

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
November 2015



**World War Two Plane Crash Tragedy
at the Speech House.**

**Read more about Sgt Pilot Derrick Prior
in the middle pages**

Also inside:

***Haunting at Mitcheldean?
We tell the story of Joseph McGurk***

BALH Newsletter
Award 2015

Jack Williams Childhood *by Ian Wright*



*Jack Williams is shown left above.
Courtesy of the Richard Burton
Archives, Swansea University*

Jack Williams was the trade union agent representing the Forest of Dean Miners from 1922 to 1953. His job involved the day to day running of the local union organisation and negotiations with the employers. He worked tirelessly representing the interests of the Forest of Dean miners through the General Strike of 1926, the Depression of the 1930s, World War II and nationalisation of the coal mining industry until his retirement in 1953.

Jack was born in 1888 at Kenfig Hill, near the Gawr Valley. His father was a hewer and his grandfather had worked as a mechanic in the mines. Jack's earliest recol-

lections were of the Hauliers' Strike of 1893. The hauliers were the miners who worked underground with the horses who pulled the drams of coal back to the pit bottom. On this occasion they were demanding a pay rise as a result of decreasing wages which had left them on the verge of starvation. In response the coal owners asked the government to send in troops to break the strike. Twelve hundred troops arrived and occupied the South Wales Valleys. Many of the hewers and other colliery workers joined the strike. Jack joined his father on the picket line at the pit where he worked in Blaengawr and remembers him confronting the strike breakers. This could have tragic consequences as the military had recently shot dead two striking miners in Yorkshire and another fourteen were hit by bullets and injured.

Jack was sent down the pits at the age of 13 at the International Colliery at Blaengawr where he worked with his father. He was paid one shilling and sixpence a day. One year later he was involved in a terrible accident. His father had been boring a hole with a rammer for shot firing. However, at the first shot, the fuse misfired. The regulations stated that it was necessary to wait 24 hours before making a second attempt. However the hewers, working on piece rates, were under pressure to ignore this rule. As a result Jack approached the face and was severely burned in an explosion. He was lucky to survive but had to spend six weeks in a bath of linseed oil. These experiences would have had a profound effect on his world view. As he lay in that bath, he would have had little idea he would end up in a place called Cinderford representing the miners in the Forest of Dean for most of his life. But that is another story....

Thanks to Dave Chapple, who is researching the history of the Somerset Miners' Association, for sending me some of this information.

I am collecting facts and stories about Jack Williams with the view of writing a short biography. If you have any information about him I would be grateful if you could send it to me. Please note there is a little confusion over his name as he was originally called John Williams. Many thanks. iankwright@yahoo.co.uk



*Jack Williams was Chairman of the
Cinderford Miners Welfare Committee
when the hall was built in 1929*

News

NOVEMBER 2015

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Editors Notes

There are some interesting stories for you in this edition courtesy of members Ian Wright, Dave Tuffley and Cheryl Mayo.

Ian Wright reminds us of longstanding Forest of Dean Miners Agent Jack Williams, by telling us of his earlier years, and how he came to be agent in the Dean. Ian intends to tell the wider story of Jack Williams in a short biography, and he wants your help. If you know something of Jack Williams please get in touch with Ian. His contact details are on the back page.

Dave Tuffley recounts a ghost story associated with the George Inn at Mitcheldean. On hearing the original tale, Dave was able to put 'flesh on the skeleton' by assiduously using the on-line digital newspaper archive to seek out the true story of Joseph McGurk. Dave is also appealing for help from you as he assembles his glossary of mining terms. Take a look at the 'News' page for more details.

Last but not least, our recently retired Secretary and now Membership Secretary, Cheryl Mayo, presents the sad story of Derrick Prior and his unfortunate death in a plane crash at Speech House during World War II. Cheryl has also provided reviews of two of the recent meetings, and a report on the AGM which you can read elsewhere in this edition.

