsie* and I am wondering if that is the reason this alley has been given a name. I'm thinking it would help to locate the substation if it had an actual address, but that's just my thoughts. Does anyone have an

actual answer as to why this back road has been named?

Let us know if you know. Contact - info@theswindonsociety.co.uk



Swindon Society Meeting - Wednesday 11th October 2023

Beaney Revisited

Diane Everett & Jennie Bridges

Make sure you don't miss next month's meeting!

At last, after a couple of postponements, we will finally get to see the long-awaited presentation of *Beaney Revisited* by Diane and Jennie.

Beaney photographs always create so much interest and Diane and Jennie do their best to accommodate personal requests to see certain images.

In this presentation, we will see an assortment from the archive so, put it in your diary as I am sure this this presentation will be well worth the wait!

SEE YOU AGAIN SOON!

Keeping Up with Jean Allen



As many of you will all know, Jean Allen is a long-time, honorary member of our Society. It wasn't that long ago that she was the Society's secretary, a position she held for very many years, and it was in this capacity, that she created the forerunner to the newsletter you are reading right now!

Diane went to visit Jean recently and found out that she is now learning Swahili because it is one of her carer's native language. Can you imagine!



We salute you Jean! How thoughtful you are, and how wonderful it is to see you looking so well. We all send our best wishes to you. xx

The Demise of Coate Water Swimming Pool

I heard on the radio that the splash park at Coate Water is broken beyond repair. Apparently, the money set aside for repairs will now be used for a completely new facility next year. Here's hoping the outcome is good!



THE SWIMMING POOL, COATE WATER, SWINDON.

K.2945

In the meantime, I thought you might like a reminder of how the pool used to look. This is how it looked in 1957...



And this is how it looked in 1987.



Let's just hope the children of this town eventually get something that is really fun to use!



THE BAPTIST CHURCH FLEET STREET

An Interesting History and Legacy

Foreword



The Baptist Church 1880

Fronting Fleet Street and on the corner with Bridge Street, the Chapel was built in 1848, the remains of which are now part of the Ofie Direct building (previously Subway). The schoolroom at the back was built in 1858 and later became home of Albion Sports and Social Club for many years. *(Info from p27 of The Swindon Book by Mark Childs.)*

Early history taken from Adver report 31 August 1868 and 29 March 1869

Around 1844, members of the Stratton Baptist Chapel felt they could expand their cause by establishing a chapel in New Swindon, and set about securing a site and subscription funds to build it. Once sufficient monies had been raised, tenders were put out to erect the Chapel to the designs of Sir Morton Peto. The foundation stone for the Chapel was laid by Dr. Cox of Hackney in 1848 *(Info from p5 of The Adver, 5 Nov 1885)* and opened for worship in the same year.

The earliest congregation consisted mainly of former members of the Stratton Green Baptist Church. The Chapel became independent of the Stratton Church in 1855, and the first Pastor was the Reverend Richard Breeze, who had previously been in charge of both chapels.

Schoolroom to the rear - Later the Albion Street Club



The first school building to house the Sunday School children was put up in 1858 but was soon found to be of an insufficient size to meet demands, and in June 1868 tenders were invited by the Architect, Thos. Lansdown of Bath Road, to extend the Chapel and erect a new schoolroom and vestry. Following demolition of

the original schoolroom, Thomas Barrett, a local builder and contractor based in Newport Street, constructed the new vestry, minister's room and a 24 x 18 foot classroom. The memorial stone for the new schools

was laid on Tuesday 25 August 1868 at 4.30pm, by Henry Tucker Esq. of Bourton House. It was preceded by a service held at the Mechanics' Institute, taken by the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon.

The external view of the Chapel building didn't change much, but internal alterations, including the addition of galleries on each side and above the entrance, allowed seating arrangements to rise from 225 to 530. At the northern end of the building was the apse, containing the pulpit, behind which were doors to access the minister's vestry and the baptistry. During the alterations, services were held at the Mechanics' Institute and the attendances were far larger than could have been accommodated in the old Chapel.



Here we have two images of the the internal view of the Baptist Chapel. The one on the left is from our archive and has the words Baptist Chapel on it. The other is Kevin's image (origin unknown) which has the title Baptist Church, Fleet Street. We are not sure which one is correct. One of them could possibly be the Tabernacle. We will leave it open to debate... over to you!

Two re-opening services, one at 11am and one at 3pm, were held on Good Friday (26 March) 1869, both sermons were preached by the Rev. R. P. Macmaster of Bristol. Following the second service, over 600 people sat down for tea in the new classroom, and during the evening a meeting was held, presided by Henry Tucker, who had laid the memorial stone some 7 months previously. Mr. W. B. Wearing addressed the meeting giving a brief history of the Baptists in New Swindon. He noted they had built their first chapel in 1848, the schoolroom in 1858 and had now constructed the latest extensions, so he was more than interested to know, after making moves forward every ten years, what their position would be in 1878.

The new build had cost between £1,500 and £1,600 to complete, and a sum of £676 4s. 10d. had been raised, including £4 11s. 7d. from the

children of the Sunday School. He was also gratified that the new school would be able to accommodate the 400 children on their books, meaning they would no longer have to turn children away, as the old school could only fit 150 children.

