

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
May 2023

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In this edition

- President's Award for Ian Standing
- 'Early Forest Newspapers' Part 2
- Forest Stone
- Passive Resistance in the Dean

May 2023

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Editors Notes

Apologies for the slightly fuzzy photograph on the front cover, but it did seem to capture the moment as Vice President Ian Standing received his 'President's Award', appropriately enough from our President, Jan Royall. More about this on the opposite page from John Lane.

Elsewhere in the centre pages of this edition, is the second and final part of 'Early Forest Newspapers' by Tom Bright. The article was written in 1974 to celebrate 100 years of our local Forest newspapers and the Bright family connection with them. Tom was a previous President of the Society and is thus, coincidentally, the second President to get a mention in this column!

For those of you who might be interested in learning some of the history resources I regularly use, perhaps to start your own research, please see the back cover of this edition. Of course every historian has their own favourite resources, so anyone who thinks they can usefully add to the list shown on the back cover, then please get in touch!

Next a date for your diary. Thursday 8th June to be exact, when Warren James Day is being celebrated at the Fountain Inn at Parkend. Further details for this are on page 5 (DHC News Update).

On the same page Nicola Wynn has issued an invitation to get involved with a really worthwhile and important project, working towards a forthcoming healthcare and hospitals exhibition at the DHC. This is an opportunity to properly record the histories of our Lydney and Dilke hospitals before they are reduced to dust, and is an ideal opportunity for newcomers to local history research to 'cut their teeth' working on an important project as part of a team.

I largely rely on 'volunteers' to produce the necessary copy for the 'Meetings in Review' section of the newsletter. Stepping forward this time around to provide some excellent reviews were Chris Sullivan and Ian Gower. Thank you both! If you would like to have a go at writing a review of a meeting, please get in touch.

Finally, my thanks once again to Cecile Hunt for her continuing series of interesting articles. This time Cecile discourses on 'Forest Stone'.

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



At our recent Indoor Meeting we were graced with two VIMs (Very Important Members); our President, Baroness Jan Royall and Ian Standing who recently 'retired' as Editor of our prestigious New Regard.

The synchronicity was no accident, Jan found time in her very busy schedule to attend the meeting to present Ian with the, recently re-introduced, President's Award for his outstanding and exceptionally long service to the Society, not only as Editor but also as a past secretary, chairman and most other offices within the Society!

The presentation piece was a handcrafted by David Harris, a leather bound book of the 1608 map of the Forest of Dean, which Ian gratefully received with some embarrassment (see the photograph on the front cover).

Ian is a Verderer, an unusual and rather rare 'occupation', which set me thinking about other obscure or lost professions. Not all of these may have been undertaken in the Forest but, equally, they may well have done.....

Ackerman – A Plowman or Oxherder – From Old English or German meaning ploughed field

Arkwright – A carpenter specialising in wooden chests

Egglar – A seller of eggs – obviously!

Hayward – Someone responsible for fences and hedges

Puddler – A worker in wrought iron

Roper – A maker of ropes and nets

Whitesmith – A worker in tin

A cursory look through occupations listed in various censuses reveals many other long since vanished jobs. Also looking at this list, it is not difficult to understand where many surnames originate, I'm not sure I know a Mr Egglar or a Mrs Puddler though!

Although we have now finished our indoor meetings for the summer, there are plenty of events to keep the avid local historian interested:

On Wednesday 17 May, our neighbours, the Chepstow Society, kick off their History Festival which goes through until Sunday 21 May. On the Saturday (20th), between 11.00am and 4.00pm, the Forest of Dean Local History Society will have a stand at the Drill Hall in Chepstow, so why not come along and say hello and learn about Chepstow's rich history?

Gloucester's Spring Weekend History Festival has come and gone but details of the Autumn Festival have already been released. Running from the 2 to 17 September, it will include the extremely popular Heritage Open Days, exhibitions, City and Docks tours and talks. The festival is one of the most successful in the Country, often opening up more buildings, venues and locations than other cities or towns.

Turning to Society matters, our Vice-Chair (and Verderer), Sue Middleton, has been working hard to organise a History Competition which is open to Forest of Dean Primary School pupils at Key Stage 2. The Competition will be administered by the History Society, with prizes funded by the Dr John Jurica legacy of £1000 which was awarded to the Society by the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Association in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Local History Association. There is sufficient funding for the Competition to be run annually for five years. We are looking to encourage the younger generations of Foresters to take an active interest in their local history, so if you have any children/grandchildren at primary school in the Forest, why not encourage them to participate?

