

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
October 2014

Is the Severn Estuary under threat from
climate change and man made projects?
Learn more at our meetings!

Also - full AGM report inside.

THE FOREST OF
DEAN LOCAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY

News

OCTOBER 2014

Editor:

Keith Walker
51 Lancaster Drive
Lydney
GL15 5SJ
01594 843310
NewsletterEditor
[@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:keithwalker@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Chair:

Simon Moore
01594 840521
Chair
[@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:simonmoore@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Treasurer:

Cecile Hunt
01594 842164
Treasurer
[@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:cecilehunt@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Secretary:

Cheryl Mayo
01594 516960
Secretary
[@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:cherylmayo@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Website:

forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Registered Charity
No: 1094700

Printed by
Hanley Court Printers

Editors Notes

Will the topology of the Severn Estuary change in our lifetime? Is climate change a real threat to our local Severnside communities? Will a tidal barrage really be built? Is it really safe to build large nuclear power stations adjacent to the Severn Estuary? All difficult questions to answer, but can history teach us some lessons about the future?

At our meeting on Friday 19th September Hadyn Cullen Jones related a surprising history of barrage proposals for the Severn Estuary, dating back to 1849. Whilst the larger barrages proposals are currently not currently being pursued by the authorities as the huge costs of building them do not make economic sense, smaller scale projects are making progress. The Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon project (www.tidallagoonswanseabay.com) is at the point of public consultation and could be in operation by 2018.

Meanwhile new large nuclear power stations are planned for Oldbury on Severn (www.horizonnuclearpower.com) and further down the estuary at Hinckley Point. We all remember the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster which occurred in 2011, when a tsunami overwhelmed the nuclear power station. Could such a thing happen in the Severn estuary? Was the 'Great Severn Flood of 1607' a tsunami or a severe storm surge? What is the likelihood of a reoccurrence? We have the chance to find out at our meeting on Saturday 8th November at the Memorial Hall, Drybrook, when Dr Mark Lewis will talk about "The Great Severn Tsunami".

For those of you who have a wider interest in the issues concerning the Severn Estuary, a number of the management groups which focus on the estuary have created the online 'Severn Estuary Gateway' (www.severnestuary.net/). Also over the years since 1985, some very interesting archaeological research has been carried out in the Severn Estuary by the Severn Estuary Levels Research Committee (www.selrc.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 Cecile Hunt*



Cecile in St Mary's Church, Lydney. One of the many locations which the Society notice boards visited this summer.

This is my last Chairman's report to you as I have completed three years in the role; which I have thoroughly enjoyed. I hand the position over to Simon Moore who is, and will continue to be, the Society's Conservation officer. Simon has been a great support to me and the rest of the committee and will continue to take the society forward. Thank you all for your support during the last three years.

At this year's AGM Liz Berry, your Membership Secretary for the last ten years, decided that she would like to step off the committee - a big

thank you to Liz for managing the membership over the years. Liz and I joined the committee at the same time in 2003 and we have worked together since then. Memberships, new and old, will now be managed by the Treasurer. For the past three years Mary Sullivan managed the society's funds as Treasurer very efficiently and she has now handed the role back to me. Mary continues as Vice-Chairman and will be a great support to Simon in managing the society. The rest of your committee stays the same apart from Publicity Officer; this role was ably carried out by Joyce Moss for the last eighteen months, but due to other commitments Joyce unfortunately had to give up the role. Anyone who would like to take up the reins of promoting the society would be very welcome; if you are interested and want to know more about this, please see a committee member.

It has been a very full three years! This summer I have taken the Society's information boards to several carnivals and history events as it was decided that Society should go out to public events to promote the Society. New information packs have been introduced to tell people what we are about and encourage new members - these have gone down very well at all the outside events your committee attended. These packs will be available at all society events so please take one or two and distribute amongst friends, family and colleagues.

One recent major change has been to the society website, which now includes an online shop. If you have not visited your society's website I would encourage you to do so. Thanks go to David Harris and Keith Walker for many hours of dedicated hard work in making it what you see today.

