

# FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*news*  
April 2013

Normans to invade Lydney??

To see them in action  
join us at our History Day  
on Saturday 22nd June !!  
*Full details on back cover*

THE FOREST OF  
DEAN LOCAL  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY

## News

**APRIL 2013**

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## Editors Notes

Firstly some sad news. Many of you may have seen reports in the local newspapers about the death of Brian Johns. Brian was a past committee member of the History Society, in fact he was a past editor of this newsletter and also wrote many articles for the New Regard. He had a particular skill of 'dowsing' which he demonstrated when he presented at Society meetings. I found the perfect summary of Brian in the tributes presented at his funeral service. One of his grand daughters said "I remember Grandad being someone who knew a lot and liked being outside". That was Brian in a nutshell.....

Traditionally the spring newsletter provides opportunities to engage in summer activities with the Society. You will see later in the newsletter that this year brings a bumper set of possibilities, both in terms of coach outings (we have two planned for this summer), and walks. Last year the coach outing was filled to capacity very quickly, so please return the enclosed form as soon as you can if you wish to join the excursion to St Fagans. The necessary forms for the August coach tour will be included with the July newsletter.

Please note that the timing and meeting place for the 'Walk Around Parkend' on Sunday 19th May has yet to be finalised. Watch the website or listen out at the April meeting for further details of the walk.

Have you heard the local story that the Forest is divided into 'Greeks and Laplanders'? Apparently it's all to do with the altitude and snowline that separates the cold Forest above a certain level and the warm Forest below it. If you travel by car from Coleford to Lydney for instance, after a snowfall, as you drive downhill from Bream woods the snow often disappears. When you reach Lydney people look at the snow on your car and say "Oh, it's been snowing up there again has it?" Thanks to Averil Kear and John Belcher for explaining this local story. Do you have any local myths or stories you would like to share with us??

*Keith Walker*

*Short pieces of news, views, and opinions for the Newsletter are always very welcome. Every effort will be made to reproduce articles as presented but the Editor reserves the right to edit as necessary. The Editor will assume that all necessary authorisation for attachments, photographs etc has been obtained and the FODLHS will not be held liable in the case of a subsequent query.*

## News From The Chair

It has been a very busy couple of months in the society since the last newsletter. Indoor meetings have attracted record attendances. Not only have members enjoyed our talks but large numbers of visitors as well; some have made enquires to join the society.

Everyone on the committee has been frantically working away at getting the summer events organised. My walk around Parkend on Sunday 19th

May has yet to be timed, if you intend to come on this walk it will **not** be all on the flat, please wear sensible walking shoes. In June we are planning the largest outdoor event the society has put on in its 60+ years; see the back page of the newsletter for more on this event.

There will be two coach outings this year. The first one is on Saturday 13th July to St Fagans and has been organised by Mary Sullivan and Joyce Moss; please see booking form in this newsletter for further details. In August, there will be a coach trip, themed 'Seeking Early Dean'; more about this trip plus booking forms in the next newsletter. Also Cheryl Mayo has arranged an evening walk around Sudbrook on the 7th of August led by Peter Strong. (Peter presented the talk on the Severn Tunnel in January).

On the 9th March Dr John Wood gave a talk on the 'Trials of Beatrice Pace', he suggested that rather than we pay him his lecture fee, we use the money to buy a couple of his books, "The Most Remarkable Woman in England", about Beatrice and her trial, so that local people could have access to the book through the library system. We have bought three books and have arranged with Cinderford library that one will be a loan item and one will be held in the local studies reference section; the third volume is to go into the society's library and be available through the 'loans' box.

On a more serious note it would appear that not all renewal payments of membership subscriptions are coming into the society at the beginning of October; when they are due. This is causing a lot of work that could be avoided. So could everyone please ensure they renew their membership on or as near to the 1st of October as they can in the future. There are many members who do pay on time so it is unfair on these people when other members pay late. Could I please ask that if you have a standing order to ensure it is dated for the 1st of October; these funds are the life blood of the society and are the base on which the events of your society are arranged – I hope that you will all agree that your society funds are used in a responsible way by your committee who aim to provide a well balanced programme of events throughout the year.

Also, to be fair on the paid up members of the society we are currently looking at how to ensure that non-members do not abuse the society's open and welcoming hospitality. The committee is currently looking at how to manage entrance to society events; entrance will remain free, or at a concessionary rate at certain events, to all paid up members. Non-members will of course always be welcome to all our events, but on payment of a small entrance fee. I will keep you all informed on any decisions the committee make in this area.

