

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
July 2013

Known as Hiwoldestone in Anglo-Saxon times.
With a nearby motte and bailey 'Castle-a-buff',
and adjacent coaxial field systems??

Solve the mystery of this place by joining our
coach tour on Saturday 17th August.

Full details inside!

THE FOREST OF
DEAN LOCAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY

News

JULY 2013

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Editors Notes

Firstly I would like to say 'thanks' on behalf of the Committee to members Kate Ellis, Ian Pope, Daphne Lane and Pat Morris who attended the History Event on 22nd June, and who offered information and help towards our developing 1914 project. Some preparatory work has been undertaken by Cecile Hunt and I to see if there are resources available which will help us explore the subject of the 'Home Front in World War I in the Forest of Dean'. We were able to identify a number of themes which will be further explored and recorded as the project gathers pace. The themes include Control of Aliens, Food Production and Control, Liquor Control Regulations, Refugees from Belgium, War Savings, and the Lydbrook Cable Works. A notice board display featuring the themes was prepared and shown at the recent History Event, and you should be able to see the display for yourselves at one of the forthcoming indoor meetings. Do you have some information you would like to contribute towards the 1914 project? Or better still would you like to get involved and carry out some research? We are still seeking volunteers to get involved with the project. Help is available if this would be the first time you were to carry out research. So please don't be shy! Get in touch with our Chair, Cecile Hunt, or myself, our contact details are shown to the left.

Any number of local development proposals have been put forward recently for either supermarkets or housing estates. Rest assured that our busy Conservation Officer, Simon Moore, is keeping abreast of these proposals. Simon makes representation to the planning authorities on behalf of the Society if any of the development proposals impact upon historic buildings or other traces of our heritage. For example a recent proposal for housing development in Lydney will potentially impact upon the route of the 'Dean Road'. Simon will be making representation to the developers to help preserve the route of the 'road' in the most sympathetic way possible. Simon will be updating us on his work on behalf of the Society in a future edition of the newsletter.

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

As summer(?) is now here; the outdoor events have started. The walk around Parkend on a Sunday afternoon in May was well attended, on, so far, one of the hottest days of the year!

Some of the committee, myself included, volunteered to promote the Society at the annual event put on by Lydney Yacht Club; this was on the 15th June – the weather was not kind and after a couple of hours the wind was so bad that we had to abandon our pitch as by now the stand and covering were being held down by three of us to stop it disappearing up the river Severn; the Sea Cadets came to our rescue and helped us dismantle everything in double quick time, they then made space, very kindly, in their marquee so that we could start again. My thanks to all on the committee who volunteered for assisting on the day – it was an experience!



As I wrote in my last report the committee were then preparing for the largest outdoor event the society has put on in its 60+ years. The event took place in Naas Lane, Lydney on Saturday June 22nd and the centre pages of the newsletter contain a photo report of the proceedings. Many of the visitors stayed a long time as there was so much to see and do. Refreshments were enjoyed by virtually everyone who visited – many thanks to Joyce Baxter and Teresa Powell who ran the 'canteen' and also a huge thanks to the numerous bakers who supplied such a variety of cakes and savouries for the day.

May I say that an awful lot of work was involved in putting the event together by your committee, and others, over the last few months so that locals, visitors, and members could come along expand their knowledge of 'People in the Forest'. So it was a big disappointment to all involved that so few members came along to support their own Society's summer event. Apart from committee and other members volunteering their time on the day we had only 20 members through the gate. A few of the 45 non-members that came along, and thoroughly enjoyed the event, signed up as members. The committee will now have to consider whether having a summer event is worthwhile, which is a great shame as these events do help towards fulfilling the society's objectives as mandated by the constitution.

The July outing to St Fagan's, organised by Mary Sullivan and Joyce Moss is fast approaching and we have a full coach. In August, there will be the coach trip 'Seeking Early Dean' led by Averil and myself. There is a bit of a mystery towards the end of the trip - see newsletter for more information and booking form.

