

The background image shows a well-maintained garden with several conical topiary trees of varying sizes. In the distance, a tall, pointed church spire is visible, partially covered in scaffolding, indicating it is under renovation. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
May 2019

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- Pull out forms for the summer excursions
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- Iron Production in the Dean

May 2019

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No: 1094700

Printed by
Inky Little Fingers

Editors Notes

During a recent visit to Westbury Court Gardens, I was struck by the coincidental shaping of some of the ornamental bushes to match the recently renovated spire of St. Mary, St. Peter & St. Paul Church. You might be able to make out a couple of workmen completing renovations to the spire in the photograph on the front cover. You will be able to enjoy Westbury Court Garden for yourself on one of our summer excursions. There are pull-out forms for both the excursions in the middle of this newsletter.

In another connection with Westbury Church, this issue carries a review of Professor Nicholas Orme's recently published booklet about Walter Map, the earliest recorded rector of Westbury Church. The booklet is only available at the Church, so if you are planning on joining the Garden tour, you might like to pop round to the church and buy a copy of the booklet!

I was recently saddened to learn of the death of History Society member Pete Ralph. Pete had worked for the Forestry Commission for many, many years, and had an unrivalled knowledge of forestry matters. He retired to the Forest of Dean where he became engaged in his other interests, most notably local history, and specifically charcoal burning, at which he was an expert. I collaborated with Pete a few years ago in writing an article for the New Regard, and was struck by his great knowledge of Forest history. He will be much missed.

Quite a few of you might have previously been involved in taking photographs in 1999 for the Society project "Photos for a New Century". This resulted in a CD being published which subsequently proved very popular. The CD was updated in 2010, and now nearly ten years have gone by so it is time to revisit the project. If you enjoy photography and would like to get involved, you will find more details in the news section of this edition.

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.

Views from the Chair

with Mary Sullivan



Dear Members

I write this as welcome, warm weather shows that Spring is really here and winter is behind us. So we are coming to the end of another series of indoor talks. As ever, we have enjoyed a delightful mixture of topics this season ranging from the Reformation in the Forest to ancient trees to past Society members and activities. The Summer means visits to gardens, including Westbury Court and Dyrham Park as well as walks around historical settings.

The research I undertook for my talks about our Founders and the early years of the Society showed me how far sighted and active those people were as we are still following the patterns of activity they forged 70 years on. I think the ideals of the Society have also remained strong, the desire to learn about the history and heritage of the area and share that with others, enthusing them too. The Foresters' Forest project shares those aims and the contribution by Lydbrook School in March demonstrated how successful they have been in incorporating local history and local studies into their curriculum.

I am very glad that our Society is an active partner in the Foresters Forest project. And we are also a key member of the GLHA, the Gloucestershire Local History Association. By the time you read this the event on 11th May may have passed, the first GLHA event at the Oxstalls Campus of the University. Next year we will have a bigger event again with displays by local societies on the theme of education. This can be on any aspect of the history of education in a village, town or area. To build on that I want us to look into the history of schools in the Forest over time. What schools were offering education and to whom at what level before the 1870 Forsters Education Act?* And how did things improve following further Acts in the 1880s and 1890s ensuring free primary education for all children. What early secondary schools were available? Later, did the move to comprehensive schools go smoothly in the Forest? If you would like to get involved in this work in any way or to share your or family memories of these events please have a word with me.

I offer a warm welcome to any new members who have joined in recent months. I hope you are enjoying your membership. Please make yourself known to me and tell me what you think of our Society and its events. A new person may have useful comments to make before familiarity dulls criticality.

I shall need to be seeking a new Secretary at the AGM as the excellent current jobholder, my husband, has to step down after 3 years in post. If there is any chance you might be able to fill that role please come and talk to me.

Have a good Summer.

Mary Sullivan

The **Elementary Education Act 1870, commonly known as **Forster's Education Act**, set the framework for schooling of all children between the ages of 5 and 12 in England and Wales. It established local education authorities with defined powers, authorized public money to improve existing schools, and tried to frame conditions attached to this aid so as to earn the goodwill of managers.*

MEMBERSHIP



First of all a warm welcome to new members Michael Reid, Nick Hodgson, David Taylor, Steven Carter, Anna Welsh & Antony Pope. We hope you enjoy the benefits of your membership of the Society.. Please take a look at the back cover where you will find an analysis of where our members live. It provides some surprising results! *Cheryl Mayo - Membership Secretary*

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
Local History Day - Saturday 11th May - 11am to 3'15pm
University of Gloucestershire School of Business and Technology
Oxstalls campus, Oxstalls Lane, Gloucester, GL2 9HW



The theme for this year's event is "Local History Today; themes, challenges & opportunities.

