

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
February 2016



- Listing achieved!
More with Chair Simon inside
- What was poet John Masfield's connection with Broad oak?
John Powell explains!

BALH Newsletter
Award 2015

Book Reviews

The Forest of Dean Revisited



A Modern History
by
Christine Martyn

It has taken a while, but all good things are worth waiting for! Now we can enjoy Christine Martyn's new book "The Forest of Dean Revisited – A Modern History". Christine is a former Chair of the History Society, who has written extensively for the Society Journal 'The New Regard' over the years. Although not born a 'Forester' Christine has lived in the Forest for over 50 years, and her wide knowledge of Forest history is clearly apparent through the pages of her 'modern history'.

A theme is explored in each of the thirteen chapters. The themes encompass some expected subjects such as 'The Hundred of St Briavels', 'Forest Folk', 'The Freemaners', 'Men of Iron and Steel', 'Sheep Badgers', 'Vert & Venison', 'Trees and the Wood', and 'Towns of the Forest'. However Christine has produced a book of the widest scope by also exploring other themes such as 'Gypsies and Travellers', and 'Cul-

ture of the Forest', where she examines the contribution made by local authors and poets over the last hundred years or so.

An extensive bibliography is included which demonstrates the wide source of material used by Christine, to which she has added her own discerning commentary. This is one of those rare books about history which has a clear narrative and, which once you start reading, is difficult to put down. Highly recommended.

"The Forest of Dean Revisited - A Modern History" 356 pages ISBN 978-0-9928959-3-8

Published by Holborn House, price £15. Available from local book shops or from Amazon

Local author and collector Neil Parkhouse has recently published Volume 2 in his 'British Railway in History' series; "Forest of Dean Lines and the Severn Bridge". Neil plans to publish many more volumes in the series and has spent 15 years collecting material for this book, which focuses on our local area. The book contains 600 rare colour photographs taken between 1957 and 1976 featuring both steam and diesel locomotives at work.

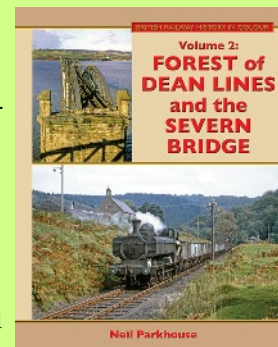
The lines featured are The Forest of Dean Branch (Newnham to Cinderford, Northern United and Whimsey); The Severn and Wye Line (Lydney to Lydbrook, including Lydney Docks and Princess Royal); The Coleford Branch (Coleford Junction to Sling, Coleford and Whitecliff); Lines around Blakeney (Purton Steam Carriage Road and Forest of Dean Central Railway); and The Severn Bridge Railway (Lydney to Sharpness).

If you are a railway enthusiast, simply have memories of the local rail network, or have walked through the Forest on the tracks which follow the line of the old railways, then you will find much to interest you in this book. As in volume 1, Neil has included images of contemporary maps, tickets and timetables of the day, to accompany full descriptions of every photograph and to provide full historical context. Of particular interest to this reviewer was a remarkable series of photographs showing the demolition of the Severn Bridge which carried the railway from Lydney to Sharpness. The book is highly recommended.

"Forest of Dean Lines and the Severn Bridge" – 328 pages – ISBN 13 : 9781899889983

Price £30, available from local bookshops or from Black Dwarf Lightmoor

(<http://lightmoor.co.uk/>)



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Editors Notes

Firstly an apology for an error which crept into the November 2015 edition of this publication. In Cheryl Mayo's article "The Speech House Pilot", the type of plane involved in the accident was reported as a 'Westmoreland Whirlwind' rather than 'Westland Whirlwind'. Thanks to everyone who pointed out the error to Cheryl and myself. Coincidentally new member Peter Symonds, has told us that one of his memories of growing up is of a couple who came to lay flowers at the site of the crash at Speech House each year. He assumes they were the parents of Sgt Pilot Prior, who apparently was an only child.

Our hard working Publicity Officer, John Powell, has written an intriguing article about former Poet Laureate John Masefield and his surprising connection with John's own house at Broadoak. Read John's article in the centre pages and see if you can supply any of the answers to John's questions about Masefield's links with Broadoak and the Forest area.

