



FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
July 2012



Where in the world?

*Join us on our Coach Outing
to find*

*"Hidden Corners of the Forest of Dean"
on Saturday 18th August*

THE FOREST OF
DEAN LOCAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY

News

JULY 2012

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Editors Notes

Welcome to the summer edition of the Newsletter!

For those of you who haven't yet experienced a Society 'outing', I can thoroughly recommend the coach excursion on Saturday 18th August, when Averil Kear and our Chairman Cecile Hunt will use their extensive knowledge of the history of the Forest area to guide you to 'Hidden Corners of the Forest of Dean'. The coach excursion offers not only a chance to learn something new about the fantastic place we live in, but also to socialise with fellow members!

The New Regard editorial team report that good progress is being made in the preparation of Issue 27, which, all being well, will be available for sale at the AGM in October. To whet your appetite, amongst the usual broad range of features, two articles will carry a botanical theme. The first article with this topic of discourse will look at Flora Klickmann, who was a well known author and editor, and in her later years, whilst living at Brockweir, wrote the well known 'Flower Patch' series of books. She was also a keen environmentalist, who wrote of the virtues of gardening without artificial chemicals and the value of natural fertilisers long before they became fashionable. The second botanically related article studies the early introduction of knotweed as an ornamental plant. Now regarded as a pest species, when introduced to Britain by the Victorians as an ornamental plant, it was actually awarded a gold medal at a prestigious flower show! The next edition of the New Regard also includes a study of the corn mills of West Gloucestershire, and presents an article on the 1981 Forestry Bill and differing perspectives on the use of the Forest.

Finally some sad news to report. Former Chairman of the Society Gordon Clissold recently passed away. Gordon worked as a surveyor for the Ordnance Survey, and carried his love of maps into retirement. He was very well known for his re-creation of the 1608 map of the Forest of Dean. He was also one of the founders of the Friends of the Dean Heritage Museum. He will be greatly missed.

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.

News From The Chair

During the last couple of months members of your Committee have been busily involved in a couple of all day events. One was organised by your Society, the other saw several volunteers help promote the various aspects of your society during a Lydney Festival event at the Yacht Club.

On a very warm day in May members met at The Fancy Viewpoint, near Cinderford. For a full report on this very well received event please see the centre spread.

On Saturday 23rd June volunteers from your committee attended Lydney Yacht Clubs 50th anniversary celebration weekend. On a rather blustery day several committee members manned a stand; answering many and varied questions, not only on the history of the docks but all parts of the forest. The display boards had material on conservation work done by the society, projects funded by grants, and information on industrial activities which tied in the forest with the docks. On the Sunday, Robin Warren led a two part guided walk around the upper and lower basins, and the canal; with Paul Barnett giving a short talk on the Lydney Hulks in the first half of the walk.

The society attends several events every year and via our display boards and other artefacts, passes on a taster of the rich and varied history of the Forest of Dean. These events are a two way transfer of knowledge and information; I personally always come away with additional knowledge about the history of our area. If you would like to join in by coming along and helping out on the society stand, if only for an hour, contact either myself or Mary Sullivan.

Talking about volunteers; your Committee is facing a problem in October when your current General Secretary will stand down. Mary Sullivan will have completed three years in post and in accordance with the society's constitution **must** stand down to make way for a new person. We currently have no-one replace her. I am asking members who would consider taking on this position to please come forward. We do not have a Treasurer; due to unforeseen problems the new Treasurer had to step down after a couple of months in post. I am now not only Chairman but have had to step back into the Treasurers shoes. This is not an ideal situation; with the additional burden of not having a secretary in post the society may not be able to function properly. If you would like your society to continue to give you the quality of events and level of governance that you currently enjoy please consider putting your name forward as secretary; this is a termed post of three years maximum.



*Cecile and Averil Kear at the
Lydney Yacht Club event*

Enclosed with this newsletter is a questionnaire. Your Committee try to gage what members really want from their society but without your input we are not really sure if we are getting this balance right, please complete the questionnaire so that we can try and make sure we get it right.

Also enclosed is the booking form for this years coach trip – it is a little bit of a mystery tour – I look forward to seeing you on the outing.

Cecile Hunt - Chairman



Winifred Foley - An Appreciation

Winifred Foley is famous because she put the beautiful Forest of Dean on the literary map of the world. Her first and best book was: *A CHILD IN THE FOREST*, [1974], which is an autobiographical account of her girlhood in the 1920s.