The programme includes Dr Matthew Cole speaking on "Mastering Local History", and making a welcome return, Dr Alan Crosby talking about "Themes, Challenges & Opportunities: the current state of local history in Britain".

As part of the programme the winner will be announced of the Bryan Gerrard award for the adjudged best article on an aspect of Gloucestershire's history in a local history publication. The History Society has two finalists contending for the prize this year, namely Averil Kear and Keith Walker, for articles published in New Regard issue number 32.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 19th May - Tour - 'In the Footsteps of Mushet'
Fully booked!

Sunday 9th June - 1'45pm - Westbury Court Gardens
Jerry Green - Gardens Tour

This a self drive tour, please see the booking forms in the centre of this edition

Sunday 21st July - 2'30pm

Geoff Davies: Bream Heritage Walk - Noxon Park to Bromley Furnace

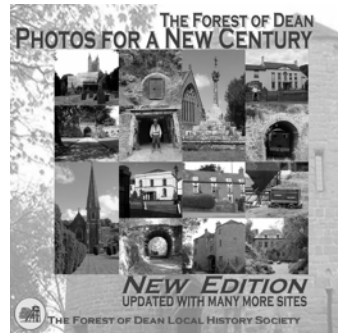
Meet at the bottom of Mill Hill, Bream on the Bream to Sling road. (SO 60053 06327). The walk will cover a section of the Bream Heritage Walk - part of the Foresters Forest project. We will walk through Noxon Park, passing close to large scowles and descend to China Bottom. We will then follow part of the route of the Dramroad that took iron ore from here to Parkend. Finally, after passing the site of Oakwood Mill, we will end our walk near the remains of Bromley Furnace. This walk will have un-even surfaces and will be muddy in wet weather. Distance 2 miles - includes an initial ascent of 150m on the Gloucestershire Way.

Wednesday 7th August

Visit to Dyrham Park - Led by Cecile Hunt & Averil Kear
Please see the booking forms in the centre of this edition

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

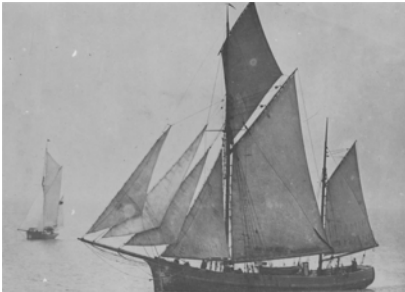
Many of you will have purchased our CD of Photos for a New Century which we originally produced in the year 2000. These photographs were taken by members of the Society of subjects of their own choosing which represented a 'snapshot' of Forest history. In 2009 new photos of the same subjects were taken and included in a revised version of the original CD. We are now preparing to update these photographs again to show what changes have occurred during the first twenty years of the century.



Consequently, we shall soon be asking for volunteers to retake the subjects that were included on the initial CD. In order to keep to the ten-year interval, the photographs will need to be taken between mid-2019 and mid-2020. Some of the original photographers will, no doubt, wish to repeat the exercise, but some of them are no longer with us and so new volunteers will be needed.

We would like to include another 100 photographs made up of the original sites plus other entirely new ones. If you would like to be involved in this new venture please contact me as I will be leading the project.

Ron Beard (ron.beard@btinternet.com)



THE LAST VOYAGE OF A LYDNEY FAVOURITE?

Could the recent discovery of the rudder and sternpost of an old sailing ship on the Severn foreshore near Gatcombe turn out to be remains of the trow *Jonadab* ?

The suggestion was floated (excuse the pun) after the story in our last newsletter which revealed the wreckage

had recently been buried beneath sand and mud. The hope was that large tides predicted for this month and next will again wash the remains clean. A society member has pointed out that a likely candidate would be the well known old trader *Jonadab*. She had been in relatively good order when she was beached at Lydney to act as a breakwater after fears were raised that the Severn was slowly eating its way towards the canal. A number of old trows were used to control the rate of erosion.

The beaching was not the last to be heard of *Jonadab*. She broke her moorings, part of her grounding close to the entrance to Sharpness. For a while the keel was upstream of Lydney and was later reported to be at Newnham. Another report put more remains across the Severn at Purton. So it's very possible the old lady, a Lydney favourite, has floated again!