We would like more members to help contribute to the new project on unusual aspects of how World War 1 affected the forest and its people. Can you please contact either myself or Keith Walker if you are interested in helping – contact details are on the opposite page. There has been an awful lot of information unearthed on the following themes that still needs further research; billeting of Belgium refugees with local families; Parkend Forestry school training of women for forestry purposes; liquor control in the area; land sold off to serving soldiers returning from the war to build houses on.

Hope to see some of you on the coach outings!

Ceceile Hunt

Plaques & Monuments The Coronation Gates - Lydney Park



Before 1850, Lydney and Newerne were two separate villages, the area in between, now Hill Street, was farm land and buildings; as late as 1963 there was an orchard on the site that is now the Library and car park. The way to the church, which served both villages, was a path across open ground called the moorland.

In 1892, Charles Bathurst of Lydney Park, whose estate included most of the farm land in the district, gave the moorland to the

people of Lydney to commemorate the 25th birthday and coming of age of his eldest son, Charles Bathurst, jun. who later became the 1st Viscount Bledisloe. It was to be preserved as open green space, and was professionally landscaped and planted with trees and shrubs to become the attractive Bathurst Park that we know today. Over the years a band stand, football pitches, tennis courts, a bowling green and children's play area have been added and the park has been used and appreciated by the people of Lydney and a much wider area for the past 121 years. In the early 1950s, a rose garden was laid out as a war memorial and later a pond was added where an impressive fountain was installed to mark the millennium. To celebrate the Coronation of the Queen, ornamental gates at the entrance from Bathurst Park Road were given and installed by Mr John Watts. The gates were handed over to the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr C H Steel, at a ceremony at the gates in June 1953 and were officially opened by Lord Bledisloe, who thanked Mr Watts for the gates, just one of his many generous gifts to Lydney.

That occasion was commemorated on Sunday, 9th June, when an event was held at the gates in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of both the Queen and the Coronation Gates. The Mayor of Lydney, Mr Bob Berryman, presiding, thanked both the Bathurst family and the Watts family for their continued generosity to the town and welcomed the Mr Robert Bernhays, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, and Rupert, Viscount Bledisloe, great, great grandson of the Charles Bathurst, who had given the park to the town 121 years ago and whose great grandfather, the 1st Lord Bledisloe had been present on both that occasion and at the presentation of the gates, 61 years later. Also present were Mr John Thurston representing the Watts family, with Mr Cecil Watts and Mrs Jane Watts.

Mr Thurston reiterated the words of Lord Bledisloe, 61 years previously, when he had said that Lydney was, for its population and size, a most progressive community, and he commended those early philanthropists who had the foresight to provide a green space in the centre of the town for all the population to enjoy, something that today most towns take for granted but was quite an innovation in the 1890s.

Christine Martyn



Poor Laws and the Workhouse by Cecile Hunt

Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 parishes became responsible for the relief of their poor and various parliamentary acts were passed, amongst these was one of 1576 ordering justices in every area to set-up 'houses of industry'. A 1597 act called upon every parish to appoint 'overseers of the poor', they were to find work for those without it and build 'parish-houses' – the forerunner of the workhouse.

The Poor Law Act of 1601, or 'the 43rd Elizabeth', lasted for about 200 years, virtually unaltered until 1834. It consolidated into one major statute all previous measures and divided poor receiving relief into three categories: able-bodied, impotent poor and the unwilling to work.

All parishes worked independently of each other and a town could be made up of several parishes, Knatchbull's General Workhouse Act of 1723 gave parishes the right to erect workhouses, the Forest of Dean parishes of Ruardean, Mitcheldean, English Bicknor, Awre, Littledean, Westbury-on-Severn, Newland and Newnham either erected workhouses or utilised other dwellings. In 1814 the Newland parish workhouse in Coleford, established in about 1786, advertised for a Matron to '...undertake the Management of this House, where there are upon average about forty paupers...'