Winifred Foley's marital home

Comparable with Laurie Lee's *CIDER WITH ROSIE*, [1959], Winifred's honest tale of grinding poverty, became a best-seller topping half a million sales. Her reminiscences first took shape in dog-eared handwritten exercise books and when discovered by the B.B.C. was attractively packaged in serial form for radio's *Woman's Hour*. Her moving memoirs ironically sold best to a middle class readership and joined the genre which contained *LARK RISE TO CANDLEFORD* and *DIARY OF AN EDWARDIAN LADY*.

Born in 1914 in the mining village of Brierley, near Cinderford, the family were hard-pressed, like so many others, between the wars. Winifred Mary Mason vividly recalled her upbringing in language unashamedly earthy, unsentimental and stark. Her father, Charlie, was a coal miner who read widely and learned sign language to converse with the village's lone deaf mute. The cottage where the Mason's lived, had no gas, electricity or running water, and there was never enough to eat, but she shared her father's love of books. Her impoverished upbringing marked her for life and shaped her views.

The women of the family had to be as tough as the men. Much of Winifred's early narrative concerns her mother's humiliation in cadging from mostly sympathetic shopkeepers and trades people. It reminded me very much of Alan Bennett's *UNTOLD STORIES*, [2005], where the Bennetts always felt their extreme awkwardness in social encounters, constantly feared humiliation and were hypersensitive about their position. The cottage back garden featured prominently in the Mason family's lives, supplying vegetables and fruit. The importance of keeping a pig was the first impressionistic account of a grunter who supplied winter food and supported the cottage economy. The surrounding woodland also offered wood for the small range providing heat, hot water and cooking.

Her book captured the unique local dialect and vernacular phraseology. A typical line from Winifred's young brother during a hot afternoon walking to Granny and Grancher's cottage through the woods is: "Phew, I be as 'ot as a fresh 'osses turd".

Like other girls, Winifred had no prospect of a job within the Forest when her schooling ended at 14. Sent to far away London and into domestic service she was desperately homesick and moved from being a skivvy to general maid to kitchen maid and waitress at a Lyons Corner House. She met her husband, Syd, at an Anti-Fascist Rally and moved back to a tied-cottage at Huntley. After 22 years of bringing up 4 children in the woodlands of the Huntley Manor Estate, the Foley's moved to Cliffords Mesne near Newent.

Winifred Foley died on 21st March, 2009, aged 94, in Cheltenham, much loved.

David J Harrison M.A.

Research Tips - Using Maps As A Research Tool

By Cecile Hunt, Chairman



Taylor's Map 1777 - Awre area

Are resources for finding the history of your house a bit thin on the ground? Then try a map. Even if piles of data and information are available they are still not a source to be overlooked. The following is just a taster as to what is available.

Over the centuries many different types of maps have been produced; and Ordnance Survey maps are one of the best places to start. Find one of the oldest editions you can of the area in which your house sits, if your house is

not showing on that particular edition work your way forward until it (hopefully) appears, this should give you a good indication of when your house was built. The Ordnance Survey itself was started in 1791, from this survey 'First Edition' or 'Old Series' maps were produced between 1801 and 1873. In 1840 a new survey commenced and by the 1870's the 'New Series' of maps started to be published.

Tithes, or one tenth, of farmers yearly produce were for many centuries paid to the local church, normally in kind. The system was always a problem to administer and in 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act was passed aimed at converting payments in kind to tithe rentcharge; the last tithe payments were made in 1977. To enable the rentcharge to be calculated, land had to be surveyed and valued, these surveys led to tithe maps and apportionments being drawn up. These maps, and their accompanying apportionments, give invaluable information on buildings and fields, who the owners' were; and who the tenants were.

In 1910 the Liberal Government brought in the 1910 Act or 'Lloyd George Survey'. This Act enabled Valuation Office records to be made, for taxation purposes, showing the use and valuation of land and buildings at this time. Detailed plans were drawn up based on Ordnance Survey maps for each property over 50 acres and worth more than £75 an acre. These maps should have accompanying field books, showing values of property and descriptions that vary in content.

A National Farm Survey was carried out during the Second World War; documents produced by this survey include maps and inspectors reports. These maps give graphic descriptions of approximately 300,000 holdings in England and Wales of five acres or more. The inspectors' reports cover such things as tenure, conditions of farm, water and electricity and management and a general comments section.

Two county maps of the Forest of Dean to try are; Bryant map of 1823/24 and Taylor's map of 1777. The Dean Forest Encroachment Act generated Walk plans; these show buildings in evidence at different dates from 1787 to after 1812. Estate maps of the large estates of the Forest of Dean area of Gloucestershire can provide all sorts of information and if you have access to the Internet try www.old-maps.co.uk.

