



On the staffing front, Elaine Guilding has sadly left us so in the New Year we will be recruiting the other half of the job share post to work alongside me.

We have made some improvements to the entrance area and Gallery 1 – creating a more welcoming and attractive space. A quiet time of year now but our visitor figures for this year are significantly up compared to last year and we hope this rise continues. We have organised a fantastic range of events and activities for next year – look out for our Events leaflets which will be out in the New Year.

In the Art Gallery we have Phyllis Lewis Forest Sculptures running until Feb. 14th 2009. These are sculptures in clay that are full of character and which

depict scenes of Forest life like mining, charcoal burning and family supper. If you have not seen them yet, come along as they really are unique.

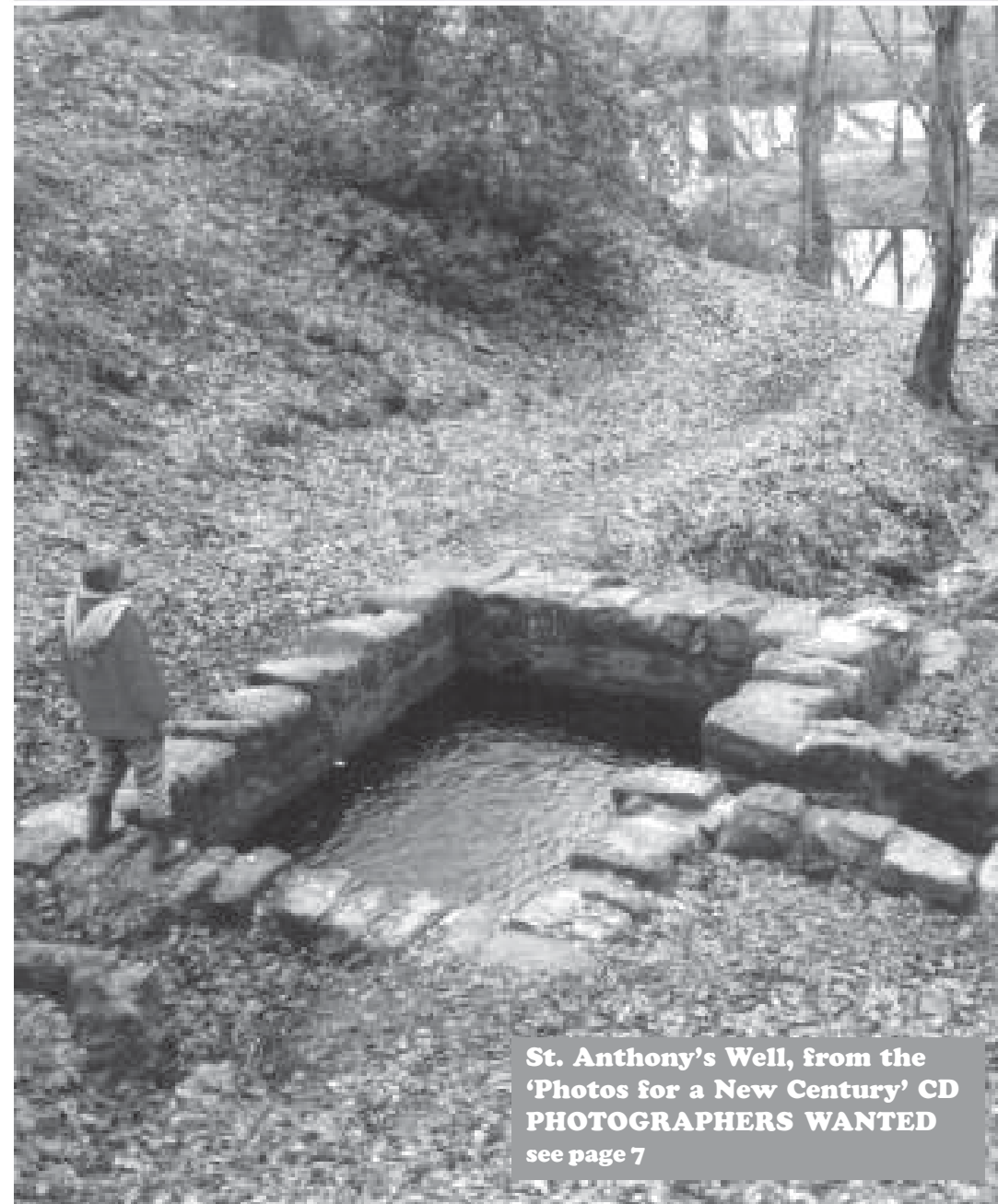
In Gallery 41 the Forest Weddings exhibition continues to run until January. The next exhibition will be photography followed by 'Their Past Your Future' which looks at memories of life in the Forest during WWII. It is a joint project between the Dean Heritage Centre and Whitecross School in Lydney.