The society has been in existence for nearly 70 years and over that time I think your committee has judged it pretty well as to what lecture's, walks, outings, extra events, New Regard articles and CD's are arranged, chosen and produced for the members. If you would like to be involved in this decision making why not join the committee or at least come and visit a committee meeting?

Now I have stepped down from the chair I am intending to devote more time to the latest Society project, looking into the home front in the Forest during World War I. The intention is to publish a book and other media. I will keep you posted on the progress of the project.

Cecile

'Annual General Meeting *As reported by Cheryl Mayo*

Some 60 members attended the 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Society at the West Dean Centre in Bream on Saturday 4 October. In her Chairman's report, Cecile Hunt noted that the Society had had a busy programme year, with indoor meetings with excellent speakers, a coach trip which focused on the very long history of iron in the Forest, and a walk around historic Cinderford hosted by Ron Beard, which followed the success of last year's *New Regard* special edition on Cinderford.



New Chair Simon Moore at the recent AGM

The WWI project had gained momentum and members' research to date on a wide variety of topics, all with a focus on how the war impacted daily life here in the Dean, had been displayed at the Dean Heritage Centre over the summer (Home Front Dean). Some of the boards used were on display at the AGM. It is

hoped the project will culminate in the publication of a book and various digital media formats.

The latest *New Regard* was on sale at the meeting and sold very well. This year's journal has a wide variety of articles, from informal memories of growing up in the Forest, to a well-researched treatise on meends. Members are always encouraged to contribute articles, and should approach any of the Committee if they would like to do so.

A report was given on the new website which members had voted for at the last AGM. The site is now up and running and has a number of new features, including an e-shop where Society publications, including out-of-print *New Regard* articles, can be purchased online. Callum McKelvie, a history student at Aberystwyth University, is our new volunteer web editor.

This was Cecile's last year as Chairman, but she will remain on the committee as Treasurer and will also continue to work with Keith Walker on the WWI project. Mary Sullivan, Vice Chair, presented Cecile with flowers and book tokens in appreciation of her three years of hard work as the Society's Chairman. Other committee members standing down this year are Joyce Moss (Publicity Officer) and Liz Berry (Membership Secretary). Both were thanked for their work for the Society. Liz will continue as a Trustee in her role of overseeing the geo-map at New Fancy. Mary Sullivan presented the Treasurer's report, noting that, while memberships are standing up well, fees no longer cover the basic operating costs of the Society. It may therefore be necessary for the Committee to look at increasing the membership fee and bringing a proposal to the next AGM. The Society has significant savings, needed as a cushion to purchase assets or for grant applications. The Scott Garrett Award for the best talk was presented to Nick Herbert for his talk, *The Forest of Dean Eyre of 1634*.

The AGM was followed by a talk by Kate Biggs on the Building Preservation Trust's work on Whitecliff Furnace, Gunns Mill and the Church of St James at Lancut.



Old Road or New? by Cecile Hunt

The highways and byways of our countryside barely get a second glance as we travel along them. They are just there, quietly doing what they have done for thousands of years, getting us all from A to B.

The Romans built many miles of road using the engineering methods of the day and these set the basis for many of the 'A' roads we use today. A lot of Roman roads were well worn Iron-Age routes; the Romans used them and added a hard surface.

The A48 through Lydney via Newerne Street (previously Newerne village) and

up Highfield Hill is an example of an ancient greenway; probably servicing the Iron-Age fort in Lydney Park. Over time the deep, well worn, track was filled in, levelled and surfaced by the Romans and then eventually tarmac came along.

Enclosure of land over many centuries generated many miles of straight and winding roads and lanes. Have you ever travelled down a road that suddenly turns sharp right or left, or even has a double bend? One explanation may be that two surveyors' surveying two separate villages during a period of enclosure drew up two roads that did not meet up squarely at the parish boundary and a little realignment had to take place.

After the Romans left, maintenance of the roads stopped. In 1555 a Highways Act was passed making it the responsibility of parishes to maintain the King's highway. This Act made it statute that each parishioner gave four days labour a year, (increased to six in 1691), to road maintenance. During the period 1555 to 1835 many roads were not looked after and fell into major disrepair. Tolls roads were introduced to try to remedy the lack of maintenance, and the first turnpike trust was setup in 1663. By 1830 there were in excess of 1000 turnpike trusts in England; the last one closed in 1895. Turnpike trusts not only maintained roads but built new ones as well, if you live on an old toll road how old is it?

