

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
November 2024



Inside:

- Meet our new Chair - Sue Middleton
- The Murder of Mary Jones of Nass House
- Granny Kear of Bream
- Newnham Pill or Creek

News

November 2024

Editor:

Keith Walker
51 Lancaster Drive

Lydney
GL15 5SJ
01594 843310

NewsletterEditor
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Chair:

Sue Middleton
07973 782914

Chair
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Treasurer:

Jan Bailey
Treasurer
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Secretary:

Owen McClaughlin
01594 560516
Secretary
@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Website:

forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Registered Charity
No: 1094700

Printed by
Inky Little Fingers

Editors Notes

At the recent Annual General Meeting some changes occurred in respect of officers of the Society. As required by the constitution, John Lane stepped down as Chair after three years, and Sue Middleton was voted in as the new Chair. Many of you will already know Sue as the masterful project manager behind the Foresters' Forest project, and the first lady Verderer to be elected. Sue introduces herself in the adjacent page, through some questions and answers. Chris Sullivan has stepped down as Treasurer after successfully guiding our financial affairs for several years. Jan Bailey has been elected as Treasurer in Chris's place, so welcome Jan! Fortunately for the Society we continue to retain the expertise of John and Chris as they remain as Committee members. One last change of note is that Mary Sullivan takes on the role of Vice-Chair in addition to her current work in Publications and GLHA Liaison.

Inside you will find pull-out forms for New Regard 39, 'The Coleford Special', and for 'The Story of the Forest'. Both publications are offered at special member prices. Get yours whilst stocks last! Also in the centre is the pull-out calendar of 2025 events, including a short synopsis of each event.

Elsewhere in this edition, Cecile Hunt poses some interesting questions about Newnham Pill. If you want to contribute to the debate, get in touch, and I will ensure that Cecile receives your comments.

Thanks to Ian Wright for his article about the formidable 'Granny Kent' of Bream. See Ian's website for more Forest social history: (<https://forestofdeansocialhistory.co.uk/>)

The middle pages offer the tragic story of Mary Jones of Nass House who was brutally murdered in July 1771. We only know about it because a pamphlet was published about the case in 1772 after the trial of the accused. The pamphlet survived the years and offers an insight into 'policing' methods and court procedures of the time. The onerous proof of guilt required by courts these days, often involving scene of crime fingerprints, DNA evidence and the inevitable information from digital cameras makes a stark contrast with the Mary Jones case, although the suspect apparently owned up.

If you have a story you would like to present in the middle pages please get in touch, contact details are to the left. A good length of article would be about 1500 words, and any accompanying images would be welcome although they can be sourced for you if necessary.

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.

Meet Our New Chair - Sue Middleton

Sue Middleton was voted in as our new Chair at the AGM. Read the Questions and Answers below to learn more about Sue and her aspirations for the Society.

Sue, members reading this will be aware that you have been a member of the Committee for some time now, but can you tell us a little more about your background?

I am proud to be a 'born and bred' Forester as I was born at home in Coleford. Some of the members will know my parents as they were Gerald Rawle (who taught Maths at the Royal Forest of Dean Grammar School) and Desiree Rawle (who taught Domestic Science at Double View, now Forest High in Cinderford). Despite being great teachers, they didn't want my brothers and myself in their schools, so we went to school in Monmouth, which I think neutralised my Forest accent. Sadly, I didn't have a very good teacher for History, so I gave it up at an early age and have been trying to recover from that poor decision for some years since!



How did you come to join the History Society?

When I started working for Forestry England as the Manager for the Foresters' Forest Programme, I met Mary Sullivan and Simon Moore who invited me to come to a FODLHS meeting. I soon realised that as I was working on a Heritage programme, it was essential to learn about our Forest's History. I was, and continue to be, impressed by how knowledgeable other Committee Members are about all facets of our History. I am still learning, and I think that one of the delights of the Forest of Dean is that you can always learn more.

Why did you become a Verderer?

I love the Forest of Dean and I think it is the best Forest in the world. I would like to help more people understand why it is unique and how important it is to look after it. As the position of a Verderer is voluntary and for the rest of your life, I hope to have plenty of time to work towards this goal.

What will you be focusing on and what do you hope to achieve in the next three years?

I would like our young people in the Forest to be enthusiastic about our History, to be proud of their roots and to understand our Forest within the context of wider British History. The introduction of the Schools Competition and the Schools Quiz are an excellent way to engage the younger generation and I hope that these continue to grow year-on-year - and that we will have more FODLHS members in future.



