

# FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*news*  
**August 2025**



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The Forest of Dean  
Local History  
Society

# News

August 2025

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## Editors Notes

Firstly, congratulations to Dean Heritage Centre on winning a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable the Centre to develop new strategies to ensure the Centre thrives into the future. Nicola Wynn, the Centre's Collections Officer (and a member of FODLHS!) tells us much more about this and other Centre news inside this edition.

Next a general thanks to all the contributors to this edition. Particularly to John Belcher, for his intriguing story about Thomas Morgan and his involvement in the building of Christ Church. Also, of course, to Cecile Hunt, who has now provided an astonishing 54 articles to consecutive editions of this newsletter. Finally, I must thank our regular reviewers of meetings and walks, this time, Ian Gower, Mary Sullivan, and Gillian Christopher. Gillian is a first time contributor, but I hope we will see more from her.

There is no space in the news section to include word of Gloucester History Festival 2025, so; kicking off with Gloucester Day on Saturday 6 September, the packed Autumn programme of 150 talks, exhibitions, tours and performances is taking place all over Gloucester. Blackfriars Priory hosts the final week of festivities from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 September, with talks, and free exhibitions and entertainment every day in the newly restored Scriptorium Buttery. Quench your curiosity and join over one hundred of Britain's top historians, broadcasters, politicians and thinkers at the Festival this September, including Alice Roberts, Lyse Doucet, David Olusoga, Olivette Otele, Greg Jenner, and Peter Frankopan. More at <https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/autumn-2025/>

During my time as a member of the History Society, there have been at least two previous attempts to set up history competitions on an ongoing basis, previously aimed at senior school level. How fantastic to finally get some serious traction with the Schools Competition and Quiz with more and more primary schools getting engaged each year. A massive 'well done' to mastermind Sue Middleton, Sue Newton and Ruth Richardson for their sustained success with the Competition and Quiz. See more in the middle pages.

Finally, it is membership renewal time once again! It would help our Membership Secretary if you are able to use the web site renewal process if you can. See more in the news section.

*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

This has been a busy time for our budding Historians in our Forest Primary schools. Both the FODLHS Schools History Competition and the History Quiz have reached their finals during June 2025. Whilst the underlying purpose of both is to enthuse our schoolchildren with a passion to learn about their local History, they achieve this using different methods. There are more details about this in the middle section of this Newsletter.

I must say a huge 'THANK YOU' to Sue Newton (FODLHS Schools Liaison Officer - ably assisted by Ruth Richardson, FODLHS Volunteer) who did such an excellent job over such a long period to encourage local schools to take part. The numbers are increasing year on year and this is due to Sue N going 'above and beyond' to explain both the Competition and the Quiz to the History coordinators, the History teachers, the Head teachers and most importantly, the Reception staff at schools who act as 'gatekeepers' to get to the teachers.



*Cyfartha Castle*

I also want to thank our Treasurer, Jan Bailey, who offered a vital helping hand on our visit to Cyfarthfa Castle on 4<sup>th</sup> June. The guide who was expected to be leading the tour of the site and its history was suddenly unavailable at short notice, so Jan stepped in and provided an excellent tour from her knowledge of the Crawshays, the iron industry and their links to the Forest.

Whilst out and about more locally, appreciating the opportunity to explore Lydney Park Estate and its gardens once again, it was particularly good to see an FODLHS display about the history of the site in the museum.

Thanks to Mary and Chris Sullivan for the display and, with others, for providing the volunteer manpower to facilitate the re-opening – whilst also capitalising on the opportunity to sell copies of the New Regard about Lydney. Chris tells me that 3300 people visited Lydney Park Gardens this spring, with over one third also visiting the museum, with good sales of New Regard Issue 36 (Lydney special) being made as a result.

*Sue Middleton*

The main objective of FODLHS is to advance education, for the benefit of the public by the study of local history. So we are certainly ticking that box as regards local school children and their families, whilst our programme of walks, talks and events throughout the year offer a different form of learning for older members. All charities should review their constitutional objectives regularly to make sure they are still appropriate for the activities the society is currently engaged in. Our committee will be undertaking such a review over the next few months ensuring that the objectives of the society cover our engagement in projects in the local community which have some form of local history link.



