WILKINSON POSTCARDS

Know Your Place E-Volunteer Project

Abstract

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre's first E-Volunteering project. A group of 4 volunteers worked from home during national lockdowns to pinpoint a collection of historic postcards to the Know Your Place historic maps website.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Know Your Place Wiltshire (KYP) is an interactive, evolving website that layers historic maps on top of present-day OS maps. This allows for seamless comparison and is a valuable tool for local historians. It also has the capacity to geotag heritage collections to relevant locations in the form of information layers.

1.1.2 The project, which originated in Bristol, was born in 2011 and has been expanding across the south west since 2015, when work started on KYP West of England thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This saw counties across the region have their historic maps digitised and added to the site. While this was conducted centrally by the KYP team, in 2017 Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (WSHC) took over the administration of Know Your Place Wiltshire (KYPWilts). The onus was then on us to interact with our community by encouraging them to contribute to the *Community Layer*, but also by making our heritage collections accessible as *Information Layers*.

1.1.3 With this in mind, WSHC is seeking to increase its capacity on the KYPWilts website, through the creation and addition of further information layers.

1.1.4 This report will review the most recently undertaken project, the Wilkinson Postcard layer and thereafter provide a template for projects going forward.

1.1.5 This will be done by laying out the processes involved, providing templates for workflows, emails and evaluation, all of which will make future projects easier to initiate.

1.2 Why?

1.2.1 The need to increase digital output has been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has already seen 2 national lockdowns at the time of writing. This has meant our designated community has been unable to visit the searchroom to undertake any form of heritage activity for a total of 6 months in 2020.

1.2.2 Since March 2020 the teams have all endeavoured to reach the community in as many differing ways as possible and it was felt that KYPWilts offered a readymade platform on which to make material accessible. It should be noted that all other forms of digital and remote outreach are continuing alongside the KYPWilts work.

1.2.3 The Wilkinson collection, held in the Local Studies (LS) photographic collection, was chosen due to its high geographic coverage of the county. That is, WSHC was certain of it creating a fair geographic spread, and thus representing as much of the county as

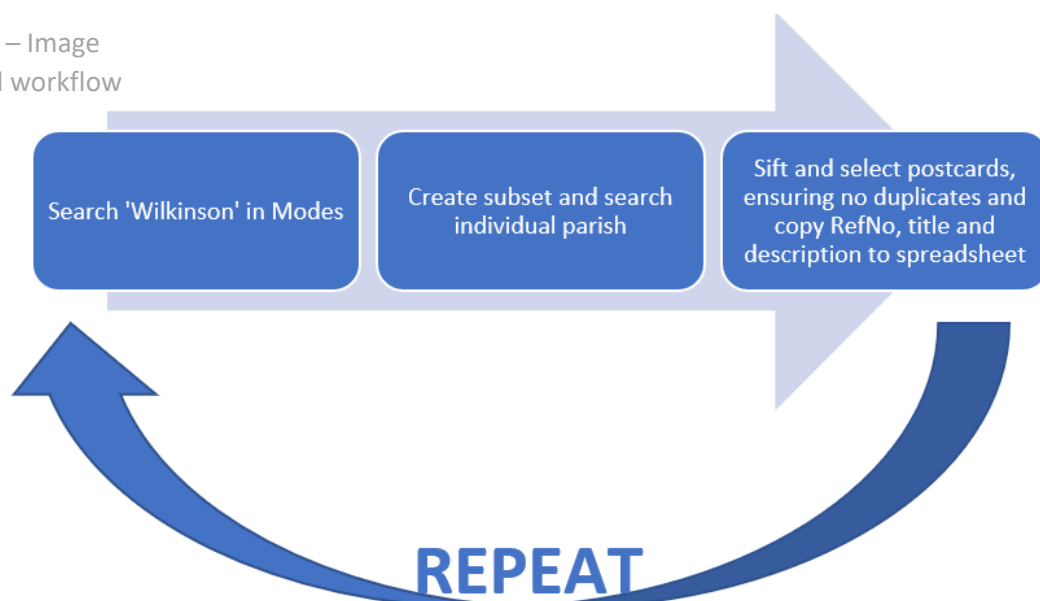possible. Furthermore, the images were out of copyright, which helped inform the decision to use them.