Plaques & Monuments



The Everard Oak & Plaque

After National Service, John Everard trained at the Dean Forestry Training School, later becoming an Assistant Forester at Hurn in the New Forest in 1957. Some 12 years later John returned to education at Bangor University where he gained a forestry degree in 1963. The degree enabled John to make the step up from Forester to District Officer. Following graduation, John returned to the Forestry Commission to work on Work Study, first at Loch Carron and then in the Great Glen.

In 1964 John was promoted to Assistant District Officer at Fochabers. Four years later he was posted to Silvicultural Research at Alice Holt, working on species and fertilisers.

His career progressed rapidly and in 1974 he was posted as District Officer for Rothbury Forest District in Northumberland. In 1978 John worked as Assistant Conservator, Harvesting and Marketing, for South Wales. When the South Wales office closed in 1986 John took up the prestigious and challenging post of Deputy Surveyor in the Forest of Dean.

During his ten years as Deputy Surveyor, John transformed management of broadleaves in the Dean, introducing the shelter wood system and experimenting extensively with natural regeneration techniques. He also oversaw the opening of Beechenhurst Lodge and laid the seeds of the Forest cycling trails. He was always keen to ensure that the Dean remained 'accessible'.

He was awarded the OBE on his retirement in 1996. John Everard died on 1st January 2011.

A mature oak, dedicated by the Verderers to John, stands in High Meadow in The Dean to mark his contribution to the Forest and its oaks.



How to find the Everard Oak



Take the A1436 from Coleford towards Monmouth. Pass through the village of Staunton and follow the double white line downhill for about 400 metres. Exactly where it ends, there is a Forestry Commission track entrance on the right (not visible in advance) and a large car-parking area.

From the parking area, take the well-made Forestry track, keeping right at the fork just beyond the barrier. Suddenly everything opens out and there are views down the valley, with the magnificent 'Everard' oak at its head.



On a beautiful spring day, Cecile Hunt welcomed 45 delegates to New Fancy before asking Liz and Dave Berry to tell how the Geomap was designed and built. Using the Geomap as a prompt, Ron Beard then described the geology of the Forest of Dean.



Ron Beard then lead the party to the Miners Memorial where he explained how the designers, John Wakefield and Graham Tyler, had produced the three legged memorial, the legs representing coal, stone, and wood respectively. Ron explained that the Memorial Project was dedicated to over 600 miners who died at work in the Dean.



Everyone then made their way to the Speech House to hear Vice President Ian Standing (left) talk on 'The History of the Royal Forest'. Ian's excellent speech was the ultimate pocket history of how the Forest was governed and managed, delivered in just 40 minutes!

Next Jon Hoyle (above), Senior Project Manager at Gloucestershire County Council Archaeological Service, explained how the LiDAR survey has been carried out over the Forest area. He went on to talk about how the results of the LiDAR survey are being followed up with archaeological digs. Digs at four sites seem to indicate that four small Roman forts may have been identified!



Lunch in the Verderers Court Room at the Speech House
(Photos courtesy of Mary Sullivan & Keith Walker)



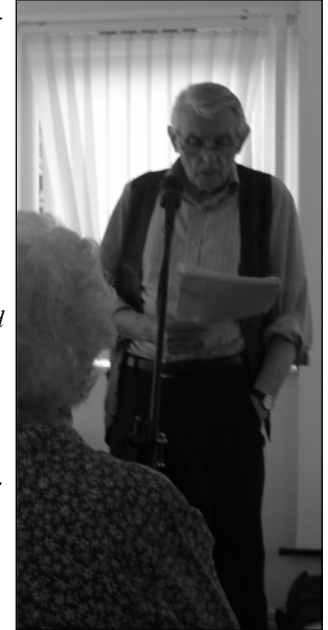
Following Jon Hoyle's talk, members and guests made their way to the Verderers Court Restaurant, where they enjoyed a two course meal. (left).

After lunch Keith Morgan, (right) the Coleford barber, entertained everyone. Speaking in 'proper' Forest dialect, Keith performed his 'stand-up routine' including many very funny stories which had his audience in stitches.

The final speaker was Simon Howell of the Forestry Commission. Amongst other things, Simon is responsible with a colleague for controlling the numbers of animals in the Forest. Apparently there are 100,000 grey squirrels busily damaging trees in the Dean.!

However the main thrust of Simon's talk was to explain how political factors, and wars, determined historically just which tree varieties are grown locally. In particular he illustrated how the proportion of conifers grown has varied over recent years, with the Forestry Commission constantly trying to seek the balance between wood production and amenity. Simon also told how the Cyril Hart Arboretum came into being, and gave examples of some of the species to be found there.

