

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
February 2021



In this edition:

- John Powell - An Appreciation
- Sir Thomas Rich (Part 2)
- Boy Killed on the Waterloo Creeper (Part 2)

February 2021

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Editors Notes

It was a great shock to hear of the passing of my friend John Powell recently. Apart from all the other work he did for the Society, he was a regular contributor to this newsletter, producing articles long and short, and, of course, providing wonderful vignettes for the 'Meetings in Review' pages. You will find an appreciation of John elsewhere in this edition, together with his final two pieces in the 'Review' section.

Elsewhere our longest standing contributor Cecile Hunt provides the second part of her three part look at the life of Sir Thomas Rich, who had some surprising connections with the Forest of Dean. Many thanks to Cecile for her ongoing series of articles.

Those who 'attended' would, without doubt, have enjoyed Steven Carter's zoom presentation about Timothy Bennett at our December meeting. His continuing but different story about 'The Boy Killed on the Waterloo Creeper' is presented in the centre pages. Steven's examination of the subsequent events provides an illuminating narrative about how our attitudes to the value of a persons life have (hopefully) changed in the decades since the dreadful accident that took the life of 'The Boy'.

Finally, if you are finding the long days of lockdown tedious and would like a little bit of stimulation, why not explore what the following two organisations have to offer online:

Heritagehub.org.uk/lockdown offers free access into Gloucestershire Archives digital content, the chance to dip into their collections, explore their partner websites, and access some online training.

Balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks provides access to a collection of videos, presentations, and articles from the British Association for Local History's resources.

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*

I hope you had a pleasant, if uneventful, Christmas and New Year. Now, back into full lockdown and with the colder weather, each day seems to drag by. So it is good to have our talks on zoom each month to look forward to. Personally, I have been so pleased to see how many of you have joined meetings and thank you to those who have expressed satisfaction with the zoom based talks. One of the good things to come out of this difficult period is the increased use of online facilities, particularly by older people. I am glad to see how adaptable our members are.



Many thanks to Caroline Prosser-Lodge for creating our very attractive new Facebook page and uploading regular interesting items. I hope many of you are following the page. You can find it here: <https://www.facebook.com/Forest-of-Dean-Local-History-Society-105167464864070/>

We have a very varied set of talks this season. We started the year with some more modern local history. Geoff Wheeler told us about Berkeley power station. He gave us an account of the laboratory where he worked at the then nuclear power station. This investigated novel physics, chemistry and materials handling in high-radiation environments, to get more electricity safely for longer out of the UK's power plants. Whereas our next talk looks back a long way as Jon Hoyle is going to tell us about recent excavations on Offas Dyke. Then in March we will hear about the local celebrities chosen by local people as worthy of commemoration by a green or blue plaque.

Our bumper 80- page New Regard 35 is selling well considering that we do not currently have sales at meetings and that many of our local outlets are closed by covid. If you have any suggestions of other venues where or methods how we might sell copies I would be grateful to hear from you.

Some very sad news now, I'm afraid. Our wonderful publicity officer, John Powell, who many of you will have known well, passed away a bit before Christmas. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family at this very sad time. We will miss him greatly. And some of you may also have known Geoff North who attended many County- wide history events selling new and second-hand history books. He also has recently passed away. Another great loss to local history in Gloucestershire.

Obviously we do not yet know what the Government rules will allow, but I hope we might be able to offer some or all of the summer walks set out on your membership cards. What a tonic it would be to undertake a walk full of historical interest with other members on a nice summer day.

When we come around to the AGM in October this year I will, finally, be stepping down from the Chair after 4 years. Whoever takes over as Chairman will need a full and willing committee, such as I have enjoyed, to keep the Society carrying on its full programme. If you are appreciating what we are doing, please think whether you could get more involved in the organisation and maybe join the committee in some capacity. I would be happy to chat with anyone interested to tell them more. Meanwhile, keep safe and keep supporting our talks.

Mary Sullivan



MEMBERSHIP

Happy new year – as well as it can be at the moment. I hope everyone is keeping well and occupied. It appears that while lockdown is having massive impacts on our lives, it is not deterring people from joining the Society. Here's a warm welcome to new members Chris Bull, Richard and Carol Clammer, Anne Bryson, Linda Bull and Henry Ward, John Cantle, Mary Freeman, Libby Stephens, Andrew Newbery and Anne Gould, Roger Buck, Keith Williams, Alison and Tim Humphries, Emma Fletcher, Steve and Dawn Pearmund, Jonathan Cooke, and Sue Burgess. We now have just over 320 individual members, which makes the Society one of the biggest local history societies in the county.

Please let me know if you change your email address - especially important while we are meeting by zoom.

Cheryl Mayo (membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)

Reading the Forest



In a brand new series of podcasts Reading the Forest is exploring some of the most persistent and well-loved stories about the Forest of Dean that have made their way into Forest literature. 'The Stories Behind the Stories' is presented as an investigation and along the twists & turns of each episode touches on the social, economic and cultural history of the Forest, as well as its books, poems and authors. Hear guest expert interviews, readings from the books, and dramatised scenes brought to life. The first of six episodes is already available with one a month to follow.