Another highly valued member of the Committee is Sue Gordon Smith who makes sure that copies of our publications are available for sale in local bookshops and other outlets. Sue also deals with postal requests for our publications. Sue has provided some information about discoveries made when the school was extended at English Bicknor. You can read Sue's contribution in the 'News' section.

Look out for the second part of Cecile Hunt's fascinating article "Hedgerows - Do You Notice Them" on page 9. I had no idea about the secret history of hedgerows until now!

Finally, the Society will achieve its 70th anniversary in 2018. The Committee is already considering what should be done to celebrate this event. Previous decennaries have been marked by social events such as lunches. Do you have ideas as to how the Society should mark its 70 years? Please let our Vice-Chair Mary Sullivan know if you do. Contact her via email at:
vicechair@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

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 with Simon Moore

May I start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year and hope that you are looking forward to 2016 and our full programme of events. We have already had our first meeting of this year, on the next steps being taken to explore the areas of interest highlighted by the LIDAR survey carried out a few years back; the talk by Worcester Archaeology was very well attended and generated a lot of interest.



For those of you who devour your New Regard articles you will have read with great interest Keith Walker's article in the current edition setting out the background behind a set of cast iron markers placed at each end of a series of roads in the Forest; I hope that you also noticed the recent press releases reporting the fact that the Local History Society have now been able to get them all listed. Keith made an application on our behalf to Heritage England (formerly English Heritage) asking them to consider listing the remaining plates as being of unique interest. I am pleased to inform you that not only did they grant them grade 2 listed status, but interestingly they also included within the listing Keith's brief history of them. Congratulations to Keith for rising to the challenge and persuading Heritage England of their importance. Anyone can apply for a structure to be listed, but only those applications that are well researched and well-presented get accepted so readily. If you have a structure, or know of one, that you consider might be worthy of being listed, please do not hesitate to contact us about it, if we agree then we will be very happy to assist you in the application process. Obviously these things go more smoothly if we have the owner's consent to apply!

Elsewhere in the 'News' section our new Secretary, David Edwards, introduces himself and provides some interesting biographical information which explains his past life as a geologist, and how he eventually came to the Forest of Dean. David is a very welcome addition to the Committee. As he is also a newcomer to the Society please help welcome him to the Society by introducing yourself if you see him at one of our meetings.

As you may be aware we try at our regular meetings to provide, in addition to the main talk, a short additional item after the tea break. I would be grateful for any ideas, short films or for people to come forward who may have something they would like to share with us. This may include an appeal for help with a project, an update on some research that you are undertaking, some old photos that you have unearthed and would like to show or need help identifying; this is your society and as such it should be not only a platform for us to provide you with a programme of interesting talks but for you to bring things forward as well.

Which brings me back to my soap-box, we now have nearly 300 paid up members, who bring a huge cross section of skills, knowledge and experience; we would love to hear from some of you to help with the meetings, sitting on the main management committee and especially those of you with IT skills, as we are still looking for somebody to take over from Callum when he steps down later this year.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Simon Moore



Meet David Edwards, our new Secretary!

I was not born in the Forest, but in the market town of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, which has now relinquished much of its old world charm to that ever expanding metropolis called London.

Many years ago, when I was young, I started studying atomic physics, but through dint of fate, a potentially static career immersed in sub-atomic theory



was deflected toward a far more energetic (and lonely) life - as a geologist. Rocks, I discovered, are far more useful than being just great for throwing. Within them, lies the storybook of their origin and subsequent history. It was this new surge in understanding, and its potential, that enthralled me and led me to qualify and work in the profession. Initially, I worked for five years in geophysics looking for buried structures that might contain oil or gas. Then, for five years, I mapped an area of 1000 square kilometres of open bush in Africa using aerial photographs, a compass, a Land Rover and a caravan. Not quite a Sunday walk in the park!

There followed a host of jobs and experiences that eventually led to the quiet life I now lead on the edge of the Forest of Dean, where I can smile and relax and feel at home among the old gnarled oaks that twist upwards to the sky. No metropolitan invasions here! Now I am old, and still largely ignorant, I realise that all I have learned amounts to little more than an acorn-full in a forest. For pushing away at the frontiers of knowledge only reveals a plethora of new unknowns. What's more, my small contribution is rather specialised and remote.

Becoming Secretary of your Society will give me a chance to avoid the potential boredom of old age and give me a chance to work my way back into the human race; to get the big picture (feel the forest, not just the trees). The talented members of your Society have already earned an enviable reputation for the quality of their research and publications. Given time, and their patience, I hope to help.