*FODLHS display at Lydney Park*





## MEMBERSHIP

Summer is now well underway, and members have turned their attention to our programme of summer walks and visits. Both the Cyfartha Castle trip and Newnham walk booked up very quickly so please remember to reserve a place as early as you can for future events.

Please keep an eye out for my emails to keep you informed of any additional events and activities from the Society and other organisations of interest. I send out a reminder for each of our indoor talks a few days before the event, and occasionally emails are bounced back to me thinking they are spam, so if you have not been getting these please add the membership email address (below) to your contacts list and also let me know if you change your email address.

Although our indoor meetings have finished for the year, new members have again increased since the last newsletter, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Peter Rawle, Alison Johnson, Simon Kewin, Maggie Northcot, Mary Brown, Charlotte Davies, Owen and Karen Moisley, Margaret Parker, Victoria and Paul West, Jas Gower and Andrew Matthews.

Finally, the new membership year will start on October 1<sup>st</sup>, so please take this opportunity to renew your membership in good time. A membership renewal form can be found within the newsletter, but if you are able, please use the online order form and payment system on our website: [forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](http://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk). From the homepage click on the tab "Join the FOD local history society" and follow the online ordering process.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer.

*Ian Gower* ([membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk))

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September**  
3pm

**Jason Griffiths introduces**  
**'The Forest of Dean Writers**  
**Collection: New**  
**Discoveries'**

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

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October**  
2'30pm

**Annual General Meeting**  
**followed by**  
**'Antiquarian Research in the**  
**Forest of Dean' described by**  
**Jon Hoyle**

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

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November**  
3pm

**Pete Rochford describes**  
**'The Life & Times**  
**of Joe Meek'**

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



## DHC News from Nicola Wynn

### Investing in the Past, Present & Future NLHF project 2025

This year we have a grant from NLHF to carry out a business appraisal, site surveys, audience development work and a collections review. The outcome will be a set of reports, strategies and recommendations on how we can improve DHC in the future.

It's all going very well. The collections review main purpose is to get to know the collections better in order to make recommendations for future development. We have made a few really interesting (re)discoveries: a collection of death club items which gives fascinating insight to early 20th life in the Forest, a box of costume & textiles including a very early nurse uniform and 'star find' a Catherine Drew poem we didn't know we had as it was listed as 'anon'.

### Forest of Dean Writers Collection (FODWC)

Cataloguing authors work continues at pace thanks to our terrific volunteers. So far we have catalogued over 3,000 documents. Project Manager Dr. Jason Griffiths will be contributing an article to the New Regard this year as well as giving a talk to FODLHS in September. We were delighted in July to receive a visit from Harry Beddington's grandson Robert Beddington who very kindly donated some wonderful artwork of his grandfather's. Well known for his publications and performances and humour, he was also a talented artist. We hope to display this in the future.

### Return of the hod boy

The hod boy that was formerly on the Blue Rock Trail in Soudley has been moved to DHC car park and renovated. Many thanks to Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council plus Rob Griffiths and Clayton Ryder for doing a great job.



### Collection donations

We are always on the lookout for interesting items related to the Forest of Dean for our collection. Contact Collections Manager Nicola Wynn email: [nicola@deanheritagecentre.com](mailto:nicola@deanheritagecentre.com)

### DHC events

Summer holidays – check out our website for family and children's activities.

Weds 20<sup>th</sup> August – Backstage Gage at 2pm looks at a school log book from the early 1900s to see what school life was like. Tickets online or just turn up.

Sat 27<sup>th</sup> September – talk for FODLHS on Forest of Dean Writers Collection by Jason Griffiths

Weds 17<sup>th</sup> September – Heritage Open Day: free admission with tours focusing on the heritage of the site itself. Camp Mill is a Grade II listed building with a long and interesting industrial history. Come and find out some of the important and surprising uses.

October half term – spooky family activities all week

Find more details on our website <https://www.deanheritagecentre.org/>



### Heritage Hub online training for community and family archivists:

Do you want to make sure you preserve your precious family memories or your community's story? Do you have a personal, organisational, local or subject related collection or archive? It could be a small or large

collection of letters, photographs, documents, computer (digital) files or other records that have meaning for you. They can show who we are and how we live, relate, work and play.

