

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
February 2019

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- Book Reviews



February 2019

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Editors Notes

Choosing a photo for the front cover of this publication is probably one of the harder things I have to do. As well as being a decent picture it should also have at least some relevance to the other content. This month's choice of Cinderford town centre is rather a stretch, but can be marginally justified! Of course the Triangle looked a little different in the 1960's and Antony Dufort's statue of "The Freeminer" (Dave Harvey) was certainly not there then!

The remaining extract from the late Freda Margrett's unpublished book is carried in the centre pages. This time the story is focused on Freda's years as a Health Visitor in the Forest during the 1960's and later. She was based for much of this time in Cinderford – so there is one connection at least.

On the back cover you will find reviews of two recently published books with a very local focus. Joyce Moss's book focuses on the reformation and its effect on the Church and the people in the Forest Deanery. However, there was no church in Cinderford then, so no spurious link for me to find to justify the front cover photograph! Luckily for me, the second book by James A. Bevan takes the reader on a bus journey of memory from Blakeney via Soudley to finish the journey in Cinderford. Phew! Spurious link number two and the front cover photograph just about justified.

In the 'News' section you will find full details of the first Society tour of 2019. This is the full day tour; "In the Footsteps of the Mushets". PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS TOUR HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY 26TH MAY, a week later than the date shown in your membership card. The tour is being led by Ian Standing and Cherry Lewis, respectively very eminent researchers in Forest history and the history of geology. This tour is sure to sell out, so if you want go along – book early!

Finally, the centre pages of this newsletter are reserved for shorter articles that are around 1600 words in length. Have you written something that you would like to share with the rest of the membership? If you have something to offer or are thinking of writing a shorter article and would like to discuss it, don't hesitate to get in touch with me. My contact details are shown above left.

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.

Views from the Chair

with Mary Sullivan



I would like to welcome all members, particularly new ones, to this first newsletter of 2019.

The year got off to a good start with the talk about the Reformation in the Forest from Joyce Moss. And how pleased we were that blinds have now been fitted to all windows in the room we use in the West Dean Centre. Sunny days will no longer be a problem for our speakers.

We have a wide range of activities planned for the coming year including varied talks, a walk and a coach trip. This will be different to previous coach trips as we are heading to Dyrham park first with a stop somewhere else on the way back. A visit to Westbury Court Gardens will be complemented by a talk about the history of gardens by the Head Gardener. The May day out will have a geology focus. Full details of all these events will appear in your newsletter. Something for everybody to enjoy I'm sure.

I am still busy researching for the second part of my talk on the Founders of our society and what they did in the early years of the society. I had not realised they were such a varied and interesting group of people. But one thing stands out loud and clear. Most of them were not only fascinated by our local history, but also wanted to share what they discovered and to involve and educate ordinary working people. I think those aims are still valid today.

One way you can get involved in helping to plan the future of our Forest is to complete the survey on Forestry England's plans for "Our Shared Forest" at <https://www.forestryengland.uk/oursharedforest>

Our society has been actively and usefully engaged in the Foresters Forest HLF-funded project. We sit on the new Built Heritage group that is part of the Forest Management structure. Let's continue to assist the Forestry Commission by input of useful comments.



Westbury Court Gardens

Photo by Angus Kirk licensed under the terms of the cc-by-sa-2.0

Lastly, I would like to know from you if there are any topics you would like to see covered in our own future programme. Or, if you have any topic you know a lot about and would like to share that knowledge we can find you either a full 45 minute slot or a 20 minutes post tea break one.

I am also looking for suggestions for a future research project. All the hard work on the World War I project led to our *Forest at War* book which is selling really well. Should we now move on to say the 20s? You can always email me at chair@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk.

All best wishes
Mary Sullivan



MEMBERSHIP

I think we got there, with the forms and GDPR etc – thanks to all. If you are receiving this newsletter, it means you have successfully renewed, so a warm welcome back for 2019. And a warm welcome also to new members Linda Thorne, Mrs & Mrs D

Williams, Janet Jewell, Jane & Ben Bennun, Jan David Lewandowski, Jennifer Harley, Sue Newton and Dave Wright. We hope you enjoy your membership of the Society for many years, starting with this year's varied and what will prove to be fascinating programme of talks and events.