From the Membership Secretary

A warm welcome to the following new members who have joined the Society since November: Mr C and Mrs S Hill, Leanne Taylor, Kim and Graham Spencer, Sid Phelps, Elizabeth Hall, Christine Moat, Peter Symonds and Janet Thorpe.

The membership of the Society currently stands at 275. That's a lot of talent we have out there! If you would like to put some of that talent to use in helping run your Society, please contact any of the committee members. We would love to hear from you.

Also, if you are not receiving member emails from me, please let me know your email address (or your new email address if you have changed it at some stage). Over 90% of our members are on the list, so it's a great way to let everyone know about other history events happening around the county or bits of news from within the Society.

Apologies to everyone! There are a couple of errors on the 2016 membership card. The **'Walk Around Pillowell'** will take place on **Sunday 10th July** not Saturday 10th July as shown. The talk **'Highnam Court through the Ages'** will take place on **Saturday 12th November** not Saturday 3rd November as shown on the card

Cheryl Mayo (membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

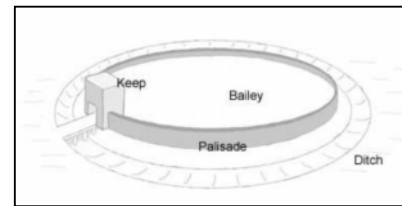


Image from www.timeref.com
Copyright Mark Needham

English Bicknor Castle Medieval Discoveries

It was always thought that the village of English Bicknor grew up around a Norman motte and bailey castle. In September 2014 discoveries made during ground works at the village school for new classrooms have thrown a different light on this theory. Andy Boucher, regional manager at Headland Archaeology, ex-

plained that the structural remains of a stone castle were found. The corner projected into the moat and is thought to be the base of one of two towers flanking a gate. The walls were 6 metres thick, 2 metre high and built of local sandstone. The base corners were chamfered as in the towers at Goodrich Castle. He said that this shows that it was in fact a keep and bailey castle. These are quite rare and usually very early in date. In English Bicknor's case the castle's construction seems to have comprised of a gatehouse keep with a drawbridge over the moat. A palisade on a bank would have surrounded the bailey with the moat below it. The stone work was in excellent condition and has now been covered over with a membrane and grass layer due to the cost of conservation.

It is known that William FitzNorman born in the Forest of Dean before the conquest was lord of the manor here in 1086 and this may have been his castle.

The **Royal Forest of Dean Herbert Howells Society** is a registered charity which was founded to honour the life of Herbert Howells, the Lydney born composer. Our first project was to erect a memorial in Lydney Parish Church, when this was achieved the Society set up a bursary in his memory. The first two bursaries of £500 in 2006-7 were funded by the Forest Rotary Club, followed in 2009 by a donation from Monmouth Schools of £750. With funds from membership the society were able to give £1000 in 2011 and 2013. In 2015 the bursary was £1,250, again funded by the society. At the AGM in 2015 the Committee stepped down. The good news is that Sarah Pierce has agreed to be Secretary and Patricia Dollins has become Treasurer. We have a new committee to carry on the good work that the Society is doing for the young musicians of the Forest of Dean.



So may I ask if there are any members of the Local History Society who would like to support the good work we are doing and become a member at £5 per year. We would welcome you to enable us to carry on the good work we are doing for our local young musicians.

If you would like to join our Society, please contact Maurice Bent on 01594 542110.

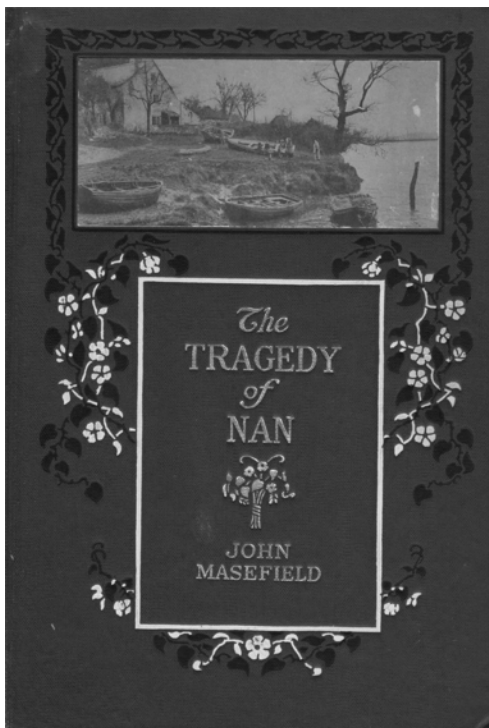
The Royal Forest of Dean Herbert Howells Society programme for 2016 includes a concert as part of the Lydney Festival on Saturday June 11th at the Parish Church at 7pm, with Duncan Honeybourne Piano, and St. Johns on the Hill Senior School Choir.