1.2.4   WSHC has always had a strong and vibrant volunteer network. Indeed, during normal times (pre Covid-19) there would be volunteers helping in the building 5 days a week. This ceased completely at the start of the first national lockdown and for reasons of social distancing, as well as wider safety concerns, it has not been able to resume.

1.2.5   In light of this, WSHC decided to instigate a trial E-Volunteering project. It was felt that there would be people who would be thankful of, and furthermore enjoy, the task in hand, especially people who have found themselves furloughed or out of work.

1.2.6   The combination of needing to increase our digital outreach and wanting to accommodate our volunteers as far as possible, meant the Wilkinson Postcard project was the perfect test bed. Archivist, Max Parkin (MP) and County Local Studies Librarian, Julie Davis (JD) set up the project and MP administered it throughout.

2. Processes & Workflows

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1   As mentioned above, JD & MP worked together to establish the project, with JD's knowledge of collections extant without copyright proving pivotal in the decision to go with the Wilkinson Postcards.

2.1.2   In 2013 JD began work on digitising the LS photographic collection and ran a volunteer project alongside her work to get every image catalogued in MODES. This previous work facilitated the Wilkinson Postcard project as the images and associated metadata were ready to use.

2.1.3   In order to get as much countywide coverage as possible MP searched every individual Wiltshire parish on the MODES database and cross referenced the search with Wilkinson.

Figure 2 – Image retrieval workflow

Search 'Wilkinson' in Modes → Create subset and search individual parish → Sift and select postcards, ensuring no duplicates and copy RefNo, title and description to spreadsheet

REPEAT

For template of spreadsheet see Appendix 1

2.1.4   Once the spreadsheet was fully populated, with a sheet for each letter of the alphabet (**see Appendix 1.1**) containing all postcards of parishes pertaining to the letter, JD & MP extracted all of the postcards from WSHC's internal drives and saved them in alphabetical folders, e.g. Chippenham, Calne, Corsham etc. were all stored in a second folder.

2.1.5 MP then created an intricate workflow for the volunteers to use as a walk-through at home, which JD checked and added to (**see Appendix 1.2**).

2.1.6 This document also provided the volunteers with templated metadata, which they were asked to input consistently throughout the geo-tagging phase. This was important for the following reasons:

- Copyright – it must be demonstrated that we hold the copyright.
- Access – consistent metadata ensures ease of access our end, e.g. if copies are requested.
- Recording 'user defined asset type' consistently as 'Wilkinson Postcard' ensured all postcards could be subsequently extracted from the 'Community Layer' with ease and efficiency, into the 'Wilkinson Postcard' layer.
- Promotion of Community History and WSHC websites.

2.1.6 Finally, MP water marked each postcard with the WSHC logo (**See Appendix 1.3**) in whichever corner was least obscuring to the image. This was done primarily to promote the History Centre and to ensure people know who to contact regarding copies, but also to give provenance to the images if they are used elsewhere.

2.2 Implementation

2.2.1 A call for volunteers went out in the Volunteer Newsletter, as well as directly contacting people who had voiced interest in taking part in the next project that comes about (**see Appendix 1.4 for email template**).

2.2.2 Initially there were 3 requests to help as volunteers, with one additional volunteer added after JD spoke about the project at a local history meeting. It was agreed that this would be the optimal number of volunteers considering the amount of work available.

2.2.3 Each volunteer was provided with the instructions to familiarise themselves with.

2.2.4 MP created individual spreadsheets for each branch of the alphabet and sent each volunteer 1 spreadsheet each. This allowed them to monitor their own progress.

2.2.5 Directly after sending the spreadsheet, the corresponding digital image files were sent via We Transfer. This is a free bulk file transfer facility.