Whatever you choose to do over the Summer, I wish you well and look forward to seeing you again, perhaps on one of our 'outdoor' visits or back at Bream in the Autumn.



A puddler at work

John Lane



MEMBERSHIP

As I write this, I have just returned from our last Indoor meeting before the Summer break, and I hope the warmer weather will now allow us all to enjoy more time outside at our summer events and walks.

New members have increased steadily in number since the last newsletter, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Malcolm and Audrey Johnson, Peter Thomas, Felicity Greenman, David and Susan Preece, Anthony Burton, Charles Kyte, Nicola Bale, Maggie Williams, Joanna George, Melanie Getgood, Linda Freakley, Tricia Pillay and Steve Davies. We hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to seeing you at forthcoming events.

Please let me know if you change your postal or email address, especially important so I can send out timely reminders for Society events, or other information which becomes available after the newsletter has been published, and of events from other organisations that I think will interest you, such as from Heritage Hub, GLHA and 'Our Forest'.

Also, if you haven't been receiving my reminder emails a few days before each Society meeting, it is possible I have an incorrect or outdated email address for you, so please let me know so I can update the database.

Ian Gower (membership@forestofdean.history.org.uk)

The latest newsletter from Gloucestershire Heritage Hub is available to read at;

heritage-hub.gloucestershire.gov.uk/april-2023



In the newsletter John Putley describes the 'Document of the Month' which this time is the inventory of John Pierce of Newnham, made in February 1732, (GDR/INV/1732/118). Pierce was the master and owner of the Severn trow *New Newnham* and drowned along with 18 passengers when she was wrecked at Awre in 1731.

The inventory lists his clothes ('wearing apparel'), money in his purse, four feather beds and bedsteads, four rugs, three pairs of blankets, twelve pairs of sheets, three tablecloths, one silver tankard, two silver spoons, three gold rings, tables, a chest, his brass & pewter (sadly not itemised), three fire grates and four spits, three pairs of hand-irons, two fire slices (coal shovels), two pairs of tongs and a jack (probably a thick hide glove), a clock, one small boat, two dozen chairs (chains), two bellows and lastly 'goods forgotten' and debts due. All this was estimated to be worth £175 5s – around £20,650 today.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Sunday 21st May 2pm

**A Guided Walk Around
Goodrich Castle with
Dr Rob Jones**

SOLD OUT

Saturday 2nd September 3pm
West Dean Centre, Bream

**Dr Simon Draper explores
'Place Names in the
Gloucestershire Landscape**

Friday 22nd September 7pm
ZOOM MEETING

**Dr Rose Hewlett talks about
'The Sea Walls of the Severn'**

Dean Archaeological Group exhibition until 13th July

This exhibition looks at the work they do, explaining archaeology and the excavations they have carried out over the last few years.

Charcoal Burn 27th - 29th May

The Dean Heritage Centre is one of only a few places in the country to make charcoal using the traditional turf and earth method. Visitors can see and smell the burn! Listen to experts explain the process.

May Half term 27th May - 4th June and Summer holidays

Forest themed craft activities for families. We have a new playground, great for grandchildren.

Guided walks with Alex Knight

Sunday 23rd July: Discover Summer Dene and Saturday 9th September: Discover Late Summer Dene

Join Alex for a walk in the woods to learn about the history, plants and wildlife of this stunning land betwixt two rivers.

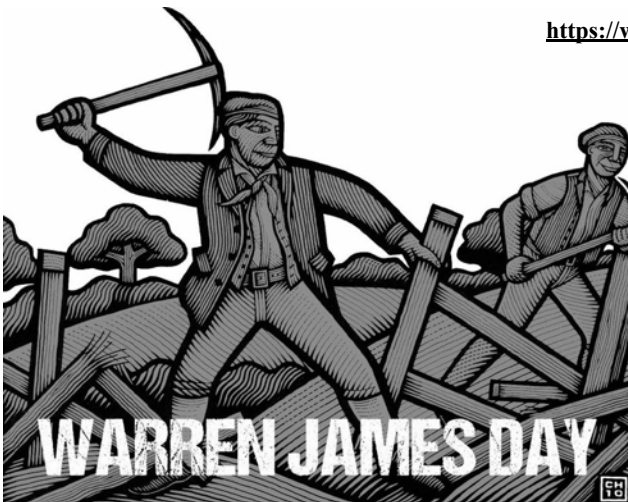
Backstage in the Gage

7th June, 5th July, 2nd August, 6th September, 4th October at 2pm

Get closer to history with an in depth look at an object from our archive. Collections staff will give a 5-10 minute talk on an object and answer questions.

