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- "The Hole in the Wire Gang
- The Legendary Minnie Wynn
- Miners Memorial & Photos For A New Century Record Sets Republished

News

May 2024

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Editors Notes

You may recall that I like to have a cover photograph which relates in some way to the contents of the newsletter. This time around we have a striking picture taken by Ron Beard of Rich Daniels standing outside the entrance to Hopewell Colliery. Rich is a well known freeminer, Forest Verderer and a regular tour guide at Hopewell Colliery. Our Chair, John Lane, mentions recently being guided around Hopewell by Rich, so that is the first connection. The same image of Rich at Hopewell is also included in the newly released third edition of the Photos For A New Century record set. Read more about this on the back cover. You can also join John Lane in July for a walk around Gloucester Docks, please see the 'News' section for details.

I am very happy to welcome a new contributor to the newsletter, namely Owen McClauglin. Owen is currently Secretary to the Society and he has provided a really interesting piece about the nefarious activities of a few German prisoners of war who were held at Broadwell POW camp after the war ended in 1945. Read what they got up to in the centre pages. Interestingly, the archaeological remains of Broadwell POW camp were explored as part of the recent Foresters' Forest project. You can see a short video which includes a description of what was found at Broadwell here: <https://youtu.be/yXbQy0OTuw0>

It is always good to get a response to requests for help, and we certainly got that in asking about Minnie Wynn in our last newsletter. Thanks to Paul Mason, Eric Nichols and Averil Kear we have more information to present to you about the remarkable Minnie.

John Belcher's article in the last newsletter about Milo of Gloucester prompted Angie Jenkins to get in touch and provide some interesting information about the maternal side of her family, namely the Wynniatts of Dymock, who lived for some time in the Old Grange there. Read more on page five.

Last, but certainly not least, many congratulations to our Treasurer, Chris Sullivan. Chris has recently been elected to fellowship of the Society of Antiquarians of London. 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

Our Society continues to go from strength to strength, with the numbers attending our meetings at the West Dean Centre, gradually increasing, month on month with the average attendance being around 60. This is extremely encouraging and is some reward for hard work put into arranging and staging the meetings.

Almost unbelievably, we are, once again, fast approaching our Annual General Meeting when we must elect/re-elect the Committee.



One of the key positions on the Committee is that of Treasurer and Chris Sullivan, who has been ably filling the post for several years, has announced his desire to step down. This is therefore a rallying call for a volunteer!!

The 'job' is not onerous but requires someone who is familiar with Microsoft Excel and has a head for 'numbers'. I am sure there are any number of our members who fit into that category and I would like to invite them to have a chat with either me or Chris to learn how you can become a vital part of the Committee.

We have, as usual, a full programme of meetings and visits planned for the Summer (when it eventually arrives), including a self-drive trip to Raglan Castle, when Dr Rob Jones will give us the benefit of his encyclopedic knowledge on castles. The 30th June will see your Society host the Gloucestershire Local History Association to Coleford for an afternoon of talks and walks around the town. In July, I will be leading a walk around Gloucester Docks – details appear elsewhere in this edition.

I recently came across an article on Chapels; the most significant thing for me was the assertion that chapels are "widely dispersed (across England) but most prevalent in poorer mining and industrial areas" – which goes a long way to explain the large number of chapels in the Forest of Dean. Many have long ceased to function for their intended purpose, but, thankfully, have been preserved by conversion to domestic use.

On his 'Visit to the Forest of Dean' in around 1832, Reverend John Horlick noted that religion had taken a hold in nonconformist chapels and Chapel religion had become more popular and widely respected to the point that it was on an equal footing with the Anglican Church. Those with graveyards attached might be problematic but turning a redundant chapel into living accommodation was once high on my wish list. (Age and wisdom have taken over since then!)

I recently had one of my (just teenage) grandsons stay with me for a few days. I think his parents were keen to get him away from his computer screen so 'Grampy' was charged with entertaining him for a day or two. Hopewell Colliery, being very close to me, seemed like a perfect way to spend a couple of hours whilst 'educating' said grandson about local history.