Jonadab was built at Newport in 1848 and enjoyed a long career tramping around and about the Bristol Channel and Severn. There were a number of major overhauls before she was motorised in 1949 when owned by Silveys, of Bristol, ending her commercial life as a barge. Our photograph shows her ketch-rigged and under sail off Portishead.

Where Was the Mystery Water Driven Cider Mil?

by John Powell



A local example of a relict cider mill, although this one is not water powered. This mill was photographed at Old Tump Inn at Blakeney

This detailed account of cider-making in the Forest of Dean was first published in 1853. But there is a little mystery.

Can anyone identify the location of the water-powered cider-mill? It was apparently constructed around 1838 and described as much superior to the old mill, being capable of producing from three hundred to four hundred gallons a day.

A great number of orchards exist in the neighbourhood of the Forest (of Dean). The cider made there is peculiarly fine. The process of making is to have the apple-trees gently shaken at two or three different times, that only the ripest fruit may fall; the apples are then laid in heaps, which, if circumstances permit, are under cover, with a free admission of air. They are suffered to remain ten days or a fortnight, and some kinds even longer, and the cider-maker takes care that the decayed apples and other impurities may be removed before they are taken to the cider-mill, where they are crushed by a large circular stone, which is turned by a horse. When the apples are completely mashed, the must — as the crushed apples are then caused — is placed in large square pieces of hair-cloth, each hair-cloth being folded over, so that nothing but the juice can escape when they are put under the screw-press, to which they are removed, and there they remain till the juice is all expressed. The juice is received into a large tub, from which it is conveyed into the casks.

Those who do not sack the cider — about which there is a difference of opinion — cover the bung-hole of the cask with a tile, and let it stay to March or April, where to every cask of a hundred gallons is put half a pound of hops and a little colouring made of burnt sugar; and the cider is then stopped close, and is fit for drinking at the end of the year. Seven or eight sacks of apples will afford about a hundred gallons of cider, the expense of making which does not exceed ten shillings.

A cider-mill was constructed about 15 years ago, which is much superior to the old mill; it is driven by water, and makes from three hundred to four hundred gallons a day. In this mill the apples are placed in a large box, with an aperture in the bottom, which drops the apples between two iron rollers; these break them in pieces, after which they fall between two stone rollers set so close to each other as to crush the kernels of the apples, which is essential to the flavour of the cider. The 'must' is in this mill received into a larger tub beneath the rollers, and from thence put into the press.



In this new series Averil Kear is setting a challenge for you to identify where the text below is describing. The only help you are getting is that it is in the Forest area! To make it more interesting there will be a small prize for the first person who contacts the editor with the correct answer. Contact details are inside the front cover.

My native village was situated in a natural and beautiful amphitheatre. On the west and south-west arose two lovely hills, clothed with the richest verdure, and interspersed with orchards and white-washed cottages, even to the very summits. A deep ravine separated those hills, through which trilled a pellucid streamlet. After turning a cornmill, the stream flowed through the village, overshadowed in its course by pear and apple trees, and after passing under two bridges, in true Doric style of architecture, it was joined by another stream in the centre of the village. This second stream had previously flowed round the shoulder of the western hill above-mentioned. Both streams united, now rushed impetuously forward, laved the foot of the main street, washed the walls of a romantic Gothic cottage, overshadowed by a solitary willow, which dipped its pendant boughs into the very waters, and was gradually lost amid orchards and flower gardens.

The main street formed an oblong square. The north side was ornamented with a picturesque chapel, battlemented in the Gothic style. The eastern side was adorned with gay gardens, profusely decorated with flowers and evergreens. At the base rolled the united brooklets. No traveller passed but what stopped to gaze on this sylvan, this Arcadian spot, and to wish it might be his lot to pass his tranquil days in such a secluded, such a sweet solitude.

And now, beloved village ! I am far away from thee, immured in the smoke and fogs of the great City. I pine for thy tranquil recesses in vain; but in my dreams I oft revisit thee, and every dat of my existence memory stamps thy beloved image in fresher colours on my heart.