The History Day was a great success, with delegates enjoying a good balance of speakers, with an injection of humour which lightened proceedings. Here's to the next one!



Hidden History - Under the Floor!!

The History Society has been asked for some help by a couple who have just bought a house (built in 1837) in the Forest of Dean (Cinderford) and who are renovating it. Whilst pulling the floor joists from their place in the wall, they found what looks like a small bundle of strangely plaited hair, a tiny piece of a page from a book and a bird skeleton.



The couple intend to put the items back, but they wonder if this is some kind of old charm / superstition. The internet provides evidence of many different 'walled up' items being found over time, including skulls, cats, brooms, shoes, coins, and bullocks hearts. However no evidence could be found for 'walled up' hair and birds! If you have any ideas about what the collection of items might represent, please contact Averil Kear. (a. Kear@homecall.co.uk)

Meetings In Review

"OUTRAGE IN THE FOREST" by Averil Kear (OR "Keep away from the Kears"!)



Nags Head, Yorkley

On Saturday, 14th April, 2012, fifty two members gathered at Bream to hear Averil's magnificent Talk on the doings of one the Kears. The opening slide showed a palm fringed beach in sunny Bermuda and the opening announcement, which Averil proclaimed, that her research started in 1989 B.C.[Before Computers] into her husband, Alec's Family Tree. Please note, not her family, her husband's.

Richard Kear, aka; Bermuda Dick, was born in 1826 in Oldcroft, N.E. of Lydney & S.W. of Blakeney, where many Kears still live in Kear held territory. The Encroachment Map of 1834 showed the stone built cottage, two up, two down, quite clearly. In 1850 Richard married Charlotte Young and they were blessed with a daughter, Phoebe. They were active in Whitecroft Chapel and professed to be Ranters. Averil showed a remarkable engraving which depicted said Ranters in their revels with much evidence of dancing erect males and some kissing of btms. Not our usual Saturday afternoon sedate entertainment!

We then moved swiftly to the nub of this fascinating piece of local historical research..30th July, 1851, saw seven men drinking at the Nag's Head, Yorkley, labourers, colliers, agricultural workers, but they were not alone. According to P.C. Ellison they all became engaged in serious misbehaviour. Their victim was an Irish woman, Mary Mc Carthy, a woman of loose morals who had been a cook, but was of poor character and already the mother of two illegitimate children. A nearby shack in the Forest was the scene of the outrage which was dignified by the ugly word – rape.

Eventually, all seven offenders were rounded up and appeared in Court in Newnham and Gloucester, being soundly tried beforehand by newspapers and public opinion. Sentenced to transportation, that well known cure-all of the 19th century which sent 165,000, to Van Diemen's Land and elsewhere. In Richard Kear's case, Bermuda, via the evil Millbank Penitentiary, where warders who served in this star-shaped hell-o-Earth, were still chalking their way around the labyrinthine corridors after many years service.

Bermuda is a 300 island cluster off Carolina and has no natural source of fresh water, so groves and storage tanks assume a great importance. The hot sticky climate makes life uncomfortable for all, and convict stone cutters in straw hats and arrowed kit, in particular. Richard's cell was terrible, dark, cramped and alive with cockroaches.

In 1863 he was released and returned to the Forest. His parents were dead and his wife believing that "transportation for life" meant precisely that, had remarried, but at least his daughter, Phoebe welcomed him back after his ordeal. He worked hard, was a decent, upright neighbour and friend to everyone and became a pillar of the community.

It is thanks to Averil's searchlight beam of steady, painstaking research that this genuine insight into a minor incident has been so clearly illuminated. What she has done so successfully is to shed light upon the 19th century context and circumstances of the ordinary lives of Foresters, all-be-the Kears, about whom we have now been warned!

David J. Harrison M.A

'A Stroll Around Blakeney by Film' with Ernie Hale

On Thursday 31st March, some 41 members made their way to a new venue, Yorkley Village Hall.

It was a delight to hear the Forest dialect of 70 year old local man Ernie Hale taking us on a 'Stroll Around Blakeney' The medium was not film, as advertised, but Vignettes of short scenes played from a computer and overdubbed with Ernie describing the scenes shown in the village. Old images were interspersed with modern views



of the same place and Ernie was able to give the history of what the building was originally used for (old shops etc) and give potted histories of the people who lived in the buildings.

Ernie strayed outside of the village to explore all parts within the bounds of Blakeney parish. He even solved the mystery of where the portal of the Purton Steam Carriage Road abandoned tunnel was to be found before it was latterly buried!

Ernie clearly hit the mark with his 'film' because he was bombarded with questions after the talk and during the welcome tea break which followed the meeting.

