

# the Forest of Dean Local History Society

July 2010

news



**Take a fresh look at Goodrich Castle!**  
**Join our tour on Saturday 10th July**

**Full details inside this issue**

THE FOREST OF  
DEAN LOCAL  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY

## News

**JULY 2010**

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## Editors Notes

As can be seen below, our extended summer programme is proving very successful with many people turning up for all of our various functions. I had wondered what Keith Walker could find to say about Slag Blocks in Gloucestershire, but it proved quite fascinating, was well attended and I shall certainly look at stone walls through different eyes in future. The History Fair was also well attended, the children's event being popular although some people had not been aware that they were on – grandparents please note, and we must improve our advertising in future. We now have three outdoor events to look forward to during the summer months, details of which are shown below.

As might be expected all this extra activity adds to the cost of running the Society. Charges for speakers at meetings are rising all the time, although we are fortunate in having so many members of the Society who are willing and able to share their expertise with us. The cost of all forms of communication continues to rise; I expect there are quite a few members who can remember when it cost twopence ha'penny to post a letter in contrast to over 6/- (32p) today.

The new community centre in Coleford, the Main Place, is more expensive than the old –and rather shabby – hall, so we have been looking around for alternative venues, of which there seem to be quite a few which would suit our needs at a lower price. The programme for the remainder of this year will remain as printed on the membership card, but next year's programme will vary, so please remember to check the venue of meetings.

You will be pleased to know that our Hon. Treasurer keeps a very tight check on your money but as she says, every little helps, including the income from our raffles at the meetings. All of the prizes are donated, usually by the same people, so we are appealing to all members to sort through their cupboards and bring along any items that they think would be suitable and that someone else would love to own.

*Christine Martyn*



## Membership

We are delighted to welcome several new members to the Society, many as a result of our History Fair last month. These are:

Ms S Budgen, Wimbledon  
 Mr R Caulkett, Micheldean  
 Ms G Croft & Mr T Cowhig, Micheldean  
 Mr R G Marshall, Goodrich  
 Mr R & Mrs V Brown, Lydbrook  
 Mr T & Mrs J Weaver, Bream  
 Mr R A Needham, Littledean  
 Mr & Mrs B Marrott, Coleford  
 Mr C J Howell, Coleford  
 Mr E & Mrs N Moore, Drybrook  
 Miss A Woolacott, Leckhampton  
 Mr A Hall, Huntley

Mr A Hall, Huntley  
 Mr I & Mrs A Foulds, Coalway  
 Ms L McBride, Tutshill  
 Ms C Baker, Lydney  
 Mr N & Mrs G Costley, Flaxley  
 Mr E & Mrs G Warden-Heggie, English Bickner  
 Ms S Middleton, Christchurch  
 Mr B Bingle, & Mrs P Fosbery, Cinderford  
 Mr J W Hine, Coleford  
 Mr R Bayton, Bristol

*Liz Berry, Membership Secetary*

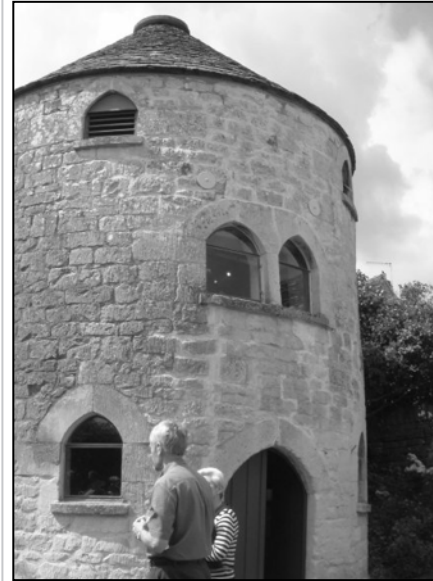
## Famous Forest Folk - Hospital Matron from Newnham

A banker's daughter from Newnham, who became one of Britain's leading nurses, Eva Charlotte Ellis Luckes, (1854 – 1919) is among the new lives included in the latest update of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Familiar to viewers of the popular BBC series, *Casualty* 1900s, in which she is played by actress Cherie Lunghi, Eva Luckes was matron of the London Hospital in Whitechapel for nearly forty years, from 1880 to her death. As a young woman she visited the sick in Newnham where her father, manager of the Gloucester Banking Company at Coleford, had established the family home. Like other young women of the period from prosperous families, she wanted to do more than follow a life of domesticity. She left a luxurious family home to undertake nurse training, before being appointed – aged only twenty six – matron of the London Hospital, the largest general hospital in the country and one serving the deprived population of London's East End.