Your committee is always on the lookout for members who would like to contribute to the running of the society, from simply giving ideas and advice at committee meetings to taking on active roles. As is often the case, there are always more jobs than people and a number of committee members are doubling up on their roles. So please talk to any of the committee at a meeting, or call or email - details are on your membership card - if you believe you would like to help with the running of your society.

Cheryl Mayo, Membership Secretary

Sunday 26th May: In the Footsteps of the Mushets Led by Cherry Lewis and Ian Standing

A day tour visiting sites associated with the geology, metallurgy and mines of David and Robert Mushet. Starting at New Fancy view point for an overview of Forest geology, we will visit the Whitecliff Ironworks, Bixslade Valley, the Oakwood Valley and Darkhill, all of them places where we will explore the Mushets' story and achievements using the evidence on the ground and information from documents of the day.

The coach pick up point will be 9.30 from the car park at New Fancy view point (take signed turning off B4234, half a mile south of the Speech House). Bring a packed lunch and let us know if you will need a lift to and from New Fancy. The tour will end at New Fancy at 4.30.
Stout footwear is essential for walking on uneven and rocky ground.

The tour is limited to 25 places. Prior booking essential.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday 16th February - 3pm - West Dean Centre, Bream
Brian James & Christine Martyn - "History of Lydney Grammar School"**

**Saturday 9th March - 3pm - West Dean Centre, Bream
Andrew Hoan - "Trees, People & Archaeology"**

**Saturday 13th April - 3pm - Yorkley Community Centre
Mary Sullivan - "More Notable Members of the History Society & the Early Years"**

**Friday 26th April - 7'30pm - Blakeney Village Hall
Phil Cox - "Newport Mediaeval Ship"**



Jo Durrant (left), BBC Radio Gloucestershire reporter, talking to Cecile Hunt (right) about the History Society book 'The Forest at War'

A Day at the Races!

On Sunday 18 November, the Society was part of a big event at Cheltenham Racecourse to commemorate the WW1 Armistice.

Our display, with a number of images taken from the Society's book, *The Forest at War*, was one of many interesting exhibits showing different aspects of wartime Gloucestershire – including a half scale model of a Sopwith Camel. Sue Middleton, Mary Sullivan, Cecile Hunt and Cheryl Mayo represented the Society.

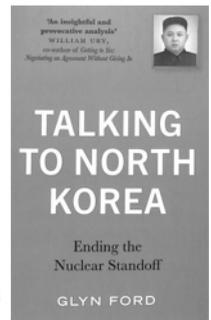
The idea was that of Dame Janet Trotter, who spoke at our 70th anniversary dinner in June and who has recently retired as Lord Lieutenant of the County. The Society's Vice Chair Roger Deeks was one of the primary organisers. Our display attracted a great deal of attention with a number of people telling us about their connections to the Forest. Jo Durrant, a BBC Glos radio broadcaster, interviewed authors of WW1 themed books, including Cecile Hunt, the Society's Treasurer and main driver behind *The Forest at War*. Princess Ann visited the exhibition and chatted to us about the Forest and the war, and Chair Mary Sullivan presented her with a copy of the book.

Glyn Ford, a member of the Society since 2014, is Director of the NGO Track2Asia, an elected Constituency Representative on Labour's National Policy Forum and a member of the Labour Party's International Committee.

He is regarded as one of the top European experts on the Korean Peninsula, with 50 visits under his belt.

Glyn has recently published a new book entitled *Talking to North Korea Ending the Nuclear Standoff*.

If you are interested in learning more about this most mysterious of nations, then you can purchase a copy of Glyn's book via the Amazon website.



Commemorating the Bears

On 26 April 1889 an infamous incident took place near Ruardean which has evolved into the Big Question of: Who killed the bears? Discussion on the point still goes on between Cinderford and Ruardean, 130 years later.

