

In this edition:

- On tour with the History Society - see the reviews of the summer walks & trips!
- Book review - 'Brass Bands & Processions in the Forest of Dean'
- More childhood memories of World War II
- "Why No Churches?"

August 2022

**Editor:**

Keith Walker  
51 Lancaster Drive  
Lydney  
GL15 5SJ  
01594 843310

[NewsletterEditor@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:NewsletterEditor@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

**Chair:**

John Lane  
07890260416

[Chair@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Chair@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

**Treasurer:**

Chris Sullivan  
01594 860197

[Treasurer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Treasurer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

**Secretary:**

Nicola Wynn  
01594 860834

[Secretary@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

**Website:**

[forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](http://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Registered Charity  
No: 1094700

Printed by  
Inky Little Fingers

## Editors Notes

The summer season of Society walks & trips is in full swing as I write this, and our Publicity Officer (Sue Newton) has been taking photos at many of those events. So many thanks to Sue for the cover photo (which shows members in the Chemist's shop at Risca Museum), and the photos in the Meetings in Review section.

Next, some welcome correspondence. The Reverend Geoffrey Crees wrote to provide some illuminating facts about Stuart Blanche, former Archbishop of York, who was the focus of Cecile Hunt's article in the last edition. *"I was interested in the article about Stuart Blanche Archbishop of York as I served under him in the York diocese in the 80s. During the second world war a young aircraftman enquired of a curate named Eric Atkins about the Christian faith and subsequently Eric prepared him for confirmation. Eric later became Vicar of Harwell, the church where I was curate 1970-73. In due time, Stuart Blanche came and preached at Eric's celebratory funeral. Stuart and Beryl, his wife, came to a clergy meeting, circa 1983, with their lunch in a Co-op bag, such was their modesty in Christian service"*.

As you will be aware, this newsletter relies heavily on our regular contributors (mainly committee members) to provide much of the content. However, the centre pages in particular are reserved for members to showcase any short (1200 words approx) articles that they may wish to share through the newsletter. Many members have started out their writing career by producing short articles for the newsletter, and have then gone on to write longer and more substantive pieces for the New Regard. If you have a story to tell and would like to offer it for the newsletter, please just email it to me (contact details on the left). If you have an idea, but are not sure how to research it, give me a ring. The Society has many local history authors who would be delighted to help you along the way.

*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 by John Lane

Horace Walpole once wrote that *'the way to ensure summer in England is to have it framed and glazed in a comfortable room'*. I think he pretty much got that right as our summer weather is notoriously unpredictable.

Despite those vagaries of the weather, it was immensely pleasing to see so many of our members turn out for the walk around Mitcheldean. Around 22 members and 8 guests from Leckhampton Local History Society enjoyed a Sunday afternoon looking at the often-hidden gems of



the town. A huge vote of thanks to Ian Gower and Andrew Maliphant for their knowledgeable and informative guidance. More details of the walk appear elsewhere in the newsletter.



*FODLHS members at Risca*

Following an invitation from Risca Industrial History Museum, Cheryl Mayo arranged for a number of members to travel to the Welsh town to spend an extremely interesting Sunday. With mining, iron production and tinsplate production having a major impact on Risca and its surroundings it became obvious there are a great many parallels with our own industrial past. I hope there will be further visits to other local history societies in the future.

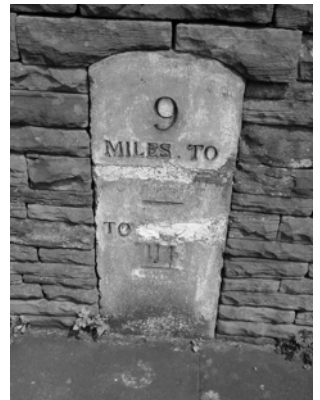
With a number of other summer trips and walks to look forward to, there is still much to be enjoyed and learned about this wonderful place many of us call home.

If you haven't done so already, book yourself onto one of the forthcoming trips.

Thanks to Cecile Hunt's hard work, arrangements are in hand for our next round of meetings and trips, but, if you have any ideas for talks or days out, please do not hesitate to let one of the Committee know and we will do our best to include them in the programme.