However, FODLHS is not just about the young, it is for everyone, of any age. As more people move into our Forest, or interest is piqued amongst those already here, we need to spread the word and hopefully get more of that excited reaction: 'Wow! That's amazing! I didn't know that!' I would like us to celebrate our Forest's History and encourage others to join in.

Our committee already have an impressive range of skills, but we need more. Please let me know if you'd like to join the committee and make a difference for our future.



MEMBERSHIP

The membership year 2024/25 is now in full swing and the membership has continued to grow steadily. Thank you to all those who have already renewed their subscriptions to the Society. Membership cards for those who have already renewed accompany this newsletter, and for others, a renewal form is enclosed.

Please either pay through our online shop facility at <https://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/join-the-fod-local-history-society>, or if you prefer please pay by BACS, and then email or post me a membership renewal form as well, so I can ensure that all your contact details are correct and up to date.

To pay using the online shop, you do not need to have a PayPal account: the system just uses PayPal to process your debit/credit card details securely.

If you believe you have renewed your membership but have not received a membership card, please email me at membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk or call 01594 543042 so I can amend my records and send your card.

As well as renewals, I am pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society: Susan Ross, Julie and Andy McNamee, Diana Landon, Jules Woolford, Andrew Bruce and Eileen Turner. We hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to seeing you at forthcoming meetings and events.

Ian Gower (membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 14th December - 3pm

West Dean Centre, Bream, GL15 6JW

Richard Clammer reveals “The Mysterious Story of John Cabot and the Matthew”

PRIZE WINNERS AT THE AGM



Pictured above, outgoing Chair John Lane presenting respectively the Cyril Hart prize to Caroline Prosser-Lodge (left), and the Scott Garret Prize to Dr Simon Draper. They each received a certificate and £50 in prize money. Photos courtesy of Sue Middleton.



On Saturday 12th October, outgoing Chair John Lane welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting. A synopsis of his report follows: *“Over the year we have seen a steady increase in attendance at our Indoor Meetings, getting back to, and sometimes exceeding, pre-Covid days. In January Sue Middleton spoke about the Foresters Forest Project and the developing ‘Our Forest’ organisation. One dark February evening, Averil Kear gave a Zoom talk on Lydney and Dilke*

Hospitals. Later in February, Sue Webb, a volunteer from the Constabulary Archives Group gave us an interesting insight into the history of the Force and events in the Forest of Dean. At the March meeting I presented a short, virtual, walk through a part of historic Gloucester. April’s meeting saw Cecile Hunt give us a presentation on “The Forest of Dean – A Royal Hunting Forest”. Our first outdoor visit took place in May when a goodly number of us travelled to Raglan Castle for a hugely entertaining guided tour from Dr Rob Jones.

Saturday 30th June saw the Society host a successful Gloucestershire Local History Association Day in Coleford. Huge thanks go to all who helped arrange a wonderful showpiece, not just of Coleford but of your History Society. To accompany the Coleford Day, Nigel Costley produced an excellent New Regard (Coleford Special). As if that wasn’t enough, Nigel is now putting together another regular edition which will be available soon. Our second ‘away day’ was to Gloucester Docks in July – during a monsoon! In early August, Cecile and Averil led members around Newnham on Severn.. When our indoor meetings resumed in September, James Rendell entertained us with his talk on the Gloucester Typhoon..

Thanks are due to all Committee members for all the behind the scenes work that goes on throughout the year. In particular, thanks to outgoing Treasurer, Chris Sullivan, for his years of work keeping immaculate control of our finances. I am very pleased that a new member, Jan Bailey, is joining our committee to take over the role of treasurer. I would encourage all of you to have a look at the Society’s Facebook page. Caroline Prosser-Lodge does a first class job in keeping the page up to date with relevant articles and links to local history related items.

The Society’s Schools History Competition and separate History Quiz were a huge success again this year, thanks to the hard work of the two Sues, Middleton and Newton and Keith Walker and Owen McLaughlin. As a Society, we are keen to ensure that local children learn about the abundant history of the Forest. We can award cash prizes due to a legacy provided by Dr John Jurica.

Before concluding, can I thank you for your support over the last three years as your Chairman, it has been a privilege to be part of such a vibrant society.”