A reminder that members can order in print issues of the New Regard from the online shop, simply select the 'New Regard' tab at <http://store.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/index.php>

Members can obtain a discount, on in print New Regards, by using the voucher code when prompted. Note that the voucher code will change from 'Sling' to 'Bicknor' on 1st March 2016.

A Famous Poet, Novelist and Playwright at Home on Severnside

Society member John Powell has an aspiration shattered but believes the Poet Laureate John Masefield has left plenty of teasing little clues for researchers to get their teeth into.



WRITERS take liberties with history. By its very nature combining fact with fiction smudges the truth. Remember, when you buy the book you take your chances...things are not always as they seem on the cover. Take the work of John Masefield, Poet Laureate from 1930 until his death in 1967, and perhaps best known for his poem 'Sea-Fever': I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and the sky/ And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by...

Masefield, who was born across the Gloucestershire border at Ledbury, had an affinity with Severnside and in particular with Newnham and Broad Oak - spelt here as two words, the way he did so. My interest in Masefield was fuelled by the purchase for just £3 of a copy of his play 'The Tragedy of Nan'. It was my good luck that the book was the first American edition published by The Macmillan Company, of New York, in 1921. Unlike its earlier English counterpart, published pre-war, the American edition included a series of seven photographs. On page 10 appeared a picture of my house above the caption 'A scene on the farm at Broad Oak', (see opposite page). The play was set in the kitchen. Fame or what!

This great drama and ultimate tragedy, had been written by Masefield in 1907. It had been performed - in dialect - at the New Royalty Theatre and enjoyed a long and successful run in repertory theatres in England and abroad. The poignant plot tells of the plight of Nan Hardwick, an orphan whose father is hanged for sheep stealing, and who was reluctantly taken in by another branch of her family, the Pargetters, small tenant farmers at Broad Oak in 1810. Nan's chances of happiness are destroyed when her mean-spirited aunt tells the man she was hoping to marry that Nan was, in fact, a murderer's daughter. Twist follows twist and Nan suddenly finds herself wealthy beyond her dreams as her father is revealed as the victim of a miscarriage of justice. He had been innocent of all charges against him, with Nan receiving a large sum of money in compensation for his death. There's still more...so visit your library to explore the fateful end. It's worth it!

In a 'Prefatory Note' to the American edition Masefield explains that part of the story is based upon something that had occurred in Kent "about a century ago" when a man had been hanged for sheep stealing. After his execution, proof came to hand that he was innocent. Someone thought to remedy the matter by giving money to the man's daughter, "but it was then too late of course." Referring to Broad Oak, he writes: "As I am ignorant of Kentish country people I placed the action among a people and in a place well known to me."

He adds that the scene of the play is in an imaginary farmhouse - so, although my house featured, it could have been any property in England! Confirmation that my kitchen doesn't feature after all comes in a letter filed away in the British Library and sent by Masefield to the Cheltenham-born actress Lillah McCarthy who had written to him asking for more detail about Nan - whose role she was about to play. Masefield wrote: "Her home with the Pargetters was at Broad Oak on Severn, a tiny hamlet between Westbury and Newnham, on the very brink of the river, in the middle of its great curve. The house does not exist in reality. I built it for myself, rather further from the river bank than the little row of cottages, but still well away from the coach road. Just below it, there is a good place from which to see the awful sight of the tide. "Nan herself is a blend of two country types known to me: one a very charming and beautiful type of character which always makes me think of the simple and gentle woman's head by Holbein, the other a coarser, more powerful, but rather sullen type, such as you may have met in Herefordshire. Some of Millet's women have the look. There is something uncanny about it. "If you wish to go to Broad Oak there is a good hotel at Newnham opposite the church. I forget its name but "opposite the church" is direction enough. Or you could drive in from Gloucester 10 or 11 miles away. Be sure you go at full moon, when the tide is high. They will always be able to tell you the time of the tide's coming. "I hope that I may live to see you play Nan; but if I don't, (for the play, I fear, has caused you many disappointments) I should like to thank you for all the trouble you have taken over it, and for the great encouragement you have both given to me. I wish I were an artist, that I could paint you portraits of all the Pargetter household."