Also inside you can read Cecile Hunt's latest piece on local history, focusing this time on 'Hedges'. Cecile has written a long series of articles for this newsletter, so my thanks to Cecile, and of course to all of our contributors!

The Society does provide regular updates via email to members. If you don't receive emails and wish to, please send an email to the address below requesting addition to the mailing list. If you already receive emails and wish to continue to receive them from the Society about events and happenings, then please make sure that you have the following email address on your approved list: membership@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*

At the beginning of October we held our AGM. Thank you to all those who attended, we had a really good turnout. For those of you who remembered to renew your membership, you will have been sent with this newsletter your membership card with the new programme of events. If you haven't received this then we haven't received your subscription. Please see the News page for more information.

As I set out in my address at the AGM, the subscription, of just £10, provides exceptional value, with access to our regular indoor meetings, a discounted price for the New Regard and our award winning quarterly newsletter. However, the Committee will be reviewing our subscription level this year, as it is no longer covering the basic costs of running the Society; we will, of course, endeavour to keep any proposed increase to a minimum.

Keith, Ron, Cheryl and I have been looking at getting a stone erected at the site of the New Fancy Colliery (shaft No 2), which was recently made safe by the Coal Authority and for which some pieces of the mechanics and some standing stonework remain. We have sourced a large stone, kindly donated by Jon Tainton of Mine Train Quarry, which we are in the process of getting transported into place. I'm sure our brilliantly successful Publicity Officer, John Powell, will be ensuring that the completion of the project will be in the Local Press. New Fancy is a very accessible site and as such we will also be looking to improve the interpretation information at the site, where you can also enjoy the Geo map and the Miners Memorial.

The Society continues to play a key role in the HLF 'Foresters Forest' project and as the various projects get started on their development work, the more documents that we will need to check, and help with the production of, to ensure that the story of 'The Forest' is accurate and consistent. For this we would like some of you to step forward to help edit, check, write and/or research areas of interest that are generated by the various projects. If you would like to help, please contact either Mary Sullivan or myself and we will be pleased to chat through the options with you.

A big 'Thank You' to all those who have agreed to stay on the committee that runs the Society on your behalf, personally it is an honour to be elected to Chair the Society for another year. Thanks to Cheryl Mayo for her 3 years of sterling work as our secretary; a special thanks to David Edwards, who has not only joined the committee but agreed to take the role of Secretary.

Planning for succession in any organisation is critical and so I appeal again for help on the committee. We are especially seeking somebody to take on the role of Web Editor, when Callum McKelvie steps down next year. The role is not designed to be a technical one, as we have spent time and money getting our website easy to use and employ a contractor to maintain the site, so the editor's role is to manage the content of the site and ensure it is fresh and relevant. Training and support will be offered, if you would like to chat through what is involved please call Keith Walker, whose contact details are printed on the opposite page.



*Simon Moore selecting a memorial stone
with Ron Beard and Cheryl Mayo*

Joseph McGurk and the George Inn, Mitcheldean

By Dave Tuffley

About the year 2000, the late Bill Austin and his daughter, Julie, were having a meal in the George Hotel, Mitcheldean. There were others in the dining room and the place was fairly busy. Bill looked up at a shelf behind the bar, which contained various bottles of spirits and wine, and was astonished to see a single bottle slowly moving itself towards the end of the shelf. He quickly pointed this strange phenomenon out to his daughter, and they both witnessed the bottle move from the shelf end and onto the floor.

Bill asked if anyone else in the room had seen the strange event, and a woman sitting nearby said casually that it was the ghost of Joseph McGurk, and he was always doing things like that. Bill and Julie finished their meal and were incredulous at what they had seen. Bill told the story to my late father, Les Tuffley, who in turn told the story to me. Some five or six years went by and whilst I was browsing the internet under the search for anything historical on Mitcheldean, I came across a copy from the Bristol Mercury, dated Saturday 19th October 1833 and subtitled "Suicide of a soldier".