Please see more information on our website

<https://www.deanheritagecentre.com/whats-on>



Thursday 8 June 2023

The Fountain, Parkend GL15 4JD

A day to remember the 1831 uprising against enclosures and for public use of our Forest.

Guided walks from 3.30pm

Talks, poetry, music and displays from 6.30pm

Hospital help

With the NHS in the news and the new hospital opening in Cinderford in 2024, we think it would be a good time to create a healthcare & hospital exhibition for next year. There is information and objects in our collection and information out there. We would like a couple of volunteers to help with research and collating the exhibition. A great opportunity to engage in local research and with the community.

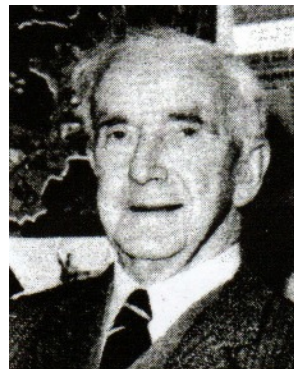
Please contact Collections Officer Nicola Wynn for more details:

nicola@deanheritagecentre.com

Early Forest Newspapers - Part 2 by Tom Bright

This is the final part of the two part series of articles, written by Tom Bright in 1974 to celebrate 100 years of our local Forest newspapers and the Bright family connection with them. Tom was a former President of the Local History Society. He died in 1984. You can read more about this in New Regard Vol 37 'Pressing the Advantage through a Bright idea'.

In 1929 the partnership was converted into a limited company, The Forest of Dean Newspapers Ltd. Father and Mr Grimwade remained directors but participated less actively in the work of the firm, though Mr Grimwade, who did good work as a member of both Cheltenham Borough and Gloucestershire County Councils, was secretary and Father was responsible for the accounts. The other two directors were Mr H G Perry, formerly editor of the Times of India, who became editor, and my brother Harold, who had worked in the business ever since he left school in 1918. Mr Perry was soon succeeded as editor by Mr J H Rider, but he resigned in 1936 when my brother became editor.



Tom Bright

Like all local newspapers we were badly hit by the second world war. It naturally resulted in staff shortages while the need for restricting imports caused a limitation of the size and number of pages in our papers, and of our circulation and the restrictions continued for some time after the end of the war.

I joined the firm in 1945 after over 30 years in the Civil Service, on the outdoor staff of what is now the Ministry of Health and Social Security. I had become a director shortly after father's death in 1938, but naturally until I returned to Coleford had not been able to take an active part in the firm's affairs. My mother became Chairman of the Board after father's death and held that position until her death in 1956. Mr Grimwade died in 1947, and for some time after his death the Deputy Clerk of Cheltenham Borough Council, Mr Board, who had been a close friend, was a director so that he could watch over the Grimwade family interest. In 1955, however, the Grimwade interest was bought out, mostly by the Bright family. And two new directors were appointed, Mr Vernon Jones, who started with us as a junior reporter in 1928, and Dr Cyril Hart.

Since the war we have entirely re-equipped both our Cinderford office and the *Guardian* office at Coleford with new machinery. Intertype machines replace the former linotypes, but the biggest change has been in the machine that prints the papers. We used to have a machine, the old "Thunderer", which was bought in 1912 for £80. It printed from flat paper, was wasteful of manpower, did not incorporate a folder, had become very much worn and we had to run it at a speed greater than it was really designed for. In 1944 we ordered our present Cossar machine, which prints from continuous reels. Because of wartime restrictions on manufacture, we had to wait for it until January 1950, and then sold the Thunderer for £200 to a newspaper firm which wanted it as a standby in case their own machine broke down. Among other machines we purchased was one which enabled us to convert photographs into blocks which we could use for the papers instead of getting other firms to do them.