The 'Gilbert's Act' of 1782 tried to encourage parishes to combine into unions; the more able-bodied poor were given work outside the workhouse, the impotent poor to receive indoor relief. But, on 18th April 1834 Lord Althorp introduced the Poor Law Amendment Bill which merged parishes across the country into unions, each to be run by a committee elected by ratepayers to be known as Guardians of the Poor; at least one guardian to be elected from each parish of the union with a Central Board of Commissioners supervising the committees. A workhouse was to be the centre of each union and the sole form of relief for the able-bodied. In the Forest of Dean small parish-houses, poor houses and workhouses were closed and the indoor poor were moved into Union workhouses at Westbury, Newent, Ross and Monmouth.

By the 1840's these newly built Union workhouses, together with new rules and regulations on poor relief, were well underway. Relief was still given to people who lived in their own homes, but the authorities actively discouraged this, as they did not want to encourage idleness. Pre 1834 act workhouses had not been used on the same scale, or in the threatening manner, that the new union workhouses were now being applied. By 1913 a workhouse was officially called a 'Poor Law Institution' and in 1929 the Local Government Act abolished boards of governors and many Poor Law Institutions were converted into infirmaries. Westbury workhouse,



Dean Hall Hostel or Westbury Hall to give it its other names; built in about 1790; updated in 1869, was replaced by a modern purpose-built home at the other end of the village in about 1968.

COLEFORD WORKHOUSE.
WANTED, a MATRON, to undertake the Management of this House, where there are upon an Average about forty Paupers. Application may be addressed to John Watts, Overseer, of Newland, and the necessary references as to Character and capability mentioned to him previous to the Vestry Meeting, which will be holden on the 5th of December next, the day of Appointment.
Coleford, Nov. 11, 1814.



Are you receiving our emails? Cheryl Mayo, our Secretary, frequently sends emails to members letting everyone know about interesting events being organised by other societies and other relevant information. If you are not receiving these and would like to, please email Cheryl at cheryl.mayo@btinternet.com to be added to the list.

During my time working at the Gloucestershire Archives, I met Barbara Owen who was busy transcribing the details of the inmates of Littledean House of Correction into paper records. When I retired from the Archives in 2002 I foolishly said

that I would put these details onto a database, making life that much easier for searchers. I then realised the massive task I had volunteered for and so approached three members of FODLHS for their help. Karen Yonge, Janet Berny and Gill Claydon undertook the inputting and last year we all completed the database of 10,982 entries from 1791 to 1923. A true case of dedication on their part so a huge 'Thank You' to all three. This database has now been presented to the Gloucestershire Archives who will make it available to searchers. I have retained a duplicate copy on my computer, so if you think that one of your ancestors might have been in the Littledean House of Correction then send me an email and I will do a search for you.

Averil Kear (a.kear@homecall.co.uk)



Vice Chair and Treasurer Mary Sullivan attends the meetings of the Gloucester Local History Association on behalf of the FODLHS. She reports that at the recent AGM of the GLHA, our own Ben Berry (who edits the newsletter of the GLHA) was awarded an ex gratia payment of £50 for his work in designing and producing the newsletter of the GLHA.

Ben is also a committee member of the FODLHS and is busy helping in the production of the next edition of the New Regard. Congratulations to Ben!

"Sweet Chestnut in the Dean" – Rob Jarman is just starting a research project to try to date when sweet chestnut arrived in the Dean and where it came from - and who brought it here! We have the oldest written record in UK for chestnut - in 1153 Henry II gave the tithes of chestnuts from the Dean to the newly-founded Flaxley Abbey. "Castiard" and "Chestnuts Wood" near Flaxley bear evidence to this. Rob will be using soil pollen and tree genetics to date and give provenance - and is also seeking archaeological and historical evidence for sweet chestnut - e.g. place or field names, very large pollards or coppice stools, etc. He is especially interested to know of chestnut trees which produce big nuts like 'marrons' which he can genetically sample. Anyone who can help Rob in his research can contact him via email: (robinajarman@gmail.com)



Member Keith Walker recently received an award from the British Association for Local History for reaching the short list of the annual 'Research & Publication' awards for his article "Where was Sailors Island", which was published in the New Regard issue 26. Keith is shown receiving his award from Professor David Hey at the BALH AGM on June 8th.