All of you, I am sure, are passionate about the history of the Forest in all its various aspects but I am often surprised at the range and scope of specific facets of history. A casual search of the internet reveals sites dedicated to the following:

- Local drove roads: ([localdroveroads.co.uk](http://localdroveroads.co.uk)). There are quite a few in the Forest!
- Roadside milestones: ([milestonesociety.co.uk](http://milestonesociety.co.uk)). Again, lots and lots of them in the Dean and many beautifully recorded in photographs on the [geographic.org.uk](http://geographic.org.uk) website, and as featured in previous issues of the New Regard.
- Post boxes: Several websites cover this subject but [heritagecalling.com](http://heritagecalling.com) is a very good site with a history of post boxes.
- Telephone boxes: [telephonesuk.org.uk](http://telephonesuk.org.uk) is an excellent website showing every type of kiosk imaginable.



*Milestone at Westbury showing WWII 'damage'*



## MEMBERSHIP

As I write this, I have just returned from an inspirational lecture by the very knowledgeable and enthusiastic Dr Ray Wilson from the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology on “The Industrial Heritage of the Forest of Dean”, hosted by the English Bicknor Local History Society. I hope you also have been able to enjoy some of the events hosted by other Local History groups, for which I will

continue to send out information, or some of our own walks or visits to local places of interest over the summer. If you hear of any Local History based events that you think other members would be interested in, please let me know and I will try to publicise them.

***It is time once again to renew membership subscriptions, so please make use of the forms in the centre of this newsletter. Your continued support is very much appreciated.***

New members have again increased steadily since the last newsletter, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ray Donaghue, Emma Johnsey, Kathryn and Jonathan Berry, Anthony and Minette Smith, Sarah and James Tuley, and Lydia Barrett.

Please let me know if you change your postal or email address, especially important so I can send out timely reminders for Society events, or other information which becomes available after the newsletter has been published.

*Ian Gower* (membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

**No Cheque's please!** One of this year's annoyances has been the introduction of bank charges on the Society's accounts with HSBC – and there are no free High Street alternatives now available. We have mitigated these charges by closing our separate Publications Account. Nevertheless, we now pay 40p for every cheque we bank. We also pay to bank cash.

Many of you pay us by BACS or 'Faster Payments'. That's very easy, once the first payment is set up. Such payments continue to cost the Society nothing.

So, cheque payers, if you can – please switch to paying by BACS for subscriptions and other payments to us. Our account is 'The Forest of Dean Local History Society'. Sort code 40-18-05. Account number 11071963. As always, double-check those figures! It will show as a Business Account. Once that's set up in your payee list, all further payments to us are secure and really easy. Thanks for your help in keeping our running costs down.

The e-shop continues to use Paypal.

*Chris Sullivan* (treasurer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

### FODLHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Sat 3rd September - 3pm - West Dean Centre, Bream**  
**Alan Pilbeam - “A Week's Holiday in the Forest of Dean in 1880”**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October - 2'30pm -West Dean Centre, Bream**  
**Annual General Meeting followed by Dr Rose Hewlett - “The Sea Walls of the Severn”**

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November - 3pm - West Dean Centre, Bream**  
**Cecile Hunt - “The Berkeley Affair”**

## “Our Forest in Future” by Sue Middleton

‘Our Forest in Future’ at Whitemead on Sat 2nd July was the first public event to explain the new organisation. Our Forest has evolved out of the Foresters’ Forest National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership programme which finished in March 2022. As many members will know, this successful partnership of 32 organisations, led by Forestry England, delivered 38 projects which focused on our natural, built, and cultural heritage. Some of the projects had completed their purpose and have therefore finished but 26 of the projects are continuing. The variety of these projects means that some have already obtained further funds, some are predominantly delivered by volunteers, and some require further funding. Our Forest is the organisation which will continue to support these projects and the legacy of Foresters’ Forest and it is managed by a leadership committee which has grown out of the previous administration.

