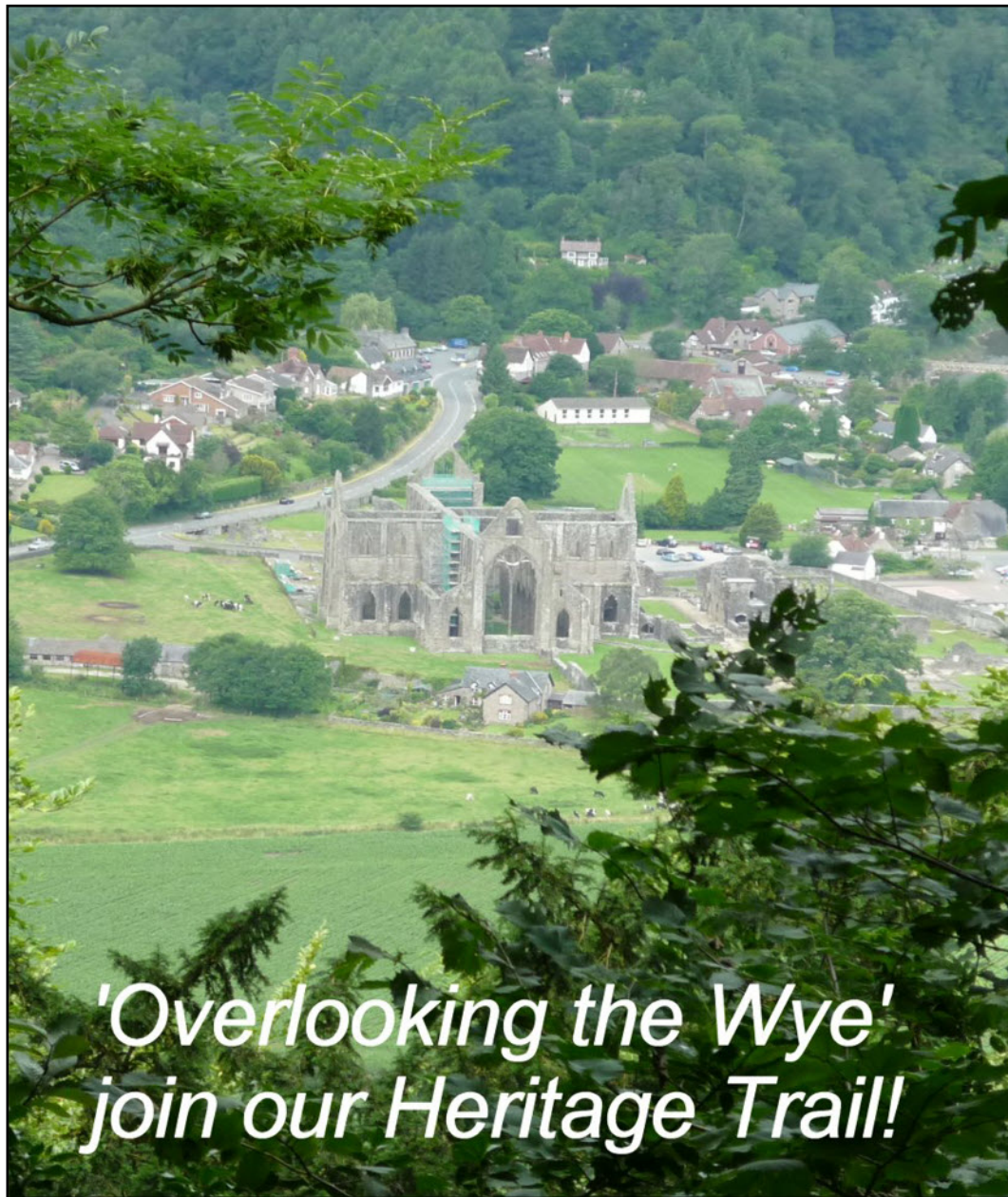




FOREST OF DEAN
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
April 2011



*'Overlooking the Wye'
join our Heritage Trail!*

THE FOREST OF
DEAN LOCAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY

News

APRIL 2011

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Editors Notes

As I write this, the daffodil buds are just opening, and the accompanying bird song seems to be a definite harbinger of spring! So we can at least imagine some months of warm sunshine to come! It is therefore time to think about the Society's spring and summer excursions and trips. You will find full details elsewhere in this edition, together with booking forms. In particular, any of you who have the germ of an idea for a research project, but have never used the splendid resources of Gloucestershire Archives might wish to consider joining the 'Tour' to the Archives on May 14th.