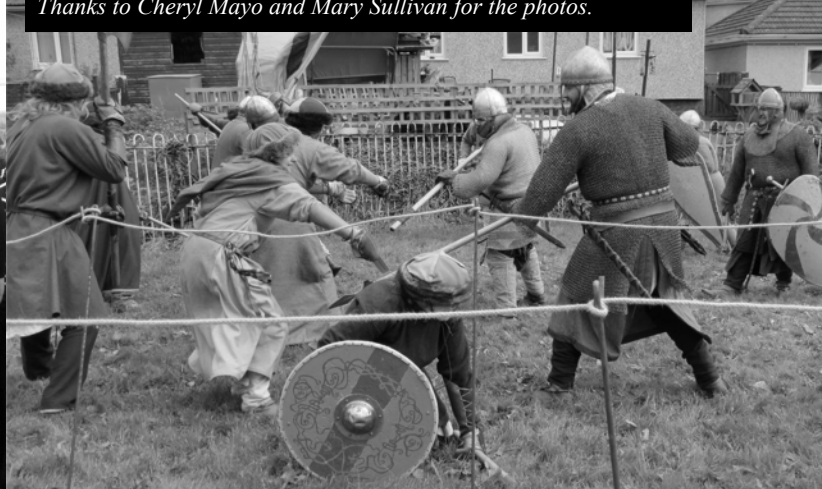


On Saturday June 15th, the History Society held a History Event, 'People in the Forest', at the Youth & Community Centre in Lydney.

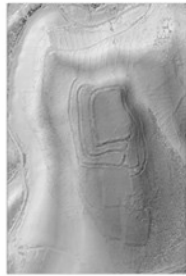
The photo montage shows (from top left clockwise):

A demonstration of salmon putcheon construction; Roger Drury as Warren James presenting 'John Harris was there'; the F.W. Harvey Society giving a poetry reading;; the FODLHS stands; the Gloucestershire Constabulary Archive Group display; John Putley of Gloucester Archives showing some Normans how to use a quill pen!; the Normans 'Taking on the Poachers in the Forest'; the DAG and BGAS stands; and finally a view of the main hall.

Thanks to Cheryl Mayo and Mary Sullivan for the photos.



Meetings In Review *with Joyce Moss*



On **Thursday 21st March**, Jon Hoyle, the County Archaeologist, talked about “**The Hidden Archaeology of the Forest**”.

Compared with the rest of Gloucestershire, the Forest has revealed far fewer archaeological sites, because it is covered by trees. An Iron Age hillfort near Flaxley was too prominent to escape notice but the task of walking in undergrowth and spotting features has been difficult. However, all this changed when LIDAR was made available in 2004. This is an aerial photographic technique which removes the trees from the finished pictures to reveal the ground beneath. The Forestry Commission and English Heritage paid for a

survey of 278 square kilometers of Forest. 1,700 earthworks were found and compared with existing maps and aerial photographs. By 2011, four features were chosen for investigation. One of the most interesting was a circular enclosure on Tidenham Chase set with small stones on a bank. This is probably a Bronze Age ritual monument or ring cairn, like similar ones nearby in Wales. There was evidence of burial mounds in the area too, related to the ring cairns.