2.2.6 The volunteers were generally only given one branch of the alphabet at a time, except in instances of certain branches containing very small numbers of files.

2.2.7 Once they had finished their work on a branch, they were asked to contact MP, return completed spreadsheets and let him know they were ready for more. At this point he

accessed the backend of KYPWilts, checked their work, corrected any errors and subsequently published each contribution to the 'Community Layer'.

3. Software / hardware requirements

3.1 In-house

3.1.1 While nothing new was required in-house, it is worth noting what programmes were required for the successful implementation of this project.

- Modes: All the digitised photographs held within our collections at WSHC are held on this system so a laptop with the app on was needed.
- Excel: Spreadsheets for arranging, dividing and monitoring the work.

3.2 At home

3.2.1 Volunteers needed their own computer with access to the internet.

4. Staffing

4.1 Time

4.1.1 The most time-consuming aspect of this project was the set-up, described in 2.1. MODES operates at a very slow pace, which at least partially explains the length of time taken. However, it should be noted that this project was set up alongside other commitments and so providing a precise timeframe is difficult, as interruptions were frequent, especially while on public duty.

4.1.2 However, it is felt that some of the slow processes in this project will become quicker with each new project, for example the instructions for volunteers can be easily adapted.

4.2 Staff

4.2.1 While this project was quite time consuming, especially in the set-up, it only required the work of 1 supervisor (JD) and 1 archivist (MP).

4.2.2 The supervisor was responsible for the following tasks:

- Overseeing the work of the archivist
- Ensuring copyright compliance
- Assisting with file transfers

4.2.3 The archivist was responsible for the following tasks:

- The set-up and implementation, as described in 2.1 & 2.2

- Correspondence – Important to be available to answer any questions regarding the work from volunteers – this was always by email.

- Evaluation of project, as described in 5.

5. Results & Evaluation

5.1   Project results

5.1.1   The new information layer, which took around 2.5 months for the volunteers to complete, went live on 22 January 2021 and consists of 324 historic postcards geotagged to their relevant locations (**see Figure 3 below for examples of Wilkinson layer).**

5.1.2   The images are represented by purple circles, which then reveal the image when clicked on.

5.1.3   The History Centre immediately promoted the new layer on their social media outlets and the following week a press release was issued (**see Appendix 1.5**).

5.1.4   This hard work and resultant publicity resulted in a surge in user figures for the website, as demonstrated in Table 1:

Month	Page views	Unique page views	Sessions	Users	New users
January 2021	1311	1061	1068	568	347
February 2021	2120	1652	1692	854	619

Table 1 – KYPWilts User Stats

5.2   Project evaluation

5.2.1   Evaluation was of particular importance, as this was the first E-Volunteer project run by WSHC and any recommendations for improvement would be beneficial for future projects.

5.2.2   Upon completion of the work by the volunteers, evaluation forms were sent out by email to each participant (**see Appendix 1.6**).

5.3   Evaluation results

5.3.1   50% of participants responded, meaning that 2 of 4 forms were returned.