Jonathon Evans, archivist of the Royal London Hospital and a historical adviser to the TV series, describes how Luckes immediately set about improving the hospital's facilities, recommending that lockers be installed in the children's wards so that each child could have a separate towel and flannel to reduce the risk of contagion. She had strong views on nurse training and found herself involved in many controversies – then, as now, best practice in nursing was hotly debated. Luckes was a disciple of Florence Nightingale in her belief in nursing as a vocation, and was sceptical of state registration, believing that her own standards were higher. Her own record-keeping of both patients and probationer nurses was meticulous, and her series of 'official ward books' begun in 1901, have provided material for episodes of the TV series. She trained generations of nurses and her books were read throughout the world.

## PICTURESQUE PAINSWICK



*Wool drying tower, Painswick*

A few of us attended the Regional Summer meeting of the GRCC Local History Group which was run this year by Painswick Local History Society. About 80 people from different History Groups throughout the County arrived at the Town Hall where we had time to view a very comprehensive exhibition about the industry, houses and archaeology of the town. We were then given a most interesting insight into the historical and archaeological development of the town by Mark Bowden of English Heritage who just so happens to live in Sheepscombe nearby.

Then we all divided into different groups for a choice of guided walks. Some were taken to look at the amazing houses in the town including Upper Cottage dating from the C16 which has a 4 centred doorway leading to a passage right through the house to the back garden. This house had a wonderful Tudor fireplace in one room with a beautifully decorated pink and white Georgian room adjacent.

Others went to the church to see, among other things, the 99 yew trees in the churchyard. I joined one of two walks to visit the mills in the Painswick valley. We took a short detour to view a rare surviving example of a former wool drying tower where the wool was hung on pegs and dried by a central stove with an iron chimney which heated the building. Passing by the mediaeval Tabitha's well we arrived at Brookhouse mill, now in residential use but dating back to the early C18. It was used for cloth making, saw milling and as a corn mill ending its days as a pin mill. We then strolled alongside the stream until we reached Loveday's mill dating from the C16 at least and owned by wealthy benefactors of the area the Loveday family. This mill was a fulling mill, gig mill and grist mill; so not only was cloth finished here but it also produced flour according to the season. It was also found recently to have possessed two water wheels.

We returned to the town centre stopping to go inside the Quaker meeting house C1706 where a number of the Loveday family are buried. Then we ended our walk by being shown enthusiastically round one of the lovely houses in the town. Finally back to the Town Hall for a tea with sandwiches and scrumptious strawberry sponge cake. The whole town had put itself out for our visit with occupants of all the houses giving their time to tell us about their houses and the organisation was exemplary.

These regional summer meetings give a wonderful insight into some of the lesser known places in Gloucestershire and I would recommend everyone to take the opportunity next year to join us on a visit to whichever place is chosen next.

*Averil Kear*



## A Day to Remember Commemorating Warren James

Around 300 people turned up at Hopewell Colliery on Sunday 6th June for a day commemorating Warren James Day, organised by Roger Drury.

The day started with a speech from Sue Merriken, Mayor of Coleford followed by a tribute to Ralph Ans-tis by Averil Kear.

Without Ralph's book on Warren James it is doubtful if many would ever have known the true hardship and legacy which the riots incurred.

Included in the day's events was a re-enactment of the Riots of 1831 which culminated in the arrest of Warren James and his transportation to Australia. Retiring Deputy Surveyor Rob Guest, playing the part of his 19th century counterpart, Edward Machen, read the Riot Act, supported by his wife dressed in Victorian costume who heralded his entrance by playing a pipe and drum.



The crowd were all supporters of Warren James and there were many boos and hisses whenever Machen appeared.