It told the story of a smart young soldier named Joseph McGurk, who was a trooper in the 8th Lancers, stationed at Abergavenny. McGurk had become drunk and when threatened with arrest, attempted to kill a sergeant. Under such circumstances he was ordered to Gloucester for a general court-martial. McGurk arrived at the George Inn (as it was then known as) on the 13th October, escorted by a corporal and a file of soldiers. After sleeping the night at the inn, they all arose at 6am. McGurk was made to cut the bread and butter for the breakfast for the rest of the troopers. He appeared to be in good spirits, although he had earlier stated the opinion that he would either be shot by firing squad or transported for life. He also expressed that he did not care what became of him.



*George Hotel (Inn), Mitcheldean
Photo courtesy of Geoff Sandles
(www.gloucestershirepubs.co.uk)*

Breakfast was finished and the corporal gave the order to prepare for the final march to Gloucester. One of the escorting troopers was then helping the corporal to tie his sash of office, when suddenly McGurk dashed into another inner room where the escort kept their loaded carbines for safe keeping. Before he could be stopped, McGurk grabbed a carbine and pointed the muzzle to his chest and fired the musket ball into his body. The newspaper report said that the ball penetrated his left breast, perforating his lungs and passed out through his back and lodged itself a considerable depth into the wall of the room. McGurk lingered in agony for about three hours when he expired, admitting that he knew what he had done.

A quick inquest was held before Coroner J. Cooke, Esq, where a jury returned a verdict of "felo de se" (or intentional suicide). A final note in the newspaper said that a book, bound with a ribbon, was found in one of McGurk's pockets,

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Annual General Meeting Report

By Cheryl Mayo

Some 65 members attended the 2015 Annual General Meeting of the Society at the West Dean Centre in Bream on Saturday 3rd October.

In his report, Chair Simon Moore thanked Indoor Meetings Secretary, Virginia Morgan, for putting together a varied and interesting programme. He also thanked Cecile Hunt and Averil Kear for their superb organisation and research which made the Society's coach outings so worthwhile. Simon then went on to highlight some of the key activities and projects which the Committee have been pursuing over the past year. These include the ongoing process of seeking lottery funding to publish members' research into WW1 and its impact on the Forest; the Society's key role in the Foresters' Forest HLF programme; and the proposal to place a stone marker at the New Fancy site. He also thanked individual committee members for their continued efforts on the Society's behalf.

The full Chair's report can be found on the Society's website, under the news page.

In her report, the Treasurer Cecile Hunt noted that while membership numbers have grown slightly, membership fees no longer cover the full cost of meetings, with some £700 shortfall. This is currently made up through teas/coffees and raffle sales, but it may be that fees will have to increase at some stage. She went on to say that because of the relatively poor take up of the coach trip outside the Forest over the past two years, there would only be one coach trip in 2016 (August). Instead, the committee was considering a self-drive trip, details of which would be advised. Other financial items were in the general order of past years, with the exception of additional revenue now coming via the e-shop on the Society's website.

Following these reports, Vice-President Ian Pope awarded the Scott-Garrett Award to Cherry Lewis for the best talk of 2015 and the Chairman awarded the Cyril Hart Award to Ben Lennon for the best New Regard No 29 article.

The AGM then re-elected Simon Moore as Chair and Cecile Hunt as Treasurer. Cheryl Mayo was required by the Constitution to step down as Secretary, having served three years, and David Edwards was voted in as Secretary together with the remainder of the committee, which stands as is. The Chair urged more members to put themselves forward and become involved with the activities of the committee.

The appointment of the Independent Examiner, Val Mitchell, was also confirmed.