5.3.2   The feedback was positive with both respondents scoring the project 10/10.

5.3.3   While no constructive feedback was provided that might be used for future projects, the positive comments serve to illustrate that this project will prove to be a solid foundation moving forward.
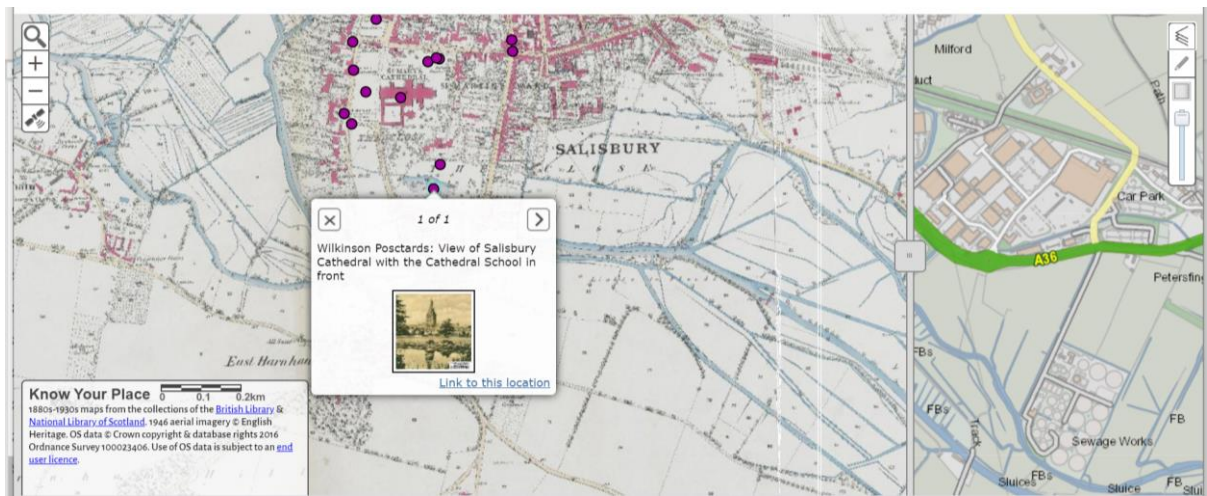
5.3.4   See appendix 1.6 for completed forms.

Figure 3 – Wilkinson layer images. From top down: Chippenham; Salisbury; Trowbridge

6. Conclusion

6.1.1   There is growing evidence that having digital material available online increases footfall to the searchroom, as a result of the wider audience being reached.[1]

6.1.2   With this in mind, projects such as this are of huge importance in the current climate, where visitors have not been allowed to visit the History Centre for months on end. It is vital that we continue to interact with our community as much as possible, in order to lay a foundation for continuing to attract visitors when normalcy resumes.

6.1.3   With volunteer work severely limited in the current climate and members of our community being forced to spend more and more time at home, coupled with our desire to serve users in any way possible, projects such as this provide a valuable outlet. Indeed, their pros are multidimensional:

- Continued interaction with users and community
- Providing stimulating activity people who may be stuck at home
- Increasing access to our collections
- Increasing our presence on KYP, an expanding heritage resource

6.1.4   One issue that cannot be overlooked is that this project is difficult, or even impossible, for those without computers, access to the internet, or who lack confidence with technology. With this in mind, other forms of remote volunteering opportunities should be considered by WSHC in the future.

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[1] Bulow, A., & Ahmon, J, Preparing collections for digitisation (London: Facet Publishing) P.8
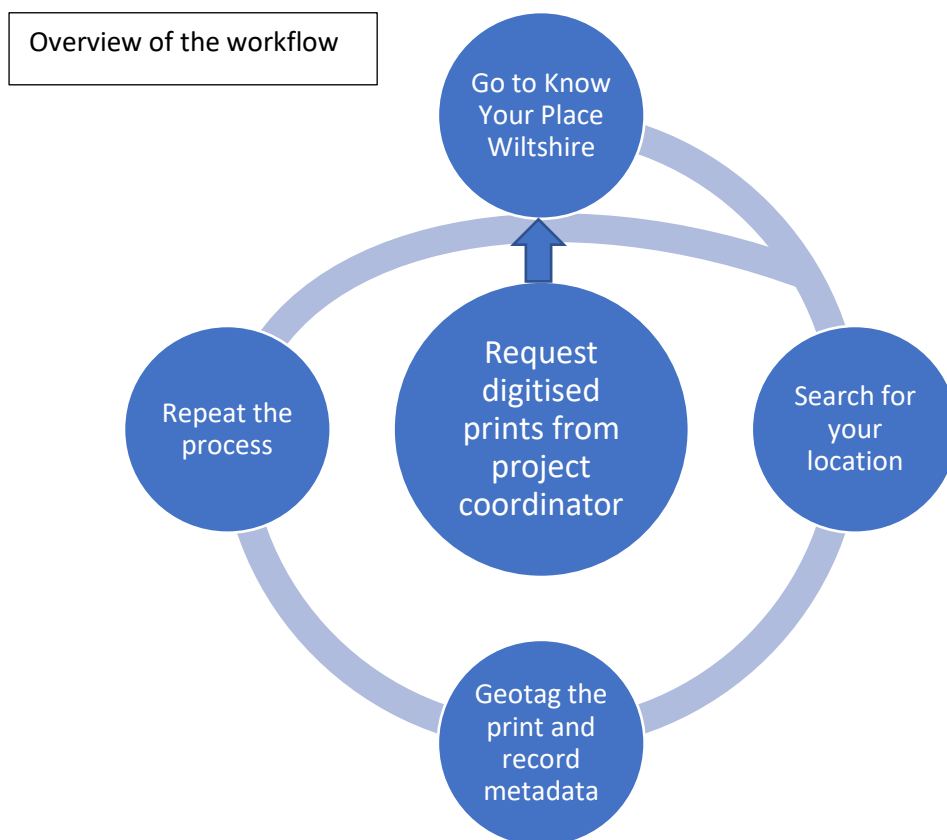
Appendix 1