The final reference to Severn's tide is contained in Masefield's note: "The Severn is a tidal river, in which a Bore or Eager forms at high water, owing to the channel being too narrow for the volume of water rushing in. The tide, being constricted or pent in, is heaped up, so that it advances much as I describe it, in a wall of water across the river two or three feet higher than the level of the stream up which it comes. As it advances it roars like an express train. The certainty and fatality of its march makes it a very noble and very terrible sight."

Three years after the completion of 'The tragedy of Nan' Masefield returned to Newnham in his children's novel 'Jim Davis'. This is the story of a 12 year-old boy, again an orphan, who is sent from Newnham to live on the Devon coast where he witnesses a group of smugglers and becomes caught up in their world. Because of what he has seen young Jim is forced to go to sea and on a voyage involving many trials he is involved in a battle with a British frigate, a chase on horseback and an encounter with gypsies.

But how true to reality is Masefield's description of Newnham around 1810? He (as Jim Davis) writes: "I was born in the year 1800, in the town of Newnham on Severn in Gloucestershire. I am sure of the year because my father always told me I was born at the end of the century in the year that they began to build the great house. The house has been finished now these many years. The red-



Hedgerows - Do You Notice Them? - Part 2

By Cecile Hunt

With 'The Great Enclosures' of the 18th & 19th around 200,000 miles of hedges made the fortunes of nursery firms in the Midlands; growing of millions of hedging plants - mainly 'quickthorn' (hawthorn).

In England between about 1750s and 1850s some 4,000 acts of parliament were passed; between 1760 and 1870 Inclosure (*modern spelling* -Enclosure) Commissioners issued instructions, for the planting of fences to enclose 'allotments' or 'allotted land'. Arguments appeared for and against enclosure. Main ones for were: 'the open field system prevented improvement of land'; 'waste lands/common pastures were over stocked with half starved beasts'; those who survived on commons were 'lazy', 'impoverished', 'not inclined to work' - enclosure of commons would force them into employment. Against enclosure: common pastures/waste lands were the mainstay of the independent poor; overgrazing... was result of 'overstocking' by wealthiest commoners' (these were the people agitating for enclosure): enclosure would 'engross already wealthy landowners'... 'force people off the land and into urban slums'...

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 appointed permanent Inclosure Commissioners who were authorised to issue Enclosure Awards without submitting them to Parliament for approval. Excluded from this act, but included in later general acts that were passed annually, were manorial wastes and lands subject to indefinite rights of common. One such award was issued by a Francis Attwood on 7th October 1851, witnessed by Inclosure (*sic*) Commissioners on 23 January 1852, for enclosures to be carried out to lands in Awre parish, except those in: Rodley Marsh, Dumble Pasture and Vicarage Marsh Dumble. The areas of Rodley Marsh, Dumble Pasture and Vicarage Marsh Dumble were to have; *'A good and sufficient Post and Rail Fence'*.

Precise instructions are given on how *'such fences shall be raised set up and made...'* giving an insight into how the hedges appeared that we now take for granted. *'Against the Roads'*; a bank to be raised eighteen inches in height, three feet wide at its base and two feet wide at its top; the ground levelled from the road to base of the bank with an *'even and regular fall and run for the water'*. *'Two rows of strong Thicksets (Hawthorn) of three years growth to be planted on the top of the Bank six inches apart in the Rows, the Rows to be nine inches from each other'*. *'Between the Allotments'*; A ditch two feet deep, three feet wide at the top and fifteen inches wide at the bottom was to be dug, with an even fall for water. The earth from the ditch to be used to form a *'neat bank'* three feet wide at its bottom and two feet wide at its top. On top of the bank *'Thicksets'* were to be planted *'in the manner aforesaid'*. The *'whole to be guarded on each side by a substantial and sufficient fence'*. This fence was to be kept in good repair until the hedge; after proper weeding, pruning and *'loose earth dressed up'* had *'formed into and become a good permanent and sufficient fence'*

Hedges all across the country; they have a history all of their own!