Among the other events on the day were poetry readings by Keith Morgan and some Forest childhood songs by guitarist Bob Smith. Lakers School Steel Band and Berry Hill Silver Band supplied music for the day and free trips down Hopewell mine lead by Robin Morgan and Rich Daniels were well supported.

*Averil Kear*

***Warren James was born in July 1792 in Bream, the sixth child of a family of nine. Like his brothers he followed his father down the mine. Although he appeared to have no formal education, later documents show that as an adult he could read and write. When the Crown Commissioners enclosed large areas of the Forest for replanting, he led an uprising, in which fences around the enclosures were destroyed. The Riot Act was read and troops were called in to restore order. For his part in the riots he was sentenced to death, but this was commuted to transportation to Tasmania for life. He died in Hobart in 1841.***

## The Fifth Local History Fair



Our local history fair on 23<sup>rd</sup> May was a great success. Our President, Baroness Jan Royall was pleased to open the proceedings and have the opportunity to meet members of the Society and discover more about our activities. She was accompanied by her daughter and they enjoyed going around the various exhibits and chatting with the representatives of the other groups. In her speech she said that she hoped to

play an active role in the Society and was particularly interested in the Past and Present project.

The fair covered its costs with a very small profit, meeting the rules for such an event when run by a charity. We were particularly pleased to welcome the 21 new members who were recruited to the Society on the day.

Particularly successful were the mini workshops on beginning history research, family history and house history, although we might try a quieter corner next time. The children present enjoyed the activities organised by John Putley from the Glos. Archives who looked resplendent in his highwayman's outfit. The committee feel that on another occasion there should be more advertising of children's events so that they are better supported. A stand run by the Sealed Knot group was also very colourful with three Royalists in full regalia on show.

One of the newest groups in the Forest is the English Bicknor History Group and they sent an email after the event stating how pleased they were at the interest shown in their village and how the Fair gave a great opportunity

working with other history groups.

As always the Forest of Dean Local History Society is a trail blazer for new ideas and we fully expect that other Fairs throughout the County will take up some of our these when running their own ventures.

*Averil Kear & Ron Beard*



## The Newport Mediaeval Ship

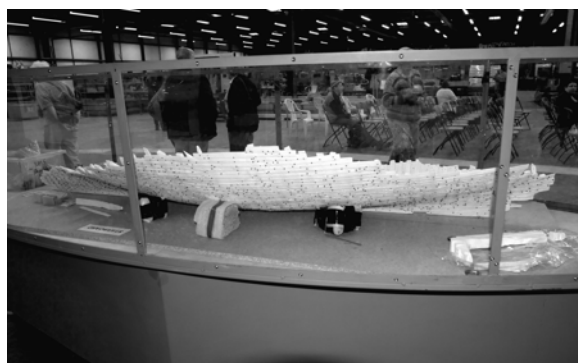
A full coachload of members travelled to Newport on Saturday 19th June to see the remains of a Mediaeval Ship, which had been discovered in 2002 on the banks of the River Usk during the building work for the Riverfront Arts Centre. It was a merchant ship, probably one of the largest trading at the time, with a 30m long keel and a 34m mast, that was about 3m wide at the keel.



Its estimated date of mid 15<sup>th</sup> century was confirmed by the discovery of a coin concealed in the keel with a date of 1445, and it was believed to have sunk in about 1469 when it came in for repairs.

If we were disappointed only to see the actual timbers lying in tanks of preservative in a warehouse on a Newport industrial estate, we were treated to an excellent presentation by a member of the team, Toby Jones, whose knowledge of the project was most impressive and his enthusiasm infectious. After explaining the intricacies of the clinker built construction, he explained that as concrete piles had been sunk through the hull in the intervening centuries, it could not be lifted intact so had to be dismantled on site. This involved removing the timbers one by one, and plotting and numbering them before cleaning and preservation, a process that took until 2008. Reassembly, which he described as a 3000 piece jigsaw, will similarly take years, assuming the funding can be found. In the meantime, using the latest technology a 1/10 scale model is in process of construction and we could only marvel at the skills of our mediaeval ancestors who could build such a vessel without the benefits of modern technology.