The winner of the Cyril Hart Prize of £50 plus certificate, for the best written and researched article in the New Regard, Vol 38, was awarded to Caroline Prosser-Lodge for her piece entitled ‘Dr Mangalore Laxumana Bangara - The Poor Man’s Friend’. The Scott Garrett Prize of £50 and certificate for the best presentation at meetings was awarded to Dr Simon Draper for his talk on ‘Place Names in the Gloucestershire Landscape’.

The following officers of the Society were elected or re-elected:

Chair: Sue Middleton
Treasurer: Jan Bailey
Meetings: Cecile Hunt
Schools Liaison: Sue Newton
Member: John Lane

Vice Chair: Mary Sullivan
Membership: Ian Gower
Publications + GLHA
Representative: Mary Sullivan
Member: Chris Sullivan

Secretary: Owen McLaughlin
Conservation: Simon Moore
Newsletter Editor: Keith Walker
New Regard Editor: Nigel Costley

The Treasurer, Chris Sullivan, presented the Annual Accounts for 2023-2024. Total income for the year ending 31st July 2024 was £10756, whilst total expenditure was £11485, leaving net receipts for the year at -£729. Regarding Publications Activity, sales of all publications produced £4962 income. Expenditure in sales of publications was £6022, leaving net receipts for the year at -£1060. The monetary assets of the Society at 31st July were declared to be; General Account, £11141; Deposit Account, £21652; Publications cash float, £50; giving total cash funds of £32843.

The Murder of Mary Jones of Nass House

In July 1771 a violent and tragic event profoundly affected the lives of the Jones family of Nass House. William Jones's daughter Mary and her friend Harriet Gough of Monmouth took an evening stroll to Lydney from Nass House to try to learn more about the Monmouthshire election held that day. A contemporary pamphlet (right) describing the trial of the accused was published shortly after the trial which took place on Wednesday 11th March 1772. The rest of the story below comes from edited extracts from the pamphlet.

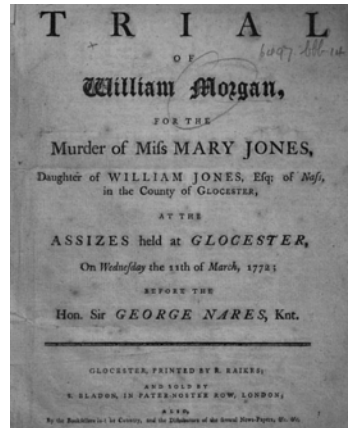
Case for the prosecution:

The deceased lady, Miss Mary Jones, was one of the daughters of a very respectable gentleman, Mr Jones, and resided with her father at his house at Nass. In July last Miss Harriet Gough happening to be on a visit at Mr Jones's on the 18th of that month, the young ladies went to take a walk as far as Lidney. As they walked up Lidney street it was observed, that the prisoner at the bar (**William Morgan**) was, together with some other persons, at the place where people play at fives; he was keen to look at the ladies with some degree of attention. It seems, this 18th day of July was the day of the Monmouthshire election, and the young ladies had a desire to learn of the event. With this view they called upon two or three different persons; the last person they called upon was one Davis, a barber; at his house they continued 'til very near ten o'clock. About this time they set out on their return to Nass; and within a quarter of an hour afterwards were observed, by one Mary Goodman, returning the same way that they had gone when the prisoner had remarked them. Night being come on, and it being later than the ladies were accustomed to stay out, the family became uneasy, and were considerably alarmed. Two maids had set out on the road towards Lidney, in the hopes of meeting the ladies. The butler, John Edwards, was then called, and directed them to take a light, and go in search of them. He followed their directions, and soon after met the maid-servants, and desired them to go on towards Lidney with him; which they declined doing, as it rained, and they were without their hats. Edwards proceeded on towards Lidney, and in a piece of ground called East Marsh, he found the deceased, Miss M. Jones, lying upon her face. He immediately put his hand to her head, and perceived that the cloak of her hood was filled with blood; he then called her by name, and no answer being made, he supposed her to be dead.

He then ran and called Mr Corfe, an apothecary, who lives in Lidney, and brought him to the place where the body lay. Upon examination it was found that the young lady was quite dead, and that her death was occasioned by a very violent fracture of the skull; Mr Corfe then discovered that her pockets had been taken away, and that her watch hug by her petticoats. Near her person he found a very large oaken stick. They carried the body to the Vicarage-house.