In 1835 a new Highways Act brought into being a highway rate and abolished the enforced labour provided by parishioners. By the late 19th century parishes were compulsorily made into highway authorities; these were transferred to county councils in 1888; in 1894 minor roads became the responsibility of local authorities.

Some old roads survive today as footpaths. Locally, Swan Lane in Blakeney was the main road in 1831, however the road was diverted around the hill and is still in use today - the A48! How old are the dwellings and building along your road? Does it appear to go nowhere? Verges standing higher than the road itself is an indication that it may have had many centuries of use. The photograph shows Driffield Road, Lydney, which has been used as a byway for several centuries; the hedge on the right is sitting on a bank the top of which is the original ground level.....(to be continued).

Loss and Disaster at Sea - some local connections...

Seeking refuge in the rigging of stricken vessels was always a last resort but a common occurrence among Severn watermen. Some survived but others perished.

In October 1817 the trow William, on passage from Bristol to Gloucester with a valuable cargo of grocery and other goods, heeled over, filled and sank after running aground near Westbury-on-Severn. Seaman James Wilkes shinned up the mast and into the rigging but lost his grip and dropped into the water. He drowned. Other members of the crew stayed on the deck until the last moment and were picked up by rowing boats.

In contrast a boy working on a small sloop carrying a cargo of salt from Lydney to Chepstow in 1836 clambered up the mast of the vessel as it sank after running into a 'high and boisterous wind' in the mouth of the Wye. The mast remained above water and the youngster was safely taken off by boat. Warren Hathaway, the master, had jumped into a small boat being towed behind the sloop. But he had forgotten his knife and was unable to cut the rowing boat free. It was dragged down with the sloop and Hathaway drowned.



Thanks to member John Powell for the piece above. John is currently researching the dramatic escape of Lydney lad Charles James Lewis, who spent a December night in 1891 lashed high in the rigging of a wrecked sailing ship in the North Sea. Charles was the son of Samuel Lewis who was Harbour Master at Lydney for many years.

Can anyone help John with more information about the family of the Lydney-born apprentice? If you can, please get in touch with the editor of the newsletter (see inside the front cover for more contact information).

Book Review

"The Churches and Chapels of the Parish of Tidenham: Their History and Architecture."

Edited by Carol Clammer and Keith Underwood. Published by Tidenham Historical Group. 200 pages. 16 pages of colour plates plus numerous b/w photographs, plans and maps in the text.

ISBN 978 0 9928722 0 5 - available from the Tidenham Historical Group: call 01291 623736 or e-mail: info@tidenhamhistory.co.uk and Chepstow Bookshop: call 01291 625011 or e-mail: shop@chepstowbooks.co.uk

This is an excellent example of a book produced by a local history society about its own patch. The production values of this self-published book are very high - good layout, clear well-taken photographs.

This book brings together, in a consistent format, researches over a long period by members of "a small society dedicated to preserving and recording the history of our parish", to quote the Group's website. Indeed the book's dedication is to members of the group who contributed to the early research. Tidenham is historical "no man's land" between England and Wales, partly West of Offa's Dyke and East of Chepstow. The Beachley-Aust crossing was important into living memory, so much of the Parish faces across the Severn rather than into the Forest. The land, and hence church, ownership reflected that. The historical perils of the crossing generated the early need for places of worship. The book charts the increasing demand for places of worship from a growing population, the Temperance movement, doctrinal disagreements and, in the last 100 years, the large number of soldiers based in Beachley after the inhabitants were evicted in 1917 for a failed shipyard.

The book covers the 24 places of worship built from AD625 to 1988. Some are conventional parish churches, others converted army huts. The level of detail is substantial where sources permit. For example, there are 16 pages on St James at Lancaut, arranged in the format "Introduction, history, architecture, tour of building plan, ownership and OS Grid Reference". While the book covers architecture in detail, with much focus on stained glass, the thrust is at least as much on the purpose of the building, on its benefactors and on its place in the community. It reads as written by those who care about these structures as embodiments of community and spirituality, while being soundly based on recorded facts. The Group's developing database of extracts from the Chepstow Weekly Advertiser since 1855 is evident, but there is a great depth of other research. To me, a great merit is the detail recorded, for posterity, of buildings which are now either inaccessible to the public (as private houses or on military premises) or have been completely destroyed.