Sadly we have to record the recent passing of Dr. Margaret Barton. Margaret was a long standing member of the Society, past Vice Chair and a hard working member of the Committee. She was also a past Chair of the Committee of the Friends of the Dean Heritage Centre. Margaret studied medicine at Girton College, Cambridge from 1945-1948. Her father was a pharmacist and optician in Cinderford, and Margaret wrote a memorable article for Issue 17 of the New Regard about her father's work in Cinderford. In her later years Margaret lived in Staunton, where she served as clerk to the Parish Council, before latterly moving to a retirement home in Caerleon.

I have a confession to make at this point. Being a user of the internet, I frequently forget that many members do not have access to the internet, and therefore cannot download forms from our website. In order that members without internet access can take advantage of members prices for our 'Special Offers' (see the back page), a 'members only' order form has been included with this issue.

Finally, I would like to commend to you the work that our Secretary, Mary Sullivan, has been doing to foster greater cooperation between the various history societies and archaeological groups in the Forest of Dean area. There is a meeting of interested societies in April, and we will report progress to you in the next edition of the newsletter.

Keith Walker

Book your Summer Trips!



There is a rare opportunity available on Saturday 14th May (10 am) to join a **'Guided tour of Gloucestershire Archives'**. Following an introductory talk on the work of the Archives (with a cup of coffee!), you will be taken on a guided tour and shown parts of the Archive not normally seen by the public. The tour will conclude with a viewing of Forest of Dean specific artefacts and documents especially made available for the visit. If you are tempted to research a subject but have never used the Archive before, or if you are simply curious about the workings of the Archive, please complete the relevant form enclosed with the newsletter. Please note that you will have to make your own way to Gloucester and that because of building work, parking might be restricted at the Archives.

There are two opportunities to join **'Overlooking the Wye Minibus Tours'** on Sunday 5th and 26th June. The full day tours will focus on the conservation work being carried out at some of the 40 sites in the 'Overlooking the Wye' project. The tour is remarkable value at £15 per person, and includes transport, coffee and lunch, and the services of a tour guide. There are just 14 places available on each tour, and if you are interested please complete and return the form enclosed with this newsletter.



On Saturday 2nd July, the Fairford History Society are hosting the **'GRCC Local History Committee Summer Meeting'**. History Societies in Gloucestershire take turns to host these meetings, and you may remember that the FODLHS hosted the Summer Meeting a few years ago with an event at Lydney Park. The meeting in Fairford offers the chance to view the remarkable 28 windows of medieval stained glass that St Mary's Church is famous for.

There are two other tours available in Fairford on the day; 'A Heritage Walk around the Town', and 'New Life from an Old School' (how Farmors School, opened in 1738, was reborn into a 21st century building). Tea and refreshments will be available in the Community Centre after the tours, where you can meet members of Fairford History Society. Full details including costs, parking etc are available in the enclosed booking form.



A school log book was the headmaster's record of activities within the school and log books were obliged to be kept from 1862. Although they were supposed to refrain from making personal comments, correspondents often wrote the entries in a log book as they would a personal diary.

This team research project is a development arising from a personal micro study undertaken by Don Dickson, FACHRS member, in 1998 to study the usefulness of School Log Books in evaluating the impact of a local school on a community and the impact of the community's needs on the school. The work was presented at a FACHRS conference in 2005. The FACHRS organising committee considered the research and agreed to support the project on a wider scale. A pilot project has tested the sources and methods and a full project is now underway. The project is expected to last two to three years and applications to join the project are welcome from any person who would like to take part. Society members, other academic researchers, family historians and local historians are encouraged to take part in this project that will use a choice of the Microsoft Access (TM) database application or the Microsoft Excel(TM) workbook application to record collected data. A template for data collection is provided to all researchers. We are encouraging as many people as possible to take part.

If you wish to take part in this project, so that details of Forest of Dean schools can be included, you will find more information on the FACHRS web site: www.fachrs.com



Princess Royal Baths Get Descriptive Plaque

You may remember the long and ultimately unsuccessful campaign that our tireless Conservation Officer, Averil Kear, fought to try and prevent the Princess Royal colliery pithead baths from being demolished.

