

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
April 2014

**What is the connection between Witley Court
and the Forest of Dean?**

**Join our tour to Witley Court and Worcester
on Saturday 14th June to find out!**

Booking forms inside!

THE FOREST OF
DEAN LOCAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY

News

APRIL 2014

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Editors Notes

First a 'thank you' then an apology to a veteran of the History Society, Averil Kear. The 'thank you' is for supplying yet another article for the newsletter. You will find Averil's latest offering, 'Littledean House of Correction', in the centre pages of this newsletter. Next the apology. Joyce Moss, our intrepid Publicity Officer, was not able to be at the evening meeting on 21st March when Averil spoke about 'The Crawshay Houses'. Unfortunately I also missed the meeting, consequently we don't have a review to print this time. However I understand some 35 members attended Averil's talk, which was very well received.

The 'iron-master' theme is extended through the Society's program this year. The links between iron-masters of the Forest and Witley Court in Worcestershire will be examined on the coach tour on Saturday 14th June. Then on Saturday 16th August, Cecile and Averil will lead the second coach tour of the summer to 'Discover the History of Forest Iron'. Booking forms for the August coach tour will be included in the July newsletter.

Those of you who came to the February meeting will have heard a short talk from Joyce Moss about World War One, and her experiences leading a school party around the war graves and towns involved in the conflict. Joyce gave a really interesting talk then, and I know you will be in for a treat if you can attend her next talk on 'The Missing Nave at Bristol Cathedral'. This will be the first talk of the next 'indoor season' on Saturday 6th September (3pm) at the West Dean Centre. Make a note in your diary!

Finally, if you are planning a visit to the local fetes and carnivals, look out for the History Society stand at the event. The Society is hoping to have a presence at Woolaston Carnival, Lydney Hospital Fete, and Parkend Carnival. Come and say 'hello' to us if you are attending these events!

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 *with Cecile Hunt*



Since the last newsletter there have been a variety of speakers at the indoor meetings, which have been reported by Joyce Moss in this newsletter. The short presentations that have been introduced after tea-break covering a wide range of subjects are the surprise of the afternoon as they are not advertised; sometimes a surprise to me until the day or two before a meeting!

I am pleased to report that the World War One project is going from strength to strength and it is very pleasing to have so many members interested in contributing to the project. Many of us involved in the project have been producing material for the exhibition that will be at Dean Heritage Centre which will run from June to September; watch the press for more details and keep an eye on the society's website for information on this exhibition as well.

On the subject of research I have been asked by several members if we could hold some workshops on how to do research. Please see separate article by Keith Walker, in this newsletter, for more information on how the committee is thinking of taking these requests forward. If you would like to take part, all of us on the committee are just waiting to be able to show you how, what, where and when on the research front.

Before Ron Beard stepped down off the committee he had for many years been managing the Society's database of historical places in the forest, their location, and historical interest. The database really needs an owner to continue the work that Ron has done. The database has a vast amount of data, information and images that will be used in future research workshops. If you are interested in putting something back into the society this is a very interesting way of doing so; Ron has offered his time and experience to help and assist anybody who comes forward to keep the database records up to date. If you are interested in finding out more about this please contact any of the committee members listed on your membership card..

Amongst outdoor events coming up are the walk on Sunday May 25th: A Walk Around Cinderford with Ron Beard. Ron will be walking some of the sites written about by him in the last New Regard – this will be a popular and interesting walk. The booking form for the June coach trip is included with this newsletter and will be to Witley Court near Worcester. This trip will in part complement the August trip being run by myself and Averil; 'Discovering the History of Forest Iron'. Finally in July your society is hosting the Gloucestershire Local History Association's annual event. History societies throughout Gloucestershire take turns to host this event and this year it will be held at St Briavels. Please see the enclosed booking form and website for more details.

The Society does have library – small, but growing all the time. If you have any books based on the Forest of Dean that you think may be useful for research purposes, please consider donating them to the Society for the library. We are looking for Victoria County Histories volumes V, X & XII specifically for the library; the society is prepared to pay a reasonable fee for them if you want to get rid of one but not donate.