To commemorate the anniversary, Reading the Forest is planning an event at Ruardean Village Hall to look at how the story has been represented in literature, drama and film, on Saturday 27 April 2019. Details of the day will be posted to our website and available through Reading the Forest nearer the time, but do mark the day in your diary. It should be interesting.



The Dancing Bear by W. F. Witherington

Reading the Forest is a project within the Foresters' Forest Heritage Lottery funded program. More details here: <http://www.readingtheforest.co.uk>

Life As A Health Visitor in the Forest *by Freda Margrett*



Freda Margrett

The November 2017 edition of the newsletter featured an extract from an unpublished book, authored by the late Freda Margrett entitled "Community Nursing in the Forest". We now feature a second excerpt which focuses on her time working in the Forest as a Health Visitor from the mid 1960's.

The history of Health Visiting started with the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association which was set up in 1852 and the Ladies branch in 1860, when it was thought that many were living in such dreadful conditions that women and children needed practical help and education. They then decided in 1862 to employ respectable working women to visit homes of the poor promoting comfort, and stressing the importance of cleanliness, thrift and temperance. They were called Sanitary Inspectors. In 1929 they

became employed by local councils on a statutory basis. Since the inception of the National Health Service, a Health Visitor has been required to be qualified as a State Registered Nurse and State Certified Midwife.

So it was in September 1965 I moved to Cheltenham to undertake Health Visitors training. The Course was very extensive indeed and covered a wide range of subjects, including medical science, relevant Public Health Acts, and even legal aspects. I enjoyed being a student again, for in spite of the hard work there was comradeship to be had. My colleagues would try to persuade me to stay for weekends to join them at dances etc, but I could not refuse the increasing needs of mother. Although the Course was interesting and enjoyable, it was very exhausting. The final exam was very extensive indeed and took place over four days. This meant sitting in an exam room, not like today with course work etc. Most of us collapsed with exhaustion at the end so it was not surprising to hear that later on the Course was modified.

After a short holiday, I was contacted by Gloucestershire Health Authority, being under contract with them, and allocated a post in the Aylburton to Tutshill area. We were all measured up for a uniform which was a rather nice two-piece suit of wool worsted grey material, and given an allowance to buy our own blouses. I had to find my own accommodation and I found a nice flat over a shop in Newerne Street, Lydney. Gloucestershire Health Authority approved of it and provided the furniture and equipment, including a desk, telephone, filing cabinet etc.

Later, a vacancy occurred in Cinderford which I accepted, so came back to Cinderford Health Centre. Again I had to find new accommodation and was offered a flat in Drybrook. I was allowed to buy all the furniture from the Lydney flat at cost price. The Health Visitors had two offices and our clerk a third one, but when the Doctors decided to move we had to share one office for the five of us. Then later on we had to move to Dr B's old house whose garden backed onto the Health Clinic. We had the top floor and the Probation staff had the ground floor. It then became the policy for each of us to be attached to a GP dealing with just his patients rather than cover a specific area. Our family doctors, a practicing couple, requested me, so here I was back on the same territory as when I worked as a midwife.

The duties of a Health Visitor are to care and support people from the cradle to the grave. Starting with the new born we would hold Mothercraft and Relaxation classes for the pregnant mother. The Midwife would give the relaxing exercises and the Health Visitor would give various talks on ante-natal care, services available, labour, and neo-natal care. We would answer various questions and re-assure them, especially first-time mothers who would be rather apprehensive. We would visit their homes as soon as the Midwife had discharged them, usually after two weeks, giving advice and support as necessary. I also attended Child Health Clinics, which in earlier days were held in village halls, (later in the Health Centres). The child would be weighed, his development checked, and given the various immunisations. The Doctor engaged to attend would usually be a retired GP. The mothers could obtain the various welfare foods, such as National Dried Milk, Cold Liver Oil, and Orange Juice. Voluntary workers helped at the clinics,

weighing the babies, selling the foods, and generally helping mothers. Everything we did had to be recorded, including the batch numbers of the vaccines for there were no computers then. This took quite some considerable time back at the office. Because my area would usually be a rural one it meant that I would have to take all the supplies from the base in my car. Of course, later on when the Health Centres were built the clinics were held there, and the GP's became involved.