In testimony whereof I the said Francis Attwood have to this my Award which I have under the directions of the said Inclosure Commissioners for England and Wales caused to be drawn up and engrossed on parchment set my hand this twenty seventh day of October One thousand eight hundred and fifty one.

Francis Attwood.



brick wall, which shuts its garden from the road (and the Severn), is all covered with valerian and creeping plants. One of my earliest memories is of the masons at work, shaping the two great bows. I remember how my nurse used to stop to watch them, at the corner of the road, on the green strip by the river-bank, where the gipsies camped on the way to Gloucester horse-fair. One of the masons was her sweetheart (Tom Farrell his name was), but he got into bad ways, I remember, and was hanged or transported, though that was years afterwards, when I had left that countryside."

"My father and mother died when I was still a boy - my mother on the day of Trafalgar battle, my father four years later. It was very sad at home after mother died; my father shut himself up in his study, never seeing anybody. When my father died, my uncle came to Newnham from his home in Devonshire; my old home was sold then and I was taken away. I remember the day so very clearly. It was one sunny morning in early April. My uncle and I caught the coach at the top of the hill, at the door of the old inn opposite the church. The coachman had a hot drink handed up to him, and the ostlers hitched up the new team. Then the guard (he had a red coat, like a soldier) blew his horn and the coach started off down the hill, going so very fast that I was afraid, for I had never ridden on a coach before, though I had seen them every day. The last I saw of Newnham was the great house at the corner. It was finished by that time, of course, and as we drove past I saw the beautiful woman who lived there walking up and down the lawn with her husband, Captain Rylands, a very tall, handsome man, who used to give me apples. I was always afraid to eat the apples, because my nurse said that the captain had killed a man. That was in the wars in Spain, fighting against the French."

How much is fact and how much is fiction? Jim's childhood certainly resembles that of Masfield's who was only six when his mother died giving birth to his sister. His father died soon after following a mental breakdown.

But there remain many questions to ask.

Was Lawwater House built in 1800?; did Tom Farrell really exist and did he hang or was he transported?; was Captain Rylands for real and did he kill a man in Spain?

Over to you!

Meetings In Review



Cannop Drift Mine, Wimberry Slade

Over 70 members and guests attended the meeting on **Saturday 7th November** to hear Dan Howell talk about **“The Role of the Deputy Gaveller 1838 -2015”**. Dan starting by explaining that the Gavellers are 'keepers of the gales under the wood'. Before 1600 the Gaveller was the Monarch, after 1608 the Gaveller was the 'Officer of Woods'. The role is

currently vested in the Director General of the Forestry Commission. The Gaveller's responsibilities are in fact carried out by the Deputy Gaveller, as Dan said, 'an Office that has stood the test of time'. The Dean Forest Mines Act of 1838 was a codification of what was previously mining 'rights' or 'customs'. The Deputy Gaveller administers the Act, with roles including registering free miners, and administering gales in grant (currently 30). Since 1838 there have been only seven Deputy Gavellers, although there have been some gaps in office. At the height of the mining industry in Dean, when there were about 200 working mines, there were 12 officers administering the Deputy Gaveller function. Today Dan Howell has the assistance of James Brittan.

Dan's grandfather, Albert Howell, was also a Deputy Gaveller who had a deep knowledge of mining in the Dean, but who kept few written records. Dan has kept the role very relevant by introducing a database of mines which help him find the relevant mining plans and records in his office. Dan also makes use of digitised mining plans produced by the Coal Authority. Currently one of Dan's biggest jobs is helping with property searches, and he has developed a system to overlay the digitised mining plans over the building plans. New Mining Regulations introduced in 2014 mean that every working mine has to have a nominated mining surveyor. Dan Howell now provides a service as a mining surveyor and has modern surveying equipment to help him in the task. This has meant that the eight free mines in the Forest can continue to operate. At the end of his talk, Dan then fielded many questions from the engrossed audience.

Following the tea break Mary Sullivan gave a talk on the New Zealand Memorial Trust. The trust was set up in 1944 by Lord Bledisloe to encourage emigration to New Zealand. A display in the hall presented the results of Mary and Cecile's research efforts into the subject.

