



The Forest of Dean
Local History
Society

News

February 2026

Editor:

Keith Walker
51 Lancaster Drive
Lydney
GL15 5SJ
01594 843310

[NewsletterEditor
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:NewsletterEditor@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Chair:

Sue Middleton
07973 789214

[Chair
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Chair@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Treasurer:

Jan Bailey
[Treasurer
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Treasurer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Secretary:

Owen McLaughlin
01594 560516
[Secretary
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Website:

forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Registered Charity
No: 1094700

Printed by Tradeprint
(tradeprint.co.uk)

Editors Notes

Firstly, the front cover image. We welcomed back the ever-popular Dr Rob Jones to our January meeting, and he gave a fascinating demonstration of how a knight dressed in the armour of times gone by. So, a once in a lifetime opportunity presented itself to capture a 'Knight' in Bream! More on this in Sue Middleton's notes, and in the Meetings In Review section.

In the middle pages this time you will find pull-out order forms for our new book 'A-Z of Mining in the Forest of Dean', and an offer of six New Regards at a special price of £2 per copy.

The A-Z of Mining book has been expertly crafted by Nigel Costley, our New Regard Editor. The book incorporates Dave Tuffley's 'Glossary of Mining Terms', extended to include descriptions of many of the old mines in the Forest and other interesting information. Drawing on the resources of Dean Heritage Centre and the History Society, the book is very well illustrated with many old photographs and other images. The book will appeal to Foresters born and bred, and to newcomers to the area.

This edition has something of a heritage theme, with a look at the work of Heritage England and the Heritage at Risk register. The entries for the Forest of Dean in the 2025 version of the register are included in the short article. On the back cover, the 'Heritage Gateway' is explored. The Gateway is a powerful tool allowing you to search multiple record sources simultaneously.

Elsewhere in this edition, Cecile Hunt concludes her fascinating series of articles on 'The Bark of the Oak'. This time she explores the techniques of tanning and lists known tanneries in the Forest area.

Thanks are due to Averil Kear, who has provided a short piece describing the recent restoration of the Newnham Pound, and its previous history.

The feature article (centre pages) tells the story of a 'carpet bagger' who remained in the Forest area after the 1866 General Election (which he didn't win), then helped form the mysteriously named 'The Forest of Dean Recreative & Medical Aid Association'. Were his efforts an attempt to ingratiate himself locally - aimed at furthering his political career, or were they genuinely philanthropic? Read the article and make your own mind up!

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.

Notes from the Chair



What a great start we had to the first talks of 2026! Dr Rob Jones provided a fascinating demonstration of how to put on a suit of medieval armour on Sat 17th Jan, assisted by his squire (his real-life wife). He explained each individual piece in turn, detailing how it was made, why it was made in that way and how armour had evolved and continued to develop over time. Once fully armoured, Rob reported that he felt invincible and would be able to fight off any assailants. As he also claimed that he would not look like a stranded turtle if he fell on the floor during a battle, he was challenged to prove this, which he duly did with surprising speed and agility.

Dan Sandford from the Forest of Dean Caving Club then followed on, with a brief introduction to the cave systems of the Forest of Dean. These included the truly incredible images of the newly discovered cave system underneath St Briavels, where the limestone caverns and passages extend towards Symonds Yat Rock. There were beautiful pictures displaying huge caverns (one 15m tall), a 'chocolate' river, a 'white Forest' of stalagmites and stalactites, a 'marble' river and a series of 'ducks' (where cavers have to duck under a rock and come up in the airspace above the water on the other side of the rock). They have been diligently surveying and recording the new caves and hope to connect two cave systems soon, to become about 11km of interconnected caves altogether, which will be one of the largest in the UK.

In the next few months ahead we will have the various delights of John Putley describing the history of farming in Gloucestershire, Cecile Hunt and Averil Kear making the connection between Lydney Park and Dyrham Park, Cecile then following that with a detailed review of St Briavels village history and Nigel Costley covering the 1926 General Strike and the Miners' Lock-out in the Forest of Dean.

In the weeks between the talks, I am looking forward to reading the newly published 'A to Z of Mining in the Forest of Dean', which is a beautiful production detailing a glossary of mining terms collected by Dave Tuffley and extended, edited and designed by Nigel Costley. It covers a remarkable range of items, and I expect it will become a 'must have' book for those interested in our Forest's history. It is now available to

buy from the FODLHS website at a discounted rate to members. Please remember to use the discount code, (see the membership page following). Or if you prefer, use the order form in the middle of this edition.