When visiting homes it was very important to assume an informal manner, rather than appearing official, otherwise one may not gain entry. Some Health Visitors would act in a rather dictatorial manner which made the young mother feel intimidated, and it was known that some people would lock their doors and pretend that they were out. I found the best way of approaching them was with a smile. When they found we were not judgmental, but there to help, they would then ask for advice.

One day I was asked to visit a young first-time mother, and as I drove through the estate where she lived a few other mothers had gathered and exclaimed "Thank goodness you have come, we can hear the screams out here". I found the young mother attempting to clean her baby's bottom standing at her feet and dabbing her bottom with cotton wool. Of course the baby felt so insecure and was thrashing her arms around and screaming loudly for she could not feel contact with her mother. I changed the baby and cradling her in my arms where she calmed down, I explained to the mother about physical contact and that the more she cuddled her baby the better. So many young mothers are advised by friends and even their own mothers to put the baby down and not spoil it, but you cannot spoil a child with love, they will soon become independent of their own accord.

A sad occasion was the death of a child even when it was expected. There was a baby of a young first-time mother who died at about twelve months. I was away at the time, but when I came back I went straight to see her. She flew into my arms, and as I hugged her she sobbed and sobbed. She said her mother and others had told her to pull herself together, so tried not to cry in front of them. How often have I found this to be so. There is no need for words but just a hug and they know you care. Her husband came to see me and asked if I would get rid of all the baby's clothes, toys etc, because the sight of them would make his wife cry. I said yes, of course, and took them to the Children's ward at Gloucester Royal Hospital.

During the primary school years there would be regular medical checks carried out including weight and vision tests. I loved attending schools for this purpose. Mothers would attend for this and I remember one little girl observing all the attention the others were getting from their mothers said to me sadly "I haven't got a mummy". "But you are special", I said, "because you have a nurse instead". So I took her under my wing with affection and she was delighted. We would sometimes give health checks from time to time on hygiene and diet. Then there were checks for head infestation, when we would supply parents with treatment. It was never very satisfactory for soon we would be called back again when some would become re-infested. I was very relieved when eventually the Authority engaged School Nurses to carry out these duties.

It was always very tragic when a mother gave birth to a physically and mentally abnormal child, particularly if it was her first child. It used to be such a stigma in those days. Parents felt embarrassed as if it was their fault. People would resist going to a Psychiatric Hospital, and it was very difficult trying to persuade a mother with puerperal depression to go. Her parents would usually object. The treatment was not so satisfactory then and it took many months to recover. From time to time we were offered 'In Service Training; which meant a day release each week or two weeks away on various topics, so in 1976 I volunteered to attend the Psychiatric Course, because I was interested to see if mental health care had improved. During the first week I attended lectures, visited Day Centres and homes with a Psychiatric Nurse. The second week was spent at the Psychiatric Hospital in Gloucester (Coney Hill).

Finally, after thirty years of work in the Forest as a Midwife and latterly a Health Visitor, when I was now over 60 years of age, the Nursing Officer invited me to go part time and just cover the Blakeney doctors' practice. This I was pleased to do, and it was nice to have more spare time. When it was time for me to retire she arranged a party at Cinderford Health Centre for all my colleagues and friends.

Iron Production in the Dean (Part 5) by Cecile Hunt

Continuing on past the site of the Cannop Chemical Company we arrived at New Fancy, the site of the Society's last big project – the Geomap. Alighting to stand on and around the map gave a good opportunity to understand the underlying geology of the Forest and identify where iron was mined.

The Forest region has long been noted as one of the earliest known iron-producing areas of England. Iron took over from Bronze in manufacture of many weapons and tools once it was discovered how to obtain the metal from the ore. The knowledge was brought to Britain by immigrants from the Celtic lands of the Continent. In 1946, an Iron Age coin was found in Bream Scowles; this coin suggests trade was done with the Dobunni tribe from near Cirencester. The Forest region was between the Dobunni tribe from the Gloucester region in the East and the Silures, a war like tribe in the West. It is not definitive which tribe occupied the forest region. The Dobunni, were a fairly advanced civilization; they had a mint and used coins; the Silures tribe preferred to barter and did not use money. The Forest did not produce any iron bars for use as currency bars; currency bars that have been analysed were not made of iron from the FoD.