Despite all her efforts, unfortunately, most of the bath buildings were demolished in

2008, leaving just a small part of the structure as a bat roost. Finally, earlier this year, the soon to be defunct South West Regional Development Agency erected a plinth and plaque commemorating the baths.

Averil Kear has taken a look at the plaque and comments "Having conferred with Ron Beard, Ian Pope, and John Belcher (one of the Trustees of the Dean Heritage Museum) we are all agreed that the wording on the plinth at Princess Royal is rather generalised and does not really reflect Princess Royal colliery in particular. Hopefully in the future we may be able correct this, meanwhile at least there is a reminder of one more of our pits lost to redevelopment".

Monuments and Plaques



In this occasional series 'Monuments & Plaques', we will rediscover the memorials placed in the Forest area by the History Society, and explain some of the background to the monuments.

We start in this issue with the Mushet memorial, erected at Darkhill.

Robert Forester Mushet (1811–1891) was a metallurgist and businessman, born April 8, 1811, in Coleford. He was the youngest son of David Mushet. David, was an iron master, formerly of the Clyde, Alfreton and Whitecliff Ironworks.

In 1818/9 David Mushet built a foundry at Darkhill. Robert spent his early years studying metallurgy with his father and took over the management of Darkhill in 1845.

In 1848 he moved to the newly constructed Forest Steel Works on the edge of the Darkhill site where he carried out many experiments, in the next ten years, before moving to the Titanic Steelworks in 1862.

The memorial at Darkhill (above) commemorates the work David Mushet undertook to produce durable steel rails. At Derby Station the Midland Railway had consistently experienced problems with iron rails. In 1857 Mushet was the first to make durable rails of steel rather than cast iron. The first of Mushet's steel rails was delivered to Derby Midland Railway Station, where "it was ... laid down early in 1857 at a heavily trafficked part of the line where the iron rails had to be renewed every six months, and occasionally every three." Six years later, in 1863, the rail seemed as perfect as ever, although some 700 trains had passed over it daily. During its 16 years "life" 1,252,000 detached engines and tenders at the least, apart from trains, had passed over that rail.

During 2011 we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of David Forester Mushet. If you want a guided visit to the Darkhill site, you can purchase a copy of a Darkhill walk, produced by Keith Webb in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, or download a copy from Keith Webb's home pages:

<https://sites.google.com/site/keithlloydwebb/forest-of-dean-articles-1/darkhill-iron-works/>



In the footsteps of F. W. Harvey on the Western Front



Our new Indoor Meetings Secretary, David Harrison, was for nearly ten years Chairman of the Western Front Association for Surrey, and is a qualified driver/tour operator.

David still organises tours to the battlefields, and in the Spring/early Summer of 2012 he is proposing to organise a pilgrimage to battlefield scenes in Belgium and France associated with the British involvement in The Great War, 1914-18.

Following in the footsteps of F. W. Harvey, other Foresters, and men from Gloucestershire, the means of transport will be a fully insured 16 seat mini bus, travelling via Euro Tunnel, which

will pick up and return travellers in the Forest. Accommodation will be half – board in a hotel Campanile or its equivalent. The trip will be fully guided, with appropriate handouts and maps. Approximate cost at today's prices is £350/£400 for a two night / three day or three night / four day trip.

Before proceeding any further, David needs to know if you are interested in seeing a detailed itinerary. If so, please telephone, or email, as below, leaving your name, address and telephone number and the details will be posted to you, assuming sufficient interest is shown.

David Harrison 01600 772849

email: davidjharrisonma@yahoo.co.uk



A final request is enclosed for those who haven't yet paid their 2010/11 subs (due in October 2010 at the AGM). I know budgets are tight, but we are good value! Can I again remind those on standing order to update their annual payment to £8:00 for one person and £12 for a family, or two at the same address.

The Society membership remains buoyant at a total number of 356. Of course, only some of our members manage to attend meetings or walks and trips, as many live at a considerable distance away (some indeed live abroad). Our website attracts many members who have a historic connection with our beautiful Forest.

We welcome these new members to the Society:

Mr A Beaumont, Oldcroft
Mrs A Lewis, Cinderford
Mr P & Mrs S Shailer, Lydney
Ms S Day, Ruardean Woodside
Mr D Leat, Goodrich

Mr P & Mrs K Ellis, Tuffley, Gloucester
Ms P M Masters, Coleford
Mr T Tomlin, Cinderford
Mr A E Gardiner, Ruardean.