At Gloucestershire Archives, through the National Lottery Heritage funded "For The Record" project, people will be supported to document, care for, interpret and celebrate their personal and shared history." For more details go to: <https://www.heritagehub.org.uk/heritage-hub-online-training/>

# Coleford's "Parish Drawing Rooms"

Certain local papers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century contain references to the perplexing phrase "Parish Drawing Rooms". Although it may seem to refer to a building, the phrase describes special events supporting the Church of England Temperance Society.

Examination of newspaper records shows that these events occurred principally in Coleford between the years 1881 and 1903, although there is evidence of similar events being held in Liskeard, Cornwall (between 1879 and 1889) and in Gloucester in 1895.

The edited extract below from the Monmouthshire Beacon (5<sup>th</sup> March 1881) describes what took place at the "Parish Drawing Rooms".

*"The Coleford branch of the Church of England Temperance Society introduced a novelty into the town on Tuesday evening week, when they held "a parish drawing room" at St John's National Schools. Considerable curiosity had been manifested previously as to the manner in which the evening was to be passed, but comparatively few persons were able to afford any information, the great majority never having heard of such an institution. There was a good attendance of members of the society and their friends. The "parish drawing room" proved to be a sort of overgrown evening party, to which anyone could obtain admission on payment of a small fee, and where a liberal supply of refreshments could be procured by the simple process of paying for them. The large rooms were well lighted and made as attractive as possible with flags and ornaments of other kinds. On the numerous tables interesting books and engravings, pretty water colour drawings, photographs, scrap books, and various games, including "go bang" and the bewildering "fifteen" puzzle were scattered in abundance. At one end was a refreshment table covered with tempting viands, and excellent tea and coffee. At the other was a piano, and at intervals during the evening pianoforte solos were played by Miss Mayo and Miss Emily Jones. Dr Trotter contributed a couple of violin solos, Mr Lovegrove, Mr W.J. Locke, and Mr J.F. Childs sang several songs, and Mr Male gave two interesting readings. Groups of people all engaged in conversation, or turning over photograph and scrap books, all appeared to be thoroughly at home, and altogether the "drawing room" passed off with so much success. Perhaps the only touch of sadness or of anything to mar the general pleasure was caused by the approaching departure of Mr J.F. Childs, who everyone regrets to know is on the point of leaving Coleford. Mr Childs, by his uniform kindness, and the self-denying work with which he has devoted himself to the training of the church choir, the organisation of the temperance society, and other kindred duties, has gained the respect and esteem of all who know him. Mr Child deserves congratulations and thanks for introducing this highly successful "parish drawing room" into the town."*



The question of the odd circumstance of the "Parish Drawing Rooms" events also taking place in Liskeard were resolved by delving into the life of John Frederick Childs. He was a solicitor who was born in Liskeard in 1850 and presumably brought the idea of the "Parish Drawing Room" with him to Coleford.

He left Coleford in 1881 to return to Liskeard where he married (in 1882) and continued his practice as a solicitor there.

# Schools' History Competition 2025

The summer term has been very busy for local schools and the History Society schools team. 2025 saw increasing numbers of schools participating in both the quiz and competition, this being the second year for the quiz and third for the competition. Funding for the competition and quiz is provided via a legacy from Dr John Jurica of Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeology Society through the Gloucestershire History Association. Eight schools competed in the quiz and six participated in the competition.

The competition is for individual Key Stage 2 pupils (primary school children, years 4, 5 and 6, that is aged 7-11 years old) to produce a piece of work that represent an element of our local history. They can choose which format option to use:

- 3D model
- Digital submission (e.g. PowerPoint)
- Video
- Written text

Each school competing selects one project to be submitted and may enter all four categories. The winners of each category are awarded a certificate and £25.

The History Society is encouraged by the commitment to the challenge and the variety and quality of entries. The judges had a difficult task to select only four winners as all submissions were worthy of that acknowledgement, therefore highly commended certificates were also awarded.

The winner in the video category was Evie from Pillowell School with her video about the Historic Forest of Dean. The judges particularly liked her presentation of a range of historic sites and her enthusiasm for them, so this also won the overall competition, gaining £100 for Pillowell school. The school intends to engage the school council and ask the pupils for suggestion on how the £100 could be put to best use with in the school.