By this time the town of Lidney was alarmed with the report of what had happened. And Richard Tamplin the constable being called, he immediately searched the little public houses in Lidney, the usual resort of travellers and poor persons. It was remarked, that upon the alarm being spread all the people in the town were up, except the prisoner and his Father. This circumstance, together with what Mary Goodman declared of her having seen the prisoner at the fives place when the young ladies went up and returned, induced a suspicion of the prisoner having been concerned in the affair, and about five in the morning several persons went to the father's house.

The constable called down his son, who came in a few minutes; when he got to the bottom of the stairs he passed very quickly by the persons who were standing there. They asked him where he was going? He answered to wash his face. He continued a quarter of an hour or near 20 minutes before he returned to them. Upon his going out of the house it was observed, that there was the appearance of blood upon his shoe, and upon the knee of his breeches, and being questioned how the blood came to be there, he answered that his nose had lately bled. Being asked whether his nose bled upon his shoe, he declared, that



The Murder of Mary Jones

what they saw upon his shoe was not blood. They took it off however, and upon examining it found it was stained with blood.....”

The prisoner was taken to the Plume of Feathers Inn in Lidney and searched. One John Winter took out of his pocket a handkerchief marked H.G and asked the prisoner whose it was, and how it came into his possession, he answered that that it was his sister's. He was then accused of being the murderer. Very soon afterwards he confessed the whole. Being pressed to tell where the pockets were, he said they were concealed in a budget, in which he and his father were used to put their working tools. Upon search made there, they were found, together with some letters directed to Miss Mary Jones and some to Miss Gough. He also produced a half guinea, five shilling in silver, two pence in copper, and a knife with two blades. Also, a white handkerchief with a red border was found in his waistcoat pocket, marked with the letters M.J., later proved to be the property of the deceased.

The next day the prisoner was taken before a Justice of the Peace ‘where he freely and voluntarily most fully and amply confessed the whole affair, disclosing the time, the manner, and every horrid circumstance attending it’.

The Confession

This examinant sayeth, that last night, about half an hour after nine o'clock, he saw Miss Mary Jones and another young lady, who he is since informed to be Miss Harriet Gough, pass by him on their return from the town of Lidney, to Mr Jones's house at Lidney; that he then took a resolution of following them and robbing them, but apprehending that he might be known by Miss Jones, he got a stake and passed by Miss Jones, who wished him 'a good night'; that he then went forwards near 200 yards, and returned back again



Tythe map showing the footpath across East Marsh used by Mary Jones on the fateful day.

till he was behind Miss Jones, and then struck her two blows on the head, the first of which knocked her down, and the second he struck when she was down; that he then struck Miss Gough on the head and knocked her down, and then struck her several blows, and took off both the pockets of both of them. And this examinant saith that he informed one Joseph Keyse where he had put the pockets which was in a budget his father carried tools in, at the top of the stairs in his father's house.

The Verdict

At the trial the jury found William Morgan guilty after ‘a very few minutes only’.

The Sentence

‘You are to be taken to the place from whence you came, and on Monday next, you are to be carried to the place of execution, here you are to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and your body is to be delivered to the surgeons to be dissected; and the Lord have mercy upon your soul’.

William Morgan was executed on Monday 16th March. William Jones, Mary's distraught father, was so affected by events that he had a new house built at the Haie near Newnham, and moved there as soon as he could. Nass House was then leased out, although later generations of the Jones family returned to live there.

Newnham Pill or Creek - Part 1 *by Cecile Hunt*

Whilst researching for our guided walk around Newnham on 3rd August 2024 by myself and Averil Kear, a question arose and was posed to all at the end of the walk: **If** boats could deliver goods up the Pill to the cellars of Unlawater (previously Hill House) how did land transport and pedestrians from Broadoak and beyond access the lower end of Newnham and onward and vice versa?

The Severn Estuary, from Haw Bridge north of Gloucester down to Lavernock Point/Brean Down, has the second highest tidal range in the world; 10 to 12 metres (32 to 39 feet). Plus, a high turbidity and high velocity currents. The Estuary's sediment is made up of gravel, sand, silt and clay in varying particle sizes – very glutinous! Newnham Pill, before silting up and being culverted, would have seen a voluminous amount of water enter and leave it on each tide – leaving fairly steep muddy banks behind at each low tide.

