



News

APRIL 2010

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Editors Notes

As announced in the last newsletter, the committee have boldly decided to continue a programme of meetings throughout the summer months, with a mixture of talks, walks and outings and as it will be seen from the events mentioned below, we have made a good start. We try to provide a mixed programme with something to appeal to everyone.

By the time that this newsletter appears, an exhibition celebrating 25 years of the publication of the *New Regard* will be on display at the Dean Heritage Museum, and will be running until June. As you can imagine, the fact that this is being held at all comes as something of a relief after the fire that broke out at the Museum in the small hours of December 17th, of which see more below.

In May we will be holding our fifth History Fair, this time at Bell's Club in Coleford. Our first History Fair, held in May 2000, was something of a novelty at the time, but the format has proved so popular that many other history societies have followed suit. Always prepared to innovate, organisers Averil and Cecile are laying on a 'new look' History Fair this time, incorporating some new ideas and help from members for a variety of functions will always be welcome.

A tour of Goodrich castle, a visit to Newport's Mediaeval Ship and a coach outing taking a look at bridges on the Severn and Wye are all included in our programme for the summer. Booking forms, where applicable, are included with this mailing.

So with events put on by other organisations, such as the day remembering Warren James at Hopewell Colliery and the GRCC Local History Day at Painswick, we have an interesting and busy summer ahead of us. All we need is some fine weather!

Christine Martyn

Join us on our tour of the bridges
of the Severn and Wye

Full details inside this issue

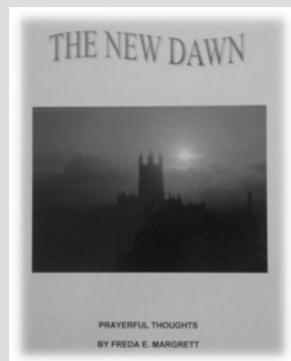
Membership



May I remind members once again that the new membership fees are £8 (not £6) for a single membership and £12 (not £9) for a family membership? Thank you to those who have paid the difference, and could I remind those who have not yet done so, that the Society needs the support of your subscriptions to function efficiently! Many apologies once again for the incorrect printing on the form sent out to some members in October.

We welcome the following members who have recently joined us:

Mr B and Mrs M F Griffiths, Lydney
Mr S and Mrs H Haygarth, Cheltenham
Mr D Fishpool, Lydbrook
Mr N J Stephens, Westbury-on-Severn
Mr F Colls, Gloucester
Mr P Kyne, Ellwood
Mr C Ballantine and Ms M Orritt, Rudford, Gloucester
Ms S Budgen, Wimbledon



The New Dawn

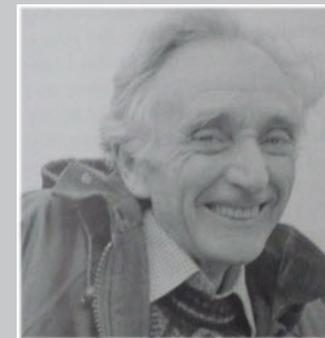
One of our long-standing members, Freda Margrett, has always had poetical leanings and many of her poems have been printed in the Citizen. By popular request, she has now published a collection of poems, many with a religious theme which she wrote for patients during a lifetime devoted to nursing.

She has illustrated her poems with pictures of Forest churches, for each of which she has added a brief historical note, and the cover is a picture of Gloucester Cathedral, by kind permission of the Dean of Gloucester, and from which is taken the title of the book, *The New Dawn*. The hardback copy costs £9.99 and can be obtained from Freda, on 01594 823646. Proceeds of sales are to be given to church restoration.

We look forward to her next book which will be a history of Welsh Bicknor, where she lived in the Old Rectory during her childhood.

Editor

ORBITUARY- RAPLH ANSTIS



Ralph Anstis died on Feb. 13th at the grand old age of 89, having been in failing health for some time. With his late wife, Bess, he retired to the Forest after a career as a civil servant in London. They both immediately took a great interest in the history of the Forest, Bess becoming an active member of the Society and Ralph began researching and writing about the area.