Part of the purpose of Our Forest is to promote the knowledge gained from the projects, to explain why our Forest is so special and worthy of protection, given the changing pressures in the future. One of the elements is to consider how the projects could orientate their efforts to address the needs of disadvantaged groups and youth in the Forest because of course it will be our youth who will be responsible for “Our Forest in Future”.



Deb Cook and Alethea Bumpstead from Forest Voluntary Action Forum provided excellent talks about the range of disadvantaged groups/ underrepresented communities in the Forest and suggested ways to engage with both them and our youth. Whilst one of the regular messages was to ‘talk to them’, when the meeting participants were asked how their projects/ organisation could work with these potential audiences in future, one of

the suggestions was to work with ‘opportunity facilitators’. The feeling was that this function was needed to be the missing link between the projects and the groups they particularly wanted to engage but didn’t have the necessary skills or time to do so.

Lunchtime on the day was enhanced by the Parkend Brass Band playing on the Whitemead terrace, reminding us all of our musical heritage.

After lunch, Andy Bell from the North Devon Biosphere explained what this meant, how it was organised and how it benefited an area to be a UNESCO designated Biosphere. Following this, Kevin Stannard from Forestry England explained how climate change is affecting and will affect our Forest in future. There are a remarkable number of pests and diseases that afflict our trees already, so it may be that we need to plan for greater diversity of species in future, possibly sourcing non-native tree species if they will survive better as our climate changes.

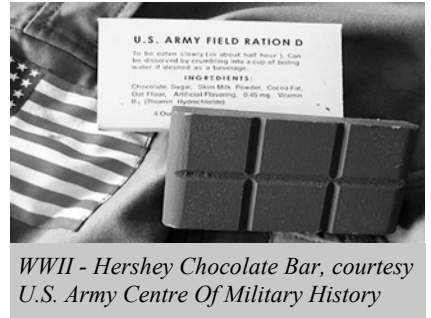
If you would like more information about any of the talks on the day please contact Sue Middleton, FODLHS Vice Chair. Sue is one of the members of the leadership committee. Sue also helped to organise the event in her role as Verderer, as the Verderers have agreed to manage these public meetings. Rich Daniels, in his role as Verderer, chaired the meeting and managed the questions to speakers. The meeting was financially supported by Forestry England who, along with a generous donation from Wilde Earth Journeys, paid for the use of Whitemead.

# My Childhood Memories of WWII - Pt 2 by Ron Beard

## Yanks

After the USA joined the war the Yankee soldiers were stationed in the huts which had been used by the RE men. The Yanks were very smart in their uniforms which were made of much smoother material than the coarse material that the British army uniforms were made from. They were also much better paid than English soldiers, were much more self assured and could dance the jitterbug! The common feeling among English boys was that there were only three things wrong with the Yanks – they were overpaid, oversexed and over here!

I met several Yankee soldiers because my family continued the practice of entertaining servicemen for Sunday afternoon tea and for the evening. My sister Betty used to go to dances with two other girls – Alma and Nora. They would meet the soldiers at these dances and Betty would get to know them and would invite them to spend their Sunday evenings with us. I can remember some of their names. There was Len from Louisiana (everyone knew him as Louisiana Len); an Italian American – Tony Mariello and a slightly older soldier – Ellsworth Ashton known as Ash. I liked Ash because he was a very kind man and would play cards with me. Most played cards and I learnt the game of ‘Casino’ from them – quite a good game which I can still remember the rules for. Occasionally they would bring us chocolate – ‘Hershey’ was the equivalent of ‘Cadbury’ but not as good. They also brought fruit sweets in the shape of Polo mints, they were called ‘Life Savers’. I can remember that I ate too many life savers one Sunday and I was sick afterwards – I never liked them after that.



*WWII - Hershey Chocolate Bar, courtesy U.S. Army Centre Of Military History*

The soldiers who were stationed near us built themselves a sledge which was hinged and could carry a dozen or so troops. When we had snow they would sledge down the White Hart Hill road and a Jeep would be used to tow the sledge back up, but sometimes they had to drag the sledge up themselves and they soon got tired of that.