Today, climbing on to the flood defence bank in the Riverside car park, you look down at grey, muddy banks, especially when the tide is out, and an outlet, fenced off to stop people accidentally falling in to or



Entrance to Newnham Pill from the Rover Severn, October 2024

deliberately climbing down to, this is the exit of Whetstones Brook the remains of Newnham Pill. This can be viewed by looking over the wall in Acasia Close beside Unlawater House's entrance drive. The stream flows under the A48, the riverside car park the flood defence bank, then exiting into the River Severn as an innocuous looking trickle of water. How many times have you driven through Newnham to Gloucester not realising you're driving along the line of what was known for several centuries as Newnham Pill and over the culvert covered by the stretch of A48 running beside Unlawater

House from the bottom of Lower High Street to where it bears left to follow the river bank to Broadoak and beyond.

Today's flood defences, running alongside the river from Newnham to Broadoak has meant, since 1992, this stretch of A48 has not flooded as it had done for many centuries before, inundating homes and stopping traffic (modern and old).

'Pill' – is a regional name for a tidal stream. Given the high tidal range of the Severn there were "...many pills that might be only a yard across at low tide but which were wide and deep enough to accommodate a sea going vessel at high tide". This was probably a good description of Newnham Pill. It has been recorded that boats would make their way into the Pill and deliver goods into the cellars of Hill/Unlawater house.

In June 1580 Gloucester was turned into an independent Head Port. In part to reduce illicit trading out of the Port of Bristol also a Head Port. Before this the Port of Bristol had jurisdiction over the River Severn and its tributaries as far as Worcester. In 1575 Lord Burghley turned Gloucester into a member port of Bristol, then in 1580, into a head port. Bristol port did not like this and raised a petition against Gloucester becoming a head port in 1582 For more on this go to: (<http://hdl.handle.net/1983/1706>)

Newnham Pill, in 1580, had already been classed as a Creek. A Creek its defined in a publication by University of Bristol as: "a landing place and haven that fell under the jurisdiction of a Head Port but where customs officers were not normally resident".

So, Newnham Pill was a tidal stream with a wide entrance and deep sides! How was it negotiated? More next time...

DHC News Update *with Nicola Wynn*



The Hod boy

The much loved hod boy sculpture that was a part of the Blue Rock Trail in Soudley has been moved to Dean Heritage Centre and will be repaired. The sculpture had sadly been vandalised a couple of times so it was decided to move the hod boy to a more secure location.

We are delighted to display the hod boy as it fits in with our displays on mining and we know our visitors will appreciate the sculpture. Many thanks to the artists John Wakefield and Rob Griffiths and Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council.



The 'Hod Boy' in it's original position on the Blue Rock Trail



Nicola Wynn, Dr Jason Griffiths, and Maggie Clutterbuck presenting 'Backstage at the Gage'

Forest of Dean Writers Collection

Archiving and cataloguing the collection has been going really well thanks to our brilliant team of volunteers. We now have about 800 documents catalogued.

Many thanks to Katy Beddington, the granddaughter of Harry Beddington, who recently donated a unique collection of items that belonged to her grandfather, including scripts, some lovely paintings and sketches of local scenes, photographs and much more.

We have been busy promoting local authors with a display at Coleford library, a talk on the FODWC project at Coleford library as part of Heritage Open Days and a Backstage at the Gage event tying in with National Poetry Day with a talk on Catherine Drew and Harry Beddington. This was live streamed, recorded and can be found on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZPT5LIYBs>

Upcoming events at Dean Heritage Centre

Fri 15th November Quiz night at DHC coffee shop 6.30-8.30pm

Join us for mixed rounds of questions with friends and family with a chance to win prizes. Entry is £2, you can book tickets on our website or buy on the door. You can also buy a cheese board with wine or other refreshments.

Sun 1st December Christmas Bazaar 10-4

Free entry to the whole site.

Join us for a variety of unique and hand made gifts created by local crafters and businesses, meet Father Christmas, enjoy festive treats and Yuletide music.

Various dates in December see website Father Christmas

Meet Father Christmas in his grotto and receive a gift. Please book ahead by phone or website.

For further information on the site or events please go to www.deanheritagecentre.org

Meetings in Review *with Ian Gower & Mary Sullivan*

The Society's indoor meeting programme restarted on **Saturday 31st August** when the very knowledgeable and enthusiastic James Rendell gave a presentation on the Typhoon Aircraft, built by the Gloster Aircraft Company of Brockworth from 1941 to 1945.