In country villages there is generally set apart some favourite spot of ground on which are celebrated the sports and pastimes of the villagers. My native village was not without this graceful appendage. It was a long, irregular piece of ground, overshadowed with elm trees, and washed, on one side by a clear and rapid brooklet. Here the morris-dancers used to assemble every evening for many weeks preceding Whitsuntide, to rehearse their several parts in the approaching gala, and the shrill squeak of the violin and the merry clash of bells echoed far and wide. All was rollick and glee, mirth and jollity.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HERITAGE HUB LOCAL & COMMUNITY HISTORY MONTH 2019

The Heritage Hub is putting on a series of events in May as part of the Local & Community History Month. They launch their activities with a family fun Maps event, and this is followed by weekly Friday lunchtime 30 minute presentations at 1pm, followed by the option of a 30 minute behind the scenes tour at 1.30. They culminate with another family friendly event on Friday 31st May. Download full details at:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2088634/local-community-history-month-poster.pdf>

Iron Production in the Dean (Part 6) by Cecile Hunt

We continue our armchair tour (Iron Industry in the Forest) at the Geomap... (I hope you've been there! It is a must-see sculpture to understand the Forest and its industrial past)

Iron mining peaked in the second half of the 19th century when Shakemantle mine was the largest producer. Most of the ore was smelted to produce iron, but ochre pigment was also mined. By the mid 1200's there were between 25 & 30 itinerant forges in the Forest by 1270 there were about 43 by 1282 there were 60. These forges used large quantities of wood and this was recorded in the eyre rolls of 1270 as ...there are many itinerant forges and those who held and hold them have done many evil things both concerning the tall as also the underwood, and also by debranching, so that by reason of these forges a great despoiling has been done in the Forest... The toll of trees for charcoal was beyond estimate.



A Victorian print showing the castle at St Briavels

St Briavels Castle was originally built between 1075 and 1129 as a royal administrative centre for the Forest of Dean. During the 13th century the castle became the primary centre in England for the manufacture of quarrels, large numbers of which were required for crossbows in medieval warfare. By 1233 production of quarrel had reached 12,000 in 120 days.

St Briavels, during the 13th century was a great armaments centre. This industry was for generations in the hands of the Malemort family;

they specialised in the bolts for crossbows and records show that they exported the bolts and quarrels to Scotland and the Continent.

The Forest retained its place as the chief seat of the English iron trade well into the 14th century. The George Inn in Mitcheldean was formerly used for the manufacture of pins and shot. Guns Mills near Flaxley is said to have derived its name from cannon made there in the 17th century. In-roads to the timber by the iron industry was pretty serious and negotiations between the crown and holders of forges occasionally took place, such as Flaxley Abbey in 1258 being given Abbotswood, in exchange for their original grant by Henry III of entitlement to 2 oaks per week for their forge.

The main ports on the River Severn were Bullo and Lydney; cannon on Armada vessels built at Lydney were made of iron from forest forges and all cast in Lydney.

Leaving the Geomap and travelling to Blakeney we pass Furnace valley with Blackpool brook quietly flowing along its bottom to the River Severn. These waters drove the many furnaces and associated machinery situated in this valley. A road leading out of the valley up hill towards Viney Hill was called 'Pig Street' – up which the 'pigs' of iron were transported. A very quiet, peaceful place today but in its iron hey-day very dirty, very noisy and very busy valley.

Next: Soudley, Cinderford and on to the River Wye...

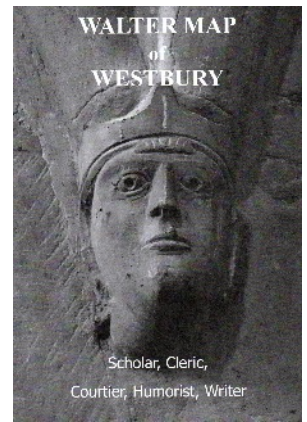
Book Review *by Keith Walker*

Hands up if you knew that Walter Map was the earliest recorded rector of Westbury on Severn! A newly published booklet entitled “Walter Map of Westbury, Scholar, Cleric, Courtier, Humorist, Writer” engagingly tells something of the story of him.

The author of the 16-page booklet is Professor Nicholas Orme, known to members of the Society for his recent article in the *New Regard*, and for the talk he gave in 2015 about “The Greyndours of Newland”.

It seems that Walter Map was a member of Henry II’s court, and was contemporary of those early writers of British history, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales. Professor Orme also describes Walter Map’s book “The Trifles of Courtiers”, which seemed to be partly a satirical look at life at Court, and various Kings, monasteries and nations. Walter’s book also contains “a collection of dramatic and amusing stories”, some of which are retold in the booklet.