*Left, Sue Newton is pictured presenting Evie of Pillowell School with her prize certificate. She was also awarded £25.00 for herself. Evie was also the overall competition winner, so also won £100 for her School.*



*Right, Mrs Allen of Pillowell School is shown receiving the overall competition winner award with £100 prize money for the school.*



# Schools' History Competition 2025



The winner in the 3D model category was Jasper from Parkend School (see left) for his model of “the mine head gear” structure on A48 Lydney Docks roundabout and what it represents.

The Judges said “This was amazing at first glance because of the realistic portrayal of the structure above ground, but even more impressive when you removed the ‘top’ section to look at the underground tunnel. This was lit at the far end, illuminating the wooden supports for the roof of the tunnel, the rail track, the sleepers within it and the coal truck sitting outside”.

The Winner of the Written Category was Cole from Mitcheldean School (right) for his account of the History of Rewilding in the Forest of Dean. The judges felt this was a very interesting read and well presented.



The winner of the Digital Category was Sophie from Parkend School (left) for her digital presentation about the Princess Royal Colliery Expedition, a very good presentation.



All the competition winners and school representatives have been invited as VIP guests to our Society meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025 when we will congratulate them again on their achievements.

## Highly Commended certificates were awarded to:

James from Ellwood School for his digital depiction of ‘Great Grandad’s Great Escape’ and his heroic role in the rescue of miners at Waterloo. This was a remarkable reconstruction of the incident using Lego characters.

Tilly from Parkend School was highly commended for her detailed video about Free mining in the FoD.

Oscar from Mitcheldean School for his digital submission in the History of Forest of Dean Coal Mining.

Poppy from Coalway School for her 3D Construction of Coleford Clock Tower

Ivy from Yorkley School written work entitled “Life changing – sky changing” about an evacuee coming to the FoD.

Piper from St Whites School for her 3D construction of Clearwell Caves with a light that lit up in her model miners hat.



# Schools' History Competition 2025



*Above: FODLHS Chair Sue Middleton showing Coleford Mayor Nick Penny around the many exhibits*



*Left and above left: Some of the many visitors who enjoyed the exhibition*



*Above right: Sue Middleton and Nick Penny continue their examination of the exhibits*



*Below right: To further engage the visitors, a display of mining artefacts and other interesting objects*



# Schools' History Quiz 2025

This is the second year that the History Society has held a History Quiz. The Quiz is targeted at Key Stage 2 pupils in Forest Schools, but whilst the Competition rewards individual efforts, the Quiz is about working in teams. Each school quiz team consisted of 4 pupils from school years 4/5/6, working together to provide answers to questions in four rounds of 10 questions, including identification artefacts, places and people in pictures/photos.

The Quiz heats and final were competitive, and points earned very close, with only  $\frac{1}{2}$  point in one heat determining which school went through to the final. The finalists were Ellwood, Parkend and St Whites Schools. St Whites School won the shield and are the retaining champions having won for a second year. Well done to all schools participating and thank you to the host schools for providing the opportunity to hold the heats and final in their schools. We hope to see some of the children participating in the 2026 quiz.

Many thanks to everyone who let us borrow some of their artefacts: Clearwell Caves, Dean Heritage Centre, Worcester Walk Community Project and to the Reading the Forest project for some of the questions relating to our Forest authors.



*Each finalist received a certificate and a copy of Andy Seed's book 'The Story of the Forest'. Pictured left are Alfie, James, Seb, and Ollie of Ellwood School receiving their finalist certificates.*

*Below right, Laura, Hazel, Juliette and Edgar of Parkend School receiving their copies of 'The Story of the Forest'.*



*The winners of the Quiz Competition were St Whites School for the send year running! Shown left are Violet, Connor, Tobias and Alex receiving the trophy from Sue Middleton (Chair of FODLHS), and on the right back Sue Newton (School's Liaison Officer), and Ruth Richardson (FODLHS volunteer)*



# Bark of the Oak by *Cecile Hunt*



Oak bark from the Forest of Dean, over the centuries was grown, harvested, sold and used by the thousands of tons for tanning leather. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the decline of this tanning method with a change to chemical tanning; today there are just a small number of artisan tanners who still use oak bark.

Collection and use of oak bark was not confined to the Forest of Dean but happened across, where oaks were grown, the UK. Buying, selling and using oak bark has been forgotten about in the Forest of Dean but it was at one time a very lucrative trade.