Chris Sullivan



Tidenham Church



Thank you to members who paid their subscription at the AGM. For those who haven't yet done so, renewal subs are due so that new membership cards for 2015 can be sent out with the January newsletter to all members.

Welcome to these recently joined members:

Mrs Penny Helliwell, Halifax;	Mr Ian Hendy, Bream;
Mrs C Hoare, Staunton Meend;	Mrs Gill Moore, Bristol;
Mr Callum McKelvie, Ruardean;	Mr Venkakesh Sheno, Blaisdon;
Mr James Clegg, Lydney;	Mr John Thurston, Lydney;
Mr Paul Walker, Bristol;	Mrs D Keogh, Cinderford;
Ms Jo Phelps, Longhope	

Liz Berry

Articles from out of print New Regards (volumes 1 to 18) have now been made available for download from the FODLHS eshop. To buy an article go to <http://store.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk> then click on the reprints tab. Articles being sold as downloads are charged at 15p per page, with a minimum charge of 75p, and a maximum charge of £3.75 per article.

A full index of articles published in The New Regard is available for download at

<http://www.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/resources/downloads/>

Members can also order in print issues of the New Regard from the on-line 'eshop', simply go to

<http://store.forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/index.php>

then select the 'New Regard' tab. **To obtain the members discount, use the voucher code 'Lydney' when prompted.**

We use paypal to safely process payments and you can make your payment using any credit card or debit card (or your own PayPal account if you have one).



Brass rubbing was originally a British enthusiasm for reproducing onto paper monumental brasses – commemorative brass plaques found in churches, usually originally on the floor, from between the 13th and 16th centuries. Brass rubbings are created by laying a sheet of paper on top of a brass and rubbing the paper with graphite, wax, or chalk.

Recently a local gentleman gave Averil Kear, a framed picture of two brass rubbings which he thought came from Newland church (see image to the left). However the brass rubbings did not originate from Newland Church. The frame is 33" x 24" and each brass rubbing is 25" tall.

Averil would like to repatriate these brass rubbings with their rightful church if we can find out which one it is. If anyone has any idea where they originated from, please contact Averil by email at:

EnquiriesOfficer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk

Meetings In Review



On the afternoon of **12th July**, over 60 members of Gloucestershire Local History Societies from all over the county gathered in St. Briavel's village hall for the **Gloucestershire Local History Association 'Local History Day'**. It was the turn of the Forest Local History Society to play host this year. The Chairman, Cecile Hunt gave a presentation on St. Briavel's Castle, church and village to set the scene and then 4 groups went into the village. As it was also Open Studios Day, and there were several Open Studios in St. Briavel's, the chance was taken to visit some of these.

The castle, once the residence of the Forest Constable, seat of forest law, royal hunting lodge and centre for the distribution of locally manufactured cross bow heads or quarrels, was a big attraction. The manageress of the YHA showed visitors around and opened up the oubliette or dungeon for viewing. A walk round the village and a visit to the well maintained thirteenth century church, with its Norman arcade and font and nineteenth century tower and chancel concluded with tea in the village hall, prepared by the local Women's Institute. There was plenty of history talk and we learnt that next year's get together is to be on the other side of the county at Lechlade. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon, organized by Mary Sullivan.

This year our local coach trip took place on **Saturday 16th August** and was based on the **Iron Industry in the Forest**.

Able led by Cecile Hunt and Averil Kear, we started from Lydney, noting the sites of furnace, foundry and forge, which had operated, one way or another from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Our first



stop was Darkhill, David Mushet's Ironworks in a valley near Sling erected in 1811. Here he perfected the manufacture of hard iron and the place saw the first experiments conducted by his son Robert into the Bessemer process in steel. The Titanic Steel Works nearby, put up by Robert in 1862, saw very hard steel being made. The production of the first steel railway lines was a great improvement on the iron ones of the time. Both sites are now covered in trees and bracken and are part of the forest again.