Professor Orme has succeeded in shining a light on a most interesting local character from quite an early period in our history. This little booklet is highly recommended and is very good value, priced at £2. It is only available at Westbury on Severn Church



Superstition at Plump Hill *from Ross Gazette 12/08/1875*

‘Tis now nearly five years, I declare
Since I wrote in these columns about a white bear
Which the folks of Plump Hill, just above
Mitcheldean,
Asserted that night after night they had seen;
And the story they told of this animal’s rigs,
How he swallow’d their sheep, and devoured their
pigs,
Five or six in a night! With his terrible jaws,
Leaving nothing behind but the print of his paws,
Which they swore they had seen in the mud and
the snow,
And declared he’d escape from some travelling
show.
Well, after some two or three months had elaps’d,
The problem was solved, and the bubble collaps’d,
As their alarms were beginning to cool,
They thought they had all of them acted the fool;
For on investigation, sober and steady,
What d’ye think was the bear? Why, ‘twas only a
neddy!



*Thanks are due to Dave Tuffley for sending in
this somewhat macabre poem!*

Now, such was the nonsense that five years ago,
Disturb’d some “Plump Hillers,” and frightened
them so;
But, would you believe it? In this present year,
They tremble at something far worse than a bear.
They affirm it is something in female shape,
It walks on two legs, but it is not an ape;
But a woman, decrepid, and wrinkled with age,
And more than a hundred years old they’ll engage;
Yet she stalks o’er the land, and she flies in the air—
And this is what couldn’t be said of the bear.
She can roost in a tree, or can lie in a ditch—
As speak out plain, “she’s a terrible witch,”
Some say ‘tis the truth, but I think it’s a lie,
That she witches all animals likely to die;
That she witches all people who have a bad liver,
With a conglomeration of bile for ever.
These are scores of more horrible things that she
does,
If I am to believe the report as it goes;
But when I have more time, and when you have
more space,
I’ll send, Mr Editor, “the whole of the case.”

Meetings in Review *with John Powell*



The display of photographs and memorabilia of Lydney Grammar School shown at the February meeting

It was not entirely unexpected that former pupils would be out in force for our February meeting, **A Look Back at the History of Lydney Grammar School**. Indeed, the atmosphere was jolly enough to rate the occasion as something of a reunion — a bit like old scholars turning up to join forces with staff and pupils at the annual school camp!

This was a difficult one for speakers Christine Martyn and Brian James. They had to achieve a balance and the audience as a whole listened intently as Christine detailed the fascinating early history of the school which was, of course, intrinsically entwined with the development of secondary education in the town and its surrounds. There was also a keen interest in the building and development of Lydney Institute . This was one of the most

impressive and well-designed buildings in the town and one still fondly remembered. Many people mourned its passing and thought it disgraceful that such a fine building should be demolished particularly so in a town which has few such buildings to shout about.

The long and impressive list of successes achieved by academics was unquestionable, and Brian James' insight into the sporting prowess of hockey, cricket, and, of course, rugby players was more than noteworthy. Indeed, the international caps won by Lydney students must surely be up there with the top schools in the country.

The school lasted but 70 years, being replaced in 1973 by Whitecross and the introduction of comprehensive education. Interestingly, the Grammar School had, in an earlier age, offered lessons in a broad range of alternative subjects including engineering and nursing so in its own way had already crossed the educational divide.

It's history has been well recorded in two excellent publications and collectors and local historians should squirrel them away while they are relatively easy to acquire. A score of years from now and youngsters will be asking whatever was a grammar school?

Well there's a thing ...there are probably more trees in the Forest of Dean now than ever in history!

No doubt it will take some believing, but it was one of the little gems of information gleaned from archaeologist Andrew Hoan's inspiring talk to society members at a well attended March meeting held at Bream's homely West Dean Centre.

Mr Hoan is a leading light in one of the aspects of the Foresters' Forest project, with a brief to knit together the roles played by people (archaeology) and trees, some ancient, some veteran and others notable (perhaps those planted to commemorate a special occasion or royal visit). The target of his talk took us on a walk through the woods round and about



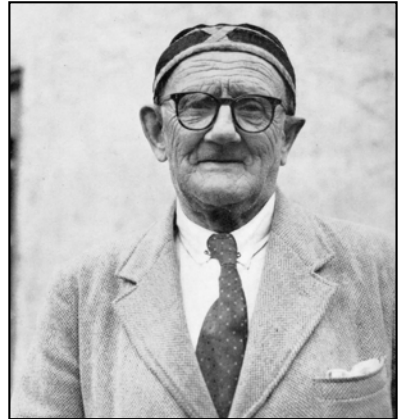
the Speech House. The facts came thick and fast and included fascinating detail of a tramway from a local colliery that cut through one of the enclosure walls built in the 1700s but later largely demolished in a show of strength by local people.