Tanning, using oak bark, was well established by the 1600's. Leather and leather goods were the second most valuable industry only outdone by

textiles. In the age of the agricultural labourer (Ag-Lab) it ranked as one of the largest non-agricultural employers. Tanning using oak bark has been in use for around 8000 years. Leather and leather goods height of production was from late 1600s to early 1800s.

Harvested Forest bark was transported by mule, cart and, from the 1830's, by rail to not only local tanners in and around the Forest but tanners around the UK. It was shipped off in large loads, some from Newnham and other local ports via Bristol to the Continent and beyond.

The tanning industry consumed vast amounts of oak bark. An analysis done of bark consumption in England and Wales for the period 1710-1830 shows an exponential yearly rise from 30,000 tons in 1710 to 110,000 tons by 1830; consumption had started to drop off by the mid-1800s. The demand for leather during the Napoleonic wars, due to military requirements then dipped after 1815 and bark prices dropped.

Forest of Dean produced huge quantities of oak bark; other areas of the country where not so many oak trees grew also used bark from hemlock and chestnut for tanning, mixing it with the oak bark. The tannins in bark were crucial in preserving hides and enhancing their durability and lastingness. Approximately 6000 tanners were recorded in England and Wales in 1841.

Calculations have been done which show that a 40-year-old oak tree produced about ½ ton of bark. Eighty-year-old oaks used for shipbuilding, as in the Forest of Dean, would produce approximately 380 kilos (838lb) of bark, plus any bark from the timber not used in the building of a ship. A tanner (England has largest distribution of Tanner surnames in UK) would use bark from three to four dozen mature trees annually; if coppiced oaks were used the number of trees would be many more. Coppiced oaks produced the finest oak bark.

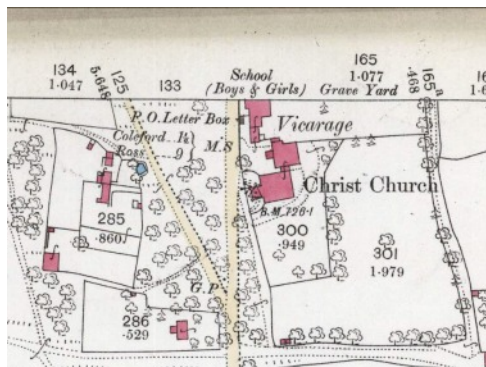
Bark is a by-product of timber and fuel production. Stripping of trees, or peeling, of bark could be done either on standing (easiest to strip) or felled (hardest to strip) trees; stripping or peeling used tools called 'barking irons' also known as 'bark spuds'. Once bark was peeled off the timber it would be stacked for the drying process to take place in readiness to be sold and delivered to tanneries here or overseas. Many advertisements appeared in Gloucester Journal advising when and where an auction of bark would be taking place – more next article.

Around the Forest of Dean were many 'bark barns' where bark would have been stored, once dry, ready either for sale, local use or distribution to where it was needed. Tanneries in the Forest were situated around the edges of the Statutory Forest area; more on these in next article.



# The Man Who Was Buried Twice *by John Belcher*

*In this article well known local historian John Belcher looks at the earliest history of Christ Church near Berry Hill, and the origins of the name of the former local college. Along the way he tells the extraordinary story of the the man who was buried twice.*



*Christ Church as shown on OS 25 inch map  
Glos XXX.16 published 1881.  
NLS Maps (CC-BY)*

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July last was the 209th anniversary of the consecration of Christchurch Parish Church near Berry Hill. Christ Church was the first of its kind to be built within the Forest boundaries, in the style of the Gothic Revival, and in its early history is an event that personifies the traditional, independent and stubborn reputation of the Forest character.

The tale goes that before 1803 there was no more than a perfunctory effort to bring religious instruction to the inhabitants of large tracts of the Forest of Dean and there was no place of worship for them anywhere.

The Rev P. M. Procter was the new Vicar of Newland and he observed that the condition of the people was deplorable so he spent several months 'visiting and getting acquainted with them and their habits'.