I think it fair to say that I enjoyed it more than he, until we got to the café that is, when his eyes lit up! I would highly recommend a trip to Hopewell, it gives a fascinating insight to the mining of coal locally. We were lucky enough to have Rich Daniels as our guide and his knowledge of mining and his sardonic delivery made for a hugely entertaining and enlightening visit.

I look forward to a flood of interest for the Treasurers role!

John Lane



MEMBERSHIP

As I write this, I am about to attend 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 since the beginning of the year, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Julian and Melanie Bastin, Susan

Johnson, Lynda and David Spears, Cherry Phillips, S C Rutherford, A Schafer-Rutherford, Charles and James Wynn-Evans, Valerie Smith, Helen Shaw, Miranda Palmer and Siboney Palmer-Jones. 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, and GLHA.

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@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

WARREN JAMES DAY

Saturday 8th June 2'30 - 4'30pm

St Pauls Church, Parkend

The story of the 1831 rebellion against enclosures in film, drama and music and told in the place the main figures worshipped.

With the Found in the Forest Youth Theatre

Donations and tea, coffee and cakes - cash only



AN AMBLE AROUND ENGLAND'S MOST INLAND PORT

Join John Lane for a gentle stroll around Gloucester Docks on Saturday 20th July 2'00pm

Meet outside the North Warehouse (opposite former prison)

The walk will take approx. 1.5 to 2 hours. It is a level walk but stout shoes are recommended due to cobble stones etc

A maximum of 15 people, names to John Lane via email: Lanerlane69@gmail.com



CHRIS SULLIVAN - Fellow of SocAnt

Treasurer Chris Sullivan has been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians of London (SocAnt), the old Learned Society which shares a building with Piccadilly's Royal Academy. Chris's path to Fellowship took him from a science degree, to Whitehall, then local history in retirement, and then archaeology, starting at Lydney Park's Roman Temple. New Regard 36 has an article by Chris on that site.

SocAnt started in 1707, as a grouping of leisured men aware of old things being turned up on land around them. It has now widened dramatically in terms of subject cover and professional rigour, and gender equality. Fellows Chris has met are professional or academic archaeologists, historians, and museum curators. SocAnt's subscriptions make our Society look the real bargain it is, but SocAnt offers great online and on-site research facilities. After Election in January, Chris went up for formal Admission at the 4th April meeting. The picture shows President Professor Millett and Chris before an audience of Fellows.



SocAnt's splendid Library subscribes to our New Regard. Before the April meeting, Chris went in to check references, over 300 years old, to the only non-Lydney record of Lydney Temple's god Nodens. New Regard 36 was prominent in the Library display of history and archaeology journals.

'Get your research started, and follow things that interest you', says Chris.

THE WYNNIATTS OF DYMOCK *an update from Angie Jenkins*

Following on from John Belcher's article in the February edition of the Newsletter, in which he tells us that Milo's son, Earl Roger of Hereford, founded Flaxley Abbey in memory of his father, I can add elements of my own family history to this story.

In 1148 Roger granted some of his lands and manors in Dymock to support the Abbey at Flaxley, and these included the Demesne of Dymock.

My maternal ancestors, the Wynniatt (or Winnett) family have held land in and around Dymock since the 12th century and in fact are believed to have been tenant farmers and bailiffs of the Desmesne Manor. When the farms were granted to Flaxley Abbey my ancestors continued managing the land and working at Dymock Grange, for the monks of Flaxley Abbey. The Old Grange stayed in the hands of the abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

In 1544 the Old Grange estate was acquired by Thomas Wenman of Caswell, and the Wynniatts were still bailiffs. The extended Wynniatt family were gaining ground throughout the 13th -16th centuries and their name appears on land transfers and deeds.



In later years a John Wynniatt made a prestigious marriage. In 1611 he married Jane Wenman, grand-daughter and heir of Thomas Wenman, Lord of the Manor of Gamage Hall, Dymock. They made their home at the Old Grange, with the Wynniatts becoming Lords of the Manor. The family continued there until the early 20th century.

I have enlarged on all these facts in my book, *'Bloodlines on the Borders – The Wynniatt Family. 800 years of history'*.