His first book, *Parkend, The Story of a Dean Forest Village* is a comprehensive history, not only of Parkend, but also of the industry of the whole Forest. It has recently been republished by Loosemore Press.

Ralph continued researching and writing about the industrial history of the Forest after they moved to Coalway in 1984, where they lived in Albion House, a former inn, which had been the meeting place for miners during the 19th century, and where the miners' legendary leader, Timothy Mountjoy, had spoken in 1874. With his strong social conscience, Ralph took a great interest in the history of the miners struggles over the years, subsequently writing *Warren James and the Dean Forest Riots* about the notorious enclosure riots in the 1830s. In 1994 he and Bess together edited *The Diary of a Working Man 1872-1873*, from an original diary of a miner working at Trafalgar colliery which had been discovered in a shed in Cinderford.

His interest in the Forest also include many of the early entrepreneurs who had contributed to the prosperity of the Forest during the 19th century and he subsequently published *The Industrial Teagues* in 1990, charting the lives of James Teague and his son Moses, and the story of pioneering metallurgists, David and Robert Mushet in *Man of Iron, Man of Steel*, in 1997. His *Four Personalities of the Forest of Dean*, in 1997, included such diverse characters as Timothy Mountjoy, MP Sir Charles Dilke, Civil War Royalist Sir John Wintour and Lady Catherine Boevey of Flaxley Abbey.

His last book in 2001 was a work of fiction, *Let the Hero be the Hungry Man*, based on a Forest miner in the difficult years of the 1870s, and with a strong social theme. It was later turned into a play, which Ralph claimed was the hardest thing he had ever written. Although only produced locally, it provided an empathetic insight into the hard times of the period, and perhaps warranted wider exposure.

Ralph's books were always immaculately researched as well as being compelling reading, a combination that is not always easy to obtain. He also provided many newspaper articles and contributed regularly to local radio on the theme of local history.

Although not a native of the Forest of Dean, Ralph's intensive research gave him a depth of knowledge about the area and its history which we were privileged to share through his books, which will be valuable source material for historians for years to come. Our condolences go to his family, he will be sadly missed but long remembered.

Christine Martyn

Future Events

Exhibition at Dean Heritage Museum

A reminder to members that 'Regards, Research and Reminiscences', the Society exhibition in Gallery 41 at the Dean Heritage Museum, will be running from April 3rd to June 27th. This celebrates the forthcoming 25th

edition of the New Regard, and showcases what the Society does and its ongoing projects.

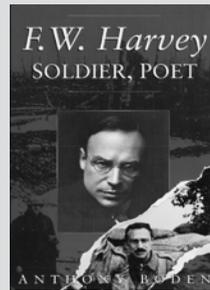
We very much hope that members will feel encouraged to go along, not only to enjoy their own exhibition, but also as an opportunity to show support for the Forest Museum - which is such an excellent local facility, and has made a great effort to overcome the inevitable consequences of the recent fire.



MBA & PAW

Launch of the F. W Harvey Society

The F.W. Harvey Society was very successfully launched on Sunday 31st January 2010 at the Memorial Hall, Yorkley. The event was attended by special guest Eileen Griffiths, Will Harvey's daughter. Also present were Eileen's daughter Elaine and husband Peter, and grandson Andrew with his fiancée Rosie.



The event was attended by 70 people some of whom were descendants of the poet. The committee were delighted at the high turnout and new membership, and thanked everyone for attending the event.

After an introduction the biographer and author Anthony Boden recited a piece entitled 'Eileen Anne' which was dedicated by Will Harvey to his daughter in 1922. He presented Eileen with a specially framed copy of the poem. Whitecross School head boy Ben Horton and his brother Sam both read examples of Harvey's work chosen by themselves. There was also a recital from Meryl Pugh, a local poet and author.

Chairman of the Forest of Dean Family History Society and F.W. Harvey Society committee member Steve Cooper closed the afternoon's proceedings with a short speech of thanks. Further information and details of membership can be found on www.fwharveysociety.co.uk or by telephone to Marie Fraser Griffiths on 01594 843107.