1.1 Postcard spreadsheet

	LOCATION	P Number	Description	Done = Y	E	F	G	H
2	Bromham	P966	St Nicholas Church					
3	Bradford on Avon	P2475	View of town bridge					
4	Bradford on Avon	P2482	Holy Trinity Church as seen from south bank of river					
5	Bratton	P2492	St James's Church in the background					
6	Bratton	P2494	village road looking towards Edington with Stradbrook junction on right					
7	Bratton	P2495	View of the outskirts of the village with the Westbury road and Salisbury Plain road to church on left					
8	Bratton	P2498	The Court House					
9	Bromham	P2504	Memorial to the poet, Thomas Moore in St Nicolas's churchyard					
10	Bromham	P2814	Spye Park House					
11	Bratton	P3400	Memorial cross and the Post Office					
12	Bishops Cannings	P8580	St Mary's Church from south east across the churchyard					
13	Box	P15809	Chapel Plaister					
14	Biddestone	P16232	Meet of Duke of Beaufort's hounds					
15	Bishopstrow	P16249	St Aldhelm's Church					
16	Bemerton	P32891	St Andrew's Church					
17	Bemerton	P32892	St Andrew's Church interior					
18	Bromham	P32912	almshouses					
19	Box	P51965	Box tunnel on the G.W.R.					
20	Bradford on Avon	P51993						
21	Box	P53620	A street view of Box					

Volunteer list | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | K | L | M | N | P | S | T | U | W | Y

Count: 29

1.2 Wilkinson postcard project workflow

By now, you will have read the background information and hopefully familiarised yourself with the website a bit. This document is a step by step workflow, aimed at ensuring that everyone is working consistently across the board. This is vital, as it is so easy to make simple mistakes, which may have little to no effect, but could result in lost data or incorrect information being posted online. It is also very important that the data you input is consistent too, as this will ensure that the collection's authenticity and provenance is retained.

Overview of the workflow

Go to Know Your Place Wiltshire

Request digitised prints from project coordinator

Repeat the process

Search for your location

Geotag the print and record metadata

Step 1 – Requesting and receiving the documents

1.1 Send an email to WSHCVolunteers@wiltshire.gov.uk explaining that you are ready to get started.

1.2 The project coordinator will send you all the files under an alphabetical bracket, e.g. all prints of place names beginning with D.

1.3 Due to the likelihood of large file sizes we will send the digital copies to you via WeTransfer, which is similar to Dropbox and Googledrive, and very easy to use.

1.4 Create a folder on your home computer, giving it the title of whichever letter of the alphabet you are dealing with, and insert the files from WeTransfer straight into it. You may wish to back this folder up at home, but don't worry if something goes wrong your end, we can always send them to you again

Step 2 – Know Your Place

2.1 Go to [Know Your Place Wiltshire](#)

2.2 On the legend to the right of the screen, click information layers and then uncheck the box next to 'community layer'.