The Hole In The Wire Gang *by Owen McClaughlin*

The Police Raid

On January 5th 1948 an unusual event took place at the Broadwell POW camp. Gloucestershire Constabulary, led by Inspector D.M. Wagstaff from Cinderford, entered the camp on the lookout for stolen goods from a series of robberies that had taken place in the Forest of Dean in the weeks before Christmas 1947. The police search focused on a single hut where some of the stolen items were discovered and as a result four prisoners were arrested. They were Hermann Plass (25), Nicholas Walbroel (24), Max Paul (21) and Gerhard Wegner (26). The four men were charged with break-ins at Mile End, Cinderford and Mitcheldean and appeared at Coleford Magistrates Court on January 13th, 1948.

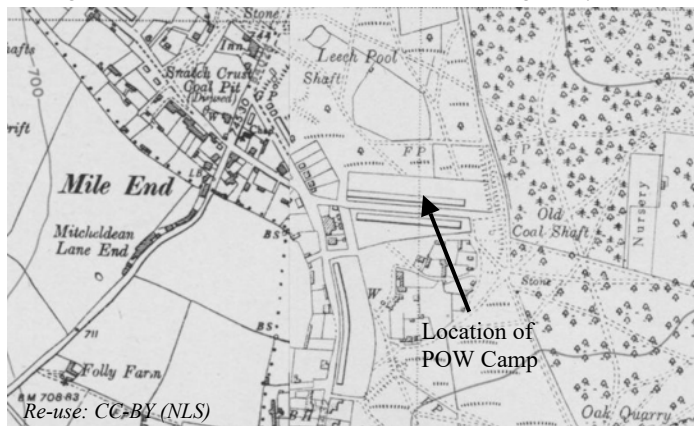
The Charges

At an all-day hearing the prosecution declared that one of the men, Hermann Plass, had made a statement describing how the four POWs had raided local shops after nightfall and returned to their camp before dawn with the stolen property. When the premises to be robbed were too far away to get to on foot they had taken a car from Mile End garage and returned it afterwards. Some of the booty was sold to other POWs or shared out among them although Plass insisted that the other prisoners had no idea that the goods were stolen.

The four men were charged with breaking and entering Mile End Stores near Coleford on the night of December 22nd. The shop owner, Mr. William Cullis said that the goods stolen included travelling cases, suits, pyjamas, shoes and women's stockings to the value of £94 8s 4d. A second charge related to a break-in at a shop in Dockham Road, Cinderford where cigarettes and chocolates worth £32 10s were stolen. Three of the men, Plass, Walbroel and Wegner were charged with a third offence of breaking and entering the premises of Eldred Voyce, a bookmaker, in Mitcheldean and stealing shoes and clothes valued at £37 9s 6d. Other offences would be taken into consideration. In all, the gang had stolen goods to the value of £196 of which only £79 worth of items were recovered. Considering that the average weekly wage at the time was about £5, the crime spree had been short but lucrative.

The defence lawyer, Mr. T. Kingsley Evans, argued that the case should be remitted to the military authorities for trial by court martial. However, the commandant of the Broadwell camp, Major W. T. Lee, argued against this, saying that the military authorities preferred to have civilian charges dealt with in civilian courts. The police supported Major Lee, saying that the Home Office advised these type of cases to be dealt with in civil courts.

This argument over who should try the case highlights a real difficulty about the status of the defendants. The men were all prisoners of war even though the war had ended over two and a half years before. According to the Geneva Convention, which had been signed by both Britain and Germany, all POWs should



have been released as part of the conclusion of peace. But there had been no peace treaty with Germany which had surrendered unconditionally. Britain therefore felt entitled to keep holding the prisoners to relieve the critical shortage of domestic workers.

The number of German prisoners in Britain peaked after the war ended, reaching 402,200 in September 1946. In that year, one-fifth of all farm work in Britain was performed by German prisoners. Repatriation only began in

1946 when Prime Minister Clement Atlee announced that 15,000 prisoners of war would be released per month. The prisoners themselves naturally resented their continuing confinement. The magistrates rejected the defence argument for military jurisdiction and the accused were remanded in civil custody awaiting trial at Gloucestershire Assizes.