In a previous newsletter I referred to the historic increase in the size of the Forest of Dean, as Forestry England will be planting trees in the area previously known as Hoarthorns Farm at Edge End. Once planted, the new 88 hectare woodland will be one of the most significant extensions to woodland in the Forest of Dean in over 200 years. There is an opportunity for volunteers to take part in this planting at a community event on 12th Feb 2026. I think this is an excellent opportunity to be involved in creating a new area of woodland for our Forest, so I'm planning to attend, so that in years to come I can walk through the trees and say proudly (to everyone I know) I planted these trees.' If anyone is interested in this volunteer opportunity, please contact Tamsin Sagar (Forestry England Community Ranger) at:

Tamsin.sagar@forestryengland.uk.

What a wonderful legacy for us to leave in our Forest!

Sue Middleton





Membership

A happy new year to all our members. We are now well into membership year 2025/2026. Thank you to the majority of those who have renewed their subscriptions to the Society. If you have not previously received one, membership cards for those who have renewed their membership accompany this newsletter.

For those who have not yet renewed, I have enclosed a renewal membership form with this letter. Alternatively, payment can be made through the online shop. Just go to the website forestofdeanhistory.org.uk and follow the link: 'join the FoD Local History Society' and use the 'renewal' button. Also, as previously, BACS payment is also very welcome, but please let me know you have paid by returning the renewal form.

As always, please keep a look out for emails from me informing you both of FoDLHS events and of upcoming presentations from other Local History organisations.

Since the last newsletter we have had a record number of 17 new members join the Society. We would like to welcome Chris Williams, Christine and Donald Ely, Sue Bezanni, Nancy and Geoffrey Jones, David Price, Allwyne Cowles, Jackie Pearce, Peter Hamburger, Stephen Symonds, Marie Mulvey-Roberts, Joanne Wardrope, Peter Sedgwick, Alan Mansell, and Lis and Andrew Fletcher. We hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to seeing you at forthcoming meetings and events, which are now in full swing!

Ian Gower (membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Forthcoming Meetings

**Saturday 21st February
3pm**

**“Get Orff My Land”
The history of farming in
Gloucestershire
with John Putley**

**West Dean Centre, Bream,
GL15 6JW**



**Saturday 14th March
3pm**

**Lydney Park and the
Dyrham Park connection
with Cecile Hunt
and Averil Kear**

**West Dean Centre, Bream,
GL15 6JW**



**Saturday 18th April
3pm**

**St Briavels Village -some
forgotten bits of history
with Cecile Hunt**

**West Dean Centre, Bream,
GL15 6JW**



Historic England Heritage at Risk Register 2025

The Historic England Heritage at Risk programme aims to protect and manage the historic environment. Historic England work with various stakeholders to find solutions for ‘at risk’ historic places and sites across England. Assessing sites for Heritage at Risk (HAR) helps understand the overall state of England’s historic sites. The process identifies sites that are most at risk of being lost because of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Every year Historic England updates the Heritage at Risk Register. The Register provides a dynamic summary of the sites most at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future. As well as carrying out surveys on condition and management, Historic England also does social and economic research to understand the value of heritage.



Lydney Docks in 2010, before access to the piers was restricted

Historic England's local teams have expertise in heritage at risk. They work with owners, friends’ groups, developers and other stakeholders to try to find solutions for historic places and sites at risk. Funding is sought from partners such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Natural England in support of owners to determine what repair or conservation works are needed and sometimes for the actual work.

Examining the latest (2025) Register for at risk heritage in the Forest of Dean reveals that six churches are listed, namely, Holy Trinity Tibberton, All Saints Staunton, St Mary the Virgin Flaxley, St Saviour Redbrook, St Michael & All Angels Blaisdon, United Reformed Church Blakeney. All the churches were assessed as suffering from slow decay, but two of them at Flaxley and Redbrook, have ‘a solution agreed but not yet implemented’. For an insight into the difficulties in conserving and sustaining ancient church buildings, you might want to read our Conservation Officer’s (Simon Moore) excellent article ‘Empty Pews & Sacred Spaces in New Regard Issue 41.