2.3 Using the search box to the top left of the screen, search for your relevant town, village or hamlet.

2.4 Consult the first print in your folder and try to ascertain exactly where it is. We have provided descriptive information to try and assist with identifying locations, but sometimes it is quite vague. Therefore, determining the best location may prove tricky and some detective work may be required. If you are able to pinpoint the exact location of the print, then that's brilliant, but if not do not worry. Just try and be as accurate as possible, which may just be a street, area of a town or even just a village in general. One worthwhile tip, if you are struggling, is to look at Google Streetview - take a virtual stroll around the area and see if anything looks familiar / relatable to the print.

2.5 You now know where you are going to pinpoint the print

Step 3 – Geotagging

3.1 Click the pencil like symbol to the right of the legend on the right-hand side of the page

3.2 Click the exact spot on the map that you have decided to place your print

3.3 Click 'create a new record here'.

3.4 Now we record the necessary metadata / information as demonstrated in the table below. *It is essential that the metadata recorded is consistent so please always adhere to the demonstrated format.*

Name of object	*Wiltshire Print; [name of place]; [RefNo]*
Type	*Wiltshire Prints*
Description	*Copy from description field on spreadsheet – add to it at your discretion*
Condition of object	***LEAVE BLANK***
Do you consent to your name and contact details being recorded against your contribution	*You must select yes here for us to be able to publish the postcard on KYP*

Do you consent to your name being displayed publicly against your contribution?	Again, you must select yes here please
Your name	Something must be entered here. Either publish your name if you are happy to do so, or simply enter 'WSHC Volunteer'
Your organisation	Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre
Do you have permission to publish this material?	Please click yes from the drop down menu
Linked resource URL 1	www.wshc.org.uk
Linked resource name URL 1	**Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre**
Linked resource URL 2	http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/
Linked resource name URL 2	**Wiltshire Community History Website for Local and Family history**

3.5 Towards the bottom of the screen click the 'choose file' box, find the relevant file on your computer, click on it and then click open.

3.6 Once the file has uploaded click submit beneath.

3.7 The process is now complete – either start again with your next print, have a break and a cuppa tea, or call it a day and put your boots up.

Thanks for your help!

1.3 Logo

1.4 Email template

I'm just writing as we are ready to go with this project now, so I'm seeing if you are still interested?

Attached are step by step instructions, I recommend reading them through to begin with, but they probably won't make much sense till you're actually working on them. If there are any issues with them, please let me know.

We have arranged the files in alphabetical brackets, some of which contain more files than others. We will send you an appropriate amount to be going on with each time you're ready. We will also send you a spreadsheet so you can keep track of where you're at and copy across the information it provides, as well as using the descriptive information to help pinpoint the postcards when necessary.

As soon as you give me the green light, I'll send you some material over.

Thanks again for volunteering with us for this project and I hope you find it enjoyable.

Regards,

1.5 Press release

Double First for the Wilshire and Swindon History Centre

An e-volunteering project run by the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre has resulted in a collection of historic postcards becoming the latest addition to the online heritage mapping resource Know Your Place.

The work to add the Wilkinson Collection is a double first for Wiltshire Council's History Centre – the first of its photographic collections to be added to the Wiltshire section of the Know Your Place (KYP) website and its first volunteer project to be completed remotely and online.

Closures and restriction due to the COVID-19 pandemic have meant nearly all volunteer work went on hold but Archivist Max Parkin and County Local Studies Librarian Julie Davis launched the History Centre's first remote, online volunteering project.

Max, who managed the project, explained: "Since the start of the first lockdown we have engaged with our community of users and volunteers as much as possible online, and this project was an extension of that. It was great to get it up and running and the feedback from volunteers has been really positive. It has definitely been worth the effort."

The Wilkinson postcard collection contains more than 800 items but not all were added to KYP Wiltshire. A small team of volunteers worked on 342 postcards, using their detective skills to identify precisely where each historic image was taken so it could be accurately located – geotagged – on the KYP interactive map of Wiltshire. The meticulous work took just over two months to complete and the information layer is now live on Know Your Place at www.kypwest.org.uk

Volunteer Tony said: "I was very pleased to be able to contribute to the KYP project and enjoyed the challenges of identifying where the various images I worked on were taken from, finding out about them and putting the information into the database."