At Clearwell Caves, Jonathan Wright told us how his father had opened the mines in 1968 against considerable opposition. Over the centuries, millions of tons of iron and ochre have been extracted and there is still plenty of iron beneath the water level. Nowadays, ochre is mined for paints and had helped in restoration projects, like the church wall paintings at St. Fagan's Folk Museum in Wales.

We then went up the Cannop and Soudley Valleys, looking at the sites of foundries, forges, blast furnaces and wire works, dating variously from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.

Few now remain. Iron was first mined in Dean in the Iron Age and has gone on ever since.. There were 60 forges in the thirteenth century and Richard 1st received 30,000 Dean horse shoes for the third Crusade. Then we came to Cinderford and Lydbrook, noting ironworks all the way.

After lunch in Walford, we arrived in Tintern, passing the Redbrook Valley, noting the iron operations there. At Tintern, we looked round Abbey Mill, which made wire. We saw the Angidy Valley, which was the first really industrialized site in Britain and where the eighteenth century Wye tourists loved to hear the sound of hammers and the red flames of the iron forges, as a contrast to the peaceful abbey ruins below.

The Mineral and Battery Works was established in Tintern in 1566 and all along the valley is the wherewithal to make wire. German experts were invited in, since it took five years to become a skilled wire worker. This industry continued to the nineteenth century. The valley, where furnaces, wireworks and ponds can still be seen is well worth a visit. The wire, made from Dean iron and taken down the Wye, was exported all over the world to make knitting needles, fish hooks, bird cages, buckles and priming wire for guns. In Elizabethan times, the farthingales to hold skirts out were made from this wire.

It is difficult to understand now the huge amount of industry that has taken place in the Forest in past centuries.



Now demolished Minster House & part of the cloisters at Bristol Cathedral

The meeting on **Saturday 6th September** focused on "**The Missing Nave at Bristol Cathedral**". Joyce Moss explained to members that early engravings of the cathedral do not show a nave and said that after an intensive investigation she discovered that this was the result of the Reformation.

She said "The abbot's of St Augustine's Abbey had started to create a nave but when Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries, it was never completed and had been demolished by 1542 when a wall was built across the transepts and cathedral tower."

Joyce told members that private houses, leased by the Dean and Chapter, soon appeared on the nave site from 1583 with the construction of Cloister House. She revealed that while the Chapter earned a lot of money from the lease, the tenants caused problems. There was a lack of supervision as the canons were largely absent from the city. At the end of the 18th Century, a brothel was started in one of the tenements.

Complaints in Chapter meetings started in 1698 and continued until the early 19th Century but the lease money was important to most of the canons, so nothing was done.

Eventually in the 1830's, the houses were demolished and in 1868 a new nave was completed during the religious revival in the Church of England. The Western Tower followed in 1888.

Meetings In Review - extra!



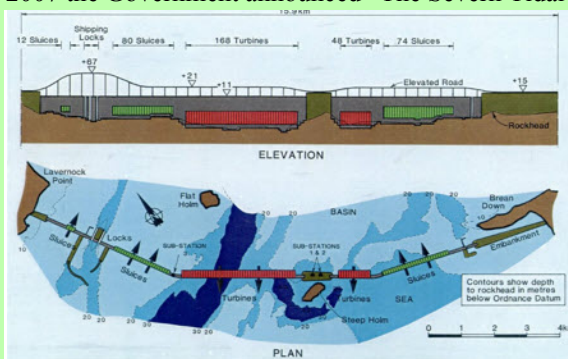
By arrangement with the Dean Heritage centre, members were able to visit the ‘**Home Front Dean**’ exhibition at the Dean Heritage Centre during the evening of the **8th September**. The Home Front Dean exhibition told the story of how local people coped with the demands and stresses of the Great War while living and working in the Forest of Dean. The exhibition explored a wide range of topics, from coal mining, to the role of women and the impact of war on family life. Many artefacts of the period were also on display. The exhibition was created in partnership between the Dean Heritage Centre and FODLHS. The information panels (that FODLHS provided material for) are being retained by the Dean Heritage Centre,

and are available for the History Society to use. Some of the panels were used as part of the History Society display at the GLHA History Day held on 11th October at Pates School.