The currency of iron-bars was graduated according to a fixed weighing standard and the production of these bars was probably organised by the Dobunni tribe.

The iron bearing areas of Carboniferous Limestone and the Drybrook Sandstone and can be traced on the Geomap by following the numbered stainless-steel discs. The numbered discs include a few of the most extensive areas of 'scowles': ancient near-surface workings, which may be unique to Dean.

Lydney Park's Iron Age hill fort is on the extreme end of the iron bearing Carboniferous Limestone on the west side of the forest coal measures. In the Iron Age it was a small iron mining village with poor living conditions. The Romans took it over sometime after AD43. Roman buildings covered the Iron Age hill fort in Lydney Park were described by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, 'no single spot in the whole country has so many historic associations'. During the 2nd & 3rd centuries iron-ore miners lived and worked within the Roman ramparts. There are still Roman pick marks in one of the mining galleries. The mine

complex is believed to be the only one in the country that can be proved to be Roman. Romans reached the Forest of Dean region sometime between AD43 and AD74 and during their rule the mining and smelting of iron ore continued under the same social conditions as before but instead of production for the home economy it was switched to support a foreign economy.

Processing of Iron continued from Roman times through Anglo Saxon to Edward Confessor when 36 dickers of iron for horseshoes was recorded - the dicker (dicra or dacra) of iron in Domesday is generally held to have been ten rods, each sufficient to make two horse-shoes - so 360 rods of iron and 100 rods of iron for making nails for the King's ships. Through the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III the forest supplied an abundance of nails, horse-shoes, spades, axes, arrow-heads and a multitude of other items. Richard I was supplied in 1195, 30,000 horseshoes and £100 of iron for Kings ships in preparation for an expedition to the Holy Land.

Next: Itinerant mining plus Furnace and Soudley valleys, they're so peaceful now, but...



The Geomap at New Fancy

Now You See It, Now You Don't..!

The opportunity to examine the remains of a sailing ship found on the Severn foreshore has been lost...at least for now.

The wreckage was found by society member John Powell and includes a rudder, sternpost and part of the transom. However, a change in weather and tides has buried the lot under tons of sand.

Says John: "It's very obviously a sailing ship and probably a trow. When I found it I had a camera but no tape measure, pen or paper. Now I will have to wait my chance. After colliding with the old Severn rail bridge a number of trows were lost in that area. And, of course, it could easily be a part of one of the Purton wrecks washed over from the other side of the river."



*The rudder and sternpost of a sailing ship
Both have disappeared beneath a sandbank*



*HMS Erebus & the 'Terror' in New Zealand , August 1841
by John Wilson Carmichael*

* A Forest of Dean link to the great days of wooden shipbuilding has recently been revealed by television globetrotter Michael Palin. In his best selling book '*Erebus, the story of a ship*' he recounts that she had been built at Milford Haven and launched in June 1826. Her frame was constructed from oaks harvested in the Forest of Dean and transported by barge down the Severn (probably from Gatcombe).

Used by the Royal Navy on two epic voyages of discovery (one successful, one a catastrophe), *HMS Erebus* made news around the world when in September 2014 her remains were discovered at the bottom of the sea in the frozen wastes of the Canadian Arctic.

CAN YOU HELP?

Our indefatigable Vice President and Enquiries Officer, Averil Kear, has received the following enquiry from a lady who lives in the Baynhams Walk area of Broadwell. If you have any answers to the questions posed please send them via email to newslettereditor@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk.