When it comes to trees, Speech House has the lot. Hollies abound and are used for firewood, coppicing and as feed for deer, and although the entire area was extensively deforested around 300 years ago, there are prime examples of veteran oaks. The talk was definitely designed to keep walkers awake and on their toes and on the lookout for the many ways the presence of mankind has interacted with natural history. Of course, they go hand in glove.

While Mr Hoan's contribution to an excellent afternoon was superb, the show was unsurprisingly stolen by the staff and pupils of Lydbrook Primary School who explained how lessons in local history fitted into their curriculum. Encouraged by the Foresters' Forest programme, they detailed how the project worked its way through the school years and had been hugely successful. Other schools are now being encouraged to take up the project, and there is sure to be much more on this at a later date.

The remarkable story of how a stash of Forest history books were saved from the ignominy of a refuse tip was revealed by vice-president Ian Standing at our March meeting held at a spic and span and very welcoming Yorkley Memorial Hall.

His fascinating tale followed part two of chairman Mary Sullivan's trawl through the archives, including local newspapers, to explore the background to the society's 70 years of digging and delving into local history. Mary had spent some time on the life and times of Charles Scott Garrett, a leading member during our formative years, and a man keenly interested in archaeology being especially active in excavating the Chesters Roman villa site near Woolaston.



Charles Scott Garrett M.B.E.

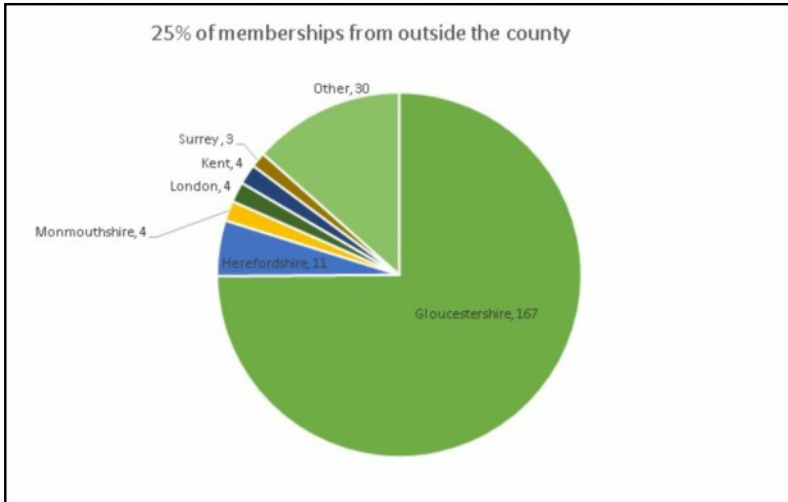
In later years what happened to his collection was a near disaster. To cut corners, many of his books ended up in a couple of bin bags and were only rescued at the last minute. But it was a close shave!

Mary's highly researched talk certainly achieved the aim of putting faces to names and we were soon immersed in the backgrounds of such luminaries as deputy surveyor John Quentin Williamson, the Rev Heal, Arthur Hicks and Frank Harris, a Forest newsagent who was a leading player in gaining National Park status for the Dean. It was especially interesting to hear something of the achievements of Mrs Dorothy Perceval who was the society's first woman chairman.

Mary also detailed many of the speakers and visits made by members in the early 1950s. Among them was the world renowned archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler who spoke about the importance of Roman Lydney, a settlement said to be one of very few with its own god, Nodens. Now there's a talk I wouldn't miss!

Membership Analysis - by Cheryl Mayo

We currently have a little over 300 individual members and as two of our recent joiners are from outside the Forest, I thought it might be interesting to see just how spread out we are. The results show that a quarter of our memberships (including two at the same address) come from outside the county, with 28 counties represented.



Within Gloucestershire, the vast majority of memberships (95%) are from the Forest, and within this, Coleford and Lydney represent the two biggest areas. 'Other' includes Stroud, Cheltenham, as well as a twos and threes from most villages in the Forest.

