

*the* Forest of Dean  
**Local History Society**  
*April 2009* *news*



**ENI GEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE AWARD 2008**  
**SEE STORY PAGE 6.**

# Newsletter

APRIL 2009

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## Editors Notes

As will be seen below, and on the cover, Liz and Dave Berry have been presented with their award from ENI for the Geomap, and this is a fitting end for a very busy year. After that, this year will seem like something of a holiday, especially to our dedicated and hard working treasurer. We do have a couple of outings planned, however, not all of which are listed on the programme card. Reply slips will be included with newsletters in due course, but I would recommend keeping in touch by means of the website, which Keith Walker always keeps up to date.

In contrast to the Geomap, which was prehistory, it has recently been suggested that we should devote more research to recent history. To many of us senior members of the Society, it comes as something of a shock to realise that events that we recall quite clearly are now part of the history curriculum at school.

It may be remembered that the late Cyril Elsmore was a regular contributor to the newsletter with his eloquent descriptions of local incidents (or catastrophies) like flooding in Coleford in the 1930s. Fortunately his memoirs have been deposited in the Local History reference section of Cinderford library for the benefit of us all, but we could do with a few more like him. So much has happened in the Forest in the last half century with the decline of the heavy industry and the opening up of communication with the rest of the county that we should record our memories before it is too late. There must be many of you out there who remember such iconic landmarks as the Lydbrook viaduct, the tin works chimney in Lydney or the old Severn rail bridge and have memories or even old photographs that should be preserved. Equally, of course, there are many who have moved into the Forest in more recent times and would like to know more about the history of the region.

There have been quite a few 'memorabilia' books from Forest inhabitants over the years, the most notable being Winifred Foley's 'Child in the Forest' and its sequels, but some of us are thinking that it would be a good idea if all the material was gathered together in some form or other. Input from our older members would be valuable and, of course, contributions to the newsletter are always welcome.

*Christine Martyn*

# Meetings



For the first time that most of us can remember, the February meeting was cancelled because of the snow. It was a pity to miss John Belcher's talk about the development of industry in Lydney but we hope to be able to fit it in at some future date.

The talk at our March meeting in the Belle Vue Centre, Cinderford, was by Jon Hoyle of the Gloucestershire Archaeological Trust. He explained the use of the Lidar system, which enables aerial photography to identify crop and settlement marks on the ground, despite the tree cover, which has always inhibited its use in wooded areas like the Forest. An amazing number of sites have been

found in the Forest, including crop marks in areas which we had supposed to have always been woodland. There are far too many to investigate in detail but it is hoped that some will be examined in due course.

Our next meeting is the evening meeting at Cinderford, when we welcome back Paul Barnett, this time to talk about the hulks of barges and trows that have been beached on the Lydney side of the Severn to prevent erosion. Some of you may have seen Paul on the Countryfile TV programme recently, when he was interviewed about the Purton hulks which we visited last year.

## Future Events



*Effigy of Serlo who began the abbey at the end of 11th century*

Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup>, a guided tour of **Gloucester Cathedral**, as announced in the membership card. Booking forms are included with this mailing.

Our guided walk around **Monmouth** will be held on Sun 12<sup>th</sup> July. at 2.30pm. There is ample public parking in Monmouth and we meet outside the Museum in Priory Street. The cost will be £2.50 each.

**Highnam Court Spring Fair**, 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> April. 10.30am – 5pm. This is being organised in aid of Gloucester Cathedral and the Pied Piper appeal. Advance tickets £6 (tel. 01452 396572) or £7.50 on the day, under 12s free. For more information phone 08454226119 or visit the website

[www.highnamcourtspringfair.co.uk](http://www.highnamcourtspringfair.co.uk)

As we had a very good attendance from all over the county when we hosted the GRCC Local History Committee Summer Meeting at Lydney Park last year, members might like to return the compliment this year when it takes place on



Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> 2009 at the **Westwoods Hall, Northleach**. It starts at 2 pm with a talk with slides on a brief history of Northleach and its place as a very typical Norman "planted" medieval town, after which three guided tours are on offer, two around the town and one to the Church of St Peter & St Paul, a 14<sup>th</sup> &