Treatment of POWs

By the end of 1947 the way in which prisoners of war were treated had changed significantly. The men were allowed to leave the camp unescorted and walk around the surrounding district. Prisoners were also allowed to drive. In his statement Plass said that on the day of the Cinderford robbery they had been to the cinema and then 'hung around' before breaking into the shop, getting back to the camp at 3.30am. However, some restrictions remained. They could not go into pubs, and they were still locked into the camp at night although security seems to have been extremely lax. In this more open environment, many prisoners met local women, and although there was initially a ban on 'romantic liaisons' this does not seem to have been remotely effective. Once the ban was lifted almost 100 marriages between German POWs and British women took place immediately. Many more would follow. In November 1947 Hermann Plass, the self-confessed ringleader of the robber gang, had married a local girl at Lydney on November 27th, 1947.

The better treatment of prisoners was driven partly by a genuine sympathy for their predicament among many of the public but also by a practical view in the government that demoralised prisoners made bad workers. Pay had improved along with conditions. All prisoners were entitled to receive 1 shilling per day and a bonus scheme was introduced of three extra shillings per week for satisfactory work and 5 shillings and sixpence for exceptional work. This was welcome as it gave prisoners local currency whereas before they had been restricted to earning camp money which was worthless outside the camp itself. The new German Government also introduced a POW compensation bill in January 1947 which granted all prisoners in captivity abroad one Deutschmark per day which would be payable on their return to Germany. But however welcome this income was, the amount a POW could earn in a week was far below the wages of local workers, and there were constant arguments about bonuses which were paid at the employer's discretion.

The Trial

The trial took place at Gloucestershire Assizes on January 29th, 1948 with Mr Justice Croom-Johnson presiding. Detective Constable Minett of Lydney gave more background information on the defendants. Plass had been captured in Italy in June 1944. He was described by the German camp leader as being 'intelligent, sly and reserved'. He was the self-confessed ringleader of the gang. Waldbroel, who was single, was captured in Holland in October 1944 and was described as 'of a low standard and primitive'. Wegner was captured in France in September 1944. His camp leader said he was 'sly, reserved and a bit lazy'. Paul was captured at the very end of the war in Germany in May 1945. He was judged to be 'of a low standard and easily put to temptation'.

Based on the overwhelming evidence of the police, along with the full confession from Plass, the prisoners had little option but to plead guilty to all the charges. Acting for the defence Mr George Heron did what he could to present some mitigating circumstances. He said that Plass had recently married a local girl and his desire to maintain her financially was one of the reasons for his crimes. He had admitted his guilt and accepted full responsibility. His wife had said she would stand by him. Wagner had been wounded several times in the war and his only relatives, his mother and sister, were desperately ill in Germany. They had also lost all their possessions in air raids. Paul's only surviving relatives, his grandparents, were living in the Russian zone and he had not heard from them since January 1945. Walbroel had also lost everything he had in air raids and only wanted to get back to Germany and help with the recovery.

Mr Justice Croom-Johnston was unmoved by these pleas and said that the men had abused the relative freedom they had been given to steal a considerable amount of property. Plass was sentenced to four years penal servitude and the other three prisoners all got three years.

By mid-1948 all POWs in Gloucestershire had either been repatriated to Germany or else given permission to remain in Britain as civilian workers. There must have been bitter regret felt by the four convicted men who would remain in much harsher captivity in Britain long after their compatriots had all been set free.

Forest Recreation Grounds Part 3 *by Cecile Hunt*

On a rainy-day during November 1934, Lydbrook had a Royal visitor, the Duke of Kent. After inspecting the works, he laid the foundation stone of the wall at Lydbrook recreation ground. There are several memorial stones laid into the base of the retaining wall of Lydbrook recreation ground. Now, sadly, hard to read through weathering and aging; and in the main, by many, forgotten about.