Occasionally convoys of American army lorries would pass through the Forest, and we would watch them and wave to the drivers as they passed. I remember one convoy when one of the older boys said that if we shouted, “got any gum chum” or “got any chewy Louis”, they would throw us some sweets.

Another result of having the Yanks in this country was that lots of young girls would fall for one of them. Some girls that we knew married Yanks, even when they were only sixteen. After the war they left for America and were known as GI brides (GI stood for General Issue, i.e. army supplies).

My first memory of ice cream was at the end of the war when the Americans laid on a big tea party for local children in Cinderford town hall. There were several hundred of us and part of the tea was some ice cream – unfortunately I didn't really like it because it had lumps of ice in it.

Several years later, when I was a student and delivering post at Christmas, one of my deliveries was to a well-known local man. His name was Harry Thomas but he was known as peg-leg Thomas because he had a wooden leg. He told me that one night during the war (very dark because of the blackout) he was walking in Cinderford, approaching a bend in the road, when he heard a squad of American soldiers marching towards him, so he banged his wooden leg on the ground to sound like a galloping horse. The soldiers panicked and ran off in all directions and some of them jumped through a shop window. The boarded up window was still there when I was delivering the post. Whether or not he was pulling my leg, I do not know.

## A Sad Story

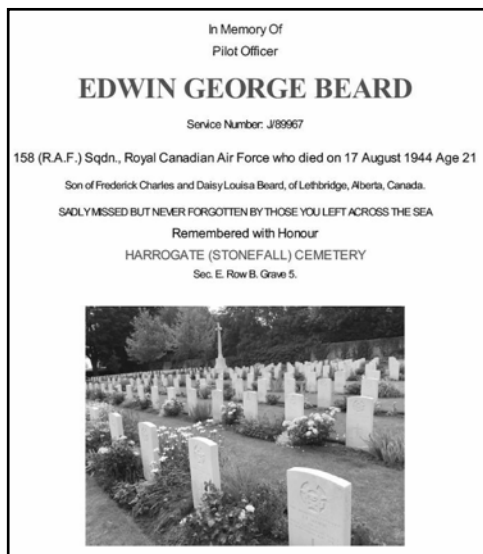
Three of dad's family had migrated to Canada not long after the end of WW1. His older brother 'Fred' had moved to Lethbridge in Alberta, but dad wrote to him regularly (like dad, Fred was a keen rugby player) and we used to send copies of the local weekly Forest newspaper to him. He and his wife, Daisy, had a daughter and son, Grace and Ted. I believe that Ted's full name was Edwin, which was the same as my dad, after whom he was obviously named (my sister Audrey's, second name was Grace). During the war he joined the Canadian Air Force serving alongside the British Air Force and was stationed at an aerodrome near Harrogate in Yorkshire. His position was as a rear gunner in a bomber that attacked targets in Germany.

One day he came to stay with us for a few days when he was on leave. I didn't know he was coming but I think my mum did because when I went to school she gave me a penny to buy a 'penny batch' on my way home from school (a penny batch was a roll that was a special bread roll which was particularly tasty). This way home took me down the 'Green Well Lane'. As I was walking down the path, enjoying my roll, I was met by a young man in Air Force uniform. He said, "You must be Ronny", I told him that that was who I was, and he said, "I'm your cousin Ted from Canada".

He only stayed with us for a short time and then had to return to Yorkshire. Unfortunately very soon afterwards, the plane he flew in was on a bombing raid to Germany when it was badly damaged by enemy fire. The pilot managed to fly the plane back to their aerodrome but it was so badly damaged that it crash landed and all the members of the crew were killed.

He is buried in a special part of Harrogate church graveyard where many Canadian Air Force men were buried. There graves were all adopted by people from Harrogate, and Ted's grave was looked after by a local police sergeant. My dad visited the grave and was met by the sergeant who was very kind – which was a relief to my dad, as he could tell his brother that the grave was well cared for. I visited the grave many years later when Gran and I were holidaying in Harrogate and it was still being cared for.

After the war the school I attended gave out certificates to all the children who had lost relatives during the war. Unfortunately I don't know what happened to mine, perhaps dad sent it to his brother.