15<sup>th</sup> century perpendicular wool church, known as the Cathedral of the Cotswolds. Tea and refreshments will be served from approximately 4.00pm onwards at the Westwoods Hall, with the help of Northleach WI. There will be an opportunity to view the displays and talk to many of the members of the Northleach Historical Society. **Cost:** £6 per person. For more details contact Mr Peter Dawson on 01451 860468 or [peterandruth@high-pavement.co.uk](mailto:peterandruth@high-pavement.co.uk)

## Research & Development

### Mine capping

On 11 March Averil Kear and I attended a meeting at Beechenhurst with the Coal Authority to discuss their plans for mine capping. Four representatives of the Coal Authority were there, including Dr Simon Reed, Head of Safety; Phil Morton, John Harvey (Deputy Gaveler), and James Britton (Gaveler's Assistant) representing the Forestry Commission, David Bull of Gloucestershire Archaeology Service and Ray Wilson of Gloucestershire Society of Industrial Archaeology were also present. Extensive discussions took place, during which I presented our views on capping, marking, recording and special case consideration.

Simon Reed explained the approach of the Coal Authority to dealing with old mines. Capping was considered a last resort, shafts that were in good condition were fenced rather than capped (capping is an expensive process), levels in good condition were faced with a grid, otherwise they were eliminated. The programme of mines to be dealt with was communicated to the Glos Archaeological Service and there was liaison with the Deputy Gaveler and the Forestry Commission. Photographs of the site were taken prior to, and following operations and were lodged with the Archaeology Service. John Harvey also had comprehensive records of activities.

Both the Coal Authority and the Forestry Commission were against marking of mines. They are concerned that members of the public might put themselves in danger which could lead to problems of liability. However, there seemed to be a general agreement that records could be made available to us with conditions to be determined and procedures to be investigated. We would probably not be able to publish these but might make them available for legitimate research.

The authorities are also considering how we might be given advance knowledge of programmes and how we might be able to carry out our own site examination and take photographs, the resulting information being made available to the county archaeology department. With regard to special cases, it was suggested that we should investigate the possibility of having the Speedwell horse engine pits listed.

We are now awaiting a response from the Coal Authority and look forward to further discussion and some positive decisions.

## Fatalities

There have been more developments with mine fatalities. Dave Tuffley has received information regarding fatalities around the 1890s and early Twentieth Century. These have confirmed the fatalities that we have recorded. However we have received a local newspaper report which referred to the death of Harry Vaughan of Yorkley in an accident at Wallsend mine, the report implies that three workers were killed in this accident which occurred in 1916. We have so far been unable to trace any account of the accident but are still searching. If anyone has any knowledge of this incident we shall be pleased to hear from you.



## Speech House Hotel

The new owner of the Speech House Hotel, Mr Dorian Charlton, is undertaking some renovations, included in which is the alteration of an existing bar to become a themed bar, the Free Miners Bar. He approached the Society for help with the project, and we have produced some superb photos which will be displayed with suitable captions and notes. The information will, of necessity be brief, but we hope it will give visitors an insight into the unique history of the Forest which they can follow up if they wish. It is hoped that the bar will be opened early in the summer, so watch out for it in the local press.

## Millennium Photos Update.

I have had a few volunteers come forward to help with the follow-up to the millennium photographs. We are still looking for volunteers for the project which should get underway from midsummer this year. Please contact me if you are interested.

*Ron Beard*

## MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their subscription for 2008/9. I am enclosing a final reminder to those who have not yet done so. For those on standing order, may I remind you to change the amount from £6 to £8 for a single member, and from £9 to £12 for a family membership?

We welcome these new members to the Society:

Mr J Orr, Coleford  
Mr A J Arkell, Ruardean  
Mr D & Mrs M Hislop, Coleford  
Ms K Buckley & Mr A Lougher  
Mr D Charlton, Speech House Hotel, Coleford  
Mr T Bint, Bream

# ENI GEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE AWARD 2008

(ENTE NAZIONALE IDROCARBURI)



As was reported in the last newsletter, the Geomap has been awarded joint first prize in the ENI Challenge Award and on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February, Liz and David Berry, who had masterminded the project, travelled to Burlington House in

London for the presentation. It was just bad luck that the Forest was hit by the worst snow for several years on that day, so that Averil and Cecile, who had also been actively involved with the project and had planned to travel up by train were snowbound in the Forest.