Perhaps not surprisingly, earthworks seem to be a ‘low hanging fruit’, presumably as economic solutions can more easily be found to conserve them. Five local sections of Offas Dyke are listed. In the cases of Shepcot and Caswell Wood, actions have been agreed but not yet implemented. Lypetts Grove is being monitored. Work is underway in Worgans Wood, but in contrast there is no action or strategy defined for Chapelhouse Wood, where the trend is defined as ‘declining’.

There are several important industrial heritage sites on the list, including Whitecliff Iron Works, and Gunns Mill Furnace. Both are listed as in ‘immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric, with no solution agreed’. This is curious as both sites are in the hands of the Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust, and they do have strategies for both sites. Lydney Docks is prioritised as in ‘slow decay with no solution agreed’. The Environment Agency have been carrying out restoration works at Lydney Docks for some time, including replacement of the outer dock gates, so it is difficult to see why the site has been categorised thus.

Two mansions are included, namely Sedbury Park and Oaklands Park. Both are listed as in ‘immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric, with no solution agreed’. Our Conservation Officer, Simon, is actively involved in trying to find solutions for the Oaklands Park mansion.

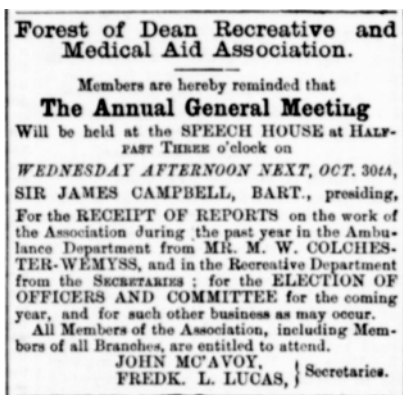
The Roman Villa at Woolaston appears in the Register, but regrettably there is ‘no action or strategy identified or agreed where the trend is declining or unknown’. Finally, the tithe barn at Highleadon Court is included, being regarded as in ‘slow decay with no solution agreed’.

To view the Register yourself go to:
historicengland.org.uk/listing/heritage-at-risk/search-register/

The Forest of Dean Recreative & Medical Aid Association and the ‘Carpet Bagger’

One definition of a ‘carpet bagger’ is of a political candidate who seeks election in an area where they have no local connections. Today we might describe a candidate being ‘parachuted in’. The carpet bagger in this story is Frederick Louis Lucas. Lucas was related to Sir Francis Goldsmid, M.P. for Reading, who was the first Jewish barrister and first Jewish Q.C. The wealthy Goldsmid and Lucas families had a tradition of anonymously donating large sums of money to causes they supported. Frederick Louis Lucas was a graduate of Cambridge University, receiving an M.A. in 1886 and was later qualified as a barrister in 1889. These facts help inform our story.

The Gloucester Citizen 29th June 1886 reported; *‘A small meeting of gentlemen desirous of promoting the candidate of a liberal unionist was held on Monday afternoon at Newnham, when Mr Frederick Louis Lucas was present at their invitation. He had been recommended by Mr W Winterbotham (a London solicitor). Mr Lucas, we understand, has been for some time past engaged in improving the condition of the working classes in the east end of London. It is understood that he consented to stand as a Liberal Unionist candidate in opposition to Mr Blake (Liberal) in the Dean Forest Division.’*



Forest of Dean Recreative and Medical Aid Association.

Members are hereby reminded that
The Annual General Meeting
Will be held at the SPEECH HOUSE at HALF-
PAST THREE o'clock on
WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON NEXT, OCT. 30th,
SIR JAMES CAMPBELL, BART., presiding,
For the RECEIPT OF REPORTS on the work of
the Association during the past year in the Ambulance
Department from MR. M. W. COLCHES-
TER-WEMYSS, and in the Recreative Department
from the SECRETARIES; for the ELECTION OF
OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE for the coming
year, and for such other business as may occur.
All Members of the Association, including Mem-
bers of all Branches, are entitled to attend.
JOHN MCAVOY,
FREDK. L. LUCAS, } Secretaries.

The 1886 United Kingdom general election took place from in July, following the defeat of the Government of Ireland Bill 1886. It resulted in a major reversal of the results of the 1885 election as the Conservatives were joined in an electoral pact with the breakaway Unionist wing of the Liberals. The new Liberal Unionist party had 77 members after the election and gave the Conservatives their parliamentary majority but did not join them in a formal coalition.

For the record, Frederick Louis Lucas received 2415 votes against Thomas Blake's 3822 votes and was not elected as Member of Parliament. However, he subsequently involved himself in charitable works in the Forest. He declined opportunities to stand as a candidate in other general elections.