Once the wartime restrictions had been withdrawn, we experienced a considerable increase both in advertisements, which are what makes papers pay, and also in the number of events which had to be reported. The result has been an increase in the number of pages for most weeks. When we ordered the Cossar in 1944, we thought from past experience that we should rarely need to print more than 8 pages per week, and the machine we ordered was one that would print 8 but had an extension which enabled us to add a further 2 or 4 pages if we required them. Nowadays, however, it is rare for any week's edition to be less than 12 pages.

In 1967 the Newent Business and Professional Men's Association, because the Ledbury Reporter, which had previously covered Newent had ceased publication, asked us if we would step into the breach, with the result that from October 1967 we have published a Newent edition of the Mercury which cover the Newent Rural District.

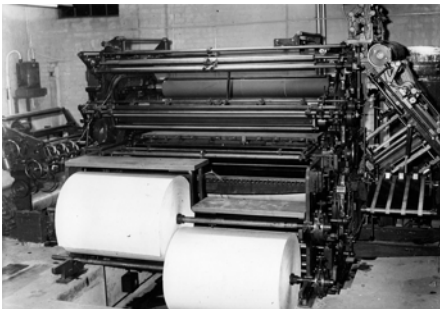
The popularity of our papers is shown by the fact that circulation has grown from under 7,000 at the beginning of the last war to 15,000. In addition to my brother and myself two other members of the family work in the business, my brother's daughter, Mrs Payne, is his secretary and has greatly developed the stationary side of the business. His son, John, who received training at the London School of Printing, is now in charge of commercial printing which for several years now we have concentrated at Coleford. Both have been made directors this year, as has also my brother's wife.

The modern tendency is for small weekly papers to be taken over by large combines and we have had several offers. The most interesting of these came in the late 1950s from an Indian, Gurbaksh Singh Salariya. He had been a student at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester and had become friendly with a Forester, Gordon Wilce, whose sister he married. He settled in the district and after 1956 started absorbing business all over the Forest. Rumour had it that he had immense wealth in India, but I had my doubts as I was certain that there would be considerable restrictions on the export of capital from India. Consequently, I had a search made in the Companies register and the Register of Business Names to get particulars of all the businesses he was alleged to have taken over. I found that most of the companies, either those taken over or those started by Salariya, were small and those which had been in being for several years were very much behind in rendering annual returns, which is usually a sign that they are not very prosperous.

Two of the businesses taken over were printers, one in Painswick and one in Cinderford and he proceeded, not very efficiently, to put the screw on us by making every effort to get printing contracts which would normally come to us. And by issuing weekly free small papers. "What's on in Lydney" and "What's on in Cinderford", both subsequently rechristened *The Deanside Clarion*. Actually, the way he got his money was by borrowing money from the Gloucester branch of the Lombard Bank on the security of immense herds of pigs, mostly non-existent, with the connivance of the manager, Mr Beckingham. Eventually of course, the crash came. Salariya managed to get away to India, but eventually he returned and both he and Beckingham received prison sentences. Several of the more recent firms started by Salariya bore names starting with the first 3 letters of his surname. Just after the crash I was motoring down Barton Street, Gloucester when I noticed some shops bearing names like SAL Electric and SAL Tailoring. Next to them were the premises of the Salvation Army.

Besides the ordinary printing staff, we have 3 reporters, if we count Mr Jones who is a director as well as a reporter. Two of them are stationed at Cinderford and one at our Lydney office, where there is also a woman employee who receives any news or advertisements handed in and sees that they are transmitted to Cinderford. The Coleford staff similarly attend to the transmission of news etc from Coleford. The *Mercury* office staff attend to their recording and sub-editing, obtain advertisements by telephone, or visit and help to read proofs.

We have several part-time local representatives who send us news from their own areas, and this is supplemented by news received from representatives of religious, social and sporting organisations, including the WI.



The Cossar Press which was installed in the Cinderford office in 1950

Since 1945 there have been various alterations to premises. Shortly after the war ended, we added a wing to the Guardian works at Coleford, and since then have purchased the two adjacent houses to the shop there, which has enabled us to increase and improve our stationary and fancy goods department.

The latest change has been at the Mercury office. Our newsprint comes from Canada and the importing firm are now supplying us with bigger reels and are also increasing the minimum weight they are delivering at any one time. This necessitated some adjustments to the Cossar printing machine and more space for storing reels. As a result, I've had to move to a new office in a wing that the Planning Department has permitted us to add to the old building.