At our meeting on **Saturday 5th December** some 60 members and guests enjoyed Averil Kear's illustrated talk on **‘Bridges of the Lower Wye Valley’**. Developed from the summer coach tour of 2010, starting with the Wilton Bridge at Ross on Wye and ending at the Wye Bridge section of the Severn Bridge, Averil gave a fascinating insight into the history and development of some 16 road and rail bridges between those two points. Space only allows us to feature just a few of the bridges that Averil so eloquently described.

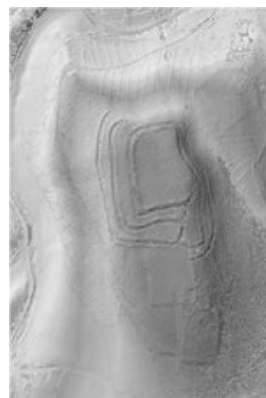


A six arched sandstone bridge existed at Wilton by 1600. Serious floods damaged the bridge in 1787 and 1795. In the 1930s reinforced concrete was used to patch up the bridge. In 1982 the decision was made to widen the bridge, but due to local controversy the work was not completed until 1993. Moving downstream, Kerne Bridge was built in 1828 using sandstone with five arches varying in span from 30 to 61 feet. The bridge provided a needed river crossing to allow access from Goodrich to the turnpike on the opposite bank of the Wye.

The development of the Ross to Monmouth railway line meant that railway bridges were built at Kerne Bridge, Lydbrook and Monmouth.

The road bridge at Huntsham was rebuilt in 1982 as a truss bridge using hollow box section steel members in 1982 and reusing the original wrought iron piers in the river to support the structure. The Biblins suspension footbridge was originally built by the Forestry Commission in 1957 and refurbished in 1997, the bridge provides an exciting experience for those brave enough to sway across it. The road bridge at Monmouth was originally built using red sandstone in the seventeenth century, and was widened in 1879. It is possible to view the original narrower semicircular arches and cutwaters below the current arches. The rather beautiful Bigsweir Bridge was opened in 1827 when the toll road was built down the Wye Valley. The bridge comprises a single arch of 50 metres (55 yd), and was designed by Charles Hollis of London and cast at Merthyr Tydfil. A pair of stone flood arches were added at each end some years later, doubling the length of the bridge. Just a few miles downstream, Brockweir bridge was constructed to replace a ferry in 1906. Designed by S.W. & A.L. Yockney of Victoria Street, Westminster, it is a plate girder construction with cast iron/steel parapet and stone abutments. The old bridge at Chepstow was built to a design by John Raistrick between 1814 and 1816. It was made of cast iron with five arches, with a centre span of 112 feet. The bridge is a Grade I listed structure and has been refurbished a number of times during its lifetime.

After a break for tea, Sue Middleton, Programme Manager for the Foresters Forest project, gave a brief outline of the scope of the project, and highlighted some of the individual schemes that members' could volunteer to help with.



*Welshbury LiDAR image
Courtesy of the Forestry
Commission*

A cold **Saturday 16th January**, did not deter over 70 members and guests from making their way to West Dean Centre, Bream, to hear Justin Hughes speak about the **‘Archaeology in the Dean’** segment of the Foresters' Forest project. Justin works for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS) who provide the professional services in leading the project. As part of the Development Stage (1) of the Foresters' Forest project, WAAS are leading a team of some 40 project volunteers who are currently investigating and validating the data obtained during the earlier LiDAR project. LiDAR involves using an aeroplane to survey the ground surface with a very high degree of accuracy enabling the recognition and recording of hard to detect features. The survey was carried out over the statutory Forest of Dean in 2006, and the Foresters' Forest project provides the means to investigate the results further on the ground, using maps and other sources to help interpret any features found. Justin showed a number of results from the 2006 LiDAR survey which revealed features under the canopy of the Forest which cannot be detected by aerial photography. These features included numerous charcoal hearths, potential Roman 'fortlets' and presumed early trackways. There are four areas of the Forest which are being focused on by the volunteers in this phase of the project; Chestnut Woods and Welshbury Hill, Great Bourts enclosure, Birchill enclosure, and Blackpool Brook.

Justin then went on to explain that there is a second part to the development phase of the 'Archaeology in the Dean' project. Foresters are being invited to submit photographs of the local 'built heritage' to the project. It is hoped that the submitted photos will eventually form part of a unique photographic archive of the Forest area.