The Gloucester Journal of 10th December 1887 described how the curiously titled ‘Recreative and Medical Aid Association’ was formed; *‘It will be remembered that during last winter Mr F L Lucas suggested the establishment in the Forest of a Recreative and Medical Aid Association for the purpose of teaching persons how to render aid to the injured. It was hoped to include within the scope of the association a scheme for opening up reading and recreation, and on Monday evening the first of these was opened at the Ruspidge end of Cinderford. The building occupied is the old St Johns National School. There is a large library of books. Over 100 people attended the opening ceremony, and a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr Lucas and his family.’*

The Association became a formally constituted umbrella organisation for several different charitable purposes. Eventually Institutes were established in Cinderford, Ruspidge, Parkend, Mitcheldean and Upper Lydbrook, equipped with libraries of ‘interesting’ books. Books were also donated to the Westbury Union Workhouse for the use of inmates.

Not all Institutes fared well, and there were difficulties to overcome. Frederick L Lucas described some of the issues in a letter to the Dean Forest Mercury of 18th April 1889;

‘Regarding the Institutes: there were great difficulties both regarding heating and lighting, so that the rooms were generally very cold and occasionally in total darkness. These difficulties have now been successfully removed with heavy expenses in the purchase of new heating and lighting apparatus. The institute is prosperous thanks to donations and the proceeds of entertainments. The Cinderford Institute was opened in February 1888’. He added, with some foresight, ‘It need hardly be said that at any rate for

The Forest of Dean Recreative & Medical Aid Association and the ‘Carpet Bagger’

the first few years of their existence, such institutions are rarely self-supporting but almost invariably need support beyond the mere membership subscription (1s 6d a quarter in winter, 1s a quarter in summer).’

Another Association initiative was first aid training, known then as ‘Ambulance lectures’, Mr Colchester Wemyss reported on progress at the 2nd Annual Meeting; *‘During the year ending July 1889, three courses of Ambulance lectures have been given at Blakeney and Cinderford. 34 students presented themselves for examination of whom 30 succeeded in obtaining the certificate of the St John Association, making in all 171 who have proved themselves qualified to render ‘first aid’ in case of need.’*

Frederick L Lucas wrote to the press in May 1889 to clarify the relationship between the Association and the St John Association; *‘The officers of the Recreation and Medical Aid Association have been appointed to act under the St John Association rules as ‘Local Committee and Officers’ constituted the ‘centre’ of that Association for the Forest District. The Medical staff consists of among others, Drs Carleton, Halpin, Irwin, Macartney, and Trotter who gave their services in lecturing. The purpose of the lectures was ‘intended to give some plain rules to non-professional persons, so as to enable them to render immediate first aid in many cases of accident or sudden illness. They are not intended to supercede the medical man.’*

The Association also funded ambulance carts (fore runner of the modern ambulance) and gave grants to develop and support recreation grounds.

The Association continued its work until around 1904, concurrent with the time that Frederick Lucas ceased his involvement in Forest affairs.

In 1919 Frederick Lucas returned to the Forest to be present at a General Meeting of the Ruspidge Institute. A contemporary report of the meeting included some valedictory words: *‘Mr Lucas’s presence carried memories back 32 years to 1887, when he challenged Mr Blake in the General Election. Mr Lucas was no ‘carpet bagger’; he was wedded to medical and recreative work, and to doing good wherever he could. In Dean Forest institutes were founded at Cinderford and Ruspidge and much use was made of them. Mr Lucas was most enthusiastic, and in both their management and upkeep lent substantial assistance. But in after years Mr Lucas found the claims of the London East End so insistent that he was impelled to devote all his interests to them, and Cinderford Institute was closed. The same fate befell that at Ruspidge when war began. Mr Lucas, who was cordially received said unfortunately his health had broken down. He had striven to help the poor wounded men as they were returned to the country, in addition to maintaining his work amongst the poor in the East End..’*

The 1921 census shows Frederick L Lucas living in some style at his country house, ‘Ascot Wood’, in Ascot, Berkshire. He was attended by a butler, cook / housekeeper, housemaid, and coachman. He was described as a retired barrister, and ‘Voluntary Worker on City Committees’.