The Society is holding its first Annual General Meeting of the Society on **Friday 9th April 2010 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall at Yorkley, GL15 4RS.**

Future Events



To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the demolition of the Severn Railway bridge, on **Sat. 7th Aug**, we are going to look at it and also take a closer look at some other bridges on the Wye and the Severn. Cecile and Averil will be giving a short history about each one.

We will start our journey by driving over Kerne Bridge and after passing back across the Wye bridge at Monmouth we will head down the Wye Valley. Our first stop will be at Redbrook to view the old railway bridge and we will then continue on over Bigsweir bridge followed by a stop at Brockweir bridge. Then it is on to Tintern for a coffee stop and to have a look at the bridge there.

Moving on we will discover the old iron bridge at Chepstow and will have time to view an interesting bridges exhibition in the museum. After this our coach will take us to The Old Ferry Inn at Beachley where we shall be right underneath the Severn Bridge. This is where we shall stop for lunch for about 1½ hours.

After lunch we will board the coach for a trip over the Severn road bridge and along the A38 to Purton. From here those who wish to can join us on a walk of about 30 mins. in each direction to view the impressive remains of the old Severn Railway bridge. The walk is along the flat and grassy canal tow path; and is about 1 mile in each direction. For those who do not wish to do the walk there will be an opportunity to have a look at the Purton Hulks.

Averil Kear

A Day to Remember Warren James

In 1831, Bream miner Warren James led the miners of the Forest in protests against the enclosures of large tracts of the Forest, threatening the traditional rights of the Free Miners. He was arrested and sentenced to death, later commuted to transportation. A day to remember him and the struggles of the Forest miners during the 19th century is being organised at **Hopewell Colliery on Sunday 6th June**, running all day from 11am.

The story of Warren James has been told in full detail by the late Ralph Anstis in his book, *Warren James and the Dean Forest Riots* and as a tribute to him, the Society has been asked to mount a display about Ralph and his various publications and to give a short talk.

Events on the day will include historical walks, entertainment, music, a talk from Keith Morgan and a chance to visit the mine, an experience not to be missed for those who have not been before.

FIRE AT DEAN HERITAGE

We were all shocked on the morning of 17th Dec. to hear that a fire had broken out during the night at the Dean Heritage Museum, but even more of a shock to museum staff and trustees. The initial pictures that were shown on TV looked quite horrendous and there was a real fear that our Society Library, which is housed at the Museum might have been damaged. In the event, thanks to the quick actions of the fire brigade, the fire was limited to one storeroom, and the galleries, café, Gage library and the rest of the museum were undamaged. Fortunately, the firemen put out the fire before it spread and relatively few items have been lost through directly being burnt. Inevitably, the Museum was closed for a couple of months to deal with the effects of the fire damage.

A Recovery and Restoration company who specialise in helping organisations recover from disasters like flooding and fire has been hired to remove the contents of the Gage library (including the LHS collection) which have been sent off for safe keeping whilst building work is carried out. They are storing the collection in a secure and stable environment and helping to clean and restore all the objects. The staff are working closely with the team of professional conservators to take the best care of the collection. Treatment of the collection will take many months. The majority of objects in the storeroom have been smoke damaged to varying degrees. The extent of damage is variable; some items will need light cleaning whilst some items will need further treatment and conservation work.

This means we are unable to offer our full enquiry service on local history, family history and collections research as the documents and books are not currently here. If you have an enquiry which can wait a while please contact us later in the year when hopefully the Gage will be restored to normal. However, John Belcher, trustee of the museum and local historian, is offering to help as best he can using his extensive knowledge and his own books until the Gage re-opens. Please direct any enquiries to John Belcher, Nicola Wynn or Alex Smith.

Meanwhile, repairing the building will soon commence and take place over the course of Spring and Summer. The official re-opening took place on Sunday 21st February, with an open day which was very successful with 700 people coming to visit the museum and look at the temporary 'Fire Damage' exhibition.

The museum will continue to remain open and run many interesting events and activities. Please support the museum and come along. Our events leaflet for 2010 has been distributed locally, if you would like one pop in or find one in local libraries and other tourist attractions. The café is also open; can you resist Kay's delicious cakes?