For those of you with children or grandchildren, we have some fun activities in the February half term and the Easter holidays. From making peg dolls and kites to crazy chicks there will be plenty to keep you entertained.

On Sunday 15th February the Recycle for Gloucestershire team will be coming here to hold a Recycling Roadshow. On Thursday 2nd March you can discover your roots with the Gloucestershire Family History Society. On Monday 13th April at 11am Mary Dutson will be giving a talk on Victorian fashion. On Sunday 19th April at 2pm a lecturer from Gloucestershire University will be giving a talk on Dennis Potter.

Finally, I would like to thank the Society members who volunteered to help us with enquiries in the Gage Library.

Nicola Wynn
Collections Officer



**St. Anthony's Well, from the
'Photos for a New Century' CD
PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED
see page 7**

Newsletter

JANUARY 2009

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Editors Notes

After a somewhat delayed start to our December Committee meeting, due to a recalcitrant burglar alarm, we finally got underway, welcoming Mary and Chris Sullivan from Lydbrook to the committee. Apologies were received from Nicola Wynn, who we also look forward to welcoming to the committee. The programme for next year was discussed and approved, and can be seen on the membership card, which will be included with this mailing. (paid up members only). It is also proposed to hold a coach outing, possibly later in the summer. Several venues are under discussion, but if any member has any suggestion, please communicate it to any member of the committee. The subject will also be raised at future meetings. Anne does a stalwart job arranging a varied programme to suit all tastes, but as she says below, suggestions for walks and talks are always welcome.

I was very pleased that a recent Countryfile programme on BBC television on Sunday morning came from the Forest of Dean. It was well produced and touched briefly on some of the history of the Forest, such as the origins of the Freeminers and the earliest known mining sites. This included some lovely filming from Puzzle Wood and certainly was a good advertisement for our Forest. We are fortunate indeed to be surrounded by such scenic beauty, and as you will see below, Ron is calling upon some of the enthusiastic photographers in the Society to help preserve it for posterity.

Christine Martyn

the town with fresh water. Breaking these, they entirely cut off the town's fresh water. They then cast fire into the town and burned a large part of it.' These tactics so exhausted the besieged town that they made a truce.

This account is taken from the Latin chronicle of Meaux Abbey which was written in the 1380s and 1390s, and which in turn is believed to be based on a lost Cistercian chronicle of 1334, which would make it practically contemporary with the actual event.

Of course this does not prove that Edward I did not employ similar tactics, and at this distance of time, we shall probably never know. The use of the skills of Forest miners in wartime has echoed down the centuries, though. In the 1st World War, the Forest of Dean Battalion, the 13th Gloucesters, had a reputation for their skill in digging trenches. Writing home to his mother in Newent, a Private Eve said that 'one of the sergeants asked some of our chaps where they came from, as they must have been born with a pick and shovel in their hands and could work like machines.'. The sergeant could not have known how right he was or that conditions in the trenches would not have been unfamiliar to the men who had dug coal in the Forest pits!

Christine Martyn



The two Edwards, I & III from a choir screen in York Minster

Membership

Thank you to those members who have paid their subscriptions for 2008/9. Your membership card will be included with the January newsletter. For those who haven't yet paid, I will send your new membership card out on receipt of your subs.

On a sad note, we were very sorry to hear of the death of Mr Mervyn Morgan, who has been a member of the Society for over twenty years. We would like to express our condolences to his family.

The following members have recently joined us, and we would like to welcome them to the Society:

Mr J and Mrs L Blanch, Coleford
Mr A R Burton, MBE, Nailsworth
Mr M K Daunter, Hucclecote, Gloucester
Mr L Howard, Cinderford
Mr R Davenport, Duffield, Derbyshire.

Liz Berry

The Siege of Berwick



Edward I's army slaying the inhabitants of Berwick after the battle fought on a plain nearby in 1296. (From a contemporary manuscript)

undermining the walls of the city of Berwick on Tweed in the wars against the Scottish in the early 14th century, although as both Edward I and Edward III were continually at war against Scotland, it is uncertain to which it refers.