"I wonder if someone can help me. I have lived in my cottage for 30 years and was told that the o!d building next to me was a pump room and a mine shaft came out to the left of my cottage. The pump room was demolished a while ago and a house has been built. My understanding was a young boy fell down the entrance and was killed. I have a wishing well in my garden that has been blocked and the previous owners told me it is an air shaft. I am trying to find information as to the young boy that has died. Where would I find this would information like this have been kept?. I know 2 children died at the back of me and that some land was trusted to the children of the area there is a stone with their names on it. But this is a different young man. Any idea where I could find more information please. Thank you for reading. "

Meetings in Review *with John Powell*



*History Society Vice
President Ian Standing*

Society vice-president Ian Standing lives in and loves the Forest of Dean. Over the years he has contributed greatly to our knowledge of the history of the district, and the word is there is more to come including a new book. In one way or another Ian has held almost every society post there is. He is currently editor of **The New Regard** and also Publications Officer, a task involving meeting the requests of members and historians from all over the world who want to purchase one of our many publications. He goes about his jobs without fuss or favour, as he does with his other duties including that of being a Forest verderer. However, of course, Ian is not just about trees but also buildings, battles and bones, in fact everything and anything to do with the Dean. So, as always when he speaks, we eagerly listen and, as

anticipated, there was an excellent turnout for his November talk at Bream's West Dean Centre entitled **Words from the past: the Forest observed from 1200 to 2012.**

There's a school of thought that a lot of modern-day history books offer accounts from the past simply by regurgitating research carried out by others. Inevitably there has to be an element of copying in all work as you can't mess about with facts, but the great thing about Ian's always splendidly illustrated talks are that they always seem to be crossing new ground. Thus we enjoyed a gentle trip through 800 or so years of local history extracted this time from sources other than the norm. There was something to be acquired by everyone and, for me, a particularly interesting piece revolved around the arrival of squatters and the encroachments that followed. The new wave of residents quickly took root and their tiny 'cots' —often nowadays upmarket country homes — gave meaning to ancient words such as 'assart' meaning to extend one's boundary by clearing scrub, a task invariably carried out while the keeper's back was turned! 'Bailiwick' was another, a term, for a measurement of land over which a bailiff was appointed to oversee we peasants left a few acres for the Crown.

Ian paints with a broad brush and has many interests. The latest edition of **The New Regard** offers an insight into his activities for not only did he edit it but also contributed articles on the rescue and conservation of the Whitecliff ironworks and part three of his epic on interesting and notable Forest trees. We can get more of Ian later this year when, in partnership with the redoubtable Cherry Lewis, members are offered the opportunity to look deeper into the history of the Mushet iron manufacturing businesses.

The national news recently included a piece about a march in London at which campaigners tramped the streets waving banners demanding an end to austerity. We all agree that times are hard for some, but exactly what qualifies as the 'A- word'?

Your reviewer asks the question in light of the quite gripping account of rationing imposed by the Government during and after the Second World War, and detailed to members at our December meeting held at the West Dean Centre, Bream.

For many this was, indeed, living history. There were those who remembered carefully cutting out coupons to buy sweets and many more who could tell tales of their parents and grandparents managing as best they could with meagre portions of meat, bread and even potatoes. It was certainly the case that much more was on ration than off — a state of affairs that lasted well into the 1950s. Perhaps it was because we were all in the





same boat that people accepted tough times as the norm and just “got on with it”. But it was (excuse the pun) food for thought.

Provoking the debate were Di Standing and Cheryl Mayo, society committee members who had worked enthusiastically for weeks to put together an end-of-year event celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the society.

And a good day was had by all. This was a carefully crafted get-together and one that demanded much research. We were transported back 70 years and had to swallow a long list of very digestible items of food which were generally scarce or unobtainable. In a word it was grim — but, amazingly, people were at ease with their lot and the general consensus was that most were happier then than now.

The time flew by as local items that made the news were read out and discussed. During the break members could get to grips with toys dating back to the war years and the event was rounded off very nicely with some home-made cakes made from recipes of the day. An altogether satisfying afternoon!

A talk full of facts and laced with dramatic events including burnings at stakes in several Forest locations, guaranteed an attentive and fascinated audience for Joyce Moss’s outstanding January lecture at Bream’s West Dean Centre.

