

1. Swindon's Town Hall

Designed by Brightwen Binyon in 1890 and built and opened in 1891 at a cost of £9,000 the Town Hall united Old Swindon and New Swindon just before the advent of trams in 1904. From the 1930s this listed building proved to be inadequate and was saved from demolition in the 1960s. It is now home to the prestigious Swindon Dance who have recently signed a lease for the next 25 years.

From 1974 Thamesdown Community Arts came into being and used the then empty Town Hall rent-free. Ken White, a local sculptor, displayed his work and Marie McCluskey a social visionary taught dancing which was the forerunner of Swindon Dance. Evening courses in pottery, painting and photography also took place.

A further revolution in the Arts in Swindon was master-minded by the artist Terry Court leading to the Arts Centre, Swindon Festival, the Wyvern Theatre and the Magic Roundabout.

Treasures of the Town Hall include busts of the Swindon writers Richard Jefferies and Alfred Williams.

2. Heartbreak on heartbreak

Morley and Ellen Starr receive a posthumous award DFC on behalf of heir second son kicked in action in 1945. Earlier their son Harold was one of The Few in the Battle of Britain, shot down in 1940.

3. Swindon 175

This year long Festival celebrates the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sir Daniel Gooch's founding of the site of the Great Western Railway's new Works. Two celebrated Swindon- built locos, the King George V and the City of Truro are due to return. In addition it will be the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of the Swindon Works in 1986.

4 Ivor Frost is awarded the Arctic Star Medal

The medal is awarded to naval personnel who served on the Arctic convoys from June 1941. Ivor joined HNS Dido in 1939, his home for the duration of the war. HMS Dido took part in several major battles, participated in the evacuation of Dunkirk, acted as convoy in the Battle of the Atlantic and later as convoy escort to and from Malta. The 16 photos tell their own story.

5 The Russians are coming

Maps of the Swindon centre, produced by the Russians, and reports of the likely damage that a nuclear strike could inflict are a chilling reminder of how seriously the

threat of invasion and nuclear war was taken during the Cold War both by the Kremlin and our own Government.

#### 6 Crowdys Hill School

Pupils research its history.

#### 7. Swindon in the Great War

William Robson of Purton organised the re-mount depot for training horse for the war effort. The animals came from the US and Canada and Purton was a different re-mount depot in the UK for often problematic horses were sent to Manor Hill Farm, Purton along with those who needed "breaking in". William Robson's methods of traing difficult and sometimes vicious horses was unique. He and his team were greatly commended.

#### 8. From suffrage to silver screen

Edith New, the Swindon-born suffragette was imprisoned in London for throwing stones to break a window at No 10 Downing Street to draw attention to the Suffragette Movement. Her life and activities ask whether she was a heroine or a hooligan.

#### 9. For your eyes only

Swindon's connections with James Bond

#### 10. The art of perfect timing

Established in 1848, Deacons, the prestigious jewellers in Old Town, were clockmakers and supplied the Great Western Railway. A family firm, now in its 7<sup>th</sup> generation, it employs nearly 50 people either in its shops or in its large workshop for repairing clocks, watches and jewellery.

#### 11. Unforgettable – Battle of Loos 1915

Several members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Wiltshire Regiments died on the first day of the Battle of Loos 2015.

#### 12. Music man on the trail of the Festival's history

Geoff Walters researches the history of the Swindon Festival established 50 years ago.

13. Raising the roof at Dyrham Park

The National Trust property near Bath has undergone extensive restoration recently. The roof has been removed in order to replace and repair significant weather damage at a cost of £3.8 million. Visitors are still admitted inside the house in a huge scaffolding and also to the 270 acres of ancient parkland are home to 200 fallow deer.

14. The Railway Churches – St Marks

In 1843 George Gilbert Scott started to design St Marks Church and it was consecrated two years later as a Railway Church. It has had a chequered history since the very High Church Tractarian beliefs of the early Vicars did not sit easily with the working class residents of New Swindon in the Congregation. More recently, a half-muffled peal of bells announced the closure of the Swindon Railway Works in 1986.

15. A chip off the old block

Pens made from Australian jarrah wood are available in the Swindon 175 Festival.

16. Oh, what a circus!

Read the history of the development of housing around Regent Circus in Swindon.

17. Planning for the narrow-minded

Wiltshire Building Record shows that the High Streets of Swindon, Highworth and Royal Wootton Bassett are evidence of town planning from around 800 years ago.

18. Throwing new light on Stonehenge

The advent of the new visitor centre at Stonehenge in 2010 was the impetus for the publication of "The Stonehenge Landscape", a comprehensive and scholarly account of this ancient monument and its surroundings. A shorter article, "Concretehenge" draws attention to the Stonehenge aerodrome used briefly in the Great War. A further article "Cast in Stone" describes the 6 year plan to manage the World Heritage Sites of Stonehenge and Avebury and to incorporate new discoveries. It takes in West Kennet Long Barrow, Silbury Hill and The Sanctuary as well as 250 burial mounds.

19. Alfred's priceless view from "inside".

Extracts from "Life in a Railway Factory" by Alfred Williams.