In his history of the Forest of Dean (pub.1858), H.G Nicolls refers to many occasions on which miners and archers from the Forest were summoned for military service, between 1310 and 1355, but also considers that the status of freeminer may well predate that period.

James Wood, in his *Laws of the Forest of Dean*, (1878) refers to a document in the University Library at Cambridge, printed in 1687, which states that 'the Customs and Franchises were granted.....in the time of the Excellent and Redoubted King Edward the Third...', although Wood acknowledges that other versions do not specify which King Edward.

Googling 'siege of Berwick' recently, however, turned up a 14th century reference to the siege by Edward III in 1333, when Berwick was held by the Scots. In response to the invasion of England by Archibald Douglas, 'Edward, King of England gathered his army and set out to defend the northern parts of his realm from the irruption of the Scots. Coming therefore to the siege of Berwick on the ninth of May, he ordered the construction of siege engines and made a fierce assault of the town by land and water. But the besieged resisted manfully. The English of his army therefore dug a ditch all around the town, at the bottom of which they discovered four conduits which provided

The status of a freeminer of the Forest of Dean is very ancient in origin. A 17th century document, the Miner's Rights and Privileges states that it goes back 'tyme out of minde' and refers to the privilege being granted by King Edward. It is believed that it was conferred as a reward for Forest miners

Geomap Success



Earlier this year, Averil entered the Geomap for a prestigious national award, the ENI Geological Challenge Award 2008. She has just heard from Chris Darmon, the Editor of 'Down to Earth' that it has been awarded joint first prize with the Cumberland Geological Association who produced a book.

He said that they have never had a joint decision before but they just could not choose between the two. Some of those involved with the project will be invited to Burlington House, in London on February 6th to receive the award, part of which will be a cheque for £500.

They are keen that the money be spent on producing written material promoting the Geomap, which is very convenient as

explanatory leaflets are already in production, and for which a wider distribution can now be sought. The whole project involved a lot of hard work and not a little worry, so perhaps the history of its conception and creation would make an interesting



booklet, something for the committee to discuss.

Once again, with our unique map, which is also a piece of sculpture, FODLHS leads the way for other societies to follow.

Meetings



Although it is rather disappointing to arrive at a meeting, only to find that the advertised speaker is indisposed for one reason or another, the FODLHS has been fortunate lately that equally good speakers have been able to fill the void. We are all aware that problems with health or family situations sometimes mean that commitments given in good faith cannot be fulfilled. but over the past eleven years or so that I have been

responsible for planning the society's programmes, we have been fortunate that this situation has happened infrequently.

This is the snag of booking speakers twelve months or even earlier in advance, equally this has to be done if we wish to continue to enjoy the high quality speakers, who wish to share their knowledge and enjoyment of their special subject with Society members.

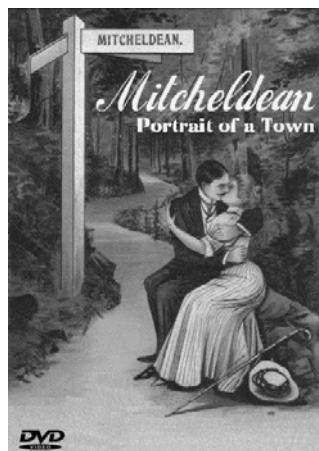
For our November meeting, Averil Kear gave a beautifully illustrated talk about some of the great houses in the Forest, of which there are a surprising amount. Some, like Highmeadow House and Westbury Court are sadly no longer in existence, and some, like Clearwell Castle have narrowly escaped, and are still in use, if in a rather different way to their original function.

In December, we were privileged to see a preview of a new DVD. Made by Tom Mason, it is called ***Mitcheldean, Portrait of a Town***, and contains some beautifully filmed shots of the town and surrounding countryside, skilfully blended with some old and evocative film and photos from past years. It is available from Mitcheldean Library, price £9.99.

As you will see from your programme the coming year will cover many subjects, ranging from trees ,schools ,and the town of Lydney from two very diverse angles, hulks and industry.

Now I would like to ask for your help, as you know your suggestions are always welcome ,so if you have a interest or topic that you would like to know more about and it is suitable for our meetings or you know of a possible speaker, please contact me on 01594 834402 I await your calls with interest.

Anne Childs



grave of his brother in Cambridge and that of his parents in Tutshill; looking through his papers in Newport Library and talking to local history buffs in the Chepstow area; and finding his home when I passed through London en route back to Canada, it bothered me that I had been unable to pay my respects at his final resting place.