By summer 1937 the recreation trustees had ordered swings, chutes, ocean wave etc to be erected as soon as they arrived. Hard tennis courts were completed in the last week of August 1938. On October 1st, 1938 the Gloucester Journal reported *..On Saturday the first service on the hard tennis courts was delivered by Mr W L Rind, of the Registration Social Services League, Somerset House...after the opening of the courts the party (from London) was entertained to tea in the Memorial Hall.*

One of the last reports to appear in a local newspaper was on 15th May 1930; *A further step was taken on Saturday (13th May) whereby the fullest benefit can be obtained from the new recreation ground at Lyd-*



A picturesque view of Lydbrook Recreation Ground taken in 2007 by Pauline E (Geographic.org.uk CC BY-SA 2.0)

brook, which was made possible by voluntary labour. Mr F Whittington presided supported by Mr S Miles (hon Sec) ad Mr J H Gibb (hon Treasurer). The chairman and Mr Miles said that a committee to look after the ground and manage it generally was needed. It was proposed that a committee of 21 be selected. Mr Miles said they all deeply regretted the death of Mr Luke Wilce and referred to the good work he had done with several others who had passed away since their scheme started.

In conjunction with local initiatives the government of the day were looking at, which was approved by the County Highways Committee on December 1st 1930:

“A scheme which, it was hoped, would

provide recreation grounds for the Forest of Dean without cost to the county and which will relieve unemployment...” In an interview with Sir Lawrence Chubb, of the National Playing Fields Association, it was suggested that the County Council would apply to the Unemployment Grants Committee for a 90% grant for a ‘distressed area’. The Association or the Carnegie Trust would make up the balance; County rates would in no way make up any short fall.

County Chairman, Lt Col Russell J Kerr, commented that in the Forest of Dean there was a local movement in working in connection with the unemployed and also for the benefit of the inhabitants to provide recreation grounds in ‘*certain open spaces*’. Lt Col Kerr also said the Forestry Commission had to signify their willingness to assist. The grant obtained would depend on percentage of unemployment in the district. It was envisaged that the cost of maintenance would be provided by local people. A grant of 90% would be forthcoming due to unemployment, for the 12 months ended June 30, exceeded 15%.

By March the following year (1931) eighteen playing field schemes had been prepared by a Captain O Kelly the Miners Welfare architect. At a meeting of the Central Committee of Forest of Dean Playing Fields Association it was announced that before any scheme could progress they had to be submitted to the County Council and the Unemployment Grants Committee, however, due to the number of schemes it was decided they first be considered by the Works Committee before the Central body. Representatives of the various schemes were reminded that ‘*...the Forest of Dean Playing Fields Association was by no means a lucky bag into which people could dip.*

Which villages applied? See next time.

The Legendary Minnie Wynn *as told to Averil Kear*

You may recall in the last newsletter that Averil Kear asked for help in identifying a lady named Minnie who lived in a cottage in the Forest near Brierley. We have had responses from Eric Nicholls and Paul Mason who between them were able to unravel the mystery.....

Andrew Stuart was enquiring about the cottage at Nelson Green, near Brierley: the one that featured in the television production of Dennis Potter's "Pennies from Heaven". Entering from the main road at Brierley, Minnie's cottage was on the left of the road, and in the year 1979/80 he must be describing the open cast site at Woogreens. A long tarmac road was laid to access the Woogreens site starting from by Meadowcliffe Pond at the rear of the old Northern United Colliery, 50 yards or so along this road Minnie's cottage would have been on the left. The road went up over Serridge Ridge, on up over Crab Tree Hill and down on to the site at Woogreens. If Stuart remembers travelling this long road through the Forest, then Woogreens is where he worked. Now the nature reserve, of course.

The cottage, somewhat grandly called Nelson House, was the home of Walter and Minnie Dorrington. Minnie was a legendary character, always known by her maiden name – Minnie Wynn. The early Wye-dean Rallies passed the cottage and Minnie would be out on the garden fence watching. Local blokes spectating would be shouting - *"Bring us a cup of tea out, Minnie"* which she laughed off.