Forest Stone *by Cecile Hunt*



*Miner's Memorial
New Fancy*

Located at New Fancy View Point there is the Society's Miners Memorial 'Roll of Honour' sculpture erected to memory of victims of historic fatal accidents in Forest of Dean iron mines, coal mines and quarries. It was erected in 2003 – twenty years ago! The memorial, four leather bound volumes and a DVD's were made possible by a £11,737 grant obtained from the Local Heritage Initiative; a partnership made up of Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency.

The leather bound 'Roll of Honour' volumes, giving details of the mining fatalities and a list of Freeminers were presented to Gloucestershire Library Service; a copy to be lodged at each of the four Forest local libraries. The DVD contains data and info relating to the accidents and where they happened, ideal for research purposes.

Forest quarries do not have as much written about them as the area's iron and coal mining; they get forgotten about but have contributed considerably to the Forest's history for centuries – Forest stone is constantly visible but not seen. The quarried sandstones come in grey, blue and red. It was, and is, used for building, paving and grinding. Grindstones (millstones) were produced in the Forest from before the mid-13th century. Some came from above Blakeney in

the south-east of the Forest. In the mid 1430s grindstones were being produced at Bixhead.. Over time quarrying and producing of millstones came and went in various locations in the Forest. Grindstones from Bixhead were sent to Bristol for sale. Quarries near to the river Wye shipped grindstones down the river to Bridgwater, Somerset, during the 16th century.

Quarrying of Forest limestone took place in many places around the statutory Forest. In 1787 21 limekilns were active in the Forest, A kiln in Drybrook was still in use in 1942. Lime was burnt to produce lime used for glass production, paper manufacturing, agricultural practices, chemical processes, plaster mortar and other building materials. It did not lend itself to transportation very well and was usually produced near to where it was to be used. Used by ironworks to produce purer metal it is probable each iron workings had their own kiln. At English Bicknor the Lime Kilns of Rosemary Topping were restored in 2002. More details can be found on the Lime Kilns Heritage Trail web page: (englishbicknor.org.uk/index.php/the-lime-kilns-heritage-trail).

By 1787 there were recorded in the Forest 19 kilns (limestone) and at least 43 quarries. Main of them were located near Blakeney, Parkend and at Worcester Walk. The building of tramroads to Bullo Pill and Lydney in early 19th century was beneficial to the stone industry, new quarries were opened. In 1851 there were 295 Foresters employed in the quarrying industry, by 1871 this number had increased to 340.

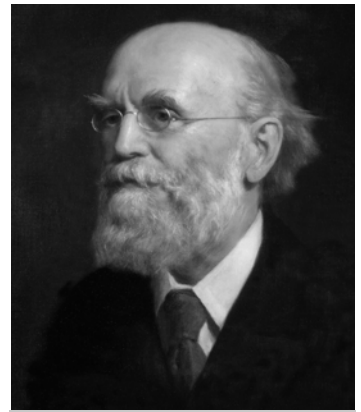
Quarried stone was exported out of the Forest. An E R Payne had a stoneworks at Point quarry on Fetter Hill in 1870 and sent stone via Lydney harbour to Birkenhead, Cardiff and Newport docks. Forest stone was used in the building of a new shipping docks in 1883 by the Marquess of Bute. It was, at the time, the largest dock in the world: 80 feet wide x 600 feet long and 30 feet deep. Forest stone was used as the vertical stones of the sides of the dock. The now disused Gloucester & Hereford canal was used to transport Forest stone to Herefordshire for the building of Eastnor Castle.

You never know when you will come across Forest stone; look for it as curbs, paving's, and in the fabric of houses, churches & industrial structures many miles away from the Forest of Dean.

Passive Resistance in the Dean

In the UK, the early years of the twentieth century saw a 'holy row' unfold about the funding of elementary education. The Education Act of 1902 (known as the Balfour Act) provided the stimulus for acts of 'passive resistance' throughout the land, and the Forest of Dean was not excluded from the fall out of the passing of the Act.

The 1902 Act was promoted by the Conservative government and was supported by the Church of England, but strongly opposed by the Liberal Party and many non-conformists. The Act provided financing for Church schools from local ratepayers, in return the schools had to meet certain standards. It had the effect of reducing the divide between voluntary schools (largely C of E administered) and schools administered by elected school boards.