Eventually, I wrote to the Brent Cemetery Service and asked if they had any

information. They kindly sent a large package of documents pertaining to the interment of JG, his wife Marian and unmarried daughter Grace Editha. Also included was a note stating that the original marker was removed "probably for safety reasons" many years ago. Small wonder, really – it had been a granite cross some 5 1/2 feet tall!

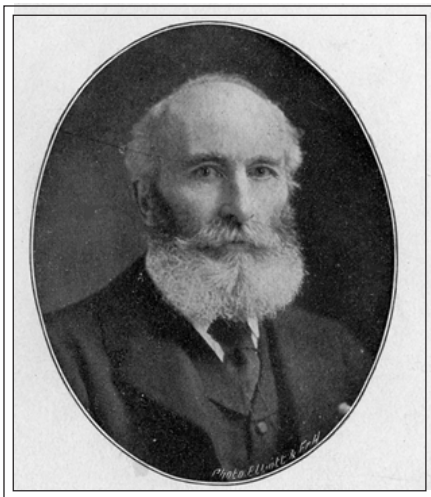
Thinking it all over, I felt that JG would want his grave to be marked. Just as important, I wanted his and his family's names to be there – to be read by passersby and found, perhaps, by other relations visiting England. And so I set about one of the strangest online transactions of my life. Paddington Cemetery staff helped me locate a local stone mason and, four months later, I received emailed photos showing the new marker was in place. Not a grand marker like the original! Just a nice little plaque made of the same colour of granite as JG's great cross had been, and with the Latin epitaph chosen by JG himself for his final resting place. *Cujus animae propitiatur Deus* – may God look with favour on their souls.

I'm sure He has."

Lesley Wood

Biographical notes of James George Wood courtesy of Dr Cyril Hart. Thanks to Liz McBride of the Chepstow Society for providing the information from Lesley Wood.

“James George Wood grave “re-marked”



James George Wood MA, LLB, FSA, FGS, was born on the 11th December 1843. He was the second son of Edmund Fowle Wood of Chepstow, Land Agent. He married, on 13th May 1873, Marian Cordelia, third daughter of George Watkins, MRCS, of Gwy House, Chepstow.

Wood was a Fellow of Emmanuel College, and Chancellor's Legal Medallist and Whewall Law Scholar in the University of Cambridge. He rowed in the Cambridge boat in 1868. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn on

17th November 1869 and acquired a large junior practice at the Chancery Bar and as a Conveyancer. He was subsequently elected a bencher of his Inn.

Wood took a very great interest in the Forest of Dean, both in its history and in the legal aspects of the rights, customs and privileges of the district. His advice was eagerly sought by both the Crown and the public.

He produced the well known book 'Wood's Laws of the Forest of dean' in 1878. The book was reprinted in 2000 in a limited edition by Ross Old Books (Ross-on-Wye) and Past and Present Books (Coleford) .

In June 2007, James's great grand daughter, Lesley Wood, was responsible for 're-marking' James George Wood's grave. She tells the story in her own words below:-

“When I arrived in London in June 2007, at the start of a two-week adventure looking into my family's history, I found myself in Lincoln's Inn within half an hour of checking into my hotel, delighted to finally see 7 New Square, the former chambers of my great-grandfather James George Wood. The next day, I prepared for emotions of another sort, as I scoured section 1B of Paddington Cemetery for JG's grave. After an hour of searching, and encumbered by an increasingly jet-lagged brain, my main emotion became despair, and I gave up and left. And while I found more links to JG during my trip – visiting the

Conservation



After the success of saving Princess Royal pithead baths things started to quieten down. SWRDA have still not decided what to do with the building so in the New Year it looks as though I shall have to chase them again to make a decision.

The next challenge is to try and save some if not all of the buildings at Northern United which planners will be making decisions about next year. I have written to Alan Baxter Associates, Urban Practitioners and the Cinderford Regeneration Board with details of various reports I have received over the years and I shall look forward to working with them and Maurice Bent next year.

Ron and I will shortly be sending a letter to the Coal Authority regarding the capping of various pits in the Forest asking once again that a descriptive plaque or stone be allowed at each capped site to enable future generations identify each pit.