The Eni Challenge Award is open to amateur individuals and groups who have created a project which promotes geology in the community, the aim of the challenge being that it should seek to help the general public understand and better appreciate geology of their region. Entries this year came from all over the country and from individuals and groups; and varied from guides and books, to databases and our own Geomap, a large scale and unique geological map made from local rocks. Joint winner with the Geomap this year was the Cumberland Geological Society for their book “Exploring Lakeland Rocks and Landscapes” .



The award ceremony was on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. at 6:00pm at the Geological Society rooms, which are part of the Royal Academy suite in Piccadilly. The ceremony was part of the annual meeting of the Geological Association. A representative from ENI gave a short speech, followed by a speech from Chris Darmon of the Geology magazine 'Down to Earth', who organise the entries to the Challenge Cup. We were then formally presented with the cup- which was actually a large (very heavy) plaque – by Alessandro Lanza, CEO of ENI.

Photographs were then taken of us and the other joint winner from Cumberland, holding the plaque. The large plaque was not for keeps, but we were given a small square plaque to bring home, (which will be on display at our meetings and other events) engraved with the name of the award and our Society as winners, and also a cheque for £400. Liz had hoped she would have been asked to say a few words of thanks etc, but there was no opportunity. She did, however, leave a sheaf of geomap leaflets for members, and as there was considerable interest in the project, we may hopefully see some parties of visitors to the Forest and to the map later on in the year.

*Averi Kear & Liz Berry*



DChris Darmon, of the Geology magazine 'Down to Earth' visiting the Geomap with Liz Berry, Dave Owen and other members of the Geomap team.

# Conservation

## PRINCESS ROYAL PITHEAD BATHS

SWRDA have once again applied for planning permission to partially demolish the Princess Royal Pithead baths building. They intend to retain a basement room which will remain underground, and a single storey set of rooms which will be the only part of the building still visible. These parts of the building are to provide an underground hibernation room for the protected Lesser Horseshoe bats together with the warmer single storey element where the bats rear their young.

SWRDA state that they are in discussions with FODDC Conservation Officer to agree a budget for the production of heritage interpretation boards and appropriate archiving of historic material from the site prior to demolition.. They also state that they are in discussion with FODDC with regard to potentially transferring ownership of the site post demolition for the purposes of re-marketing for commercial development, subject to agreement of necessary financial arrangements.

Unfortunately, after Russell Baker's engineers deemed the building unviable for renovation, we now appear to have run out of options and ideas to save this building.

It is therefore with regret that I feel that the Society must agree to this latest application with the following provisos.

- 1) The interpretation boards should be designed and worded by FODLHS and paid for by SWRDA.
- 2) The site should be allowed to revert to Forest and NOT offered for sale for potential development.



## CLOSURE OF CONSERVATION DEPT. AT FODDC

It has come to my attention that FODDC were intending to close the Conservation Department at FODDC and make Bill Cronin, the Conservation Officer redundant. Their idea is to incorporate his department into the Development Control Dept.

## CLOSURE OF TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

It has also come to our attention that FODDC are thinking of closing the Tourist Information Centres, the objective being to save money. This would appear to be counter productive at a time when they are trying to boost tourism in the Forest, especially this year with the pound being just right to encourage foreign visitors to visit the Forest.

Letters objecting to both of these proposals have been sent to the Council on behalf of the Society.

*Averil Kear*  
*Conservation Officer*



## BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

For many years, the Society has held institutional membership of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archeological Society, probably the oldest and most prestigious local history society in the county, having been founded in 1876. I was recently asked what benefit we receive from our membership, a question to which I was not able to give a reply at a moments notice, a situation which I felt obliged to rectify.