Then a series of enclosure systems with linear terraces was found. Those under the trees have produced Iron Age and Roman pottery. These field systems may be related to hillfort sites, like Lydney or to small circular enclosures like those found at Soudley and Flaxley, with ditches and banks. These may have been farmsteads, though the discovery of iron slag indicates smelting. Finally, came the discovery of hill top Roman fortlets. These are the size of a playing field with rounded corners. The easiest to see is Ruardean Woodside, but there are 5 others. These could have guarded the iron workings or been used by Roman soldiers going forward into Wales, in the 1st century. There is evidence of 3rd century re-occupation for smelting. In its history, the Forest has frequently had parts cleared for settlement and industry, which have been replanted. Though there were no towns, Roman villas were present at Lydney and Woolaston, for example, and would have had farms attached.

On **Saturday 6th April** some 45 members and guests heard fellow member Freda Margrett talk about **Welsh Bicknor**, the isolated small picturesque community situated beneath Coppett Hill, within a loop of the River Wye, opposite English Bicknor.



Freda divided her talk into four parts, and started by describing the early history of the estate, demonstrating ultimately how the lands came into English royal ownership. The journey through royal lineage led us to Lady Margaret Montague, (a descendant of Edward 1st), and her husband. They owned the manor, then known as Greenfield at the time of the birth of Henry IV's son, Henry, in Monmouth in 1387. Henry was brought up on the estate by the Montagues, and later the name of the manor was changed to 'Courtfield' by Henry IV to reflect the time his son (Henry V) spent there as a child.

The focus then switched to the history of St Margaret's church at Welsh Bicknor. Many pictures were shown to illustrate the simple beauty of the current church (built in 1858 at a cost of £2600). We learnt that the last vicar to reside at Welsh Bicknor was the Reverend Aldrich Blake (1867 – 1904). Sadly we discovered that the church is now redundant and for sale, and is rapidly deteriorating.

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Freda then gave a personal account of the time she spent living with her father, mother, sister and two brothers in the Old Rectory at Welsh Bicknor during the 1930's. It seems that she spent an idyllic childhood living adjacent to the River Wye. The family were religious and performed many duties in the adjacent church including bell ringing and organ 'pumping'. Their lives were shattered when her two brothers were 'lost, presumed dead' during the Sec-



On **Sunday 19th May**, Cecile Hunt led a **History Walk Around Parkend**. The village seems like a tourist destination now, but its past has been very different. After passing the eighteenth century Fountain Inn, we crossed the railway bridge and stopped to see the Dean Forest Railway train parked at the station. Originally, the line was owned by the Severn – Wye railway and ran from Lydney to Lydbrook, carrying coal, iron and other industrial goods and, after 1875, passengers.

We continued up the hill to the church which was finished in 1822, through the fundraising efforts of its first vicar, Henry Poole, to serve the newly industrialized villages nearby. This was the church where Warren James, who led the Foresters to destroy crown enclosures in 1831, sometimes worshipped.

As we walked down the hill, we saw mine workings. By 1800, Parkend was full of industry and must have been very polluted. Early bell pits are still visible in the woods. In 1799, a new Ironworks was built in the village and this triggered rapid industrialization. The site lies near the Post Office and the engine house remains as a field centre. The early nineteenth century saw the opening of several large coalmines, like Castlemain and the development of many branch railway lines to industrial workings throughout the Forest. In the 1850's, a stone works and tinsplate works were built next to the Iron Works in the Lyd Valley, but they closed by 1877, because of competition from much larger industrial areas like South Wales and the development of new processes. Coal production finally stopped in 1929 and Parkend was free to become the pleasant little holiday village it now is.

Streamlining Membership Subscriptions



We are now three-quarters of the way through another eventful year of local history activities. The AGM on 5th October will be the official start of our new year.

I have found that taking on the role of Treasurer has kept me quite busy. Each meeting means more takings on the door, on the draw and for teas and publications sold. This is excellent as it is helping to pay the bills without needing to increase membership subscriptions.

I had thought that collecting subs would be the easiest part of the job. Surely all members pay once a year and most would be on time? However, keeping accurate membership records has taken many hours for me and our hard-working membership secretary, Liz.