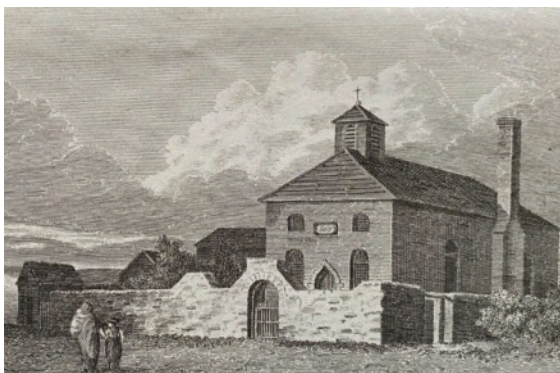
One day a collier living in Berry Hill by the name of Thomas Morgan asked the good Reverend to come and preach the Gospel to the local people, offering his cottage for that purpose. The Reverend arrived the following Thursday, knocked on the door and tried to enter, but the door appeared to be barred against him, and he feared the worst. However, he soon found out that the resistance was due to the amount of overcrowding within the cottage.

After preaching from the 61st chapter of Isaiah, his new congregation was so impressed 'that they begged him to come again'. These services became a regular event, and the congregation grew so big that it became necessary to build a proper place of worship.

Again, Thomas Morgan stepped forward. Gathering his friends together to meet and listen to the Rev Procter, he then said: "Take my field. With that, I give you five guineas, to which my neighbours' have added £15. We ask you only to begin; and build until the money is expended. In another year we will again add our mites; only lay the foundations and begin."

On the Epiphany in 1813 under the authority of the Episcopal licence, the public service of the established church was for the first time read within the walls of a new chapel erected the previous year, and which now forms the north aisle of the present church.

A schoolmaster, Edward Hawkins, was appointed, and 300 children enrolled in the first week. Within two years the chapel and the schoolrooms were separated. The new school



*An early engraving showing  
Christ Church Chapel School*

was built of best Forest stone and cost £300, with expenses for running the school being per £70 annum. The Rev Procter was liable for two-thirds of this, and the rest was made up of voluntary subscriptions. After a long history, Christchurch Junior Mixed & Infants School closed in 1954 to be replaced by Berry Hill Primary School. Next the church was increased to twice its size and a new children's gallery added.

Thomas Morgan died in 1816, and his property was purchased for £400. A freehold estate was also purchased in 1816 for £200. So now the property of the new church consisted of five acres of Crown land, the freehold, and Thomas Morgan's property. On this, as an ecclesiastical endowment, the consecration of the new Christ Church took place on July 7, 1816, by Bishop Ryder of Gloucester.

The purchased five acres was soon to become an acknowledged part of the Berry Hill district, on which land Five Acres Council School was built at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1914 the older children from Christchurch School were transferred to the new school. The school was renamed Lakers School in 1985, to subsequently close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, reopening on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 as Five Acres High School!

Thomas Morgan had naturally become a highly respected and popular figure in the local community, and after he died the people wanted him buried in the environs of their new Christ Church. The only consecrated burial ground within their parish, however, was at Newland Church, and despite what must have been vehement protests, Mr Morgan was buried there.

Name	Abode	When buried	Age	By whom the Ceremony was performed
Thomas Morgan	Berry Hill	Dec 26	53	W. Procter

Name	Abode	When buried	Age	By whom the Ceremony was performed
Thomas Morgan	Forest	July 30	53	P. M. Procter

The protests must have gone to the top because the Home Secretary became involved. But it is said, the Foresters cared nothing for the Home Secretary. Twenty of them marched to Newland where, with pickaxes and shovels, they dug up his coffin and carried his body back to Christ Church where he was re-interred in the South Aisle, a stone tablet marking his resting place. Thomas Morgan is the first name entered in the burial register at Christ Church, and must be unique in being buried twice!

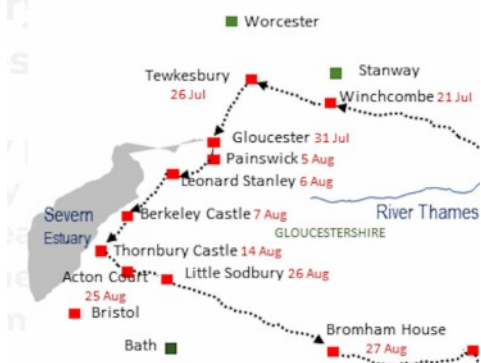
The tablet was covered by carpet when this article was originally written, and a brass plate screwed to the side of a pew indicated where this remarkable Forester lay within the bosom of his church. However, in October 2010 the church was closed for re-ordering, which included removal of the pews.