Haydn Cullen-Jones was our guest lecturer on **Friday 19th September**, when he talked to some 34 members about “**The Severn Barrage**”.

Somewhat surprisingly the history of proposed barrages in the Severn estuary started as early as 1849 when Thomas Fulljames proposed a barrage between Beachley and Aust to create a large shipping harbour. By 1925 the estuary was being evaluated for possible electricity generation, and the first of the schemes to consider this was proposed by Lord Brabazon at English Stones. His design was engineered to produce a potential 800Mw of electricity at a building cost (then!) of £25m. In 1931 Paul Shishkoff demonstrated a prototype 220Kw turbine at Avonmouth docks, but the project went no further. In 1933 the Severn Barrage Committee Report recommended that an 800 MW barrage across the English Stones area would be the best option. The work was interrupted by World War II and then later revived in 1945. A further government study looked at barrage options in 1948 and estimated the construction costs at £60 million. By the time of the next study in 1953 the estimated cost had risen to £200 million. In 1971 Dr Tom Shaw came up with a plan for a barrage between Brean Down and Lavernock Point. In 1975 the CEBG produced a study that concluded that a barrage was not economically feasible at the time because of the availability of cheap oil.

Since then there have been a number of other initiatives either supporting the building of a barrage at Brean Down or in ‘The Shoots’. In 2007 the Government announced “The Severn Tidal Power Feasibility Study”, but by October 2010 the project was abandoned. The huge cost of building a 10 mile long barrage across the estuary appears to currently defeat both public and private finances. However a smaller scale tidal lagoon proposal for Swansea Bay is currently being considered for planning permission. This scheme can apparently provide electricity for 120,000 homes at a building cost of £850m.



Society People



Liz Berry, our long standing Membership Secretary, has stepped down from the Committee. Many of you who attend meetings will have met Liz as she was the friendly person that greeted you at the entrance door.

After working as a biologist at Stirling and Strathclyde Universities, Liz and husband Dave moved down to the Forest on retirement in 1999. Liz joined the Committee in 2003 becoming Membership Secretary after Bess Anstis.

Liz also served as General Secretary for three years. Liz and Dave Berry were Project Managers for the Geomap project. Together with other partners and members of the Committee, Liz brought the £107,000 project to a successful conclusion, on time and within budget. The Geomap project was awarded the prestigious ENI Geological Challenge Award in 2008, and the photograph shows Liz and Dave Berry at the awards ceremony.

Thanks are due to Liz for all her hard work during her time as a Committee member. However Liz will continue to help with the production of the newsletter, and she is remaining as a Trustee.

Unfortunately we have to record the recent death of **Norma Denton**. Norma was a Vice President of the Society. Norma was born in 1930, as Norma Mary Grindle. She married John (Jack) Denton in 1952, and they went on to have four children.

Older members will remember Norma as our ‘Outdoor Meetings Secretary’. In fact she organised the Society coach tours for well over twenty years before stepping down in 2004. Norma organised two or three coach excursions each year, and they were always well supported. Norma was closely associated with the Cinderford firm of Grindles Coaches, and the Society continues to use Grindles Coaches today.



Norma Denton cutting the cake with Ian Standing at the lunch held to celebrate the 60th year of the Society in 2008

We are also mourning the recent loss of long standing member **Pam Powell**. Thanks are due to Ian Standing for the following short tribute:

Pam Powell was a member of the Society for than 40 years. She served on the committee from 1975 until 1980, and was Vice Chairman in 1978, and Chairman in 1979. Until recent years, Pam attended most meetings; at them she was a constant presence in the tea making department, particularly when meetings were held in the Dr Charley Room.. Her antecedents were connected with the management of Lightmoor Colliery and she owned a working model of the Lightmoor Railway including a clockwork locomotive. Beyond the Society Pam was an active in numerous causes. For many years she and her family lived in the Old Vicarage on Lords Hill, Coleford. In later life she moved to Berryhill. She is survived by her son and daughter.