The Speech House Pilot by Cheryl Mayo



I was looking for the memorial oaks planted in Speech House field at the end of the 1981 Forest campaign to take a photo for Alan Robertson's article, *Lord McNair's nightmare: the Forestry Bill of 1981 (The New Regard 2013)* when I found the plaque (above). It's on the stone wall which forms the boundary between The Speech House field and the courtyard outside the Orangery, facing into the field. A gardener happened to be working nearby. He wandered across to ask if I knew the story (I didn't of course) and told me the young pilot had apparently lost his way in early morning fog and tried an unsuccessful forced landing in the field.

The plaque had been unveiled at a memorial dedication on 4th October 1998. Various documents had been pulled together for the ceremony by Mr H McOwan, chairman of the Royal Air Force Association, Royal Forest of Dean Branch. These were subsequently given to Gloucestershire Archives. This is the story that they tell.

Sgt Pilot Derrick Ellis Prior was the son of Harry W E B Prior and Amy Prior of Colnbrook in Buckinghamshire. He trained at 31 SFTS in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, gaining his wings on April 5th 1941. At the time of his death, only eight months later, he was based with No. 263 Squadron RAF at Charmy Down Royal Air Force Station in Somerset. The airfield was approximately 3 miles (4.8km) north-northeast of Bath.

Below is the extract from the December 1941 Operations Record Book which records Derrick Prior's death.

"This was the first month in 1941 in which the Squadron made no contact with the enemy. Rhubarb operation against transport in the Cherbourg Peninsula was planned for December 8th but permission for it could not be obtained from Group. It is apparent that Fighter Command is, for the moment, conserving its resources on the Western European Front. There were three scrambles, wholly without incident, and these comprise the operational record for the month.

A number of hours have been flown by day in co-operation with the military authorities. It is understood that these are in connection with a new type of predicted searchlight.

The Servicing Echelon of the Squadron flew from Filton to Colerne. This move brought to an end the Squadron's connection with Filton which has existed on and off, always in a most friendly fashion, since the Squadron's first formation at Filton on October 2nd, 1939.

The squadron was detached for five days at Farmwell for Air Firing Practice. The weather was not very favourable; however, some useful work was done.

Twelve whirlwinds and pilots moved to Exeter to stand in for Squadrons covering a bombing operation on Brest. Owing to foggy weather 263 Squadron had not returned to Charmey Down on Jan. 1st.

Form 540				OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK		Page No. One	
Name of Unit or Formation, 263 Squadron				No. of pages used for day		Month	
Date	Time	Summary of Events	References in Appendix				
Dec. 1st		December. This was the first month in 1941 in which the Squadron made no contact with the enemy. Rhubarb operation against transport in the Cherbourg Peninsula was planned for December 8th but permission for it could not be obtained from Group. It is apparent that Fighter Command is, for the moment, conserving its resources on the Western European Front. There were three scrambles, wholly without incident, and these comprise the operational record for the month.					
Dec. 6th		A number of hours have been flown by day in co-operation with the military authorities. It is understood that these are in connection with a new type of predicted searchlight.					
Dec. 6th		The Servicing Echelon of the Squadron moved from Filton to Colerne. This move brought to an end the Squadron's connection with Filton which has existed on and off, always in a most friendly fashion, since the Squadron's first formation at Filton on October 2nd, 1939.					
Dec. 29th		The Squadron was detached for five days at Farmwell for Air Firing Practice. The weather was not very favourable; however, some useful work was done.					
Dec. 30th		Twelve whirlwinds and pilots moved to Exeter to stand in for Squadrons covering a bombing operation on Brest. Owing to foggy weather 263 Squadron had not returned to Charmey Down on Jan. 1st.					
Dec. 1st		It is with deep regret that we record the death of Sgt. Pilot D.E. Prior on Dec. 14th. He was engaged on a Searchlight Co-operation Flight, flying at 8-10,000 feet. At about 1030 hours he was seen to crash near Coleford in Gloucestershire after a vertical dive; he was killed instantly. It cannot be known whether he lost control in cloud or whether he was the victim of ice-formation. Sgt. Prior had been with the Squadron since Sept. 12th 1941, and was popular for his sense of humour and excellent spirits.					