Keep on researching – and have an enjoyable summer.

Cecile Hunt



## New Society Projects

Next year will see the 100th anniversary of the start of **World War One**. Over the last couple of months I have been looking to get a group of members involved in doing research on this very short, four year period in the history of the world that had such a vast and terrible impact on the people in Britain and Europe. Around the country, starting next year, there are going to be many events remembering the events of those four years that touched so many people and their ways of life. I would like to get Society members involved in researching the more unusual aspects of how the war impacted on the Forest of Dean and its people.



Much research has already been done on the war memorials and the people who are commemorated on them. What I would like to be researched are the more obscure happenings here in the Forest of Dean, such as the Red Cross hospital set up in Lydney Town Hall, how and why did that happen? There are records of two young Belgian refugees attending school in Broadwell; thousands of refugees came to this country from Belgium surely there were others in the forest, where were they housed? What more can be found out about the 'Woodmen's School' in Lydney, Gloucestershire where 'only forewomen planters' were trained during the war as reported in the Times of 31st January 1918?

The aim of the project is to get articles of varying lengths to be published in a book or something similar. Some members have already expressed an interest in doing research in various areas; some are keen to assist the project with other help such as using their computer skills to type up research notes. One evening in April I am intending to get everyone who is interested together at a venue in Lydney to see how we can take this project forward and work together to produce an outstanding publication which will be a credit to the society. If you are interested in contributing to this project my contact details are on the back of your membership card. Thank you in anticipation of your input to this project.

Cecile Hunt

## Heritage Lottery Funding Opportunities

Those of you who attended the January meeting may remember that I talked about your committee's plans for preparing educational packs to interest children in the unique heritage of the Forest. At that time we were going to put in a separate bid for a small lottery grant to cover the costs both of learning how best to produce such packs and the actual costs of designing and printing them.

However, since then we have been approached by David West, Forestry Commission lead of the Landscape Partnership Project which is bringing together many groups and societies, from the public, private and voluntary sectors to put in a large composite bid in May. We have been convinced that being part of this bigger project and working with partner organisations is likely to lead to better outcomes in relation to making Forest heritage more accessible members of the public. Our aims overlap with those of other groups who bring different expertise to the party e.g. Gloucester University.

So we are currently working with the Forestry Commission and others to make the bid as good as possible. However, if this effort fails we can still return to our own small project. I will keep members informed of progress over the year.

Mary Sullivan



## Forthcoming Local History Events

July sees two chances for members to travel out of the Forest for local history events. On Saturday 6th July **Stonehouse will be hosting the annual history afternoon.** These are always an interesting way to find out more about the history of somewhere in our County – and enjoy a lovely afternoon tea into the bargain. There will be a choice of walks around the town led by members of Storehouse local history group, an exhibition and tea all for £8 per person. Please complete and return the enclosed booking form if you want to attend this event.



Whilst on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July, as per your membership card, we will be organising a **coach tip to St Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff.** Here you can see reconstructed houses and learn how people lived in them. We are preparing a short hand-out for you about the houses you will see which will be given out on the coach. There are a couple of cafes within the grounds for lunch or you could bring sandwiches. The cost so long as we have a full coach of 53 visitors will be £8 per head.

Please complete and return the enclosed booking form if you want to attend this event.

*Mary Sullivan*

## Sudbrook Summer Stroll

In January Peter Strong of the Caldicot and District Local History & Archaeological Society gave us a fascinating talk on the building of the Severn Tunnel. At the same time he provided us with a tantalising glimpse into the little village of Sudbrook and its ancient history. It all sounded so interesting that we thought members might enjoy a follow up visit to Sudbrook. This has now been organised for **Friday 2nd August** and Peter has very kindly agreed to do a guided walk for us. The plan is for members to travel there under their own steam and meet at the Pumping Station at 7pm. The address is Camp Rd, Sudbrook, Caldicot NP26 5TE. If it's a fine evening you might like to bring a picnic tea.

So that we can give Peter some indicative numbers, please email our Secretary, Cheryl Mayo, on [cheryl.mayo@btinternet.com](mailto:cheryl.mayo@btinternet.com) or telephone 01594 516960 if you plan to come (not binding!).

## Sale of Surplus History Books

Thank you so much to everyone who made donations to the Society of their surplus history books. They have now all been sold on the Publications table at our meetings and have raised £30.