Frederick L Lucas’s country home in Ascot,

After his death on 6th December 1930 at ‘Ascot Wood’, probate records reveal that he left £109536 (£6.5 m today). Under the terms of his will, his second home at Ascot was turned into the Helen Lucas Hostel for ‘gentle women of the Jewish and other faiths

Frederick L Lucas was undoubtedly a ‘carpet bagger’, but also a man who used his considerable wealth to do, (as he would have seen it) ‘good works’, both in the East End of London, and for a period, in the Forest of Dean. Whether his wealth could have been put to better use than to fund the activities of the Forest of Dean Recreative and Medical Aid Association is open to debate!

Bark of the Oak Part 3 by Cecile Hunt

Tanning is the craft of turning animal skins into leather. Oak bark, one of the main constituents of the tanning process, was harvested, dried and stored then cleaned of moss and ground into a rough powder ready for use in a Tannery. Tanneries consisted of many pits and buildings. In 'leaching pits' bark powder was soaked in cold water and made into various strengths of tanning-liquor. Prepared hides would be suspended by sticks for 3 months in weak tanning-liquors then for 9 months. With sticks removed, the hides were placed on top of each other in deeper pits' with stronger solutions of the liquor.

In addition to leaching pits there was either a stream of clean water or cleaning pits where skins were first washed then placed into lime pits which included other ingredients of dog & bird dung and human urine for up to six weeks to remove hair etc. This process was followed by the scrapping off of the remaining flesh, hair and lime. After these procedures skins were then immersed into the 'tanning-liquors' held in the leaching pits. The skins were finally washed and hung in drying sheds with slatted windows. The whole process could take from 15 to 36 months. The combination of tanning-liquor, rotting flesh, lime and human and animal by products made the noxious fumes associated with tanneries.

Records of tanneries in the Forest of Dean range from the 13th century to at least the early 20th century.

Awre & Blakeney: Millend, Blakeney a tannery on Forge Brook was held by Hayward family from mid-18th century. In 1806 a bark mill was worked with the Millend tannery; buildings out of use by 1901 if not before.

Coleford: A tannery was recorded at Whitecliff in the 17th century.

Clearwell: Early 19th century a tannery and bark grounding mill was in operation. (Now Tannery Gardens)

Littledean: A tannery was located near the church in the 1600s, possibly still in use in the mid-1740s.

Longhope: A tannery stood south of Longhope in 1858. Associated with this tannery, in 19th century, was the former Furnace Mill on Longhope brook, Mill Lane. The tannery buildings have not survived; the associated house is concealed by 19th and 20th century additions.

Lydney: A tan-house in Newerne village called Marlong House was in operation in 1599, possibly still in operation in 17th century.

Newent: A tannery was established in the town on Peacock brook; on west side of Culver Street c1652. This tannery remained in use until 1914. Tan House dwelling still extant on Culver Street (formerly Lux Lane).



*Tan House, 33 Culver Street,
Newent. Photo by Jaggery
CC BY-SA 2.0*

Mitcheldean: Tanning introduced in 1540s. By 1624 Jasper Lugg ran a tannery in Stenders Road, operated until 1777, in ruins 1786. Another, sizable, tannery operated in Brook Street from 1540s, closure date unknown.

Newnham on Severn: in 1276 a tannery was recorded at Stears (Staure's Farm). By 1645 a tannery was in use at Underhill, between Newnham and Ruddle by late 19th century referred to as large. Tanning ceased at Underhill c1922.

Newland: In 1608 a muster for Newland listed 5 tanners possibly working tanneries on Valley Brook. Upper Tanhouse, working before 1750s possibly sited above crossing of Valley brook by Cleaarwell Road. Tanhouse Farm further on down Valley brook was, a 'tanyard and all stock in the tannery trade' in 1778; ceased operation in 1818.

Woolaston: 'Tan House Orchard', High Woolaston, was a tannery operating in 1769. Tannery 'Brookend Tan House' operated in 1771 and closed in 1925.

Newnham Pound *by Averil Kear*

One of the remarkable surviving historic artefacts in Newnham is the cattle pound. Located on Dean Road, the pound has until recently been overwhelmed by brambles and undergrowth. However, in 2025, two residents of Newnham, Peter and Maureen Payne of Castle House cleared the ground in and around the pound, leaving it in the pristine state shown in the photograph.

The pound was moved to the current site around 1766 on the orders of the Court Leet. The pound is grade II listed by English Heritage, who describe its construction and use thus:

‘Cattle pound, latterly salt store. Probably early C19. rubble walls with weathered keel-shaped copings, except back wall, finished cement fillet. About 5 m x 4 m overall, end walls about 2.5 m high, with iron gate central to road elevation’.