We also saw some of the artefacts that had been recovered from the mud in the bilges, which included bolts, coins and domestic items like a nit comb and a long pointed shoe such as one sees in fairy tales. Copies of the tools that would have



been used were on display and instantly recognisable, being like those still in use today.

Funds permitting, it is hoped eventually to house the reconstructed ship in a new museum in the city centre, where it will certainly become an attraction to tourists and we can hopefully visit again.

*Christine Martyn*

## Book Reviews



The Victoria County History of the Counties of England was founded in 1899, and by her gracious permission, named after Queen Victoria. They comprise a major work of reference which has earned an international reputation for its quality of research and scholarly standards.

Since 1933 it has been owned and managed by the University of London. Most of the counties in England are now covered, although not all are yet completed, including Gloucestershire. The latest volume covering Gloucestershire has now been published and the following offer may be of interest to Society members.

"A History of the County of Gloucestershire: Volume XII: Newent and May Hill" is edited by A.J.R. Jurica and published this month at a price of £90.00. This latest Gloucestershire volume is centred on the parish and former market town of Newent but also covers the ancient parishes of Bromesberrow, Dymock, Huntley, Kempley, Longhope, Oxenhall, Pauntley, Preston, and Taynton.

It is on offer at a special 25% discount price of £67.50. Other available volumes in the set for Gloucestershire can also be offered at a discounted price. Volume 5, the Forest of Dean and Volume 10, Westbury Hundred, including Tidenham and Woolaston, are the volumes that are most relevant to our area.

Orders can be placed for the 25% discount price (£67.50 rather than £90.00) by phoning 01394 610600, faxing 01394 610316, ordering by email at [trading@boydell.co.uk](mailto:trading@boydell.co.uk) or ordering securely on-line by going to: [www.boydellandbrewer.com](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com).

Postage = £3 UK, £6.50 Europe (up to a maximum of £26.00) and £10.00 per book outside Europe. (Offer reference: **10134** Offer ends: **31st August 2010**)

### Comrades in Captivity by F W Harvey

Pub. Douglas Mclean Publishers. Paperback, 378pp Price £14.95

An important new book to be republished in early July, *Comrades in Captivity* by **FW Harvey** was first published in 1920 and although highly acclaimed and excellently reviewed at the time, it did not achieve its deserved popularity so soon after the Great War. It is a beautifully written and closely observed account by the Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean poet Will Harvey. It tells of his capture and imprisonment in German PoW camps from where most of his better-known poems were written, including 'Ducks'. An important addition to the original text is a guide to many of Harvey's fellow prisoners that he mentions in the book, which explains who they were and what became of them.



## R& D Report

The Coal Authority have continued their programme with the two Mushet's levels near Darkhill, these mines have a very attractive setting and have been sensitively made safe. The New Bowson mine which had been subject to vandalism has also been restored as a memorial site

The programme of re-photographing sites from our 'Photos for a New Century' CD is well under way. Approximately fifty photographs of sites that were taken but not chosen for the CD have been added to the list of those to be retaken. These will be included on our second issue (ten year update) which it is hoped to publish sometime next year. If anyone has photographs of new sites that they would like to add, please contact me with details.



Continuing the subject of photographs, I am still looking for any photographs that people might have of snow, flooding, wind damage etc that may be hidden away in members' collections. My earlier appeal on this has produced one photograph of snow in 1963, I am sure that there must be many more of such photographs stored away in old albums or shoe boxes. If you have any, please let me know, I will scan them and return the originals promptly.

The recent letter in the local press from Penny Fernando of the Glos Society of Industrial Archaeology for information about bell pits reminded me of conversations with former mining colleagues. These concerned the illegal surface workings of striking Welsh and local miners as well as out of work miners between the wars. There have been references to these and legitimate 18th Century bell pits in recent publications. I hope to say a little more about these in a future newsletter or NR article. Any information will be gratefully received.

*Ron Beard*



The picture, left, was taken in 2008 and shows Lydney Harbour gates, one of the sites which is being re-photographed for the forthcoming updated 'Photos' CD. The gates were replaced as part of the Lydney Harbour Regeneration project since the original photograph was taken in 2000.