We will always welcome further donations of books from any period of history, especially those concerning The Forest of Dean and the surrounding area.



*Sue Gordon-Smith*

## Review - Radical History Workshop

### *“Landscapes of Resistance: figuring the places and spaces of protest past”*

On March 2nd, a workshop entitled “Landscapes of Resistance: figuring the places and spaces of protest past” was held at the University of Gloucestershire. Several members of FODLHS were there. Through the day, there were many different sessions on place and protest. The key address set the ball rolling by discussing the many reasons for protest, but concluded that a sense of place was very important. This was about the dispossession and reclamation of space by workers and radicals in the late c18 and early c19 and had much to do with inclusion and exclusion. A good example of these themes would be the breaking of Nelsonian enclosures by Warren James and his associates in the Forest of Dean.

The business of place is a universal theme but, in a British context, we heard about Highland clearances and the seizure back of land, in some areas, for houses. A lawyer talked about police

kettling techniques in London and the St. Paul's squatters and Simon Sandall looked at the freeminers in Dean during the c17 and their legacy. The miners who claimed their rights by custom and from Edward 3rd, who had rewarded them for their help at the siege of Berwick on Tweed, had protested at several of the land grants of Charles 1st in the Dean. Their mining activity in the Forest is commemorated in place names everywhere. The Pludds, for example, represent open cast mines and the early iron scowles have produced a rather mysterious landscape. The names of Coleford, Cinderford and Redbrook are self-explanatory.



This sense of place has been most recently shown in the HOOOF movement, where the miners were invoked again. The people of the forest were not going to allow central government to privatise their land! We then heard about the Cornish clay miners strike, for better pay. A woman organizer, Julia Varley, came in from the Black Country and mobilized the women. The police, who were brought in from Glamorgan, were isolated by the strikers and were refused lodgings and entry to local pubs. Eventually, the employers gave in. Then the concept of radical walking was introduced. John Watkins, a Whitby Chartist, invoked the northern landscape of the Yorkshire Moors as a metaphor for liberty in 1842. Access to certain places became integral to radical history. In 1796, John Thelwall of the London Corresponding Society, walked all around the periphery of London, recording the plight of cottagers. Cobbett's “Rural Rides” also mention the working people he met.

Obviously, these ideas came from the more general Romantic Movement which glorified nature, following the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. But journeying to a goal in the physical landscape is a universal human need and has been going on through history. It simply took a radical turn in the late c18.

The conference gave me a lot of new ideas to ponder, particularly the universality of the theme but the localism of the examples. Again, local history proves its worth in these studies, to add up to a more general picture. So, it is not only “the Land between Two Rivers” where a sense of place is important. It is everywhere and we need to link in Dean's history with a much broader spectrum of national history.

*Joyce Moss*

## Plaques and Monuments

### Memorials connected with Horatio Nelson



*HMS Victory Plaque  
(above and below right)*

Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson, KB (29 September 1758 – 21 October 1805) was a flag officer famous for his service in the Royal Navy, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars. He was wounded several times in combat, losing one arm and the sight in one eye. Of his several victories, the best known and most notable was the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, during which he was shot and killed.

Nelson joined the navy and rose rapidly through the ranks and served with leading naval commanders of the period before obtaining his own command in 1778. He suffered periods of illness and unemployment after the end of the American War of Independence. The outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars allowed Nelson to return to service, where he was particularly active in the Mediterranean. In 1797, he distinguished himself while in command of HMS *Captain* at the Battle of Cape St Vincent. Shortly after the battle, Nelson took part in the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, where his attack was defeated and he was badly wounded, losing

his right arm, and was forced to return to England to recuperate. The following year, he won a decisive victory over the French at the Battle of the Nile. In 1801, he was dispatched to the Baltic and won another victory, this time over the Danes at the Battle of Copenhagen. As a reward for the victory, in 1801 he was created Viscount Nelson, then later in the year he was created Baron Nelson.

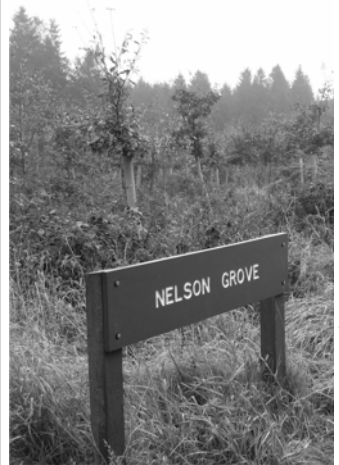
In 1802 he embarked on a tour of England and Wales, visiting numerous towns and villages including Monmouth.