Gloucestershire Archives records (D265/M6), list the accounts of tolls collected for fairs at Newnham, detailing the animals impounded and fines paid to the Lord of the Manor between 1894 and 1928. The lists for 1929 – 1935 show no income from the pound, probably indicating when it fell out of use.

One contemporary newspaper record from the Gloucester Journal of 30th May 1885 describes a curious court case involving the attempted use of the pound. The case was heard in front of the local magistrates, one of whom was

Russell J Kerr, Lord of the Manor of Newnham and thus owner of the Pound:

Edwin Price, of Newnham, was summoned for allowing cattle to stray, on the 7th inst, at Newnham. Herbert Smith, farmer of Newnham, said that on the day in question he saw between twenty and thirty head of cattle belonging to the defendant grazing on the road near his house. Two lads were with them. He told the lads to take them back to Newnham, and they broke over the fence onto his land. He then impounded them. Mr Jackson for the defence urged that the cattle were not straying as they were in the charge of the boys that were with them, and that Smith had acted in an arbitrary manner in impounding the cattle. Police Sargeant Westaway said he saw Smith trying to get the animals into the pound. There were 21 of them. – Fined £1 and costs. A case against Albert Smith, a boy, for releasing animals while on the way to the pound was then gone into. - J. G. Garefield, surveyor to the Newnham Local Board, said that on 7th May he saw four of Price's beasts on the Town Green. He was with the warden of the pound endeavouring to place the animals in the pound, when the defendant, with a stick, drove the animals past them, so as to frustrate their efforts to impound them. Thomas Clark, hayward of the Newnham pound, corroborated. The Bench considered that the boy was acting under the direction of his master, and a fine of £1 and costs was inflicted, or in default one month's imprisonment.

Whilst the Lord of the Manor sold the rights in Newnham Green in 1880, he retained the rights in the pound. Thus, ongoing maintenance of the pound is legally the responsibility of the estate of Milo Kerr. However, due to the demise of the role and function of the Lord of the Manor, presumably Newnham Parish Council will ensure that the pound continues to be valued and maintained.



Meetings in Review *with Chris & Mary Sullivan & Owen McClaughlin*

In October, John Hoyle provided an overview of ‘Antiquarian Research in the Forest of Dean. First, what was an ‘antiquarian’? Perhaps ‘A student of antiquities...with particular attention to ancient artefacts....sites...or archives’.

Thomas Leland toured the West Country in 1542, but in the Dean area only recorded the recently-dissolved Flaxley Abbey. William Camden’s Britannia of 1586 pushed the idea that Alvington was the *Abonae* of a Roman travel guide. St Briavel’s Castle was then ‘half-ruined’. There were ‘vast mine pits as big as a church’ – scowles, we’d now say. Sir Robert Atkyns’ 1712 *The ancient and Present State of Glostershire* regaled its readers with *all* the charters of Flaxley Abbey. Atkyns noted Offa’s Dyke – running through Coleford! Rudder, Bigland, Rudge and Fosbroke were all to write on County lines, with Fosbroke doing fieldwork to trace Offa’s Dyke. There was also an emerging interest in pre-history, as a place to put invented Celtic learning and savagery, so the Dean’s standing stones were all Druidical.

Major Hayman Rooke had an uncle at Bigsweir Court, and visited Lydney Park to sketch and loot; he at least had the idea of drawing a map. Charles Bathurst’s excavation there from 1805 was ‘a wonder for the period’ and left marvellous mapping and artwork. The 1932 Wheeler mapping barely differed, they moved the interpretation of the site from a military governor’s villa to a pilgrim healing site. George Ormerod once lived at Sedbury Park. Ormerod traced old roads and his own part of Offa’s Dyke, with *Strigulensia* as his 1840 book on the Chepstow area.

In the mid-1800s, Rev Henry Nicholls and John Bellows wrote on Dean history and then-current issues. Sir John Maclean, Editor of the Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological (*not* Antiquarian) Society from 1878, there published his own house history – of Bicknor Court.

Some of these antiquarians recorded material now totally lost under subsequent development, some over-extended good theories.

Chris Sullivan (of the Society of Antiquaries!)

At the November meeting, Pete Rochford shared some of his extensive research into the ‘The Life and Times’ of Newent man Robert George "Joe" Meek (1929 – 1967).