Dr John Clifford

The non-conformist opposition was led by Rev John Clifford, the Baptist pastor of Westbourne Park Church in London, who shared an abiding belief with many that "We seek the total separation of churches from all state education. The functions of Church & State must be kept apart". More explicitly the non-conformists believed that through the 'rates', they were being obliged to support the upkeep of sectarian Anglican & Catholic Schools. Rev Clifford formed the National Passive Resistance Group, which hoped to resist the 1902 Act by encouraging non-conformists to stop paying their rates until it was repealed.

As late as 1909, Dr Clifford was still leading the resistance, and on 1st July 1909 he spoke to the Coleford & District Passive Resistance League in the Baptist Chapel, where he was joined by many non-conformist ministers of the Dean and a large audience.

The Ross Gazette of 26th November 1903 reported that "*The Education Act has called out a good company of Passive Resisters in the small market town of Coleford and neighbourhood. More than 55 belong to the Forest of Dean Passive resistance league. The education rate, being refused by 21 persons in the town, was paid anonymously. The men in the adjoining parish of West Dean had their goods seized for their balance, and a public demonstration was held in the Coleford British Schoolroom, Mr JJ Joynes presiding. A resolution of protest was moved by the Rev EG Everett of Stroud seconded by Rev Basil Martin of Hereford and carried. The goods taken from 31 West Dean passive resisters were sold by the assistant overseer. He put the whole lot at a price reckoned to cover the whole of the rate and expenses, and Mr BN Taylor who was deputed to purchase all for the men, offered the necessary sum, and the sale was quickly closed. Nearly all the Forest Free Church ministers are enthusiastic passive resisters, and the movement is strong and growing.*"

The Gloucester Citizen of 16th July 1904 reported that a sale of goods belonging to Dean Forest 'passive resisters' took place at Cinderford. There were nine 'vendors', most of whom were members of Cinderford Baptist Church. The auctioneer was Mr AE Dykins, who, after explaining that he was not a 'passive resister', but sympathised with his fellow non-conformists, stated that the amount required was £4 12s 6d. The Rev WW Wilks, Baptist Minister, purchased the whole of the goods in one lot.

As late as October 1908 the local press was reporting court action against 'passive resisters' who would not pay rates or at least the portion of the rates appertaining to education. 26 objectors were dealt with, orders for payments and costs were made in every case.

Eventually, under the Butler Education Act of 1948, the Anglican schools were largely brought under the control of Local Education Authorities. In the intervening period nearly all of the non-conformist schools had been closed.

Meetings in Review *With Chris Sullivan, Keith Walker, and Ian Gower*

At our February meeting, Averil Kear spoke to an attentive capacity crowd about the origins and development of the Lydney and Cinderford hospitals.

Mary Elizabeth Bathurst, mother of the 1st Viscount Bledisloe, raised funds to open the Lydney and Aylburton Cottage Hospital in 1883. Although £1200 had been raised for the hospital, it was soon clear that demand for more beds and better facilities required a bigger replacement. Again, there were big donations from local employers, including Richard Thomas and Charles Bathurst, and smaller donations and fund-raising. The Lydney and District Hospital opened in 1908. While patients were means-tested, donations and subscriptions provided the main funds. Miners, through their Agent Rowlinson, and tinplate workers, were major supporters. The Red Cross took over the Hospital and Lydney Town Hall for 3000 British and Belgian wounded through the 1st World War. Higher post-war taxation dampened philanthropy, and subscriptions increased to 4d/week. Nevertheless, new equipment continued to arrive. It was not until 1937 that the Bertha Bledisloe Maternity Wing was added; she was the Mrs Bathurst running the wartime Town Hall. She died during the General Strike. In the 2nd World War, extensive voluntary work raised thousands of pounds. The Hospital was taken over by the NHS in July 1948. In 1963, fund-raising added the Bledisloe Memorial physiotherapy wing.