Our next big event is 'Fire & Wood' on the Bank Holiday Weekend at the end of May (Sat 29th – Mon 31st May) which celebrates a variety of woodland crafts and of course the opportunity to see the Charcoal Burn.

The exhibition from April to June will be **OURS!** celebrating the forthcoming 25th edition of the New Regard and recent projects and activities of the Society. Following this will an exhibition celebrating 100 years of Girl Guides in the Forest. If anyone has any photos or information on this contact Collections Officer Alex Smith.

Thanks

The staff of the museum offer heartfelt thanks to everyone who volunteered in helping to pack up the collection. It was time consuming grotty work, but was greatly appreciated. This museum is lucky to have such dedication and a range of skills amongst the volunteers.

Acknowledgements to Nicola Wynn.

Future Events

A Date for your Diary!

HISTORY FAIR

on
Sunday 23rd May 2010 10am - 4pm
at
Bells Hotel, Coleford (GL16 8BE)

Admission £3.00



This year we will be hosting our 5th Local History Fair on Sunday May 23rd and are pleased to say that Bells Hotel (formerly Bells Grammar school) has agreed that we can have it there. Last time we held a History Fair at the Speech House we were fortunate to have a really hot day and a huge number of people turned up, showing what an interest there is in the history of our area.

This time we are once again being trailblazers by introducing something new to the Fair. We are having some children's activities run by John Putley from the Glos. Archives. These will have an historical theme and, according to John, will involve dressing up and making masks and other items such as swords which the children can take away with them.

We will also be running some short workshops (about 20 mins each one) on various topics. Vicky Thorpe from the Glos. Archives will be running a couple of sessions on Family history, Averil will be running a couple on House History research and Cecile will be telling everyone how they can start with their research projects.

Bookings for stands at the Fair have been brisk and this year we are looking forward to seeing the work of the newly formed St.Briavels History Group and the English Bicknor Group. We will also be welcoming the return of our stalwarts such as the GSIA (Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology), the Chepstow and Tidenham History Group, DAG (Dean Archaeological Group) and Forest of Dean Family History Society.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Averil Kear

GRCC

The summer meeting of the Local History Section of the Glos. Rural Community this year is being hosted by the Painswick History Society on Sunday 13th June at 2pm.

The programme will include a talk on the history of the town, sometimes called the 'Queen of the Cotswolds' and noted for its variety of period buildings in golden Cotswold stone. This will be followed by a choice of walks to places of interest around the town, and afternoon tea. Booking details are included with this mailing.

The Annual Meeting of the LHS will be held on Saturday 2nd October 2010 at Sir Thomas Riches School Gloucester. The title of the day is 'A Fair Days wage for a Fair days work' There will be one lecture and two short ones all relating to the work ethic, i.e. strikes, working conditions and Chartism.



Meetings

Members will not need me to remind them of the heavy snowfalls that caused the first meeting of the year to be cancelled, but fortunately all is not lost. Keith Walker has kindly agreed to give his talk about the fascinating subject of Slag Blocks on Saturday 17th of April at the Belle Vue centre in Cinderford in place of Brian Johns who was booked for that day but will be unable to be with us. We hope to enjoy Brian's talk at a later date.



The Newport Mediaeval Ship

February's speaker Helen Brown was unable to be with us due to a family bereavement. However we were fortunate that Averil Kear was able to stand in with just twenty four hours notice to give us such a clear and interesting account of the history of apprenticeships. It transpired that some of the young lads had to live-in with the family of the masters who were responsible for the training of the apprentices, maybe for the whole of the term of training, which could in some instances take seven years.

John Loosley was the guest speaker at the March meeting on the subject of 'Allotments in Gloucestershire' His talk that was very well illustrated with copies of maps, some going back as far as the mid eighteenth century, showing the sites of the original allotments, some of which are still in use and others which have since been used as building plots as the need was not so pressing. In the accounts and records of the time, it was interesting to note how the behaviour in and around the alehouses improved when the allotments became available to the farm workers. Perhaps however we should bear in mind that the long hours of poorly paid farm work, and then a stint of working on the allotment to help the family budget, left very little time or energy, to misbehave.