I do remember that my sister Betty was very upset because she was away from home at the time when we received the telegram that Ted had died so she was unaware of it until she returned home. Wars bring a lot of sadness to many people and this sadness is often forgotten by those who celebrate the eventual victory.

On a happier note another cousin of mine – Winston – was in the Royal Marines. He was on the aircraft carrier 'Hermes' that was serving in the Far East. It was attacked and sunk by the Japanese. Winston was in the water for eighteen hours before he was rescued

## Why No Churches? *by Cecile Hunt*

Whilst giving a history talk on Workhouses in the Forest of Dean to a group in the northern area of the Forest a few years ago I was asked, as the talk touches on how and why West and East Dean parishes came into existence due to the New Poor Law act in 1835, “why did the centre part of the Forest of Dean have no old churches and was this because the people who lived there (centre of the Forest) could not agree on who or where to build them”?

This is surprising; the misunderstanding of management of the Forest of Dean up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and why pre 19<sup>th</sup> Church's only surround the 'centre' of the Forest of Dean. The Forest's 'centre', pre 19<sup>th</sup> century, was extra-parochial and royal demesne land. The fact there were no churches in the centre was nothing to do with inhabitants, or illegal squatters, at that time of this demesne land. It was land reserved for the King and his chosen retinue to hunt in. This hunting area became known as the Statutory Forest of Dean and was defined as an area where, soil, timber or herbage belonged to the Crown, it was also controlled by harsh Forest Laws.

Looking at 'why no churches' starts with understanding what is royal demesne land? Since before 1066 the Forest of Dean, one of England's principal Crown forests, it had already been reserved as a hunting ground of the King. Mainly consisting of woodland and waste land the name Forest of Dean was recorded from about 1080, probably taken from a Manor called 'Dean' which by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century was the Forest's administrative centre.

English feudal law defines demesne land as: “*that portion of a manor not granted to freehold tenants but either retained by the lord for his own use and occupation or occupied by his villeins or leasehold tenants*”. The lord in this case was the King. The Forest of Dean was therefore: “*Demesne of the crown, or **royal demesne**, was that part of the crown lands not granted to feudal tenants but managed by crown stewards until it was later surrendered to Parliament in return for an annual sum. Ancient demesne was land vested in the crown in 1066, the tenants of such land having a number of privileges, such as freedom from tolls.*” ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)).

Not only royal demesne land, the Forest was also extra-parochial. The Forest of Dean hunting area was basically an area outside of the jurisdiction of any parish. This dictated that there could be no church and no poor rate, but people resident there would attend a nearby church of their own choosing.

When last legally defined in 1833, it was still assumed, with some caveats, that Forest of Dean's Statutory laws still stood including ‘...none could reside or own land and the rights at Common Law of the local inhabitants were severely restricted’. The subsequent formalisation of encroachments and continuing sales of land mean today some 20% of land within the Statutory Forest is privately owned land – the remainder is managed as the Crown Forest Estate by the Forestry Commission. (<https://www.data.gov.uk/>)

On 12th April 1834 a bill was brought before the House of Commons; 'to provide for the relief of the poor in the Forest of Dean and other extra-parochial places in and near the Hundred of St Briavel's', plus a bill to divide the Forest of Dean into ecclesiastical districts; the first step towards creating the parishes of East and West Dean.



*Parkend Church - built within the statutory forest in 1822*





## Dean Heritage Centre News *from Nicola Wynn*

### Free Mines & Coal Faces Exhibition: 10<sup>th</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

A photography exhibition on Forest free mines by photographer Nick Hodgson. The exhibition has two distinct sections: The first section has colour photographs recording the evidence of mining of both current and old free mines, examining

mankind's trace and the regenerative power of nature. The second section, taken in black and white, focuses on members of today's free mining community, and their work, culture and personalities. 'Free Mines, Coal Faces' has deep personal interest for Nick. His mother's family are Foresters from Coleford and his great-grandfather Joseph Henry 'Slen' Gwilliam was a well-known freeminer. One of Nick's earliest childhood memories is being taken inside a working free mine back in the mid 1960's. A book of Nick's project accompanies this exhibition.