Liz Berry



Ted Cooper and a colleague checking a vehicle in the Duramin factory at Lydney

Ted Cooper and the Duramin Engineering Company of Lydney

After the Second World War the Royal Forest of Dean Development Association created an industrial estate north of Lydney Harbour. Among the main firms attracted to the estate, where around 1,000 people were employed by 1960, was the Duramin Engineering Company, which built bodywork for commercial vehicles.

Tony Beadle tells the story (below), of Ted Cooper, who was Manager of the Development Department for Duramin.

“In 1935, aged 14½, Ted Cooper joined Duramin at Hythe Road, Willesden, as a commercial bodybuilder apprentice. He worked for the company until 1969, becoming manager of the Development Department at Lydney, and was interviewed about his career in October 2009.

During the 1930s Ted remembers Duramin built a huge range of commercial vehicles in light alloy: from large box bodies on 8-wheel chassis to small containers for many companies (including tea suppliers like Lyons), also three-way tippers, lorry cabs and platform bodies, etc. Ted subsequently worked on a big contract for the London Brick Company, which included the first two four-wheelers based on the AEC Monarch chassis.

He was called up in 1942 and joined the Army, returning to work for Duramin in 1947. When the Lydney factory was opened in 1950 there were half a dozen local men (who had previously received just one week’s training at Park Royal!) plus a few people from London. Fred Watson (who became works supervisor) and Ted Cooper were sent there to take charge and they did most of body work themselves to begin with as it took 12 months to train fully the local workers. Initially they did commercial vehicle bodywork, with chassis delivered from Park Royal. Living in lodgings for the first year, Ted would drive a chassis down from London on a Monday morning (illegally loaded with all the bodywork material required) and return the finished vehicle on Friday. Gradually more staff went to Lydney (from drawing office, etc) and general manager Ernie Horritt transferred there permanently about 18 months after the factory opened.

Around 1961/62 Duramin submitted a prototype ISO container for the new worldwide containerisation system. Bill Rogers, an engineer from Australia, invented a lightweight insulation panel consisting of a vacuum-moulded sandwich of rigid polyurethane foam lined with a glass reinforced plastics material and, as the Development Department

manager, Ted Cooper worked with Rogers on creating a viable production method to make container panels.

In the late ‘60s Duramin supplied a first batch of 200 of these 20ft containers (with steel end frames and corner posts) to Manchester Liners and they were used for shipping dry freight from UK to Canada. Subsequently 40ft reefer containers (reefer was the industry name given to insulated and refrigerated containers) were supplied to many of the big shipping lines. Following on from this Duramin also started to manufacture lorry cabs using fibreglass (these were originally specified by Bulwark Transport). They later made dual cabs for Seddon Atkinson in fibreglass and also a few cabs for ERF and Albion.

By the early ‘70s the Lydney factory was devoted solely to producing reefer containers, but struggling with technical problems and spending a lot of time rectifying faults, thus getting behind with orders. During this time the supply of containers reached saturation point (most countries had manufacturers by then) and demand for new containers tailed off.”

It is understood that Duramin had moved to Hong Kong by the late 1970’s. When Duramin Engineering left Lydney, Lydney Containers was set up by the remaining management team, but had no connection with Duramin itself.

The main body of text was compiled from notes taken during an interview with Ted Cooper by Tony Beadle in October 2009 and was extracted by permission from Tony Beadle’s book ‘Armada to Aquila: The History of Vehicle Manufacturing in Hillingdon’ published by Panic Button Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-9566538-0-2

The Cyril Hart Award



The Society has received a very generous donation of £500 from the son and daughter of the late Dr. Cyril Hart.

Our thanks go to Judith Fern and Anthony Hart for the gift, which will be used to help fund the ‘Cyril Hart Award’. This is a new prize of £50 which is awarded annually to the article adjudged the ‘best’ in the New Regard. This was first awarded, appropriately,

in October 2010 to Roger Deeks for his article ‘The Wood Distillation Works & Munitions Supply in the Great War’ (published in New Regard Issue 24).

The Cyril Hart Award is a companion to the Scott-Garrett Award, which is also given annually for the best presentation to a Society meeting.

The photograph above shows Dr. Cyril Hart (left) with Dr. Scott Garrett who was a chemist by profession and supervised the production of acetone at the wood distillation works in the Forest of Dean during the first world war.