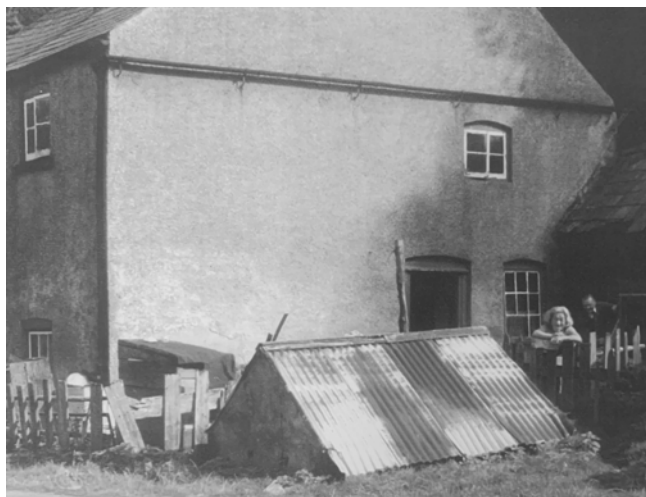
Minnie, whose full name was Minnie Alice Maud originated from Steam Mills, married Walter George Dorrington in 1960. She had been previously married to a soldier called Read, in the early 1940's, which was bigamous as he was already married. It was reported extensively in *The Citizen*. She had several children who all died in infancy. The couple were well known local 'characters' and frequent patrons of *The Swan* at Brierley. Tales of Minnie at the pub, some not repeatable in polite company, include a tale from Andrew Stuart who knew Minnie. *"Myself and a few other lads were in the pub having a few beers when this little old lady came in and gave this bloke a right telling off. She stuck her tongue out the side of her mouth and on it was a lit cigarette. She then proceeded to take this blokes pint, which was only missing one mouthful and drank it all in one go, with the tongue and the cigarette still sticking out. Her ranting reminded me of a clip from the Tasmanian devil, couldn't tell what she was saying, probably the local forest dialect. It was then, she grabbed him by the collar (or ear) and dragged him from the pub. To be honest, it was quite funny, because Minnie was around 4 feet, and the bloke was like 6 feet. This I think must have been the boyfriend, he wore wellies, and his legs didn't fill the space in them.*

Walter, or Wat as he was known in the Forest dialect, died in 1983 aged 68 years. Minnie died in 1996 aged 75 years. She had vacated the cottage by then and lived at Ruardean. They lie at rest in Drybrook

(Holy Trinity) Churchyard, their grave marked by a simple square concrete vase which bears the inscription – Walter Dorrington, wife Minnie (Wynn), at peace. The Forestry Commission demolished the cottage.

Just a final word from Andrew Stuart ... *"No one ever believed me when I told them about Minnie,, especially the bit about when she came out of the Forest dressed in nothing but a nightie and a large scary looking hatchet over her shoulder in the early hours of the morning."*

Minnie Wynn pictured left peering over her garden fence, with a friend (George Bennett)



Meetings in Review *with Ian Gower and Keith Walker*



In February, a large audience was ‘arrested’ by Police Archivist Sue Webb’s interesting talk on the History of Gloucestershire Constabulary. Gloucestershire Police was founded in 1839 and is believed to be the longest established rural county police force in England. Initially Tewkesbury and Gloucester retained their own forces but joined the county force in 1854 and 1859 respectively. The first Chief Constable was Anthony Thomas Lefroy, who transferred from Ireland, bringing with him the established Irish system of policing and a good number of Irish officers as well. The county was selected as a pioneer force because it had a high rate of crime, there was a lot of political unrest, and because of the “lawless Forest of Dean”! The recruits had to be able to read and write, but more importantly be physically strong, as hard as the people they dealt with.

What of women in the police? Gloucester was a pioneering force, employing women after 1918 in the ‘Women’s Police Service’. Surprisingly the women patrolled the County on motorcycles! Locally, Janet Grey joined the force in 1932, becoming known as ‘the Lydney Policewoman’. She went on to become the first Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland.