*The Operations Record Book describing the death of
Sergeant Pilot D.E. Prior.
Reproduced by courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives (D8089/4)*



The Westmoreland Whirlwind was a British twin-engined heavy fighter

PERSONNEL

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As noted above, the cause of the accident was not clear. According to the official accident report, Sgt Pilot Prior was seen "in breaking cloud at 300 feet above ground level, with insufficient time to pull out." The Officer in Charge noted that this type of aircraft, the Westmoreland Whirlwind, 'takes 8,000 feet to pull out of a vertical dive.' He then goes on to say that he is 'of opinion that pilot flew into cloud and lost control either through inexperience or there may have been icing conditions.'

The Investigator added: "Entered cloud and when ordered to change course from a vector of 350° to one of 185° it is thought that he went into a steepening spiral dive which resulted in breaking cloud..."

Sgt Pilot Prior is buried in the Yiewsley and West Drayton Cemetery in Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

The Deputy Gaveller, Dan Howell, tells me that there have been various attempts to excavate the plane over the years, however, as it has been declared a war grave, permission has never been given.



There have been some significant changes to the 'News' section of our website. David Harris has been working hard in conjunction with our web service providers (moduleIT of Mitcheldean) to install a 'News Blog'. Members of the Committee are now able to send news items to a special email address, and the News Blog is then automatically populated with news from the email.

In addition readers of the News Blog are able to 'reply' to any of the news items. The comments left in reply are however moderated to prevent any 'inappropriate' messages being left on the News Blog. You can take a look at the News Blog at our website:

www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

The Committee also has plans to shortly introduce a new 'Enquiries Blog' onto the website.



From the Treasurer (Cecile Hunt)

Thank you to those members who have renewed their membership - a new membership/programme card is enclosed - if you have sent payment in last few days it may have missed the posting of this newsletter, your membership card will be posted as soon as possible. The society's membership year is 1st Oct to 30th Sept - membership subs are due on, or just after, 1st October. Non-renewal of membership will mean this will be the last newsletter you will receive. I hope though that you will continue as a member and enjoy our new programme of events.

Details of how to renew are on the society website - bank details for payment by Bacs are on the downloadable forms - or email me at treasurer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk for the details. Alternatively please send payment to my address, as printed on last years membership card. A new membership card will be sent to you on receipt of payment.

A warm welcome from the society to the following recently joined members:
Sue Middleton, Coleford Ernie Hale, Blakeney

A reminder that members can order in print issues of the New Regard from the online 'eshop', 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 'Bream' to 'Sling' on 1st December 2015.

Member Dave Tuffley is recording local mining terms and has asked for some help from the members: "I would welcome any information on mining terms (general or unique to the Forest of Dean) as I am currently creating a large mining glossary which I hope to have included on the Local History Society's website. Replies can be via my email address or telephone number below. Most of the Forest NCB miners are in their late 70 to 80's and once they have gone there will be no one to ask for this information."

You can contact Dave by phone: 01594 824343 or email: davidtuffley@btinternet.com

Hedgerows - Do You Notice Them? - Part 1

By Cecile Hunt

Hedgerows - do you take much notice of them? Are they just... there? As a part of our landscape they do get overlooked more often than not by the majority of us.

Hedges were around in Britain before the Romans invaded; the last major push in planting miles of them was in the mid 1800s during the 'Parliamentary' inclosures under the direction of the Inclosure Commissioners. Hedges, and field walls, have been around for many centuries, across the world. By Julius Caesar's day he was calling it 'an ancient practice' after encountering them in Flanders in 55 BC. They were boundary markers, written about by Siculus Flaccus, a writer on surveying, in the first century AD. In Britain Romans destroyed some earlier hedges by building over them; but they also planted hedges, around small fields newly laid out by them.