We do, of course, get the annual transactions which are held in our section of the Gage Library at the Dean Heritage Museum. Thanks to a bequest from the late Dr Emery, the Society holds a full set of BGAS Transactions and Averil has compiled an index of articles relating to the Forest of Dean, which can be seen on the Society website. In April 2007, all the volumes of Transactions were put on the Internet for free access and all 113 volumes from 1876 up to and including the volume for 1995 are now available. The B&GAS Council decided to hold back the most recent years but the next 5 years will be available shortly. To access them just put TBGAS into Google or click on <http://www.raywilson.ukp.net>.

I have also agreed to scroll through the index of the most recent ones that are not online to identify articles which may be of interest to members, and which may then be accessed from the library.

We also get the Gloucestershire Record Series, an elegantly bound hardback series, the latest of which, Volume 22, *Calendar of Summary Convictions at Petty Sessions 1781 – 1837* edited by Irene Wyatt, was reviewed in the January newsletter. These are also held at the library, which is open to members free of charge on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

BGAS also hold some very interesting meetings and talks, which members can attend. Two outings are arranged each year, one being a summer meeting overseas and the other a residential weekend in UK. This year the summer outing is to Lorraine in June, but this apparently is already fully subscribed. The residential September meeting will be in East Anglia, dates and full details will be available later. The full programme can be found on the website at [www.bgas.org.uk](http://www.bgas.org.uk)

**Congratulations** to George Gordon-Smith, the husband of our indefatigable publications officer. George was awarded the MBE in the New Years Honours list for services to the disabled. Being themselves parents of a daughter with a learning disability, George set up, and until recently ran, the Orchard Trust, which provides services for adults with learning disabilities. Sue and George have not been to the Palace yet to receive the award, but are eagerly anticipating the occasion.

# Notes and Queries....



## VILLAGE PUMPS



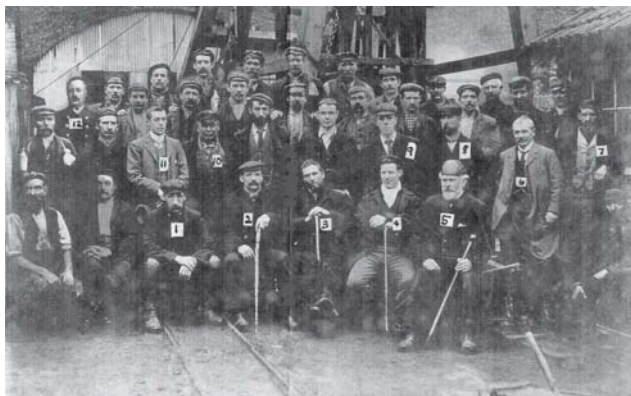
We have been approached by Richard Williams of Cheltenham, who is researching village pumps. He holds the National Register of Village Pumps, of which there are 2205, and still counting. He is currently researching Gloucestershire, and although having found over 80 in the county, only one is from the Forest of Dean, at Pillowell. He has already written a small book, which is due to be published in May, and is intending to produce one on Gloucestershire, although there is still a lot of research to be done, so is appealing to anyone in the Society who may know of a pump in their location.

He is quite specific on the definition of a pump; 'they are hand operated, and lift water up from a well or borehole. They are not pressure fed, either by the mains water supply or by a spring' Apparently there are many municipal taps, hydrants and fountains around the county, but interesting as they may be, they are not, strictly speaking, pumps.

If anyone can be of assistance to Richard, Averil has undertaken to pass any information on to him, or for more information go to his website [www.villagepumps.org.uk](http://www.villagepumps.org.uk)

## THE UNION PIT DISASTER

We have been sent the above picture by Chris Brown, from Tadworth in Surrey. He thinks it was probably taken for an anniversary of the Union Pit Disaster of 1902, and unfortunately, only some of the people are named, so he is hoping that we could identify some of the others.



The ones for whom he has names are:- 1) E A Worthy, Manager. 2,3,&4) the rescued men. 5) Thomas Hedges Deakin, mine owner and MD 6) G H Rowlinson, Miners Union representative. 7) Albert George Brown, Day shift worker at the time of the disaster, who escaped by wading through waist high water, and grandfather of Chris Brown. 8) Amos Brown, brother to Albert. 9) Thomas Carlyle Deakin, son of Thomas Deakin. 10) Richard Burrows, chief engineer. 11) Charles Dilke, Jun. son of late Charles Dilke, MP. 12) Mr Hustler, ostler and driver for the Deakin family.