### AIM Collections Care Grant Scheme

We are very pleased to have secured £6,800 from AIM (Association of Independent Museums) to make improvements in the care of our collections. This includes improving environmental conditions in our galleries and employing a professional conservator who will carry out a condition assessment of various objects in the museum. We will be focusing on objects in the Agricultural shed and other outside objects. The conservator will also provide training for staff and volunteers on the best practice in conservation care.

### Happy is the Eye film

For anyone who hasn't seen this film (*see image right*), it is a fantastic portrayal of the Forest drawn from Dean Heritage Centre & Voices from the Forest oral histories. It is only half an hour and can be seen via this link:

<https://vimeo.com/486397575/f3c324c98a>



## Out & About Representing the Society



The Society was well represented by members of the committee at the Gloucestershire Local History Day event on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

The theme of the day was 'The History of Education in Gloucestershire' for which the Society provided a display. Averil Kear was also a featured speaker.

*L to R: Chris Sullivan, Ian Gower, Sue Middleton, Mary Sullivan, Averil Kear, John Lane*

The Society also took a stand at the Speech House Jubilee Party on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

The event was very well attended, and £200 was taken in sales of publications, and 20 membership information packs were handed out.

Just three of the members helping on the day are pictured:

*L to R: Cecile Hunt, Mary Sullivan, Averil Kear*



## Meetings in Review *with Chris Sullivan & Sue Newton*



*Statue of William Marshal, with Pembroke Castle visible behind*

A sunny Easter Saturday did not deter an appreciative audience for the Society's last indoor talk of the season. Mary Sullivan introduced Dr Robert Jones, a specialist in medieval battles and chivalry, to talk about 'William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke', with a focus on William's activities in and near the Forest of Dean from the 1100s.

He was a man active as a warrior and politician, known to kings across six reigns. Archbishop Langton hailed him as 'the best knight that ever lived'. The tales about his life, through from a book commissioned by his children, are good ones, of loyal men and some equally brave women. Robert told them engagingly and brought these distant people to life.

William was the second son of minor noble John Marshal. At the start of the Stephen v Matilda Anarchy after Henry 1's death, John Marshal built an unauthorised castle ('like militarising Chieveley Services' as Robert put it). During an unsuccessful siege, Stephen twice could not bring himself to execute 7-year old hostage William. Once grown, William was sent away for knight's training to his mother's relatives in Tancarville, Normandy, followed by Patrick of Salisbury. Patrick was killed accompanying English Queen Eleanor to claim lands in Aquitaine, and William was wounded and imprisoned. Eleanor paid his ransom and he joined her court.

William was a talented fighter and gained a reputation in large-scale tournaments. This led to a role as arms tutor to Young King Henry, Henry II's son. Following a failed rebellion, Young Henry joined the tournament circuit and his father's court, getting William better known. The young King died in 1183, asking William to take up his vow to go to Jerusalem, which he did. Soon after his return, William married Isabel de Clare and gained her Pembroke and Chepstow estates. While King Richard made his ill-fated Crusade, William was on the panel of justiciars. On return, Richard gave him the lucrative - £153/year- Forest of Dean and control of Gloucester, cementing William's position as a bulwark against resurgent Welsh princes.

William's wife also had lands in Leinster. When bad King John denied him the right to go to Ireland and defend those lands, William went anyway – despite John holding two of his children as hostages. William was a trusted intermediary with the barons in generating Magna Carta. It is possible that Carta Foresta, relieving the burdens of Forest Law on baron and poor man alike, was shaped by William's time in control of the Dean.

On John's death, William was made protector of the 9-year-old Henry III. When French prince Louis made a grab for Henry's crown, William at 69 led the lifting of the siege of Lincoln Castle which broke the invasion. On his deathbed in 1219, he fulfilled an early promise and joined the Templar Order. He is buried in their London circular Temple.

In all, a fascinating and accessible talk about a mighty figure from the past with some associations with the Forest of Dean.

The Summer 2022 outings season started with 14 members enjoying a visit organised by Cheryl Mayo to the Risca Museum on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Our 3 hosts were very welcoming, freely sharing knowledge about the displays in the museum, during a short, guided walk and a chat over Sunday lunch in a local pub.