We heard how the Typhoon was created in response to an Air Ministry specification for a very powerful interceptor replacing the Spitfire and Hurricane, led by the designer Sydney Camm of the Hawker Aircraft Company. The Typhoon was initially intended to be a medium-high altitude interceptor, but several design problems were encountered, and no supercharger was good enough to support the engine at high altitude, so it never completely satisfied this requirement.

When the Luftwaffe brought the new Focke-Wulf Fw 190 into service in 1941, the Typhoon was the only RAF fighter capable of catching it at low altitudes; as a result it secured a new role as a low-altitude interceptor. Its speed of over 400mph was enabled by having a 24-cylinder Napier Sabre engine developing over 2000 horsepower. In the original concept the Typhoon was a failure, suffering unexplained crashes and engine failures, and was on the brink of being cancelled. One test aircraft had a mid-air structural failure at the join between the forward fuselage and rear fuselage. In another flight, the tail plane broke off! The Sabre engine was also a constant source of problems, Napier, the engine manufacturer, was reportedly poor at reliable mass production.

The Typhoon began to mature as a reliable aircraft at the end of 1942. Being a large, fast and, eventually robust aircraft it was massively armed and reconfigured for ground attack roles and after use at Normandy in 1944, became famous for being known as an 'Aircraft Artillery'. The aircraft proved itself to be the most effective RAF strike aircraft on raids against communications and transport targets in Northwestern Europe prior to the invasion, and in direct support of the Allied ground forces after D-Day, specifically being used to try to destroy tanks.



The first Typhoon P5212 taken just before its first flight

The French Forces loved it, as its thunderous noise over northern France signified a probable end to hostilities, whilst the German Forces were scared to death of the Typhoon, its mighty exhaust signalled a probable violent aerial onslaught. By the time production ceased in 1945, 3300 Typhoons had been produced by the Gloster Aircraft Company.

John also showed us a video of an interview with two women who worked on different parts of the assembly line: Phyllis Gough and Peggy Fisher. We heard some enthusiastic tales about working on the aircraft build from the ladies who have known each other since they were 10 years old! They clearly loved, and were very proud of, their work.

Lastly, we heard that now it is thought that only one complete Hawker Typhoon still survives and is on display at the RAF Museum in Hendon, North London. The Hawker Typhoon Preservation Group is also in the process of performing an airworthy restoration by the Aircraft Restoration Company at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

After the tea break at the AGM on **Saturday 12th October**, Dr Cherry Lewis gave a talk on David Mushet of iron and steel fame, based on information gleaned from letters he sent to his wife, Agnes, when away from home. The family later gifted these letters to Dean Heritage Centre.

David Mushet was born in Scotland in 1772, the eldest of 9 children. His father was a woollen merchant but got involved in an iron foundry. This was where David's interest in the industry was first sparked. In 1791 he got his first job in the offices of the Clyde Ironworks; he was good at figures. In his own time, he began regular experiments in smelting, trying to improve then existing processes. In 1798 he married Agnes and still continued his experiments often late into the night. These led to a series of 12 articles which he got published in the new Philosophical Magazine, published by Alex Tilloch, a printer, journalist and fellow scientist.

In 1800 he went to London to file his first patent for an improved method of smelting which he later sold for £3000. This was his first absence from Agnes and their first-born and he sent fulsome and affectionate letters to his wife. Rather jarringly for modern ears, one included "it is curious for a man to be divided from his property." By this he meant his wife and child as well as home.

In 1801 he entered into a partnership in Calder Ironworks where he discovered a new class of black band ironstone that needed less coal to smelt it. This meant less need to import Swedish iron ore and was far cheaper. But he failed to make money from this discovery, being a better scientist than businessman.

In 1803 Mushet was back in London trying to sort out a failing business venture. However, he found time to go to the opera which he professed to disliking. He also saw the King and Queen at a theatre with three little princesses. he declared Queen Charlotte to look fierce and one of the princesses to be very beautiful. He attended the House of Commons and saw PM Addington. He was very moved by the sight of a poor dead negro man and wrote an empathetic poem about it. All this was sent to his wife.



Dr Cherry Lewis overlooked by David Mushet
Photo courtesy of Sue Middleton.

In 1805 he moved to be the manager of Alfreton iron works in Derbyshire. By 1806 he had improved productivity significantly at the Derbyshire works and had published 30 papers. He had become known at the Royal Society and the Geological Society, becoming acquainted with other scientists of the day such as Humphrey Davy and William Crawshaw. He watched some of Davy's experiments at the royal Institute.