Standing orders are fine if they work well – the bank should pay the subs on **1st October**. However, many are coming through at all sorts of later dates. Some people have paid Liz a cheque and others cash at meetings. Some have forgotten altogether until reminded. I think we need a simpler system.

With the agreement of the committee I propose that:

- No new members are allowed to set up standing orders
- People wishing to continue using a standing order must ensure it pays on 1st October
- Members renewing their subscriptions will pay them direct to the Treasurer by cash, a cheque or BACS – sort code 401805 account no. 11071963. For reference please put your name and history. See the new renewal form on the website.
- Liz, our membership secretary, will continue to enrol and help new members and distribute news to paid up members.

Your committee members' time is not limitless. Please help us make this part of the job as easy and painless as possible.

Mary Sullivan (Treasurer)

Membership Update

Please will all members note the request above from Mary Sullivan, our Treasurer, to renew membership by October 1st for 2013/14. Could those with standing orders please check with their banks that their subs are debited in October of every year?

Welcome to these new members:

Dr Chris Parsons, Flaxley
Mr John Rocyn-Jones, Ruardean
Mrs Patricia Frost, Lydney

Mr D J Price, Newnham
Mr & Mrs D Andrew, Westbury-on-Severn
Mr Rob Jarman, Newnham.

Liz Berry (Membership Secretary)

Book Review - "Overlooking The Wye"



We are all familiar with the beautiful scenery of the Forest and the Wye Valley right here on our doorstep, but do we ever wonder how it came to be, and do we all take it too much for granted? A quick glance through this book, *Overlooking the Wye*, recently published by Black Dwarf and the Wye Valley AONB will soon put us right, and even those of us who think we are familiar with our local scene will find something that we didn't know. This beautifully produced glossy book, with a mixture of old photographs and paintings, interspersed with modern photos, describes the journey down the River Wye from Ross-on-Wye to Chepstow, from the time it originated in the late 18th century to the present day.

It has been described as the birthplace of tourism, since in 1750, the Rev. John Egerton, Rector of Ross-on-Wye, had a boat built to take his visitors on a two day trip down the river to Chepstow. It had already become popular when the Rev. William Gilpin published *Observations on the River Wye*, illustrated with his own watercolours, in 1783, believed to be the first ever tour guide. By 1800, the trip had become a must for people of taste and fashion, unable to travel on the continent because of the Napoleonic War. Gilpin's description of the picturesque scenery was to lead to the Picturesque movement, attracting poets and painters to the area, including notables such as Turner and Wordsworth.

It is hard to realise now that the river provided the means of transport along the valley in those early days, but a look at the 1845 map at the end of the book shows just how many wharves and landing places there were along the river. Most of them were commercial in origin, doing a thriving trade with Bristol and ports further afield, but soon also to accommodate the tourist trade. The valley was heavily industrialised at that time and strange as it may seem now, that only increased the appeal to those early tourists, as Gilpin said, 'Volumes of thick smoke thrown up at intervals from an iron forge ... add double grandeur to the scene.'

Many of the places illustrated, like Symonds Yat and Tintern, are familiar today, but of others we need reminders. Millstones from Penalt, oak bark at Llandogo and paper mills at Whitebrook are all industries that could well be forgotten for ever if researchers and writers did not produce reminders such as this excellent book. Ruth Waycott is to be commended for her interesting yet succinct text which complements the many superb illustrations. Tourism along the Wye Valley today is a major industry, contributing circa £100m to the local economy. It became an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1971, and more recently the Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £3m to the conservation and preservation of many sites along the valley, of which this book is a record. It is to be recommended to everyone who wants to see our beautiful countryside through fresh eyes

Overlooking the Wye is published by Black Dwarf Publications in conjunction with the Wye Valley AONB. It is available at local bookshops, price £7.50

Christine Martyn