Anglo-Saxon (Old English) words for hedges include *hege*, *haga*, *hegeræwe* (hedgerow) and *ræw* (row). Charters of this period mention around 378 hedges which at the time was 2.45% of all boundaries in England. Where there was, or had been, woodland it was more likely that hedges existed - possibly from grubbing out the trees to make pasture and agricultural land and then leaving a line of trees and shrubs to mark the boundaries.

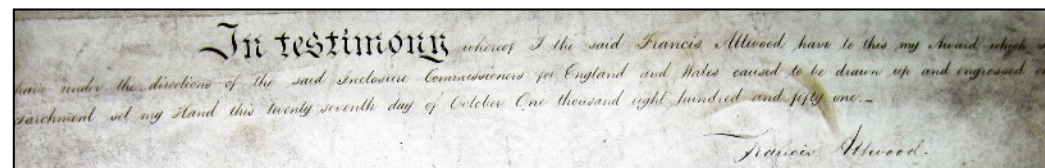


Severn Vale hedgerows viewed from near Pleasant Stile

By the Medieval period (5th to 15th centuries) over grown hedges were being recorded. During this period records show that hedges were being planted and maintained; in some cases they were felled and even stolen - *Buckinghamshire, 1283, Ralph Cheseman... took away thorns growing in the plantiffs hedges...fined 1/2mark (33p or £135 in 2015).*

Maps of the 16th & 17th century sometimes show boundaries by distinguishing type; hedge, wall etc.. Some counties abounded with hedges, in others hedges were rare - as is today in counties such as Yorkshire. Fuel was a great driving force of the maintenance of hedges; good maintenance of hedges, and trees within the hedges, produced wood. Estates would have acres of wood being managed, some of these acres were made up of 'hedgerowes'. In the 1590s and 1600s winters were bitterly cold, plus an increase in poverty meant hedges were stolen for fuel; courts increased the penalties from fines to hours in the local stock 'with wood placed before them to signify the cause of the punishment'. 'The Great Enclosures' of the 18th & 19th centuries saw more new hedges appear than ever before. 200,000 miles of hedges made the fortunes of nursery firms in the Midlands area with the growing of millions of hedging plants - mainly 'quickthorn' (hawthorn). Strict instructions were issued by the Inclosure Commissioners regarding planting of fences to inclose 'allotments' or allotted land.

To be continued



Meetings In Review *by Cheryl Mayo and Keith Walker*



*Kempley Church
Copyright Julian P Guffogg
Creative Commons license.*

With many thanks to Cecile Hunt and Averil Kear who, as usual, did a thorough job of research and organisation (and found a lovely pub for lunch), to make our **coach outing on Saturday 1 August** a great success. Our magical mystery tour took us first to Mitcheldean where we learned something of its past glories as a thriving market town, and the histories of key buildings including the church with its beautiful marble sculpture, the market hall which is now the town hall, and the brewery, converted into offices and workshops by Rank Xerox in the 1980s to help redundant employees. From there we went across to Huntley to see the extraordinary church of St

John the Baptist, with its unusual and colourful interior of red stone inlays, marble pillars and extravagant floral carvings. The ancient yew in the churchyard, purported to be some 1,500 years old, also attracted a great deal of attention. We moved away from churches for a bit to follow by coach and by foot, sections of the line of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal, which is slowly being restored by the Canals Trust. The length around Oxenhall Lock is extremely pretty, enhanced by the restored Lock Cottage. But the best was really saved for last, with a visit to St Mary's Church in Kempley with its ancient oak door and medieval wall paintings. A true treat and if you haven't been, do go!

On **Saturday 5th Sept**, members were treated to an erudite talk by Chris Sullivan titled **'Eyres and Disgraces'**, which explored how the money-raising ploys of various kings over past centuries were exhumed by James 1st and Charles 1st to help them out when Parliament refused to vote them sufficient money.