Some infamous Forest cases were then discussed, including the case of Samuel Beard, who was murdered whilst on duty investigating sheep stealing near Speech House. Four suspects were convicted at trial and sentenced to 15 years penal servitude. Thomas Cooper, George Cooper, and Thomas Gwilliam were transported to Western Australia. Richard Roberts completed his sentence in England and then returned to Shortstanding, where he lived until his death. Sergeant William Morris was stoned to death on 10 November 1895. Sergeant Morris and P.C. Harding were on duty at Viney Hill when they came across a party of drunken foresters from the Whitecroft and Pillowell district of West Dean. These men had been to Blakeney stopping at various public houses on the way home. Both officers were struck down by stones. P.C. Harding survived, but Sergeant Morris was killed. Three young colliers were arrested and charged with the murder of Sergeant Morris and the attempted murder of P.C. Harding and were later convicted of manslaughter. The involvement of the Police in the still notorious case of ‘who killed the bears?’ was next investigated. In April 1899, two Russian performing bears and their French keepers performing in the Forest area. A rumour started that the bears killed a child and injured a woman. This led to a crowd chasing the bears and their keepers as they were travelling to Ruardean. The bears were killed and the keepers who didn’t speak a word of English were badly beaten by the crowd before being rescued by the villagers of Ruardean. Police then arrested 14 men from Cinderford for killing animals unlawfully and assaulting two French subjects. They were fined for their actions.

Sue concluded her ‘evidence’ by explaining that the Constabulary Archive is held in the Chester Master Room at Gloucestershire Archives. You can read more about the archive or get in touch with Sue via the web site gloucestershirepolicearchives.org.uk. *K.W.*

On Saturday 16th March, John Lane guided us through the second part of the history of ancient Gloucester on a ‘virtual walk’, as a sequel to his initial talk last March. We reconvened at the site of Gloucester High Cross, which had been a focal point in the city because of its function as a water supply, at the meeting point of Eastgate, Northgate, Southgate, and Westgate streets. The cross was demolished in the 18th century. Nearby now stands the modern sculpture depicting trades and professions of Gloucester old and new, including today’s aircraft industry.

We heard stories of the New Inn in Northgate Street, the most complete surviving example of a medieval courtyard inn with galleries in Britain. The Inn was built around 1450, and was reportedly used for pilgrims travelling to visit the tomb of King Edward II in Gloucester Cathedral. We heard how the courtyard within often hosted travelling shows, including the performance of Shakespearean plays. As can be seen to this day, looking down the side of New Inn, to minimise the building footprint, each higher floor is wider than the one below. So, at the top of the building rooms are extremely close to those opposite! Much of the timber used in construction of the building was Oak felled from the Forest of Dean.

Northgate Street was once a market for the whole of its length, where cattle were driven into adjacent alleyways. Further up, where the old Debenhams building now stands, can be found The Oxboode, formerly Mitre Street, but originally Oxbody Lane, also immortalised in a nursery rhyme as we heard in John's first talk when both Doctor Foster and Humpty Dumpty also made an appearance! Now few old buildings remain in the area, the most notable of which is St John's Northgate Church, originally built around 930, and from which rector Thomas Stock, along with Thomas Raike founded many of Gloucester's Sunday Schools. Close to the site of St. Johns's church, is the site of the Roman North Gate, originally also used as a Jail, and demolished in 1789. The Longfield charity shop nearby still has pillars from original Roman foundations.



The New Inn pictured in 1973 Photo A. Longbottom CC BY SA 2.0

After the break, in the "20 minute slot", Nigel Costley described the life of Morgan Philips Price – International traveller; MP for the Forest of Dean 1935-1955; Champion of the Farming Industry and influential in the NFU farming policy. We heard how he was born at Tibberton Court Estate into a rich family which owned a timber Company. However, his interests were initially focused towards journalism for the Manchester Guardian specialising in Russian events, and he was the only British reporter in Russia during the Bolshevik revolution. He returned to Britain in 1921, met Ramsay McDonald in 1923, first entered Parliament in 1929 as a Labour MP, and became MP for the Forest of Dean in 1935. A truly enigmatic character, he transformed from a background of Country Estate and Business ownership to a strong supporter of the Workers' rights, with a true understanding of international affairs. **I.G.**

Standing in for the planned speaker at the April meeting, Meetings Secretary Cecile Hunt gave a presentation entitled "Forest of Dean – A Royal Hunting Forest". The talk was wide ranging both historically and geographically, using a thematic approach, with a 'smorgasbord' of facts presented along the way.