Have an enjoyable Summer and I hope to see you at one of the Society events.

Cecile

Scott's Polar Pony 'Lydney' alias 'Victor'

The British Antarctic Expedition, led by Captain Scott in 1910, attracted sponsorship from various schools who presented money to buy dogs and ponies for the expedition. One of the ponies was sponsored by The Institute, Lydney, and was in fact named 'Lydney', and was given the nickname 'Victor'. The rather sad story of Scott's polar pony Victor can be found online at:

<http://www.polarponies.com/victor.html>



Expedition member Henry Bowers with a pony. Was this Victor?

The Society has recently received an enquiry from the Dean Heritage Centre as to what happened to the as-

sociated 'Captain Scott pictures' from Lydney Grammar School. Norman Hunt, who attended Lydney Grammar School in the 1960's, can recall the picture hanging on display in the entrance hall to the school, together with an associated letter. Christine Martyn also remembers the photos of the ponies that went on the Scott expedition on display on the half landing of the staircase of the school in the 1950's. Much earlier in the century, one of her uncles' attended the school and remembered when the collection was originally given in 1910. Our Vice President, Ian Standing, commented 'Many years ago, the Lydney Grammar School old pupils organisation donated a considerable collection of Lydney Grammar School material to the Dean Heritage Museum. Being aware of the Scott Antarctic pony funded by Lydney Grammar School, I sought it at the time. Seemingly, it did not survive the conversion of Lydney Grammar School into a new comprehensive school. I was told that every hint or reminder of the Grammar School was burnt, including the Scott photo.'

Do you have any further information about the Scott photos at Lydney Grammar School or about what happened to them when the Grammar School closed? If you do, please contact Cecile Hunt (telephone: 01594 842164 ; email: cecilehunt@btinternet.com)

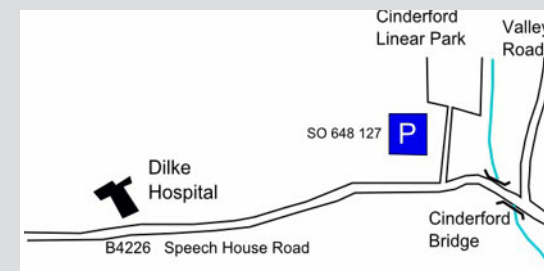


A Walk Around Cinderford Sunday 25th May at 2'30pm

Led by Ron Beard, the walk will complement the recent special issue of the New Regard "Cinderford through the years", but will be 'free standing' and will not assume that walkers have read the Journal.

The walk will start at the Linear Path car park at Cinderford Bridge. It should last approximately two to two and a half hours and will mostly be conducted along roads and reasonable tracks. Good walking shoes or trainers are recommended.

Meet at the Linear Park Car Park



Lost Houses - Part Two *by Cecile Hunt*



Some other houses that have disappeared include Rodley Manor situated on Highfield Hill, Lydney. An indication of who would have originally held this dwelling and lands is held within its name, 'Manor', indicating that at some point a landlord held it who was himself a tenant of the Crown or a mesne lord i.e. a person who in the hierarchy of titleholders was above other lords and owned land directly from the Crown. Records indicate that a dwelling had been in evidence on the site of Rodley Manor or Rodleys, or Archers Hall (1564), since about 1204 when the Manor of Ledenei or Lidney was seized, or held by, the Earl of Warwick. Rodley Manor was uninhabited for sometime before being demolished, amongst some controversy, in readiness for the expansion of Lydney in the 1990's. The drive and entrance gates are still visible and are situated directly opposite the Driffield Road turning off the A48.