Joe’s father, Alfred, had many businesses in Newent, where Joe and his brothers grew up. From an early age Joe was deeply into music and wanted to understand the mechanics of recording and replaying sounds.

During his national service he was a radar technician which increased his knowledge of instruments. When his father died and left his mother needing financial help, Joe returned in 1951. To earn money Joe worked as a mobile DJ in Newent and surrounding villages. In 1953 he was offered opportunities to develop sound effects for plays.

In 1954 he moved to London and after a job in a radio shop managed to move into the recording business with Pye Records. This progressed to radio shows out on the road. By 1957-58 he was recording many famous names such as Adam Faith and Petula Clark. He later became a production engineer.

Eventually he decided to go it alone. By 1960 he was recording singers in his flat. He went into a partnership with toy importer Major Wilfred Alonzo Banks as his financial backer and set up RGM Sounds Ltd. There he was a combined sound engineer and production manager.

Meek pioneered space age and experimental pop music. He was involved with 800 chart hit records the most famous being “Telstar”, the space-age 1962 instrumental hit by The Tornados. He also recorded with Gene Vincent, Tom Jones, Marc Bolan and David Bowie among many others.

Pete emphasised the charitable nature of Joe, citing £200 donation for the children of Aberfan, and a charity event in Cinderford in 1966 featuring the Tornados.

All his life Joe Meek wanted to be different and be himself.

M.S.

For the December talk, Kirstie Moore gave a fascinating account of how the celebration of Christmas has changed over the centuries. Alfred the Great first established the tradition of the 12 days of Christmas lasting from Christmas Day until twelfth night. Alfred wanted to give a Christian stamp to a festival that had pagan ancestry. The display of mistletoe and holly are both ancient customs although kissing under the mistletoe is a more modern addition.

Before the Christmas tree first appeared in Britain in the nineteenth century, the centre piece was the Yule Log which was introduced by the Vikings. The log had to burn for 12 days otherwise ill luck would follow. Alongside religious celebrations there has always been an element of disorder. Villages would appoint a 'lord of misrule' whose sole purpose was mischief, and the early Father Christmas was someone who punished people who were not celebrating hard enough. Each of the 12 days had its own significance. For example, St. John's day was an echo of the Saxon wassail. On the seventh day games were played. In late Tudor times disorder was frowned upon and several popular practices were banned, including football. Under the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell, Christmas itself was abolished for being frivolous and ungodly. Fortunately, it was reinstated after Cromwell's death.

Under Henry VIII, Christmas was celebrated in style. Feasts lasting 7 hours took place at court with exotic food and lavish entertainments. In 1509, Henry spent £7,000 on Christmas, the equivalent of £4 million today. Outside court people ate plainer fare but enjoyed themselves with games and plays. In villages on the 12th night there would be dancing and a king and queen would be crowned for the occasion. Plough Monday marked the end of the celebrations and a return to work for most people although the festivities at court might continue until Candlemass.

Kirstie gave the audience a lot to think about while eating their 'mynst pyes' and an understanding of how the ghosts of Christmases past still haunt our modern celebrations. *O.M.*

Members and guests arriving at the January 2026 meeting were greeted with the extraordinary sight of Dr Rob Jones standing in medieval undergarments. He was preparing to dress in a full suit of armour dating from the 1300's, aided and abetted by his hardworking 'squire' Liz.

Rob's suit of armour was made to emulate that of John Pembridge (1328-1375), whose memorial tomb lies in Clehonger Church in Herefordshire. Rob had the armour made to provide an insight into the ritual of dressing in the armour and the psychological effects wearing it. Armour was a status symbol, and knights paid large sums to get the best they could afford, to allow them maximum flexibility to fight for long periods of time. Armour was designed to repel blows from all types of weapons including axes, swords, spears and arrows. Rob's armour was that of a mounted knight, although he said that most battlefield encounters involved two knights fighting to get the opponent on the ground, where the victor would triumph by stabbing in the weak points in the armour (knees, armpit).

Rob started dressing from the lower legs, with Liz strapping on the greaves, moving on to the upper legs (cuisses). The cuisses were attached to Rob's gambeson (padded jacket), which had hanging leather points (laces) from which the cuisses were hung. Then the torso armour (cuirass) was strapped on, followed by a chainmail skirt to cover the hips and the groin. The articulated arm armour was added as one piece comprising vambraces (upper and lower arm protection) and couters (elbow protection). Rob then put on his bascinet (under helmet), which left his face unprotected. Finally, another 'over helmet' – a fully padded great helm was fitted over the bascinet. Apart from gauntlets and sabotons (foot protection), Rob was now fully armoured.