However, there is a plaque on the wall of the North Aisle, which reads: "The examples of Thomas Morgan, a man of God, who could neither read or write, and that of the Reverend Procter, a man of learning, who used his knowledge to help others, must be kept fresh in the minds of this and every generation."



Christ Church after the 2010 re-ordering.

## Meetings in Review *with Ian Gower, Mary Sullivan & Gillian Christopher*



*Henry VIII's royal progress through Gloucestershire in 1535*

For our last indoor meeting of the year on May 10th, Alan Pilbeam gave a very informative talk on The Royal Progress through Gloucestershire of 1535. Royal progresses were common in Tudor times, both to understand what was happening throughout the Country, and to be seen. For this four-month Progress between July and October (5 weeks of which were spent in Gloucestershire), we heard how this was not just a chance for the people to greet their king, but an exercise in royal power against the backdrop of the reformation.

We heard how accompanying the King were Queen Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell and a collection of 500 courtiers, soldiers and servants. If the venues had been nearer London, there would have been nearer 1000 in the support team.

Alan described where the royal party stayed and why these places were chosen. Henry was very fond of hunting hence his choice of venues, all of which had or were close to enclosed deer parks. Venues chosen included Sudeley Castle near Winchcombe, Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Painswick, Leonard Stanley Priory, Berkeley Castle, Thornbury Castle, Acton Court, and Little Sodbury Manor.

Throughout the presentation, Alan showed pictures of each of the places where the Royal party stayed, all these can be visited today except for the privately owned Little Sodbury Manor. At the time of the Progress, Little Sodbury Manor was the home of Sir John Walsh who reportedly employed William Tyndale at a time when he had started his translation of the Bible in one of the rooms. Anne Boleyn was keen to research Tyndale's background. Acton Court, (built specially for the occasion!) is now open to the public at certain times of the year only. Thornbury Castle is now an up-market hotel. Sudeley Castle became the burial place of Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth and last wife.

We heard how Anne Boleyn was then in her early thirties, was not well liked and she had not been forgiven by many people for replacing Katherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife. Anne Boleyn was very critical of the state of the Church in England. But she was quite a humanitarian and with the help of her maids, gave money to the poorest person in each place that they stayed.

One of Thomas Cromwell's responsibilities was to assess the wealth of the monasteries. The Royal Progress through Gloucestershire was an ideal opportunity for Cromwell to assess this wealth. Henry needed money from the Church to fund his extravagant lifestyle and military operations abroad including wars with France. Before returning to London in October, Henry visited Winchester for the appointment of three 'reforming bishops' which led to the start of the dissolution of the monasteries (Tintern and Flaxley Abbeys were two of the first to be dissolved), with the money going to the crown. The Royal Progress finished on 31<sup>st</sup> October, with Henry returning to Windsor.

*I.G.*

On a fortunately dry Wednesday in June, 24 of our members went on a self-drive visit to the home of the Crawshay family in Merthyr Tydfil. The Crawshays owned the Cyfarthfa Iron works one of, if not the biggest, in the Empire at that time.

The house was built as a family home in 1825 by William Crawshay II, one of the most important iron masters in South Wales. Another member of the family was Henry Crawshay who lived and worked in Cinderford.





Now owned by the local council, the Castle has expansive gardens, lake, play area and other activities.

The group heard a bit about the family and iron working then went round the museum, now housed in the castle. An indoor picnic was followed by an afternoon of options. Some went to explore the now derelict remains of Hirwaun Iron works. Others took a more detailed look at the museum and grounds. Whilst a few decided to drive around the area and take in the sights.

A good visit which gave all participants the chance to get the most out of their day.

*M.S.*

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July, Cecile Hunt repeated the popular 'Newnham Walk'. Meeting at Riverside Car Park, by the entrance of the Newnham Pill, now covered by the A48 (giving a more direct and drier through route) once deep enough to be appointed by the Crown as a creek of the Port of Gloucester, Cecile set the scene, then led us up Church Road. She pointed out the hard, black slag blocks, a by-product from copper smelters, transported as ballast in boats and used by the thrifty villagers in the construction of their buildings. Remnants of the Old Wharf and sites of ancient warehouses were pointed out (some converted to domestic dwellings after Newnham, as a port, declined due to the building of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal), we passed the rear of historic burgage plots, and a long 'rope walk', running from the rear of Mansion House.