At the other end of Lydney was Whitecross, the home of the Winter or Wintour family who due to their involvement in the civil war of 1642 – 1645 destroyed this house by setting fire to it, to stop it from falling into Parliamentary hands. Rudder states that after Lydney manor had reverted back to the crown in the mid 1500s it was "...granted, by Queen Elizabeth to Sir William Wintour, vice admiral of England; who with great valour and success, opposed the famous Spanish Armada, and was well rewarded by that queen. He built a stately house at Lidney, called *White Cross*, which was begun in 1588". This house gave its name to the school now located on the spot where it once stood. Eventually another house was built by the Winter family; the remains of that dwelling still in evidence are the kitchens and stables which are now used by Lydney Park Estate as offices and Taurus Crafts (photograph above right).



Abbots Wood House, Cinderford (photograph below) was a house destroyed by fire round about the late 1970s. The 1851 census shows Henry Crawshay and family in residence together with 10 servants, a butler, 3 visitors and 2 governesses; the house was probably only about 10 years old at the time of the census. Today the most visible sign of the existence of the 'big' house is Abbots Wood Lodge; Abbots Wood House would have been behind and above the lodge where there is now a small housing estate.



These houses are only a taster of what has helped to shape the countryside; not just here in the forest. But evidence of what is thought of as gone forever can sometimes be found by; digging around in books, maps and documents, and looking for visible remains; even if it is just a bit of old walling, such as the small length of wall still standing in Westbury on Severn – which is all that remains of Westbury Union workhouse.



We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Mr Ian P. Jones, Cinderford
Mr Charles Curry, Lydbrook
Mr Eric Witheridge, Lydney
Ms Jackie Fraser, Abenhall
Mr Trevor Light & Ms Rachel Andrew, Westbury-on-Severn
Ms Pam Singer & Mr John Yeo, Ruardean Woodside

Mr Christopher Temblett, Coleford
Ms C.J. Wildin, Teignmouth
Ms Stella Berg, Broadwell
Mr Paul Harrison, Caterham

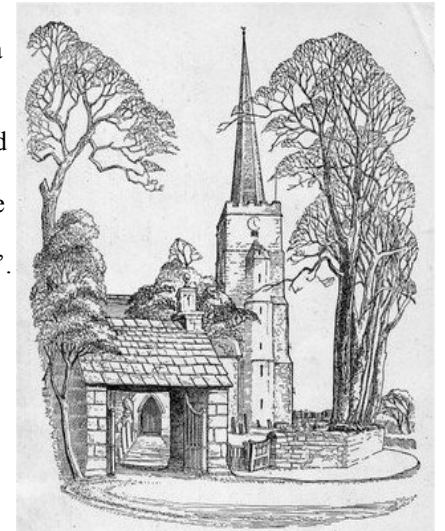
Liz Berry, Membership Secretary

Our Secretary, Cheryl Mayo, regularly sends out email updates to members about events of interest etc. If you do not receive these updates but would like to (and of course you have an email address!), please contact Cheryl to ask to be added to the email list.

If you have been receiving the email updates but have recently changed your email address, could you please let Cheryl know your new email address so that you can continue to receive these updates. You can contact Cheryl Mayo at cheryl.mayo@btinternet.com

R.A.J (Jack) Bell was a respected local historian. He was a church warden at St Mary's church in Lydney, a parish and district councillor, and also a trustee for the Lydney Recreation and Town Hall Trusts. On his death in 1987, his considerable collection of books and associated material was split up, with some of the collection going to Gloucestershire Archives, but with the remainder of the material being presented to Lydney Library where it is known as the 'Jack Bell Collection'. The collection remains as a very useful but underused resource.

The listing for the Jack Bell collection at Lydney library is available from the Society's website as a downloadable file. However for members who do not have access to the internet, copies of the listing are available from Cheryl Mayo (telephone 01594



The **Market House at Newent** is open this year from 19th April to 27th September on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from 1'30 to 4pm

Inside you will find an enhanced Newent History exhibit, archaeological finds, a new music making in Newent exhibit, and tourist information.