As Mushet's fame grew, in 1808 he was asked to come to the FOD to advise on the running of Whitecliff

Furnace. He became a consultant and visited regularly but this led to so much travel he had to choose between Derbyshire and the Forest. As a result, the family moved to Coleford and lived in Tump House, now Forest House on Cinderhill. Mushet professed to loving the geology of the area and went on long walks to study it. However, he only stayed at Whitecliff works for 6 months before going on to build Darkhill Ironworks where he could continue his experiments. He left some beautiful drawings and maps of cross-sections of the rock strata in the Forest.

To sum up, the letters to his wife show that Mushet was a family man, very fond of his wife and children, with a concern for those less well- off and interested in animal rights. He was a dedicated scientist but less proficient as a businessman. Nevertheless, the family seem to have had a good life. In 1840 all his papers were published in 2 volumes.

Granny Kent of Bream *by Ian Wright*

Phoebe Hager was probably the last woman who lived in the Forest of Dean who had worked underground in a mine.

Phoebe was born in Woolaston, the Forest of Dean on 13th December 1847, the daughter of John Hager and Mary Batty. Soon after her birth, the family moved to Cwmbran where John obtained work in the iron mines.

When Phoebe was nine years old, she started working in the iron mine with her father. Her job was to sort the lumps of ore from the earth as it was thrown back by her father from the face where he was extracting the ore often using explosives.

She worked in the mine for two years and then started to work making bricks in a brickyard. The bricks were hand-made and she claimed she could work as fast as any man making up to 12 bricks a minute. While the blast furnaces at Tredegar were being built, she had the task of making the special lining bricks. As the last load was being taken from the yard, the other workmen lifted her onto the truck which carried her to Tredegar to see the results of her labour.

The only schooling Phoebe received was when she attended Sunday school. However, when she grew up, she educated herself and enjoyed reading, playing cards and going to the cinema.

Her first child, Joe, was born in 1870 in Cwmbran. Her partner was Charles Kent and they went on to have seven children. Charles was one of the workers involved in building the Severn Tunnel between 1873 and 1886.

According to the census:

In 1881, she was living on Parkend Road in Bream with Charles and 4 children. Charles was working as a labourer in an iron works.

In 1891, she was living in Bream Eaves. Charles was working as a labourer in a coal mine.

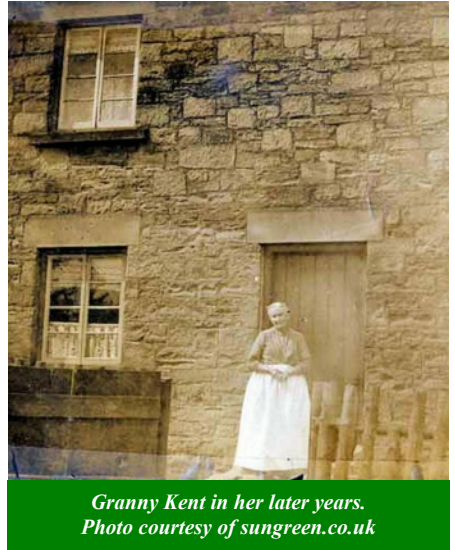
In 1901, she was living in Bream Eaves. Charles was working as a labourer.

In 1911, she was living in Bream Eaves. Charles was working as a labourer in a coal mine.

Charles died in 1917. Phoebe and Charles had five sons Joe, Charles, John (Jack), William and Fred. Three of these men served in the military during World War One. Sadly, Joe died in a prisoner-of-war camp in December 1918. They had two daughters Julia and Elizabeth.

When Phoebe moved to Bream she gained a reputation for her cooking abilities. When Charles met with an accident in a local colliery, she earned some income by baking bread and cakes often using three sacks of flour a week. The cakes were in great demand and up to the age of 79 she supplied the cakes for the Non-Conformist Sunday School events in the village. She was especially noted for her toffee cakes and lardees. She also made little pads and iron holders to give away to visitors.

In the last period of her life, she became known as Granny Kent and she lived with her daughter Julia and son-in-law Sam Cox at Bream's Eaves. The 1939 Register shows her as 'incapacitated'. She died in 1939 at the age of 92.



*Granny Kent in her later years.
Photo courtesy of sungreen.co.uk*

*Thanks to Ian Wright for this article. You can read more about the Forest's social history at
www.forestofdeansocialhistory.co.uk*