

Sat 11th January, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

The Brewery buildings in Mitcheldean – from Brewery to Business Park: Gerald Cooke

The Brewery Buildings were built by the Wintle family in the 1860s, hosted British Acoustic Films (BAF) during WWII, and produced cine equipment post war.

In the 1960s it produced the world's first photocopier, which became known (in later years) worldwide as a Xerox machine.

The talk will explain the sequence of expansion and firm name changes at the Mitcheldean site, and explore some of the key events and people involved in its 150 years of history

Sat 8th Feb, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

Archaeology in the Forest of Dean: Worcestershire Archaeology

Over the last few years Worcestershire Archaeology has trained and supervised local volunteers in carrying out excavations in various locations around the Forest. These have included excavations at Yorkley, Soudley Camp and Ruardean Castle.

Today the team will give feedback about the excavations, and finds made, together with an overview of how the results have informed knowledge of the fascinating history of our local area.

Sat 14th March, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

Bathurst open-air pool, Lydney, celebrates a 100th Anniversary: Bob Berryman

Dip into the history of this award-winning swimming pool, which is said to be one of Gloucestershire's best kept secrets! This 38 metre, solar heated, outdoor pool is now run by volunteers and is a registered charity. Over the years this community asset has seen many changes. The pool has been in use, during the summer months, since 1920 when it was gifted to the people of Alyburton and Lydney by the Bathurst family.

A book is being published to mark this special occasion. Copies will be available for sale.

Sat 18th April, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

In the Shadow of the Hills - can the Forest Heritage survive? : Di Court

This talk starts with a short film from 40 years ago "In the shadow of the hills" it gives an idea of how the Forest's artefacts and unique heritage was being lost.

The result was the forming of the Royal Forest of Dean Museum Project. You will hear about the people and events of the long journey to today's Dean Heritage Centre.

Fri 24th April, Blakeney Village Hall, 7.30p.m.

The Glosters at Waterloo: Andy Meller

The Glosters - or to give them their full name, The North Gloucestershire 28th Regiment of Foot - have an enviable history. They are the only regiment in the British army permitted to wear the famous 'back badge' and were the only English line regiment to be mentioned by name in the Duke of Wellington's 'Waterloo Dispatch'.

The evening's talk follows the soldiers of the regiment during the 4 day Waterloo campaign of 1815 and traces their footsteps through the Battle of Quatre-Bras on 16th June and 2 days later, the Battle of Waterloo itself.

Using photographs and maps of the battlefields, along with contemporary accounts and modern day film interpretation, we will stand where 'the Old Braggs' stood, see what they saw and begin to understand why their Divisional Commander, Sir Thomas Picton, said of them 'If I live to see the Prince Regent, I shall lay before him your bravery this day!'

Sunday 31st May, Meeting outside Ellwood School, Bromley Road, Ellwood, GL16 7LY at 2 p.m.

A led walk around the settlements of Ellwood, Little Drybrook and Clements Tump: Di Court

This 2 1/2 to 3 mile walk will look at the settlement patterns within the Forest boundary and the mining and quarrying that brought people here.

Sat 20 June, 2 p.m. meeting place Dean Heritage Centre, Camp Mill, Soudley, GL14 2 UB

'Finding a few Nonconformist chapels': Averil Kear

Self-drive visit to a few nonconformist chapels in the Cinderford area. Bookings will be directly with Averil (maximum of 25 places). See newsletter for further details.

Sun 19th July, 1.30p.m. Self-drive. Meet at small car park GL53 0QJ opposite the church.

Leckhampton, 'the Home Farm where leeks are grown': a tour of Leckhampton church, churchyard and village: Paul McGowan, Leckhampton LHS

Please note, there is a £2 per person requested payment to the Leckhampton LHS for this walk. This will be collected on the day and passed on the walk leader. This walk, led by a member of the Leckhampton LHS, takes us first to explore Old Leckhampton village. It has many buildings of historical interest, amongst which we will see a 16th century chuck construction cottage, a moat surrounding a designated ancient monument (where Leckhampton's second Manor House stood) and Lott's Meadow, where watercress was once grown. Having explored the village we make our way to visit the church and churchyard, where amongst the many highlights we will see carved stone effigies, believed to be of Sir John Giffard, Lord of the Manor (who died around 1330) and his Lady. Sir John built the church in the early 14th century.

Please note, while mainly on the flat, this route does include one stile. At the end of the walk there will be the opportunity to return to the church cottages, where tea and cakes are available on summer Sunday afternoons.

Sat 12th Sept, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

The Berkeley Affair: Cecile Hunt

Mary Cole was born a commoner but eventually became the Countess of Berkeley after two marriages, ten years apart, to Lord Fitzhardinge the fifth earl of Berkeley. The first marriage was disputed and the entry of it in Berkeley's parish records was allegedly proved to be forged. Problems arose on the death of the Earl in 1810 of the legitimacy of the six children born between the first and second marriage. Newspapers became full of reports of the Parliamentary inquiry by the House of Lords into Mary and her marriages to the fifth Earl. The consequences suffered by the 'illegitimate' children of the first, invalidated, marriage rumbled on for many years. The Parliamentary case came to be known as the 'Great Berkeley Case'. Mary fought with the powers of the time as to who she thought should inherit the title of 6th Earl; she believed that both marriages were legal. Who did inherit the title? And who inherited the 'noble and ancient family seat' of Berkeley Castle?

Fri 25th Sept, Blakeney Village Hall, 7.30p.m.

Tribes of the Forest: Alex Browne

When the Romans arrived in Britain it took them only a few years to conquer the lands east of the Severn. But it took them another 30 years to establish themselves in what is now the Forest of Dean & surrounding areas of Wales, strongly defended as it was by ancient iron age tribes such as the Silures and the Dobunni.

Sat 10th Oct, West Dean Centre, 3p.m

Lumberjills, PoWs and us - The Forest of Dean during the Second World War: Sarah Franklin

During the Second World War, the composition of both the Forest itself and its inhabitants changed enormously.

Training for the national Women's Timber Corps was headquartered at Parkend, where recruits from around the country came to learn timber husbandry. Many 'lumberjills' stayed on to work alongside any foresters not conscripted to the war.

Also working in the Forest at this time were several of the Italian inhabitants of Camp 61, a Prisoner of War camp at Wynoll's Hill.

This talk will look at the changes wrought upon the Forest by its new occupants and use first-hand accounts to draw a picture of those new to the Forest who made it their home during this period.

Sat 14th Nov, West Dean Centre, 3p.m.

The story of the Kymin Round House and Naval Temple, Monmouth: Martin Kerrigan

Set atop a hill overlooking Monmouth, The Kymin is a small quintessential slice of everything Georgian: a Round House for sheltering gentleman diners who styled themselves the 'Kymin Club', the quirky Naval Temple commemorating Admiral Nelson and 15 other Royal Navy Admirals and 10 acres of pleasure grounds offering far reaching views over the Wye Valley, Forest of Dean and Brecon Beacons.

In the early 1900s two of the original founders of the National Trust were involved in obtaining The Kymin for the then recently formed charity.

Martin Kerrigan has been volunteer Deputy Manager at the Kymin for 16 years and lives on site. His knowledge of and enthusiasm for the site is unsurpassed.

Sat 5th Dec 2020, West Dean Centre 3p.m.

A Gloucestershire (Archives) Christmas: John Putley

A look at the general history of the midwinter festival in Britain, the origins of some of our Christmas traditions and a look at how Christmas has been celebrated in Gloucestershire taken from material held in the County archives.