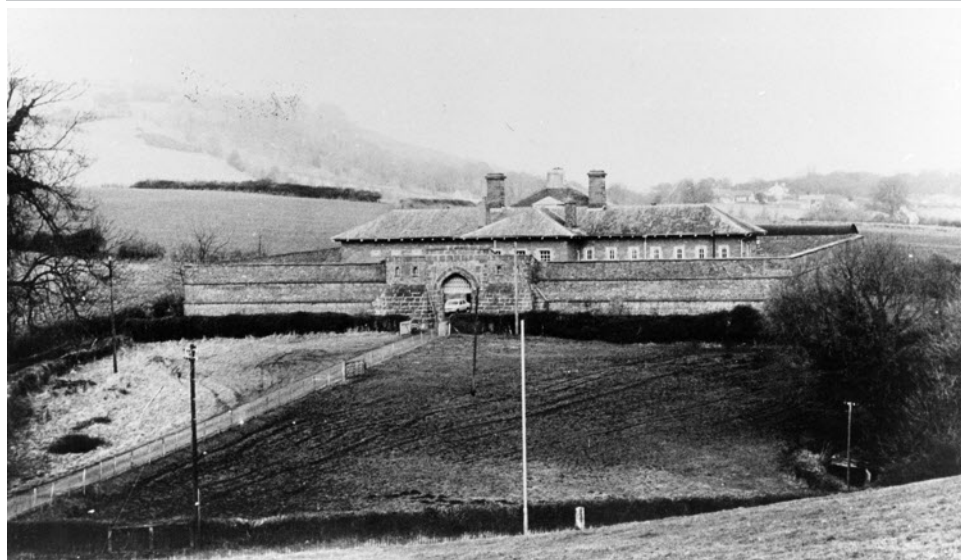
Though built in 1791/2 by William Blackburn, leading Prison Architect of the day, Littledean House of Correction was based on a design by Sir George Onesiphorous Paul, a wealthy clothier turned Prison reformer. The original building was later extended and modified and in fact was to become the prototype for Pentonville, the Governments 'model' Prison. The site chosen was dry but cold, the foundations were laid on cinders, which were the accumulated residue of an Ironworks which had once been there.

There were 4 courtyards. Each 42ft square. Approaching the block, the 'Fines' were kept on the left hand side and the 'Vagrants' on the right. 'Female' and 'Felons' yards were at the rear. The main buildings consisted of a centre section and 2 cell wings. The ground floor centre section contained the keeper's office, kitchen, scullery and magistrate's committee room with a chapel in the middle.

The first prisoner was an 18yr old labourer who stole a spade; he was imprisoned for 7 weeks. In its time the gaol has seen a motley collection of inmates, from poachers to tree bark stealers, drunkards to lewd women. Not there to be punished but to be educated and reformed, though some of the education left a lot to be desired - anything from nine hours on the tread wheel; a flogging or a spell in solitary. Many of the petty offenders were poor people who were better off in Littledean Gaol than out.

In 1874, election riots in Cinderford resulted in 120 soldiers having to travel by train from Newport to Little-

Littledean House of Correction by Averil Kear



dean at a cost of 7 shillings (35p) per man. As a result, 22 rioters were remanded at Littledean for one week. Also in 1874 a petty sessions court was added, and at the same time the tread wheel was removed.

Following the children's act 1908, the magistrates decided in 1909 to hear juvenile cases in their meeting rooms or in the courtroom at a different time from the ordinary sittings. In 1929, Littledean was listed as a place for retaining children even though children had been retained there since 1805, when whipping was used as a chief punishment.