In the museum, we had an ‘appointment’ in the pharmacy (see front cover photo), we learned about the purpose of Miners Lamp Checks, and we heard an introduction to the walk. Other items which caught our eye in the museum included Hitler’s propaganda leaflet (based on his infamous 1940 speech to the Reichstag) which survived being confiscated and destroyed. We also spotted the Richard Thomas Co Ltd Roll of Honour for WW1 (1914 – 1919) for the tin works which started at Lydbrook, Lydney and Abervale, and which lists 28 men from the Lydney works. The photo shows Members standing in front of a picture of the 1805 Long Bridge. Only the final end of the bridge remains in Risca or is it the Champion barrel that has taken their interest!

During the walk we discovered that the foundations of No 3 Blast Furnace at Llanwern Steelworks came from waste product of the FoD coal mining industry in the form of rock and clay e.g. from New Fancy and other collieries. The walk also took us through the Remains of Colliery Row once a substantial mining community until the housing was condemned in 1930 as there were no toilets or running water. The area was blown up by the Territorial Army for health and safety reasons! Remnants of coal can readily be found in this area. **S.N.**



The weather was kind to us for our second summer outing on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022; “A Walk Around Mitcheldean”. We particularly enjoyed wonderful tea and cakes during the break provided by Ian Gower’s family. We were also joined by our guests from Leckhampton Local History Society.

Features of the walk included the demographic and industrial heritage past and present, oral history, documentation of some of the houses, and past residents in Mitcheldean which all helped bring the walk alive. Over refreshments artefacts found in Ian’s Garden were viewed, including a distinctive glass bottle with markings from the Wintle family Brewery which was built in Mitcheldean in 1868. British Acoustic Films later becoming the Rank Organisation were based at Mitcheldean Plant site (now known as Vantage Point) in 1941, not to be confused with the once significant employer within the Forest (Rank Xerox), where the world’s first automatic copier was created.



*Members about to tuck into tea & cakes kindly provided by Ian Gower’s family*

The Church of St Michael and All Angels is on the site of two ancient roads of the Roman period and was opened for the group by the Church Warden. Within this medieval church some structures and architecture dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century can be found.

**S.N.**

## Book Review *by Nicola Wynn*

### Brass Bands & Processions in the Forest of Dean



A study of the relationship between Nonconformism, Friendly Societies, Politics and Brass Bands in the Forest of Dean, 1880-1914

Roger Deeks

I thoroughly recommend this fascinating book. There have been many books on industrial history and many memoirs, but few books on social & cultural history. The author points out that historians have largely neglected brass bands, which are often seen as a marginal activity. The book looks at the growth of brass bands in the Forest of Dean and the role they played in creating working class identity. Roger focuses on the history of brass bands in Yorkley to examine the emergence and change in the bands and wider society.

Not only is it a history of brass bands, but it also gives an idea of the social & cultural life in the Forest at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As settlements expanded during this period, so did the bands. The author demonstrates the inter connectedness of life; how brass bands relate to Friendly Societies, unions, politics, chapel, processions, village halls and people's lives. It tells the story of working peoples' struggle for independence, security and advancement.

Little known, interesting characters are brought to light. Find out about Sidney J Elsom, a miner and Baptist Minister in Yorkley who became very active supporting the miners and in politics. Kate Blanche Price was a teacher, a JP and Secretary of the Forest of Dean NUWSS.

The author uses a wide array of interesting resources to examine band history, including oral histories and private publications like Cameron Johnson of Yorkley to give first-hand accounts of band and village life. There are also some great photographs of bands, processions, and villages.

In this book, Roger shows that brass bands were about more than entertainment; they were also closely associated with class and identity.

Publisher: Holborn House

ISBN: 9781739787400

Pages: 170

This book is for sale at Dean Heritage Centre for £9, and from Waterstones website:

<https://www.waterstones.com/book/brass-bands-and-processions-in-the-forest-of-dean/roger-deeks/9781739787400>



*Author Roger Deeks*