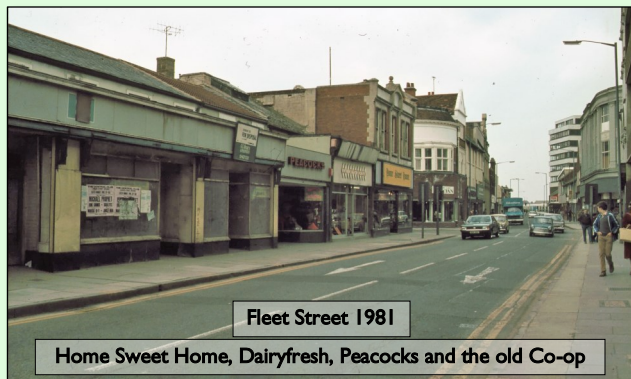
The meeting continued with a long and interesting talk by the Rev. J. H. Snell, and address by the Rev. H. Gilmour of Faringdon, and was concluded by the Rev. J. M. Murphy who alluded to the importance of having a good Sunday School attached to a place of worship. Collections made at the services held on the day amounted to the sum of £31 19s. 7½d.

By 1879 the space in the Chapel was proving once again to be inadequate for the congregation size, and with no further room for expansion, plans were made to find a new site. It took some 6 years to find a suitable site but by May

1885 the Charity Commission had given permission for Trustees to sell their Fleet Street Chapel site, and use the proceeds to purchase a site near York Terrace (Regent Circus). By July, the old Chapel was being advertised for auction by Mr Thomas Hooper Deacon, and in the same month the New Swindon Local Board had passed plans for their new Chapel and schools at the top of Regent Street. Work commenced quite quickly on the new Chapel and four foundation stones were laid on Wednesday 4th November 1885. Plans for the new Chapel were prepared by Mr. W. H. Read of Swindon, and once again local builder



Exposed brickwork used for shops 2005



Fleet Street 1981

Home Sweet Home, Dairyfresh, Peacocks and the old Co-op

Thomas Barrett was employed to carry out the construction. By December 1886 the pews, pulpit and fittings were advertised for sale in the Adver. Shortly after closure, the former Fleet Street church was sold off and converted into shops.



In 1978, the old Sunday School room, 62 to 64 Bridge Street, which had been a fruiterers, was purchased by the Albion Sports and Social Club following the closure of their original club building at 2 Bridge Street. Major alterations were carried out internally, the stonework was cleaned and a new slate roof put on before the official opening date on 13 December 1978. The Albion Club was closed in 2019 and the building put up for sale.

Kevin Leakey - August 2023

Radnor Street Cemetery Walks

Join us on our next meeting and find out about some of the people who are remembered here

**Meet outside the chapel at 2pm
Sunday 17th September 2023**

The Radnor Street team, Fran, Noel and Andy, can be contacted on 07968 246792

Please also see the
Radnor Street Cemetery Facebook page



Important Information

Please can you ensure that you complete and return the membership form that is enclosed with this newsletter. We will also have forms at the first meeting in September.



Also, just a little reminder that the subscription for membership is now £15 per annum. Please remember to change your standing order if you have set one up.

If you wish to pay by bank transfer please contact treasurer@theswindonsociety.co.uk for our bank details.

Swindon Quiz - Just for fun!

Can you answer this?..



The new season will see the continuation of our photo quiz, starting off with another one of Andy's images. This one is very difficult but as it is an interesting picture, it's worth a look.

Where is this sign? It's not obvious in the photo so just to clarify, the sign is above an arch (you can see the road underneath it). Think you know? Then let us know:

info@theswindonsociety.co.uk

Answer to May's Teasers



The answer to where this gate is - it is Ferndale Road School, where Poppies Nursery is now located. Although it still baffles me as to why the writing is the wrong way round!



Also, the answer to Diane's question about where the people in this photo are standing - In the words of Jenny Bassett who wrote in to let us know "You would have been standing near the original Bruce Street bridge where the double decker buses had to stop and turn around as they were too tall to go under the bridge! The St George and the Dragon mural was across the road from the Terminus Café - handy for a quick cuppa!"



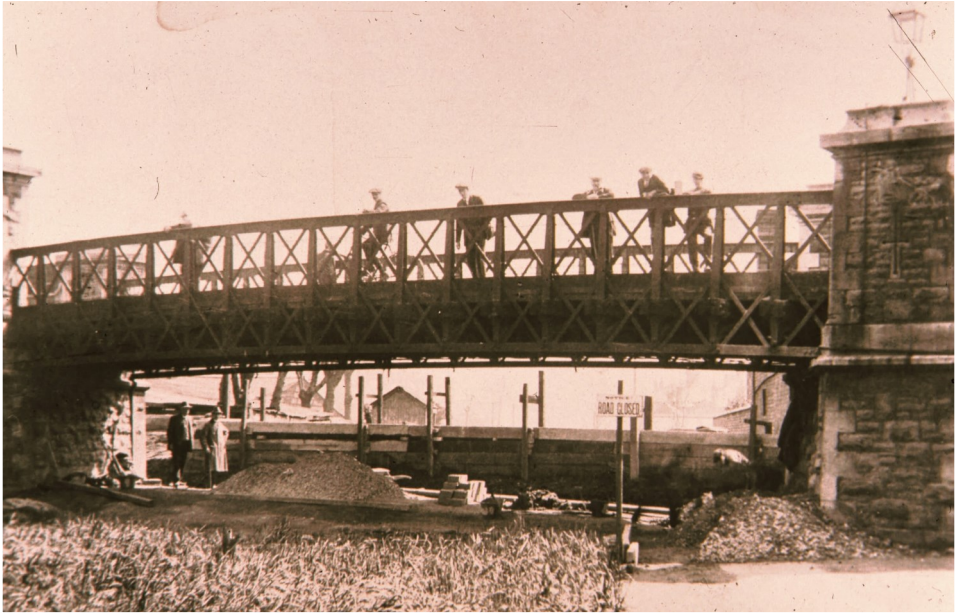
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Opening Hours

Mon: By appointment only
Tues: 10am to 4.00pm
Wed: 10am to 4.00pm
Sat: 10am to 1.00pm

Bullens Bridge, Station Road - 1920s



GWR Park - Faringdon Road

G. W. R. Park, Swindon.