Indoor Meetings

The Tinsplaters of Lydney - (15th January)

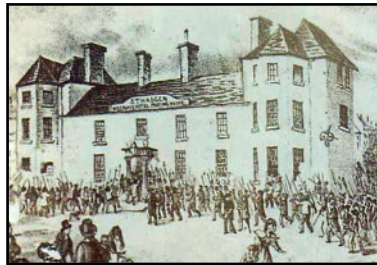
The West Dean Centre, Bream, proved to be an attractive and comfortable venue for our first Talk in the New Year which was given by well-known local, John Belcher.

The tinning process was explained and John even alluded briefly to tin in the Ancient World and the original Cornish connection. The great Lydney Tinplate Works dominated the screen from a photograph taken from St. Mary's in 1950. We were shown the furnaces, the 60 ton fly-wheel driven by steam, the Tin House Finishing Dept. and the Sheepskin Rolls which tinned the plate. This, once, was Lydney's main employer. The time of day in Lydney was not the province of the B.B.C. or even Greenwich Mean Time, but the Tin Works hooter. Hooter time punctuated the air and set the clocks and wristwatches.

The very successful Thomas family ruled the tinplate roost and provided employment and housing for the workers in three-storey terraces. They also paid out very low wages which provoked strikes and bad feeling. On the other side of the coin, the Lydney Institute was a life enhancer with its Beer & Snooker Club. The Thomases were very big employers indeed. In the last quarter of the 19th century, expansion and extra output was the name of the game. We explored the Lydney canal, wharf and upper basin. We sailed on the wee Glasgow puffer "The Black Dwarf" and heard what happened to its bell. Thanks to John, we lived again the life of a tinsplater, the daily grind, the fearful conditions and the snug status of real community. The Thomas Works became Richard Thomas & Baldwin, eventually The Steel Company of Wales with expensive changes and much modernisation at the fore front in 1956. Just in time to close down for ever in 1957 after 168 years.

For me, my father, Rowland Harrison, [1904-1970], a labourer in R. T. B. Landore, Swansea, all his working life, lived again through this splendid Talk.

David J. Harrison, M.A



Monmouth & The Chartists - (12th February)

Those who joined the 50 or so members at West Dean Centre on Saturday 12th February were treated to an entertaining treat in David Harrison's talk on 'Monmouth and the Chartists'. David provided to each member of the audience a timeline of events which he used as a prompt for his speech and rather unusually,

showed the accompanying slides after he finished his speech.

Published in 1838, the People's Charter listed six key demands, which are worth repeating below if only to remind ourselves just how limited democracy was at the time; 'A vote for every man at 21 years', 'Vote by secret ballot', 'No property qualification for M.P's', 'Payment for Members of Parliament', 'Equal electoral districts', 'Annual Parliaments'.

From the mid 1700's the social upheaval of the industrial revolution and the deprivation of the working class led to an increasing demand for greater democracy. Protests increased until on 3rd November 1839, marchers set off from various parts of South Wales to converge on Newport. The Mayor of Newport had prepared a 'welcoming committee', and when the marchers arrived at the Westgate Hotel in Newport, 28 soldiers, hidden in the hotel, fired volleys into the demonstrators killing 22 and wounding 50 more.

Subsequently the authorities declared a 'Special Commission' to investigate the 'High treason' committed by the demonstrators, leading eventually to a trial of 14 defendants at Monmouth in December 1839. Four defendants were acquitted, five transported, and three sentenced to be hanged, although later the capital sentences were remitted to transportation to Australia. By the time the most famous defendant John Frost died in 1877, at least some of the six key demands of the 1838 People's Charter had been satisfied.

Following the now restored tradition of 'tea', a lively question time ensued, with a debate starting about when the working class first became radicalised. Perhaps a further talk could focus on whether the 1790's radical movement extended to Forest?

'Blood, Guts and a Little off the Top' - 12th March

On 12th March, 2011, at the Belle Vue centre, jolly John Putley, completely costumed up as a barber-surgeon, stood behind a table overflowing with medical goodies.

A barber – surgeon of the Middle Ages shaved, let blood and drew teeth. John told us all about it! The audience reaction predictably resounded with "Oooohs" and "Aaahs" and nervous laughter as John's matter – of – fact information "entertained".



Terrific insights into the barber- surgeon's life have been discovered in the wreck of the Mary Rose. Ranging from close shaves, hair cut with sheep shears, nits hunted by combs, wounds soothed by honey, to remedies for flux and biting on willow tree bark, the horrors mounted. Keeping the Four Humours in balance and believing that prevention is always better than cure, the barber – surgeon was in high demand in the local community ever since monks had given up the practice of medicine. Astrology was used to determine the nature of the illness. "Piss Prophets" were highly thought of and the application of medical leeches commonplace.