Nelson often found himself received as a hero. It was at about this time, that Nelson wrote a ten page memorandum on his concerns about the supply of oak for warship construction. In it he mentions the Forest of Dean:

*"The Forest of Dean contains about 23,000 acres of the finest Land in the Kingdom, which I am informed, if in high cultivation of Oak, would produce about 9200 loads of timber fit for building Ships of the Line every year; that is, the Forest would grow in full vigour 920,000 trees.*

*The State of the Forest at this moment is deplorable, for if my information is true there is not 3500 Load of Timber in the whole forest fit for building and now coming forward. It is useless, I admit, to state the causes of such a want of Timber where so much could be produced, except that by knowing the faults we may be better enabled to amend ourselves.*



*First, the generality of trees for these last fifty years have been allowed to stand too long. They are passed by instead of removed and thus occupy a space, which ought to have been replanted with young trees.*

*Of the Waste of Timber in former times I can say nothing but of late years it has been, I am told, shameful. Trees cut down in Swampy places, as the carriage is done by contract, are left to rot and are cut up by people in the Neighbourhood. Another abuse is the Contractors, as they can carry more measurement, are allowed to cut the trees to their advantage of carriage by which means the invaluable Crooked timber is lost for the Service of the Navy. These are also another cause of the failure of timber: a set of people called the forest-free miners, who consider themselves as having the right to dig for Coal in any part they please. These people in many places enclose pieces of ground, which is daily increased by the inattention, to call it by no worse name, of the Surveyors, Verderers etc.. who have the charge of the Forest. "*

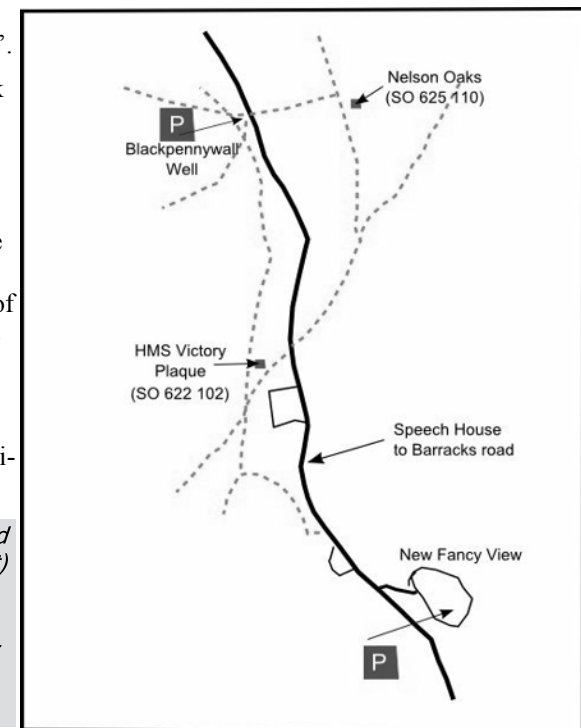
Nelson's memorandum was put before the Government of the day, and his report undoubtedly had a substantial influence on the contents of the eventual Dean Forest (Timber) Act of 1808 under which 11,000 acres were planted in the Forest, (mainly Oak).

The 'HMS Victory' plaque (see the map for location), commemorates an oak tree that was planted at the spot in the Forest of Dean in 1808, presumably to mark the passage of the Dean Forest (Timber) Act of that year. In 2004 the same tree was felled to 'refurbish a gun emplacement on HMS Victory in preparation for the Bicentennial celebrations of Trafalgar'.

The Nelson Grove was replanted with oak trees in 2005 to celebrate the bicentennial of the UK victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. More particularly, on 25th October 2005, Forest Enterprise arranged and planted 200 oaks in the form of an avenue in The Dean, now called "The Trafalgar Avenue". Dr Cyril Hart, ( late President of the FODLHS ) planted one of the Oaks as HM Senior Verderer of the Forest. Ron Beard, then Vice Chairman of the FODLHS, also planted a tree in Nelson grove as part of the commemoration activities.