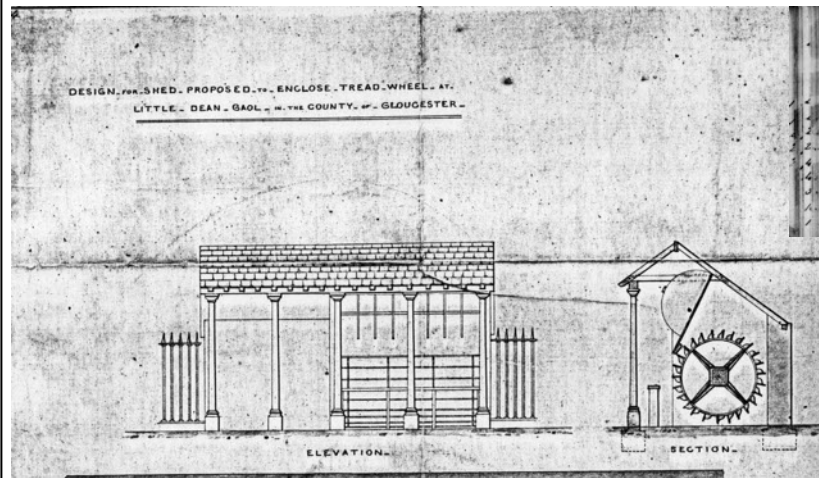
During the Second World War archives from the Gloucestershire Archives and Gloucester Cathedral were stored in the cells, as were some oil paintings. The Gloucestershire Ar-

chives records were removed in 1979. The gaol also became the headquarters of the Local Defence Volunteers (Home Guard) and an A.R.P. centre.

In 1950, a local rifle company was allowed to store arms in the gaol. In 1953 Sergeant Cornelius Baldwin took over for a couple of years, followed by Sergeant William Burtonshaw until his retirement in 1960. He was followed by Sergeant Campbell Willett until 1971. In 1954, the remaining prisoners were moved to Gloucester Gaol and Littledean ceased to be a House of Correction. It then became a Police Station and a Prison of Remand. The police station in Littledean village closed and a Sergeant and two Constables moved into the gaol. In 1972 a police constable was on duty until the station was closed, leaving only the courtroom and the archives. The courtroom ceased functioning in the early 1980's. The gaol then stood empty until it was purchased by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Company in 1986.

Today Littledean Gaol, a Grade 2 listed building, is occupied as a home and museum.

A full history of Littledean House of Correction is given in a book entitled 'A House of Correction' by J.R.S. Whiting, published by Alan Sutton in 1979



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Meetings In Review *with Joyce Moss*



January's meeting saw Nadine Carr, alias Lady Atherton give a talk called "There's A War On You Know." Lady Atherton was a regional rep. for the Women's Voluntary Service. During the war, this organisation prepared thousands of meals and cups of tea for troops, helped with the evacuation of city children, found them homes in the countryside as well as issuing ration books and helping to home 8000 refugees. The rest of the talk was about "Make Do and Mend" when things were scarce in the war. You had to be an expert gardener, knitter and seamstress to survive. Some of her ideas were rag rugs, making one dress from 2 worn ones and making children's clothes from adult's cast offs.

We also had a talk by Keith Walker, author of an article called "Sailor's Island". We were given an explanation of Lydney's changing coastline. In the ninth century, Lydney was "Lidenegth" or Sailor's Island. It probably wasn't one but the church was sited on an isthmus, above all the tides, but very close to the river. Over the centuries, the Severn has deposited land in Lydney and the new land has been claimed for farming by building sea walls. In the twelfth century, the new land was drained by ridge and furrow and reens or larger ditches. By 1682, a new land accretion had been formed. The "New Grounds" to the west of the harbour became the property of the Winter and Jones families. This development hindered shipping as the Lyd silted up and must have been the reason for the new harbour in the early nineteenth century. It is possible that, in the twentieth century, with rising river levels, the New Grounds could be claimed back by the river, if defences are not updated. Lydney could become Sailor's Island again!

At the February meeting, Kevin George gave a talk about Lydbrook's connections with Sarah Siddons, the great 18th century actress.

Her father Roger Kemble was a wig maker in Hereford but then started a travelling acting company. He married Sarah Ward in Cirencester and their daughter (Sarah) was born in 1755 at the 'Leg of Mutton' in Brecon, where the company happened to be performing. The inn is now called 'The Sarah Siddons'. Her siblings were born in a variety of places and some of them became accomplished actors.