Further along we passed the tollhouse and Severn Terrace which led to Newnham Sands at the bottom of the Ferry slipway, very popular with the Forest people who would walk from Cinderford and Littledean to enjoy the 'seaside' down Severn Street, formerly Passage Road, a continuation of Dean Road, the main transport and trading route in and out of the Forest.

We stopped by Brightlands before going on to the Churchyard and St Peters Church. Originally built by the river on The Nab (a 14<sup>th</sup> Century promontory) as The Nab eroded the Church was moved three times to higher ground.

Crossing the main road, by the Victoria Hotel, to the castle area and the Grade II Listed Cattle Pound, we worked our way back, stopping on the grassy bank running the whole length of the High Street, known as The Chains, hearing about its row of houses, now disappeared, and its use for markets and fairs. After crossing over the A48 we stopped on the grass area beside Beech Road.



Walking around the village Cecile pointed out various buildings of interest, giving many historical nuggets covering people, occupations and occasions.

Newnham probably only exists because it was a fording place, it became a bustling river port and ferry terminal boasting a market, quays, a tannery, glass, rope, boat building works et al.

In 1187 it was the only Gloucestershire Borough south of the River Seven, attesting to its commercial importance. Many houses on the High Street were rebuilt or re-fronted in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with rough-cast or plaster giving Newnham its predominately Georgian appearance, their history only visible from their rear.

*G.C.*





## F.W. Harvey - the Laureate of Gloucestershire

Poet, broadcaster and solicitor, Frederick William Harvey (1888-1957) first achieved fame as a War Poet, with verses written while he served in the 1914-1918 War. His work is famous for being some of the earliest formally published dialect poetry. He also pioneered dialect and accented voices in BBC drama such as his *Gunter's Farm* and *My Friends the Foresters* series.

Harvey was a 'citizen-soldier' of the Great War, joining a Territorial Battalion and inspiring one of the first trench newspapers, the *Fifth Gloucester Gazette*. His verse captured the longing for home, the camaraderie of his friends and humorous insights that made soldiering bearable. Decorated for bravery, he was finally incarcerated as a Prisoner of War until the Armistice. He was the best friend and mentor of Ivor Gurney, and Herbert Howells, the Lydney composer - all three were from west Gloucestershire. Harvey's best-known poem is *Ducks*, but he is also respected for other works including *'In Flanders'*, set to music by Ivor Gurney. Harvey's lyrical approach meant there have been numerous settings of his words to music.

Harvey came from a Minsterworth farming family, settling in the village of Yorkley for the last thirty years of his life. He became a solicitor, specialising in defending those who could not normally afford legal representation. He was deeply committed to remembering his fallen comrades, advocating for veterans of both Wars and standing up to injustices.

He was a popular BBC broadcaster but was most at home in his local village, commonly found in local pubs and participating in skittles, choirs and village life. He was keen to explain the law and inspire young people with literature, and to help anyone with their troubles. Author and poet Leonard Clark acknowledged him as his inspiration, 'a brave unshackled spirit' and observed: 'The Foresters loved every inch of him'.

He had a seminal influence over Forest writing and figures such as Clark, Beddington and contemporary poets such as Keith Morgan.



*The Harvey memorial window in Minsterworth Church*

### FW Harvey Society

The F.W. Harvey Society works to promote Harvey's life, poems, scholarship and his legacy to the creative arts. To take advantage of a recent resurgence of interest in his literature, the Society plans to hold a special event on Saturday 1st November in Minsterworth that will feature a number of talks and an opportunity for members to meet. The main focus will be the village of Minsterworth, the landscape and people based on the recent work of local historian Terry Moore-Scott, LHS member and contributor to *New Regard*. Terry's research will also be the leading article in the first edition of the biannual *F.W. Harvey Journal* which will be launched at the event, and available to members at a discount.

If you would like to support the work of the F.W. Harvey Society, learn more about the Forest's literary heritage and be a member please visit the website <https://www.fwharveysociety.co.uk/membership/> or email Cheryl Mayo (membership secretary) at [fwharveysociety@gmail.com](mailto:fwharveysociety@gmail.com)