*You can see the HMS Victory Plaque and Nelson Oaks for yourself. The map (right) shows the locations.*

*A short circular walk is possible by parking at New Fancy View, then following the Forest paths shown.*





## Meetings In Review - by David J Harrison MA

### SUDBROOK & THE SEVERN TUNNEL

One hundred and four people cannot be wrong – and they weren't! On Saturday, 12th January, 2013, Pete Strong kicked off the New Year Talks Season in magnificent style. The main hall at the West Dean Centre, Bream, was packed, the audience was not disappointed.

A very brief history of Sudbrook on the banks of the Severn gave us the Bronze Age Camp of the Silures. Roman coins and the Medieval ruins of Holy Trinity and the feudal field system were revealed in turn. Old ferries ploughed the Severn from Beachey to Aust and another from Blackrock, by the middle of the 19th century steam trains even arriving at the end of piers. This was okay in calm weather, but no fun in rough, and mercifully in the 1880s, one of the piers burned down.

Early schemes to excavate a tunnel from side to side of the estuary date from 1809. The motivation was the cheap transportation of good Welsh steam coal. An Act of Parliament in 1872 paved the way and saw Charles Richardson taking soundings, boring rocks, dropping plumb lines. As Chief Engineer he bought up land at Sudbrook and sunk shafts of 200 feet. By October 1879, the two tunnel excavations were a mere 130 yards from joining up when an unforeseen disaster struck. A massive underground spring burst into the workings. Directors of the G.W.R. met to discuss the threatened project and the enterprise was placed in the hands of Thomas Andrew Walker. A unique and soberly upright product of the railway age, he was a "Mr. Fixit" of his time. Walker was greeted by a scene of desolation and terrific flooding with the diggers themselves downhearted. He set about with great energy, employed beam engines, built his own brick works, and used divers to locate the difficulty. The divers isolated sections of the tunnel by closing massive doors. Tidal floods, subsidence and another inundation from yet another underground spring in 1883 trapped 83 men who were safely rescued.

Above ground, Sudbrook was transformed with 130 houses built in a substantial manner. Between 1873-84, Sudbrook gained a school, two hospitals and a 1500 seater mission hall. Walker had high ideals and high standards. New Pumping Stations were installed to divert the spring water and by 1886 the railway tunnel was up and running, first for coal and then for passengers. A magnificent achievement which we are proud to use to this day.



### DEAN FOREST RAILWAY

Peter Adams is the current Chairman of the Dean Forest Railway and spoke to our Society on Saturday 9th February, at Bream. He concentrated our attention on the history of the railway since preservation and showed two carousels of colour slides. In the audience of 85 members and friends were many secret train-spotters, myself included, who love the sight of old diesels, tank engines, class 37s, The City of Truro, 5541 Flagship, Iron Duke and, of course, Thomas the Tank Engine. The use of the latter's copyright means that royalties of 23% of gross earnings are paid out after special events.



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Using his red-light spot pointer we traversed the workload of preservation by volunteers who have been based at Norchard since 1975/76. Under the Severn and Wye railway colours special excursions, Santa Specials, war weekends, restaurant cars, Open Days fill a busy calendar. Track extension and maintenance, upkeep of rolling stock, platforms and stations, the ever cutting back of the jungle aka the Forest of Dean, the repair/replacement of bridges, railway gates at level crossings and new signals all make work for the volunteer working man to do. The

### THE TRIALS OF BEATRICE PACE

As an acute observer said, "Cries of foul play and accusations of murder, certainly bring 'em out". On Saturday 9th March the Society welcomed a great influx of fresh faces at Bream, when 86 members and friends looked again at the fate of forester Harry Pace. Harry died in agony, aged 36, at home in Rose Cottage, Fetter Hill, in January, 1928. He was a quarryman who also kept sheep. His post-mortem examination showed that a large quantity of arsenic was present in his body. Sheep dip contained arsenic, but why would Mr. Pace imbibe it? Did it get there through the hands of another? Beatrice Pace, his wife and mother of his five children, stood trial at Gloucester in July.



Rose Cottage, Fetter Hill

Did she do it? The mystery of what really happened at Rose Cottage is alive and well in the minds of foresters today. Leading detectives sifted through bucketfuls of gossip and found the evidence – "complicated, contradictory and mysterious". The Inquest named Beatrice, but the public loved her as she had truly suffered 18 years of an unhappy, violent marriage. The prosecution took more than four days to present their case, but the clever Norman Birkett, for her defence, claimed that there was no case to answer and the judge agreed. We have still not heard all the points from Beatrice's side of things. She was the property of her husband and remained with him as if in bondage, a prisoner of poverty. The modern woman, the flapper, and women who "identified" with Beatrice's situation caused riotous scenes and hysterical crowds swamped Gloucester when Beatrice was triumphantly acquitted making Front Page news.