Local History Committee of GRCC

The Local History afternoon of the GRCC will be held on Saturday 3 October 2009 at Sir Thomas Rich's school. The theme will be 'Housing the Poor'

Gloucestershire County Archaeology service has been awarded £49,400 to be used to help coordinate a programme of community involvement and if any society has a project involving field work, historical research or parish surveys where they would benefit from working with the archaeology service we need to contact Anna Morris (01452 425705)

A book that may be of interest to both family and local historians has been published by BGAS. Listing over 6000 convictions giving the name of the offender, victim, complaint and witness together with the offenders occupation and where he or she lived it has a comprehensive index allowing the reader to find names of people and places. The 'Calendar of Summary Convictions at Petty Sessions 1781-1837, pp530, edited by Irene Wyatt, is published by Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 2008, priced £30.

Opening hours of Gloucestershire Archives, formerly known as the Record Office are to be changed. From they will be:-

Closed Monday

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: **9.00am - 5.00pm**

Thursday: **9.00am - 6.30pm** Saturday: **9.00am - 1.00pm**

Research & Development

CHAPEL PHOTOS



For some time Averil Kear has been researching nonconformist chapels in the Forest of Dean. In conjunction with this she has built a large collection of photos, many of them taken by the late Renford Key and John Shulston. We are now engaged in scanning these photographs to add to our database. Averil will welcome any photographs that you may have of Forest chapels, particularly if they date from earlier times. Please contact Averil or Ron Beard if you have any that you think might be of interest.

IMAGES OF ENGLAND



New Inn, West Dean. Photo: John Sheraton

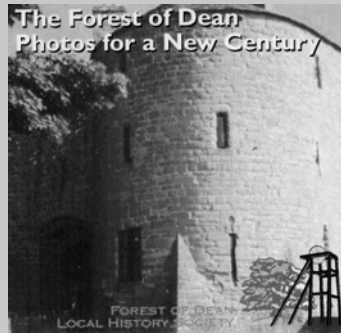


Toll House on road junction to Bream. Photo: Angela Bruist

Some of you may be aware of the collection of 'Images of England' which has been built up by English Heritage. The images are photographs of historic buildings and monuments which have been taken by local volunteers. If you have not seen them I suggest that you 'Google' Images of England which will lead you to the website. There you can search through the collection. For instance if you enter 'Littledean' in the search box you will find a collection of 30 photographs, most of which are of 'our' Littledean. Each photograph has description and further information, including the name of the photographer and you will find that several were taken by FoDLHS member John Sheraton. The site is well worth a visit. Furthermore English heritage are looking for ideas as to how they can supplement their collection and make

it more useful to users. If you have any ideas please pass them on to one of our committee members and we will see that they are forwarded to English Heritage.

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED



Many of you will have purchased our CD of Photos for a New Century which we produced in the year 2000. These photographs were taken by members of the Society of subjects of their own choosing which represented Forest history. We are now preparing to update these photographs to show what changes have occurred in the first ten years of the century. Consequently we shall soon be asking for volunteers to retake the subjects that were included on the initial CD.

In order to keep to the ten year interval the photographs will need to be taken between mid 2009 and mid 2010. Some of the original photographers will, no doubt, wish to repeat their exercise, but some of them are no longer with us and so new volunteers will be needed.

Originally around 250 photographs were taken, and 100 of these were selected for the CD. Some of those not selected could serve to replace subjects which have disappeared. We should also like to include another 100 photographs made up of some of the original sites that were not used plus other entirely new ones. If you would like to be involved in this new venture please contact me as I will probably coordinate the project.

Ron Beard

Future Events

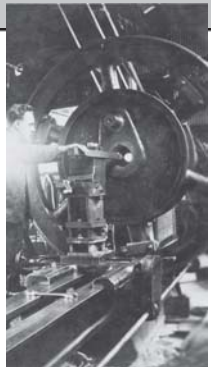
GREASING THE WHEELS

There will be a mini conference highlighting the changes in selected industries of Gloucester, the Stroud Valleys and the Forest of Dean. Speakers Ian Mackintosh, Ian Pope and Ray Wilson. The title of the day is Greasing the wheels: Gloucestershire's Engineering Innovations. It will be held at the Glos. Archives on Saturday 14th March 2009 9.30 am - 1:00 pm.

Prior booking is required as spaces are limited.

Entrance is FREE !! To book contact the Archives on 01452 425295 or email

archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk



HOUSE HISTORY WORKSHOP

Averil Kear is running a **House History Workshop** on Monday 26th January at Lydney Library 9.30am - 12.30pm. The cost for each participant is £10 which should be sent when booking to the Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street Gloucester, GL1 3DW. You must book a place with the Gloucestershire Archives on 01452 425295. I expect this to be popular so get in early if you want to come along.