In the 17th century when Charles and Parliament found themselves at odds over income, Charles used means such as the sale of commercial monopolies, Knights' fees, fines on Catholics and forced loans, the restoration of feudal duties, extension of Forest Law, land and mining grants to ironmasters, and Forest privatisation - all of which inevitably led to tensions between local commoners, miners and gentry on the one hand, and Court appointees on the other. The Dean was a particularly attractive source of income, with a five-fold increase in the use of iron making it a great source of fuel, so one gambit was Disafforestation, ie forest privatisation by agreement with the 'legal' inhabitants. Local riots in various forests occurred between 1626 and 1632, led in the Dean by John 'Skimmington' Williams from English Bicknor. And then the 1634 Dean Forest Eyre came to town. The Eyre was a travelling court last held in 1282 which dealt with crimes considered too serious for the local Speech court.. A court decision in 1630 to restore Forest Law across England brought about its revival. The Dean Eyre took place between 10-18 July. It started in Mitcheldean but after only two hours was adjourned to Gloucester castle. It dealt with over 800 offences in a bid to raise revenues rather than attack the rampant corruption taking place.

Mr Sullivan's talk provided us with a fascinating insight into troubled times, and a reminder that the Foresters' defence of their Forest has been going on for a very long time.



Charles I

Phil Riches attracted an audience of some 50 members and guests on **Friday 18th September** for his talk entitled **"The Dean Road and Welshbury Hill Excavation Reports"**. Phil started by outlining a recent dig on Welshbury Hill. The dig was undertaken in cooperation with Rob Jarman. Rob is currently researching when and where the Sweet Chestnut tree was introduced into the United Kingdom. Buried soil beneath archaeological features provides an opportunity to search for chestnut pollen in a dateable context. The name 'Castiard' is seen as significant as the name is associated with chestnut, and Welshbury Hill is located in the Vale of Castiard. Two trenches have been opened since the dig started in 2014, allowing soil samples to be recovered. Additionally pottery has been recovered from trench 2, subsequently identified to be Oxford roman ware, and 13th century.



The Dean Road at Blackpool Bridge

Phil then turned to the subject of 'The Dean Road'. Previous research into the Dean Road did not manage to identify when exactly it was built, but it was pointed out that the 'road' might have been in use continuously for many centuries, with different road surfaces being built at different points in time. Phil revealed that DAG currently has an unfinished dig in progress alongside the 'road' near Yorkley. Excavations were made alongside the remaining kerb stones. This revealed a cobbled surface, wider than the width of the 'known' Dean Road, and underlying it. Cobbles from the underlying wider surface had been used to infill the later narrower 'known' Dean Road. The dig is currently 'on hold'.

After the AGM on **Saturday 3rd October**, Cecile Hunt and Averil Kear entertained some 70 people with their talk **'Discovering Forest Iron'**. They presented a 'tour de force' following the route of their successful 2014 coach tour which visited many of the former sites of the iron industry of the Forest of Dean. Until coal became 'king' in the mid 17th century, the winning of iron ore and subsequent working of it was a primary industry in the Dean for many hundreds of years, and was of great importance to the nation.

Starting in the Lydney area, facts and figures were presented in relation to sites such as Lydney foundry, Lower, Middle and Upper Forges. The virtual tour moved on through Parkend where reference was made to the extraordinary 51 feet diameter water wheel which once stood

there. Dark Hill was the next 'stop', where the importance of the work and works of David Mushet and his sons were fully explained, including the successful production of self hardening tool steel in 1868. An ancient reference to Clearwell in 1086 as a 'partly iron ore mining district' reminded everyone how long iron ore and oxides and pigments have been won from places like Clearwell Iron Mines (Old Ham Mine)

Many other sites of the iron industry were described in Blakeney, Soudley, Cinderford and Lydbrook before the virtual tour came to a halt.



Darkhill Iron Works