I know it happened a long time ago but does anyone know any of the others?

## LYDNEY INHABITANTS, C 1945.



We have also been sent a collection of drawings or caricatures of many of the eminent inhabitants of Lydney in the late and post war period from Kathryn Shreeve from Hertfordshire. Her maternal grandfather, William Henry Venner, with his family, was evacuated to Lydney during WW2, and he was, by all accounts, a talented amateur artist. Kathryn's mother, Phyllis, worked in the Food Office and married her father, Neville Shreeve in Alvington Church in August 1941, so it is quite likely that they actually lived in Alvington – perhaps someone there can remember them.

There are about 35 drawings in total, of which we have managed to identify 14. I am hoping to show them around to some of the senior inhabitants to see if we can identify more. He was indeed extremely talented and the people that

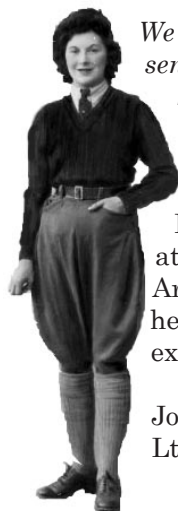
we know are instantly recognisable, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Bledisloe, our Society's first president. Most of them appear to have been done in a bar, probably the Feathers, which Kathryn says her grandparents did frequent.

Obviously there are far too many to reproduce in a newsletter but we have arranged with Lydney Library to put them on display, so if anyone thinks they may be able to identify any of them, please do go and have a look. It is also possible that someone who is not a Society member might recognise one of them so contact details will be given in the Library.



*The figure top left is that of Lord Bledisloe, but who is the man immediately above?*

## WOMEN'S TIMBER CORPS.

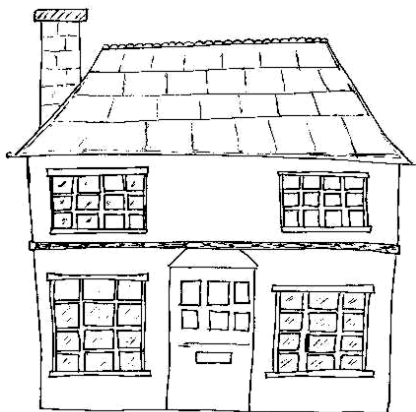


*We have had the following from John Edwardes so perhaps some of our senior members may be able to help, especially as we had a Forestry School in Parkend. Please contact Lt Cdr Edwards direct or send to me and I will forward to him'*  
*Ed.*

I'm researching the Women's Timber Corps of WW2. I've met the curator at Dean Heritage Museum who has been very helpful. The Gloucester Archives staff have suggested I ask if you hold any relevant material not held at the Museum. I'm particularly interested in reminiscences from ex-WTC members.

John Edwardes

Lt Cdr RN(rtd) [JohnCEdwardes@aol.com](mailto:JohnCEdwardes@aol.com)



# HOUSE HISTORY WORKSHOP

By popular request, Averil is holding some more courses for those wishing to know more about the history of their homes. The course is suitable for those who want to start researching the history of their house, or for people who have started and would like some help. Participants will learn how to trace the history of a building in Gloucestershire, using sources available at Gloucestershire Archives and elsewhere.

## **Courses are being held at the following venues:-**

<b>Wednesday 15th April</b>	<b>Longlevens Library</b>	<b>1.30pm-4.30pm</b>
<b>Friday 1st May</b>	<b>Yate Heritage Centre</b>	<b>10.am-1pm</b>
<b>Wednesday 17th June</b>	<b>Cirencester Library</b>	<b>1.30pm-4.30pm</b>
<b>Monday 2nd Nov.</b>	<b>Coleford Library</b>	<b>9.30am-12.30pm</b>

Courses cost £10 per person, cheques payable to Gloucestershire County Council. Anyone interested should apply to:-

**Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester,  
GL1 3DW**