But if powdered mice and the mixing of horsehair and egg white failed, it was, of course, "the will of God". Your time had come and no blame was attached to the barber – surgeon. The best audience groans were confined to amputations, trepanning and cauterising. Real teeth, provided by a tame Newent dentist, were exhibited, sword and pistol wounds explained and through a leather mouth piece the excruciating pain communicated itself.

Thankfully, we were never embarrassed by the call for volunteers. We were spared – but a routine visit to the doctor or dentist will never be the same again.

David J. Harrison

The Forest - Safe for Now?



No one could be unaware of the recent furore over Government plans for the National Forest Estate, and the potential implications for the Forest of Dean. As a charity, and out of respect for the broad views of the membership, the History Society restrained its activities in connection with the recent events to lobbying to protect the archaeological and historic features of the Forest of Dean. However leading members of the Society felt that they wanted to engage more deeply, and so joined

the 'Hands Off Our Forest' campaign to take action in their own names. The photograph (right) shows Averil Kear, Ron Beard and Baroness Jan Royall at the recent celebratory event at the Speech House.



The Hands Off the Forest Campaign recently stated: "This is the third time in 30 years that the Forest of Dean has had to fight and win a battle to save our Forest. HOOF was the first local campaign to mobilise and it has been the largest and most active of them all. The Rally in the snow sparked the national response. Thousands of people gave wonderful support which led to the government to abandon their plans, and drop the clauses in the Public Bodies Bill and terminate the consultation process." HOOF added "A permanent and positive solution must now be made to define the whole of the public forest estate in England and to protect the expert Forestry Commission staff that manages them. As the public has demonstrated, these woods and forests are regarded as precious public open spaces. It's now up to the Government to recognise this and come up with positive proposals."

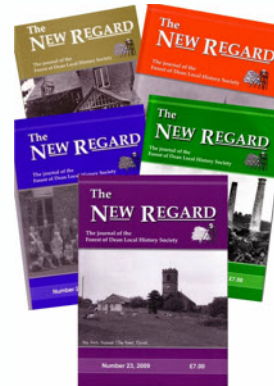
Research Tip! Thanks to Dave Tuffley for this suggestion! For those of you who have access to the Internet, and have a current library 'barcode', then you can search on-line certain 19th century newspapers:

1. Via the URL below go to the 'Virtual Reference Library' within Gloucestershire Library: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/index.cfm?articleid=10789>
2. Select 'Newspaper' then '19th Century British Library Newspapers'
3. Enter your library barcode
4. When you select the newspaper you wish to look at, the text has normally a green marker against the search name. If you cannot see that marker, go back to the top of the page and select 50% magnification (instead of 33%) and this should then bring your article up on the screen.

SPECIAL OFFERS!



Complete Your Collection of New Regards!



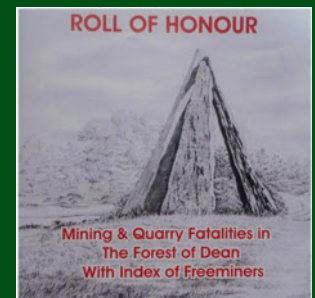
We can now offer past issues of the New Regard issues 19,20,21,22 and 23 for sale at the **special price of £3.50**.

You can find out about the contents of these issues at our website:

<http://www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/LHSnrprevious.html>

Another special offer is our **Miner's Memorial CD**. Members can buy copies for the **reduced price of £10**.

As well as the record of mining casualties, these CDs include details, including some superb pictures, of nearly all the former mine sites, many of which are now nearly obliterated by the woodland. So the CD is an excellent record of our industrial history which could otherwise be lost forever and would make a very acceptable present.



We would like to remind you that there are still a few of our **specially commissioned mugs** available. There are two designs, one showing our Roll of Honour Memorial at New Fancy and the other showing Trafalgar Arch.

The back of each mug has the name of the Society together with our logo. Caldwell Creations who designed and made the mugs have assured us that they are dishwasher friendly and make a really good cup of tea or coffee. They are now available at the **special price of £2.50 each**.

You can buy the issues of the New Regard, mugs and CDs at our meetings or buy the New Regards and CDs online at our website, or by using the form included with this newsletter.