In 1773, Sarah married William Siddons. In 1774, she was recommended to David Garrick while acting in Cheltenham. By 1775, she was in London and played Portia in the Merchant of Venice at Drury Lane. This was not a success and she spent the next two years perfecting Shakespeare roles in



provincial companies. In 1778, she came to Bath and acted at the Theatre Royal. She became the talk of the town. She returned to London and her performances there earned her appointment as English Reader to the children of George III. She became so famous that she was painted by Gainsborough, Reynolds and Lawrence. She bought a farm in Middlesex and, in 1809, spent a holiday in Cheltenham and visited the old house at Lydbrook. She retired in 1812 and died in 1831 in London. She had given birth to seven children but outlived five of them.

Joyce Moss also gave an illustrated short talk about the First World War, which was a conflict between Germany/Austria and Russia for control of the Balkans, as the Ottoman Empire weakened. Since Russia was allied to France, the Germans decided on a knock out blow to France before turning on Russia. In 1914, the German army therefore invaded Belgium and France. The allies had evenly matched it (Britain and France) and there was now a race to the Channel ports and south to establish lines. These became the trenches. For 4 years the sides were unable to break effectively through each other's lines and there was a stalemate. Joyce went on to talk about St Edward's (Cheltenham) School trip to Belgium and France in 2005.



The March meeting of the History Society saw Nicholas Herbert give a talk on the Dean Eyre of 1634.

A Forest Eyre was a periodic visitation by Crown officials to punish offences against Forest law and to regulate local officials. But Mr Nicholas explained that by 1634, the Eyre was largely disused until Charles I was short of money, having dissolved a troublesome Parliament in 1629. He then had to raise extra Parliamentary revenue by any means to keep the Crown going. This was often done by the revival of out of date dues which inevitably fed into his unpopularity. Eventually these led, with other factors, to the outbreak of Civil War in 1642. It is significant that one of these first grievances tackled by the Long Parliament in 1640 was the extension of Forest Law to the new boundaries. In July 1634, in Gloucester Castle, the Dean Eyre inflicted high fines on those infringing the King's rights to timber, iron, coal, fish and deer within his lands in the Forest, as a way of making more money. Worse the boundaries of the Forest were pushed back to include other parishes in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, to take in more tax. The importance of the Eyre is that it illustrates a part of Dean History, which is very much part of our national history, concerning conflict between King and parliament.

Former Chairman Ron Beard also gave a short talk on the work being undertaken by the Coal Authority to make safe redundant mine shafts and drifts in the Forest of Dean. Ron explained that he has close contact with the contractors undertaking the work, and he regularly visits them when they are operating in the Dean. Ron showed photographs of some of the recent work undertaken by the contractors, including work at Parkend and New Fancy.

Society Research Projects



Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?

HOME FRONT DEAN IN WORLD WAR ONE

The World War One project (Home Front Dean In World War One) is progressing well. The project members have been working very hard to prepare material on relevant subject areas for the exhibition at the Dean Heritage Centre. The textual content has been handed over, staff at the Dean Heritage Centre are now busy editing the material for the display boards. The next stage for the project team is to find suitable images to augment the text.

In parallel with the research work, Nicola Wynn of the Heritage Centre has been busy collecting artefacts from the World War One period which will be used in the exhibition.

The exhibition is scheduled to run between June and September of this year. In addition the Heritage Centre is planning to hold a special WW1 commemorative event in early August. We will have more details of this in the next newsletter.

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT!

Those members involved in the World War One research project were given some written material and images to help them in their research. However they were largely left alone to carry out the research. The Committee is aware that there are other members of the Society who would like to get involved, but who are not sure how to go about it, and would prefer a more structured and guided introduction to research.