Keith Walker

A Snapshot in Time - The Forest of Dean in 1735



St Briavels Castle

THE FOREST OF DEAN IN 1735.—The following advertisement (slightly curtailed) from the *Gloucester Journal* of July 22, 1735, throws some light on the social condition of the Forest of Dean at that date :—

" Whereas a notorious and villainous gang of Persons have several times of late assembled themselves together in a riotous manner, and committed divers disorders by breaking open the Pounds at the Castle of St. Briavels and Park End Lodge, and discharged from thence several cattle. And

upon Saturday night, the 5th instant, the same gang came to the Lodge of Mr. R. Worgan, entered his garden, beat down his beans, cut up his cabbages and apple-trees, broke his windows, and part of the Pound-wall; then adjourned to the Speech-House lodge, which is in the possession of George James, commonly called Captain Whithorne. Upon their coming they immediately fell to work on the Pound, but being desired by the Captain, who rose to the window, to disperse themselves, they returned him for answer a brace of slugs in at the window. The Captain upon that ply'd them warmly with small shot, who sent him in return a great quantity of slugs and balls, so that almost a continual fire lasted for near half an hour, when their ammunition being spent, they had something else to pick besides stones out of the pound-wall. On the morrow one of the gang was taken, and on Monday committed by Thomas Pyrke, Esq., to Gloucester Castle; but his company being apprised of it, seven of them disguised themselves in a dreadful manner, and arm'd with four guns and three swords, came several miles over the Forest, but finding their comrade gone too long before, returned back to pull off their ragged petticoats and clean their too much like Devils faces. But it is to be hoped the gentlemen of the county will lend an assisting hand to cut a stop to these resolute desperate fellows. N.B. They are supposed to be what are called Fanside-Men, and come from in or about Clowerwall."

Thanks to Averil Kear for this insightful exert from Gloucestershire Notes and Queries Vol III, 1887. There were obviously no ASBO's in 1735!

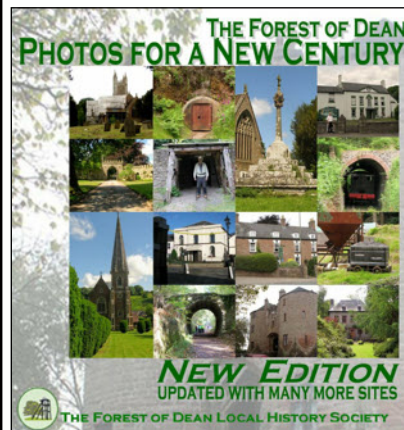
MEMBERSHIP NEWS *from Liz Berry*

One more reminder to those on standing orders to update them to the new rate of £10 for a single member and £15 for more than one member at the same address. Most of these standing orders will be debited from your account on 1st October, so this update needs to be effected before then, otherwise your subs to the Society will be incorrect for a further year!

We welcome the following new members to the Society:

Mr Andrew Blake, AONB Officer, Monmouth
Mr N & Mrs J Webster, Viney Hill
Mrs K Fisher, Pillowell
Mr I Henning, Pontshill
Mrs J Moss, Lydney
Mr S & Mrs G Payne, Lydney
Mr R Marrows, Lydney

Photos For A New Century - New Edition!!



A snapshot of the Dean's historic sites and monuments in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Year!

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 photographers were all volunteers and were given a free hand regarding the subjects that they took subject to the above general principle.

Produced by Ron Beard, **The New Edition** includes the 100 original sites, 44 additional sites from the 2000 exercise and 7 completely new sites. The 144 sites

that were photographed for the year 2000 have all been re-photographed to record any changes (or lack of changes) that have occurred over the last ten years. Improvements in technology have enabled larger images to be shown and we have also been able to include more than one photograph of several of the sites.

You can order a copy of the new CD at the special members price of £5.50 via our website (www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk) or you can purchase a copy at any of the Society's indoor meetings.

Cast Iron Road Markers of the Forest of Dean

Buried in the undergrowth at the junction of New Road and Blakeney Hill Road in Blakeney (365876,207134) is this example of a cast iron road marker. As can be seen from the lettering the plate records that a section of road was 'made at the expense of the Crown for the inhabitants and district' in 1905. What can't be seen on the photograph is the name of the Deputy Surveyor of the Forest, which seems to indicate that the road was funded by the Office of Woods. It is known that other marker plates still exist in the forest area, and some quick research seems to indicate that the plates might be unique in the United Kingdom.

If you know of the location of any other such road marker plates in the Forest area, then Keith Walker (01594 843310) would be grateful for the information in support of his research.



Photo courtesy of Ron Beard