Rob gave a running description of each piece of armour, and its purpose. The audience was totally engrossed, firing questions and comments, which were eloquently and wittily dealt with by our 'Knight'.

Once fully equipped Rob roared 'I am invincible', underlining the psychological effect of being cocooned in the armour. The full flexibility of the armour was proved by Rob lying down on the floor and getting back up again. Many more questions followed as Rob's outstanding demonstration and talk came to an end.

After the tea break Dan Sandford gave a short talk on Caves and Caving in the Forest of Dean. *K.W.*

Unlocking the Heritage Gateway

HERITAGE GATEWAY Site Map Text size: AAA

SELECT

- Home
- More Detailed Search
- Help and FAQs
- Cookies
- About Heritage Gateway
- Historic Environment Records
- National Datasets
- Professional Access
- Contact Us
- Terms And Conditions

Search for information on England's historic sites and buildings, including images of listed buildings.

This website allows you to cross-search over 60 resources, offering local and national information relating to England's heritage. Click [here](#) for full details of the range of records that you can search on this website

PastScape results now appear as Historic England Research Records. [Further information on Historic England Research Records](#)

Quick Search

Use this to carry out a simple search by building name or location. To carry out more complex searches use the [more detailed search](#)

(What's This?)

Where

Map **Admin Location**

Search in the following area:

Administrative location:

Important Notice

Owing to differences in indexing practice across the datasets, admin area searches may not retrieve a full range of records from all datasets. In order to receive accurate results for an admin area, please contact the dataset organisation directly. Other types of geographical search may be conducted through the map-based search.

Newnham

King's Newnham (Parish) (County = Warwickshire, District = Rugby)

Newnham (Parish) (County = Gloucestershire, District = Forest of Dean)

Newnham (Parish) (County = Hampshire, District = Basingstoke and Deane)

Newnham (Parish) (County = Hertfordshire, District = North)

The Heritage Gateway is managed by Historic England. The website provides access to local authority records covering over 70% of England's Historic Environment Records (HERs) and national records from the National Heritage List for England including listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

Gloucestershire County Council's Historic Environment Records are accessible via the Heritage Gateway, thus providing an extremely valuable research resource available from your desktop.

The usefulness of the Heritage Gateway is demonstrated in the images shown,

uncovering sources of information about Newnham on Severn which could form the basis of articles you might be interested to write yourself!

You can access the Heritage Gateway via Heritagegateway.org.uk

In this case the more detailed search feature has been used. Enter your place of interest and click to confirm your selection from the list presented.

Gloucestershire COUNTY COUNCIL Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire's Historic Environment Record holds computerised records of archaeological sites, historic buildings and other notable sites of historic interest.

Viewing results 1 to 20 of 256

<< Previous Results Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Next >>

HER Location	Description
4627 NEWNHAM	Oval enclosure south of Morse's Grove, north of Newnham. Aerial photographic evidence.
4885 NEWNHAM	Grade II listed former Coaching Inn, known as the Victoria Hotel, High Street, Newnham
5170 LITTLEDEAN	Traces of possible Roman road.
5177 NEWNHAM	Medieval castle ringwork dating to the C11 and located at the south of Newnham village.
5183 NEWNHAM	Civil War defences and siege, Newnham.
5184 NEWNHAM	Early medieval and medieval chapel, church and churchyard known as St Peters Church. Located at th...
5185 NEWNHAM	Site of Medieval High Cross, located at the junction of the High street and Dean Road/Severn Street...
5618 NEWNHAM	Site of post medieval forge known as Bradley Forge (C17-C18); C18 wireworks; C19 Foundry and associ...
5619 NEWNHAM	Grade II listed Dock and Lock walls at Bullo Pill, Newnham.
5626 NEWNHAM	Grade II listed Unlwater House, High street, Newnham.
5682 NEWNHAM	Post medieval iron works, known as Lower Soudley Ironworks. Dating to 1837, and located south of L...

You will see that the search identified 256 Historic Environment Records in Gloucestershire County Council's records pertaining to Newnham.

Click on the GCC entry to see the records, then click on an individual record to view the details, which will include references to help further research.

Try the Heritage Gateway for yourself, targeting your own town or village. If you subsequently motivated to write an article about what you find out, we would be delighted to hear from you!