The speaker knew her subject inside out. ***Tradition, Reformation and Reaction in the Forest Deanery*** might sound stuffy but, hang on a minute! Two years of digging and delving in church records in Hereford and Gloucester, plus hours and hours of writing, has produced a splendid book and one your reviewer strongly recommends as a good starting place if you want to put a local twist on national events.

Joyce’s account puts much into context: there were vicars with eyes for the ladies as well as the booze; punishments for those who skipped Sunday services in addition to the odd burnings at stakes. They were tough times.



Joyce Moss pictured holding her newly published book

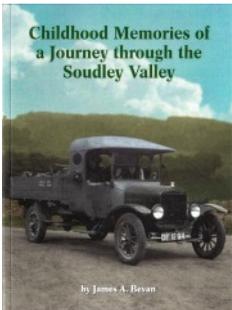


Woolaston Church, once a place where Lollard activists held sway

Joyce has thrown a cat among the pigeons by claiming (she reckons it’s a 95 per cent certainty) that William Tyndale was born on our side of the Severn, probably at Purton or Nass. Her research looks immaculate, so good that the local Tourist Board should be jumping up and down with delight!

Incidentally, it was interesting to see the name of F S Hockaday crop up again. Known for his outstanding research into church records, Mr Hockaday lived on the edge of Lydney where he built a fire-proof room in which he safely kept the original records he was working on. He would make a great subject for a future talks. Any takers !?

Book Reviews – by Cheryl Mayo & Keith Walker



Childhood Memories of a Journey through the Soudley Valley by James A. Bevan

How much has changed, and how little! In this book, James Bevan of the Bevan Coaches family takes the reader – by bus of course – on a memorable journey from his maternal grandparents' village of Blakeney, up the Cinderford Road past Brains Green to his own village of Soudley, overlooking Ayleford and Two Bridges along the way, then on through Ruspidge and finally into his local town, Cinderford. James's memories span the early post war years to about 1960 and every stop is packed with James's own stories and those of his parents and grandparents of the families who lived in the houses and ran the shops, of the annual carnivals, of the churches and youth clubs and the ways in which people earned their livings in the first half of the twentieth century. Today, the 'bus wars' of the pre-war period are over, there are few shops, many of the churches and all the chapels have closed, and the days when a train brought the Soudley school teacher from Newnham are well past. But the places remain highly and delightfully recognisable. To anybody with any familiarity with the Soudley Valley, this book is a 'must read', but anyone knowing the Forest will feel instantly at home with it also. *C.M.*

The book will be launched on Saturday Feb 9th (12.00 noon -2.00pm) at the Dean Heritage Centre in Soudley where it will be on sale, with all profits going to Marie Curie. It is also available direct: Tel 01594 842859 or from James Bevan, Unit 1 Mead Lane Industrial Estate Lydney GL15 5DA.

Tradition, Reformation and Reaction in the Forest of Dean 1450-1603 by Joyce Moss

I have been reading about Thomas Cromwell's influence on King Henry VIII and the minutiae of political and religious change of the reformation which happened at the national level. What I did not learn is just what effect the reformation had on the ordinary men and women of the country. However, Forest of Dean residents need wait no longer to have that knowledge gap well and truly plugged. Joyce Moss has spent the last two years or so mining many primary and secondary sources, including ancient church court records and contemporary wills, to produce her fascinating book.

Tradition, Reformation
and Reaction
in the Forest of Dean,
1450-1603
Church and People
in the Forest Deanery



Joyce Moss

Working on a timeline through the changing religious flavour of the time, Joyce relates to us just how the convenient protestant reformation of Henry VIII then flip flopped back and forth to Catholicism through the subsequent reigns of Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. The willingness of the local Forest clergy and people to adopt to the religious whim of the current monarch is examined, and there are some surprising facts revealed along the way, highlighted by many detailed church court cases.

The book has also caused a stir in some circles by challenging the notion that William Tyndale (born Hutchins), translator of the New Testament into English, was born on the western side of the Severn, probably in the Lydney area, rather than the eastern side. Is the removal of the Tyndale Monument at North Nibley imminent? – Perhaps not!

To conclude, this is an extremely well researched and important book which will surely become regarded as an invaluable resource in the years to come. *K.W.*

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