The journey started with the title, as Cecile explained that our locality was already used for hunting prior to the Norman kings giving it special status as a royal hunting forest. In the case of the 'Dean', the King owned the vert, verd and land, which was not necessarily true of other royal forests. The last recorded date for a King hunting in the Forest is 1256, and there are several records of extraordinary numbers of animals killed during the royal 'progress' through the Forest.

The long list of Forest officials and their roles, from Warden to Regarders, were then discussed. The still existent role of Verderer received special mention, just as well as your reviewer happened to be seated next to Sue Middleton, our Vice Chair, and of course Verderer!

A geological map of the Forest then provided the prompt to discuss the important iron, coal and quarrying industries of the past. The Geomap at New Fancy received a mention as well worth visiting to those who haven't already seen it. The contrast between the smaller 'freemines', often worked by a handful of colliers, and the later large mines, such as Trafalgar then came into focus. The Brain family owned Trafalgar colliery, and from the proceeds built themselves a fine mansion (Euroclydon) just outside Mitcheldean. A photo of the house revealed the attached tower, from which Francis Brain could oversee his colliery.

There is no space in this review to cover the many other themes that Cecile managed to squeeze into her well received 45-minute talk, which prompted many questions and comments from the audience.

After tea Averil Kear unravelled the knotty history of the 'Bream sampler', including some new thoughts on who the mysterious soldier depicted on it might be. The regiment of the soldier eluded Averil & the other original researchers, but with the date on the sampler reinterpreted by Averil as 1863, the likelihood of the figure being a Royal Artillery man was startlingly confirmed by a former army officer of long service who was by chance in the audience! The story of the sampler is available for download on our website.

K.W.

Miners Memorial & Photos For A New Century Collections Republished!

Up until a few years ago the Society sold compact disks which contained record sets of value to both local and family historians. Of course, CD drives are no longer routinely incorporated into new computer equipment, thus the record sets were latterly made available for download free of charge from the History Society web site.

However, whilst the record sets could be downloaded and accessed by 'traditional' laptop and desktop computers, it was not possible on devices incorporating the android operating system, such as tablets and mobile phones. Consequently, the Miners Memorial and Photos For A New Century record sets have now been converted into pdf format and are now accessible for download from the History Society website by ALL computer devices and mobile phones.

For those of you who are not aware of the records sets, a short description of each follows.

MINERS MEMORIAL RECORD SET

The record set was assembled by a team led by former Society Chair Ron Beard and was based on the extensive research of Society member Dave Tuffley. The purpose of this record set was to identify and document records of the almost 600 fatal accidents which occurred in Forest of Dean Mines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also includes records of Free Miners and Free Quarrymen who registered prior to 1960. The mines and quarries records contain photographs and a brief historical account, in addition to relevant accident details. The record set can be seen at:

<https://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/learn-about-the-forest/miners-memorial-record-set/>

PHOTOS FOR A NEW CENTURY RECORD SET

The original photographs in this collection were taken as part of the Gloucestershire 2000 Photographic Archive project. The society decided to photograph 'sites and monuments' which had some historic interest so that a record would exist of their nature and condition in the year 2000. The project was coordinated by Ron Beard, and ultimately volunteers produced more than 250 photographs from which those you can see in the collections were chosen. The intention was to revisit the selected sites at ten-year intervals and take new photographs. Accordingly, this was done in 2010 (second edition), and for **the new third edition** in the period 2019 - 2024. The collection provides a record of any changes that have occurred over the last twenty or so years and provides a valuable insight into how historic sites of interest in the Dean are valued and cared for. The photographs are presented in themed collections, available to read or download at:

<https://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/learn-about-the-forest/new-resource-page-2/>

MINERS GLOSSARY

Also of much interest and historic value is Dave Tuffley's 'Miners Glossary'. Although there are technical words specific to the mining industry which were in common use throughout the country, there are also words or phrases which were unique to the Forest of Dean. The results of Dave's long term research into mining terms used in the mining operations in the Forest of Dean iron ore and coal fields have been collated into the 'Glossary' which you can download at:

<https://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/assets/Uploads/Dave-Tuffleys-Mining-Glossary.pdf>



Dave Tuffley (left) and Ron Beard with pages from the republished collections