To help budding historians get the most out of Know Your Place the History Centre has created a User Guide which can be found at https://wshc.org.uk/know-your-place.html

The success of the project also means Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre is looking for more volunteers willing to work online – you will need a computer, an internet connection and a keen eye for detail. If you would like to take part email WSHC.Volunteers@wiltshire.gov.uk

The History Centre's community engagement throughout the pandemic has supported Wiltshire Council's Active Communities programme which encourages residents to stay fit and active – physically and mentally – through online activities and resources. Search for Active Communities on the Wiltshire Council website www.wiltshire.gov.uk

1.6 Evaluation forms

SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL   Working in partnership with   Wiltshire Council

We are always looking to improve our services and we would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill out this feedback form. Any comments will remain anonymous.

Title of project: Wilkinson Postcard Project for Know Your Place

How did you hear about this project?
From the October Volunteer newsletter

Why did you volunteer help with it?
I have a large involvement already with the Photographic Collection, having catalogued many postcards, and I have a strong interest with, and a significant use of, maps. So this project brought together two of my strong interests.

Was everything adequately explained to you?
The project workflow guide was an excellent introduction to how to record the entries and got me underway very fast. I already had a good understanding of the Know Your Place website.

Did you receive adequate support throughout?
Yes, Max was very responsive whenever I had a query – getting back to me within 24 hours. Very efficient at distributing the work lists with only a few minor issues which he cleared up immediately. Would happily work on one of his projects again.

What did you enjoy about contributing to this project?
Probably the detective work in trying to establish exactly where the picture was taken from. Used a number of aids to achieve this including OS 1:25000 mapping, aerial photographs, Google Streetmap and just general Google searches. I also uncovered some incorrect MODES catalogue information when doing this which I will correct when I have access to MODES once again.

Wiltshire & Swindon HISTORY CENTRE

ACCREDITED ARCHIVE SERVICE

Do you feel this project has: (please tick any that apply)	
Improved your knowledge yes	Inspired you to find out more yes
Improved your wellbeing	Encouraged you to take part in other heritage activities yes
Helped you develop new skills or improved existing ones yes	Improved your understanding of Wiltshire, its history and its people

Would you be interested in future E-Volunteer opportunities?	
Yes	

How would you rate this project out of 10? (Please circle, 10 being the highest, 1 being the lowest)										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Why? Well organised and provided some interesting research work.										

Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
Access to MODES may have helped to see if any additional info was available but wasn't essential.

We are always looking to improve our services and we would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill out this feedback form. Any comments will remain anonymous.

Title of project: Wilkinson Postcard Project for Know Your Place
Tony Pratt

How did you hear about this project?
Announcement at Wiltshire History Forum meeting

Why did you volunteer help with it?
I have not been able to contribute as a transcribing volunteer since Covid started and this seemed a good opportunity. Also I have experience with the KYP site. georeferncing etc.

Was everything adequately explained to you?
Explanations very clear and thorough

Did you receive adequate support throughout?
Excellent support

What did you enjoy about contributing to this project?
Seeing the different; postcards and using analytical skills to work out the viewpoint for each card, being able to add material to the archive.

Do you feel this project has: (please tick any that apply)	
Improved your knowledge ❤️	Inspired you to find out more
Improved your wellbeing	Encouraged you to take part in other heritage activities ❤️
Helped you develop new skills or improved existing ones ❤️	Improved your understanding of Wiltshire, its history and its people ❤️

Would you be interested in future E-Volunteer opportunities?	
Yes	

How would you rate this project out of 10? (Please circle, 10 being the highest, 1 being the lowest)									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Why?

Increases value of KYP, easy access to historical, local images and information, excellent support and realistic expectation.

Do you have any suggestions for improvements?