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Ms C Baker, Lydney  
Mr N & Mrs G Costley, Flaxley  
Mr E & Mrs G Warden-Heggie, English Bickner  
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*Liz Berry, Membership Secretary*

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# Events - Spring, Summer and Beyond

## Meetings

Our annual Thursday meeting was well attended despite the very heavy rainstorms, Keith Underwood gave an enlightening and revealing talk about Chepstow in the mediaeval period. He explained how the town developed with its markets and trade, with the river Wye playing an important part in the timber and wine trades. Members who enjoyed this talk will be pleased to know that Keith has been booked to give a guided tour of Chepstow next year, which will include the Gatehouse, the Priory Church and Booth Hall all of which featured in his talk. So look out for details later.

It was third time lucky for Keith Walker's talk about Slag Blocks, Keith explained that Slag blocks were originally the waste products from the production of copper. Many of us were amazed to learn that the Forest of Dean and the nearby Wye Valley were one of the earliest in the UK to produce copper. Redbook in particular had around twenty-six smelting plants and there were others in the lower part of the village, a real hive of industry.

Later on Slag Blocks were produced in their own right for building and were much sort after for building for cellars and other areas which suffered from damp conditions, as the blocks have excellent water repellent properties. Slag Blocks can still be seen today in the villages of Redbook, Newnham and elsewhere where they have been incorporated into the fabric of houses and walls.

May I remind you all of the meeting that will be held at the **Belle Vue Centre in Cinderford on Saturday 11th September at 3pm** when **Anthony Boden** will be giving a talk about the very well known Forest poet, F W Harvey. This is the first time for many years that we have held a meeting during September and I hope that you will be able to come along and enjoy it.



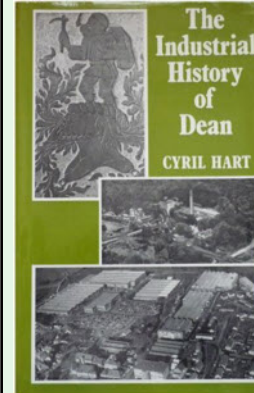
**October 9th is the date of our Annual General Meeting.** Please note the new venue The Main Place Coleford, which is situated off Old Station Way, Coleford, car parking is available in the near by public car parks. As normal we will commence the AGM at the earlier time of 2-30pm.



After a break for tea the Speaker Steve Blake will be giving a talk about John Bellamy, the Oldest Showman in England, and his links with the Forest.

Finally please make a note of a change of date, John Belcher's talk on the Industry of Lydney, will now take place on the new date of **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011**, not as printed on the programme.

## SPECIAL OFFERS



The Society has been given a 1<sup>st</sup> edition of **Dr Cyril Hart's Industrial History of Dean**, originally for our library, but as we already have one, we have permission to sell it. Dr Hart's books were always produced in a limited print run, so first editions are highly sought after and can realise high prices at auction. His knowledge of his subject and his depth of research make his books invaluable source material for any serious student of Forest History and *Industrial History* is no exception.

We have decided therefore to run a silent auction, as we did with books at the History Fair, culminating at the AGM. We have set a reserve price of £50 and if any member would like to make a bid before the AGM, let Cecile know.

We will also be running a silent auction on some early numbers of the *New Regard* which we have been given, which are also becoming collectable and have been seen in a local second hand bookshop at a high price, so here is a good chance to complete your collection.

Another special offer is our Miner's Memorial CD. Members can buy one for the **reduced price of £10** if you have already bought one.

As well as the record of mining casualties, these CDs include details, including some superb pictures, of nearly all the former mine sites, many of which are now nearly obliterated by the woodland. So the CD is an excellent record of our industrial history which could otherwise be lost forever and would make a very acceptable present.



We would like to remind you that there are still a few of our specially commissioned mugs available. There are two designs, one showing our Roll of Honour Memorial at New Fancy and the other showing Trafalgar Arch.

The back of each mug has the name of the Society together with our logo. Caldwell Creations who designed and made the mugs have assured us that they are dishwasher friendly and make a really good cup of tea or coffee. They are priced at £5.00 each.

**You can buy the mugs and CD at our meetings  
or buy the CD online at our website [www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](http://www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)**