On **Sat. June 19th**, our meeting takes the form of a coach outing to see the **Newport Mediaeval Ship**, the remains of which were found in the mud of the river Usk during construction of the Riverfront Theatre in 2002. The largest mediaeval vessel found in the UK, it is now being painstakingly restored by a team of experts, financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Travel will be by coach, for which a booking form is enclosed.

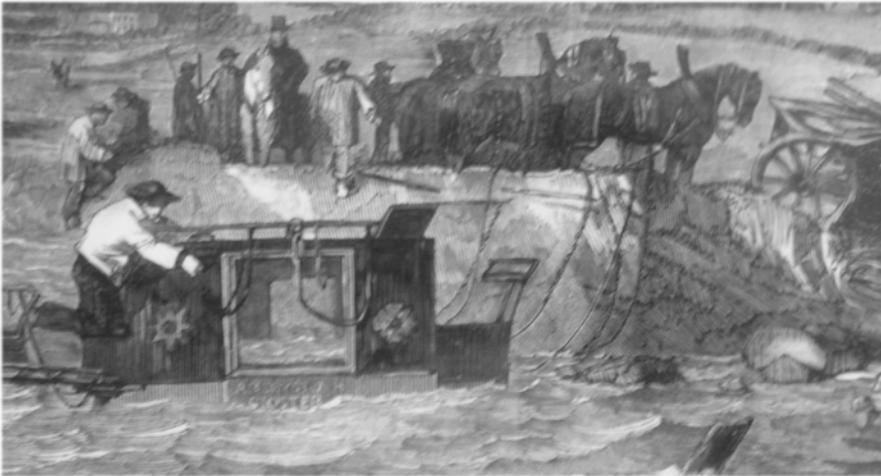
On **Sat. 10th July** we have a tour of **Goodrich Castle**, and a talk by Myra Jenkins. This will be a self-drive outing and refreshments are available at the café in the reception area.

As ever your ideas for talks and walks are always welcome, call me on 01594 834402

Anne Childs

Tracks to Tracks

On Saturday 13th March FODLHS took a display relating to transport in the Forest to a lecture programme hosted by the Glos. Archives. There were two lectures, the first by Nick Herbert one of the editors of the VCH (Victoria County History of Gloucestershire) who gave a most interesting talk about the Georgian road set up in the County of Gloucestershire. Nick explained how the roads were constructed and how they came to link with towns and villages along the way. One snippet about the Forest concerned the fact that to make a road through Newnham on Severn the road makers had to cut off the top of the hill which can still be seen today with high walls on each side just as you enter the village.



One of our Vice presidents, Ian Pope, gave a very good insight into the development of transportation in the Forest starting with horse drawn vehicles used both to haul wood (which is where the term 'haulier' comes from) and also horses being used underground to pull the dram carts full of coal. He then showed photographs chronicling the steam age in the Forest with reference to the movement of coal from Lydney docks.

The whole proceedings were interspersed by readings about road and rail travel taken from the Gloucester Journals of the period and also the F.W. Harvey poem of a rail journey '*Lydney to Coleford (By Rail)*'

Averil Kear

Gloucestershire Archives is working with the National Archives to create an updated web based searchable form of the Manorial Documents Register for the historic county of Gloucestershire.

The Manorial Documents Register (MDR) identifies the nature and location of manorial records.

Manorial documents have statutory protection under the Manorial Documents Rules. They are defined in the Rules as court rolls, surveys, maps, terriers, documents and books of every description relating to the boundaries, franchises, wastes, customs or courts of a manor. Only those types of document defined in the Rules as manorial documents are noted in the Manorial Documents Register. Title deeds and other evidences of title are not defined as manorial documents and are therefore not included in the Register. Until the project is completed, you can find details of Gloucestershire Archives holdings of manorial documents in our catalogues.

There are many opportunities to volunteer to help with this project. These mainly consist of undertaking research in secondary sources. If you would be interested please contact us, marking your message Manorial Documents Register volunteering. If you have found any documents either in Gloucestershire Archives or at any other repository which you believe should be considered as part of this project please let us know.



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