Sir Charles Dilke was Liberal MP for the Forest until his death in 1911. A hospital was seen as a suitable memorial for him. The bulk of the funds came from local worthies, with miners and general subscriptions adding significant amounts. War delayed matters and added to building costs, so the initial plans were scaled back to a single-storey building, started on 29 June 1919. The much-loved Dr Bangara pressed for X-ray facilities and managed their installation and use until his death. Again, the Hospital transferred to the NHS in July 1948. Its last hospital beds for birth of potential Freemaners closed in 1948. Despite promises in 2004 and 2010, 2020 saw ‘consultation’ on the proposal for one, much smaller, Forest Hospital to open in 2024. The reaction of Averil’s audience said a lot.

After the tea-break, Dr Steve Blake, Chair of the Gloucestershire Local History Association, outlined the origins of the Association and our own Society. GLHA was relaunched as a self-funding Association of local history societies in 2011, after funding was cut to the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council. Members of a contributory Society can attend its events. Steve enthusiastically outlined its role in Local History Days (2017 - we won ‘Best Display’), afternoon visits between Societies (we host again in 2024) and the research resources on its website. **C.S.**

On Saturday 11th March Dr Naylor Firth presented a witty and interesting talk titled ‘The History of Severn Ferries.’

In earlier times, the combination of small boats and swift tides made crossing the Severn estuary a hazardous exercise. In 1734 Daniel Defoe refused to make the passage, calling it ‘*an ugly, dangerous, and very inconvenient ferry*’. The historic rival crossings, Old Passage (Aust – Beachley), and New Passage (Chestle Pill, near Pilning – Portskewett) came into focus. The fortunes of both passages shifted like the tides. In 1825, separately, the Old Passage and New Passage Associations were formed to raise money and try to improve matters. The first steam powered packet (the ‘Worcester’) was built for the Old Passage in 1827, and by 1838 there was a regular hourly service between Aust and Beachley. The New Passage was back in the ascendancy after the coming of the railways led to the opening of new piers at Chestle Pill and Sudbrook to take rail passengers to newly built boats, the ‘Gem’, the ‘President’, and the ‘Christopher Thomas’. The opening of the Severn Railway Tunnel in 1886 caused the ending of the ferry services. However, in 1926 Enoch Williams re-established the Old Passage route to accommodate the burgeoning demand for a crossing for motor vehicles. Specifically designed boats with integral turntables were introduced, namely, ‘Severn Queen’ in 1934, ‘Severn King’ in 1935, and ‘Severn Princess’ in 1959. The building of the Severn Bridge led to the winding up of the ferry company in 1967. In later years the ‘Severn Princess’ was rescued from Ireland and brought back to Chepstow to undergo restoration.

After the tea break, Cecile Hunt gave a 20-minute talk on local almshouses.

K.W.



William Marshall's effigy Photo by Michel Wal (CC BY-SA 3.0)

The first Zoom talk of the year was given on Friday 31st March by Dr Rob Jones. Rob's passion certainly shone through as he seamlessly told the tale of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. William's introduction to the world of courtly politics came when aged five he was given as a hostage to Stephen by his father John, in a baronial tussle during 'the conflict formerly known as The Anarchy'. Later he was sent to Normandy to serve in the household of a cousin (de Tankerville), where he would have learnt the art of jousting, and taken part in violent tournaments.

In 1168 he joined the retinue of his uncle, Patrick, Earl of Salisbury, and travelled to France with him. Patrick was killed during an ambush in Poiteau, and William was injured and captured. He was rescued through the actions of Queen Eleanor and subsequently William gave his unswerving loyalty to the House of Anjou, through the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John, and Henry III. Along the way he rose from being a landless knight to one of the most powerful barons of the realm and regent for the King. In 1190 he became High Sheriff of Gloucestershire, and in 1194 Warden of the Forest of Dean and Constable of St Briavels. William had gained control of the Forest, including the mineral rights, and he took the opportunity to make a lot of money.

His finest hour came when he was made Regent of England and protector of the young Henry III. Opposition to Henry emerged and William won his last battle in support of him at Lincoln when aged 69. He died in May 1219 and was buried as a Knights Templar in the Temple Church, London. Truly an extraordinary life, well lived, and brilliantly described by Rob Jones. **K.W.**

On Saturday 15th April, a packed West Dean Centre started proceedings with a presentation of the "Presidents Award" by Baroness Jan Royall to Ian Standing, in recognition of his outstanding service to the History Society for over forty years. Ian has held most committee posts, including Chairman, and for the last eight years, editor of the New Regard. He was presented with a copy of the 1608 map of the Forest of Dean on which he had painstakingly worked.