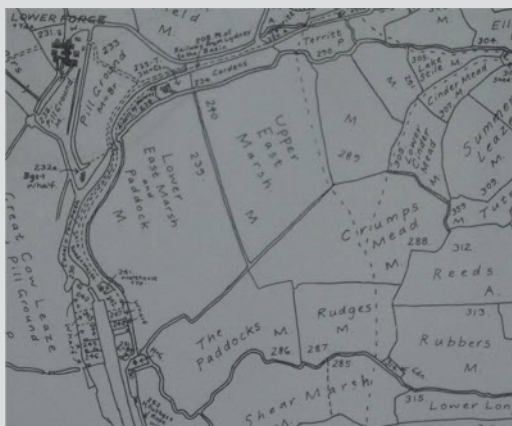
The Committee would like to offer members the opportunity to engage in a research project, where the members would work as a group, and would receive as much help and support as they need in their initial research. In the first instance, this support would take the form of workshops, held at the Society's 'base' at the Sea Cadets, Naas Lane, Lydney.

Included in the Society library is some unfinished research from the early 1950s into 'Field Names'. The Committee feels that this subject might be very suitable for a group research project, as the research needed might include study of maps, use of resources at the Society library, at Gloucester Archives, and on the internet. Any study of field names would also necessitate 'field trips'.

If you are interested in learning how to set about researching for local history, and would like to get involved with the group research project into local 'Field Names', please contact our Chairman, Cecile Hunt;

Email: cecilehunt@btinternet.com

Telephone: 01594 842164



Book Reviews



"A Week's Holiday in The Forest of Dean" by John Bellows
Replica of first edition (1881) Holborn House 2013, £10.00 paperback

"A very pleasant spot is this for a pic-nic; and a note sent beforehand to the keeper's wife will ensure the requisite supply of milk and other *et cetera*." So John Bellows advises visitors walking to Danby Lodge near Yorkley in the first edition of his guide, "A Week's Holiday in The Forest of Dean". Bellows was the founder of the Gloucester publishing firm which carried his name. He was also a frequent visitor to and ardent admirer of the Forest. Using The Speech House as his base, Bellows describes his day trips across the Forest. The guide's wealth of practical detail gives a clear picture of holidaying in Victorian times.

We learn what it costs to hire traps, train times from the numerous stations within the Forest, and the four different ways one can return from Littledean to The Speech House. But while full of useful information this is not a dry tome by any means. On the contrary, Bellows writes with a gentle sense of humour. He finds the local people friendly, and full of helpful information. There are also some beautiful colour engravings, numerous black and white sketches and a map showing the drives and rides in The Forest.

The replica edition of "A Week's Holiday in The Forest of Dean" has an Introduction on the life of Bellows and printing notes by Ian Standing. To find out about local stockists or to order direct, go to <http://holbornhouse.com> or call 01594 516960.

For those of you who like rugby and also have an interest in local history, then Paul Mason's '**A Centenary History of the Forest of Dean and District Rugby Football Combination**' will certainly appeal to you. Written, as the title suggests, to celebrate the passing of one hundred years since the foundation of the local rugby 'Combination'. The book reveals that



tin plate workers may have originally brought the game into the Forest of Dean at Lydbrook. The two earliest clubs in the locality, Ross and Newnham, were apparently both playing by 1874. There is also a record of rugby being played at Bells Grammar School in 1876. By the late 1890's rugby was flourishing in the area, with over 70 teams playing in the local area. In August 1913, under the guidance of Mr W.D. Meredith, a meeting was convened at the Fleece Hotel, Cinderford, where 11 local clubs combined to form the Forest of Dean Rugby Football Combination. In 1923 the Combination was set on an official footing with a proper committee of officials, a new set of rules. The Combination joined the Gloucestershire County Union, and applied for membership of the English Rugby Union. The book goes on to chronicle the history of the Forest of Dean Combination decade by decade. The highs and lows of managing the Combination are described. Many interesting contemporary photographs of local teams are included, and the more memorable matches are recalled.

The book is priced at £8 and can be purchased from any Forest of Dean and District Rugby Club, the Forest Bookshop in Coleford, or from the secretary of the Combination; Mr John Wood (telephone 01594 823566 or email johnfwood@btinternet.com)