The FODLHS is now on the international map as far as visiting speakers are concerned. John Carter Wood, the author of "The Most Remarkable Woman in England" (*Beatrice Pace*), came to us from the Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz, Germany. John's excellent presentation was aided by a neck held microphone and his splendid manner was a little reminiscent of the great Tom Lehrer.



## Book Review

### *“Henry of Monmouth also known as Henry V”*

It is fairly well known that Henry V was born in Monmouth, but in his newly published booklet David J Harrison widens our knowledge of the warrior king. The title of the booklet suggests a narrow study of Henry, but in fact we are offered a ‘smorgasbord’ of wider subject matter so that we can place Henry in the context of his time, including a vivid picture of life in the fourteenth century, particularly in Henry’s birthplace of Monmouth.

Naturally Henry’s family is put under the microscope, including his father Henry Bolingbroke, and grandfather John of Gaunt. Henry’s early life in Monmouth is discussed, including the remarkable survival (or otherwise!) of his childhood cot! We follow his life along the Wye to Courtfield and his upbringing there by the Montacutes.

The focus is then on Henry’s later life including the years he spent as Prince of Wales, on active service attempting to control Owain Glyndwr and his followers. His reign as King is also covered, culminating in his famous victory over the French at the Battle of Agincourt. Henry’s marriage to Catherine de Valois in 1420 and the later birth of his son (Henry) in 1422 lead us to his early death at the age of 35 from fever and dysentery in 1422.

David Harrison concludes that Henry V was ‘never easy going, always serious and pious and often thought of as a war monger, but a victorious one. He had none of the attractive virtues, but in the light of his own day, he was outstandingly efficient, able, and above all, a just king’.



*“Henry of Monmouth also known as Henry V” 40 pages, A5 format booklet.  
Directly available from: David J Harrison, 11 Monks well Road, Monmouth, NP25 3PF.  
Priced at £6 (including post and packing).*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS *from Liz Berry*

There are still a few members paying by standing order who have not updated them to £10 for one and £15 for two or more people at the same address. Could you please check with your bank that you are paying the correct amount? This will be the last newsletter sent out to those who have not yet paid their 2012/13 sub. I will now drop the whip, and welcome these new members to our Society:

Mr P Horsley, Newnham  
Mrs G Smith, Coleway  
Mr & Mrs C & P Haines, Newent  
Mrs D Hebden, Mitcheldean  
Ms J Lang, Cinderford  
Ms J O'Hanlon, Harrow Hill

Mr & Mrs W & J Hall, Monmouth  
Mrs H Bowen, Boughspring  
Mrs S Wilkes, Hartpur  
Ms C Hagood, Birmingham, Alabama  
Mr M Vine, Clearwell  
Mr J Taylor & Mrs A Fuller, Ross on Wye.

We were very sorry to hear of the death of two of our recent members; Mr Anthony Hall and Mr Andy Beaumont. We send condolences on behalf of the Society to their families.

## History Event - “People in the Forest of Dean” Saturday 22nd June

On the 22nd June at the Sea Cadets site in Naas Lane, Lydney the Society is putting on its biggest event in its 60 year history. It is going to be a very exciting event with the Normans coming to Lydney. In a Norman camp you will be able to learn all about life in Norman times; children can dress up in authentic Norman dress and learn about the weaponry of the time.



The theme of the event is going to be ‘People in the Forest of Dean’. Come and learn about all the different aspects of life and trade in the forest and along the river over the centuries. Stands and displays will include: History of the Sea Cadets, Police archives of many events and happenings in the forest, Family History Society, Book stalls, Dymock Poets, Archaeology, Social history displays, and much more besides. Do you use the cycle tracks in the forest? – come and see a now and then display – what used to be where you ride your bike today.

There will be a World War One display as part of the society’s latest project. Do you have any artefacts that come from this time, handed down the family – would you like to bring them along and give us the story behind them?

*Volunteers are needed to help out on the day - please contact a member of the committee if you would like to help.*

**The event will be open 10am – 4pm. Entrance fees will be Members £1.50, Non-members £2.50. Refreshments will be available. There is disabled access to the venue. There will be limited parking on the site but there is plenty of public parking in various locations around the town.**