John Lane then guided us through parts of the history of ancient Gloucester on a 'virtual walk', describing the environs within the original Roman city, which was founded near the lowest crossing point of the river Severn with a fortress at Kingsholm in around 50 AD, before a new fortress was built in around 60AD at the current centre, bounded by walls and four main 'Gates' – Southgate, Eastgate, Northgate and Westgate, connected by their aptly named Streets.

We heard tales of warfare, including the Siege of Gloucester in 1643 from which the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty allegedly originated, and of less violent events such as when King Edward 1st visited, and when confronted by particularly bad weather decided never to return (captured in the rhyme of Dr Foster).

We heard stories from many of the currently surviving buildings, including St Mary de Crypt, Greyfriars and Blackfriars monasteries, Robert Raikes' House, St Michael's tower and many more, and some sadly not surviving, such as Gloucester High Cross, St. Michael's Church, and the Bell Hotel. We learnt of commemorative mosaics on the walkways as well as celebratory structures at ground level and above, celebrating industries such as drapers, tailors, pin makers, bell foundries and horology, through to today's aircraft industry.

All the buildings and streets described in John's talk can be found on the Website 'Know Your Place' www.kypwest.org.uk, through a series of maps and entities from the 1700s up to today. After the break a demonstration was given to the group on the functionality of this website, showing how to access not only these maps, but also a wealth of information about historic railways, tramroads, canals, Roman roads and walls, and old photographs and lithographs of ancient buildings and scenes. Further information on ways to conduct your own research can be found on the back page. **I.G.**



Starting Your Own Local History Research *by Keith Walker*

At a recent History Society Meeting I gave a 20-minute presentation on 'Writing for the Newsletter'. As part of the presentation, I gave a few suggestions of resources that I regularly use which might be of interest to help in research, and I agreed at the meeting to share this information in the newsletter. The best place to start is Chris Sullivan's excellent '**Research Guide**' which is now available on our website: www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/learn-about-the-forest/researching-local-history/

The **Victoria County History** series is a fantastic source of information. The Gloucestershire Volumes V & X are relevant to the Forest and surrounding areas. Until recently the Volumes were only available in expensive book form, but now you can access them for free online:

www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol5 www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol10

The **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** has been in existence since 1876, and they have published their annual journal 'The Transactions' for a similar length of time. You can access all the years from Volume 1 up to 2015 online at:

www.bgas.org.uk/resources/bgas-resources/search-past-transactions



Our Society has published an annual journal '**The New Regard**' over a 37-year period. A searchable index is available at:

www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/assets/PDF/New-Regard-Index-2022-vols-1-37.pdf

Old maps can be a really good source of information and the **National Library of Scotland** offers access to a superb range of Ordnance Survey and other maps which can be accessed online at: <https://maps.nls.uk/>

We are lucky in Gloucestershire that **Geoff Gwatkin** has produced beautifully transcribed tithe maps for our locality. These maps predate the Ordnance Survey maps and come with a landowners list which can also be useful for research. Purchase them via Geoff's website: <https://geoffgwatkinmaps.co.uk/>

Another good local source of information is **Geoff Davis's** curated web site which focuses mainly on historic photographs of the Forest area. Check it out at <https://www.sungreen.co.uk/>

The Vision of Britain resource brings together historical surveys of Britain, using maps, statistics, census reports and travel writing to create a record of how towns and villages have changed over time. Access it here: <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>

The Connected Histories project brings together a range of digital resources related to early modern and nineteenth century Britain with a single federated search that allows sophisticated searching of names, places, and dates. Try it for yourself here: <https://www.connectedhistories.org/>

Of particular interest if you want to research your family history, or aspects of social history, is the **Find My Past** web site. It also offers access to the useful and interesting 'Collection of historic British Newspapers'. This is a pay to use resource which can be found at <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Of course, we cannot overlook the more traditional primary sources of information, including **Gloucester Archives**. To see if they hold material relevant to your research before you plan a visit to the Archives, search the catalogue at <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/researching/online-catalogue/>

Finally, the **Cinderford Local & Family History Centre** at Cinderford Library offers local books, maps, and directories. In particular the set of Dean Forest Mercury newspapers dated 1881 to 2007 is available to view via microfiche reader. Contact Cinderford Library via telephone (01594 822581) if you intend to use the microfiche reader.