To listen just go to readingtheforest.co.uk and click on 'Podcast'.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 13th February - 3pm - ZOOM MEETING
Jon Hoyle - "Offa's Dyke in Gloucestershire"

Saturday 13th March - 3pm - ZOOM MEETING
Helen Chick - "The Foresters' Forest Blue & Green Plaque Scheme"

Saturday 10th April - 3pm - ZOOM MEETING
Andy Mellor - "The Glosters at Waterloo"

Saturday 8th May - 2'30pm - BREAM HERITAGE WALK
Covid restrictions permitting - 3 mile walk led by Geoff Davis
Meet at the Youth Shelter, Whitecroft, GL15 4QF

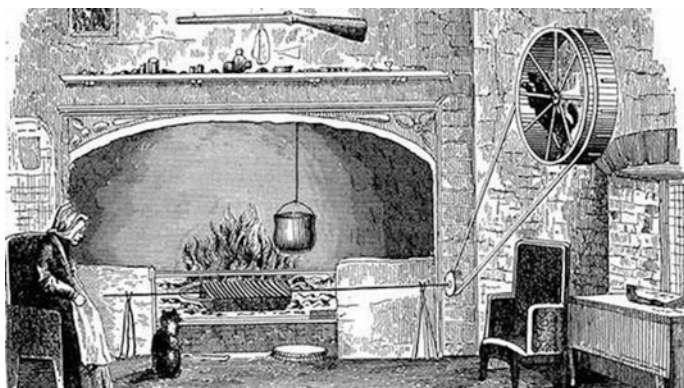
Members will be advised of the joining details for the Zoom meetings by email a few days before the event. You can either download the Zoom application, and join the meeting by entering the Meeting ID and Passcode advised in the email, or join the meeting via your browser by clicking on the meeting url (as advised in the email).

Amanda Bennett has been in contact with the Society requesting some help:

"I would love to hear from anyone who may know the whereabouts of the family of Dr H. J. Selby. He practised in Newnham between the 1940's and 1960's. I have found an original music manuscript handwritten, which he composed for local entertainment in 1945. It would be wonderful to be able to give this to one of his descendants."



Can you help? If so, please contact Averil Kear: (enquiriesofficer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk)



A Turnspit Wheel At St. Briavels Castle

*Written by Sir John
Maclean in 1887.*

“The apparatus for turning a spit by means of a dog still remains at St. Briavel’s Castle, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. There is a circular cage in which the dog was placed, where he worked like a squirrel, or, in the poor dog’s case, like a man on the treadmill, except that the dog was inside the circle instead of outside. The animal’s constant climbing kept the cage revolving, and this by a leather band conveyed the revolution to the spit at the fire. The cage at St. Briavel’s is near the ceiling of the kitchen, some six or eight feet, perhaps more, above the fire. I have been informed that a similar cage exists at Windsor, and another at Christchurch, Winchester, and that these, with that at St. Briavel’s, are the only examples which now remain.”

NB:- The Turnspit dog was a short-legged, long-bodied dog bred to run on a wheel, called a turnspit or dog wheel, to turn meat. It is mentioned in *Of English Dogs* in 1576 under the name "Turnespete". William Bingley's *Memoirs of British Quadrupeds* (1809) also talks of a dog employed to help chefs and cooks. It is also known as the Kitchen Dog, the Cooking Dog, the Underdog and the *Vernepator*. In Linnaeus's 18th-century classification of dogs it is listed as *Canis vertigus*.

Turnspit dogs were mostly gone by the 1850's, barely hanging on in the 1860s and completely extinct by 1900. As an unloved breed with only one job to do, they quietly went extinct once that job was given away. But, while they are extinct, there are modern breeds that are possibly related to them such as the Glen of Imaal Terrier, while others make it a relative of the Welsh Corgi.

Boy Killed on the Waterloo Creeper *by Steven Carter*

Part 2: Justice Dismissed - A Brother's Verdict

The last edition of this newsletter told the story of the tragic death of Clifford Kear, killed by a cart on the Waterloo Creeper on 31st October 1942. Part 2 examines the battle over whose interpretation of the brutal death of the boy Clifford Kear should prevail. The Arthur & Edward (Waterloo) Colliery owners created a potentially dangerous half-mile tramway running between the Pit and the Screens at Miery Stock. Despite their awareness of the risks, the Lydney & Crump Meadow Colliery Company Limited took no responsibility for the danger they had built in the Forest and let the costs fall on the local community. The Kear family felt this cost in the death of their ten-year-old Clifford.

The Coroner, Mr M F Carter, held the Inquest on Tuesday afternoon, 3rd November, in the Lydbrook Memorial Hall library. He told the jury that decapitation made a doctor's report unnecessary. Perhaps concerned about issues of reputation, blame, negligence or liability for compensation, the Company was mightily represented by Director Mr E J Hale, Colliery Manager Austin Adolphus Miles, Colliery Surface Manager Llywelyn Fothergill Barter, Solicitor Percy D Clarke, and long-time employee George Kear (no relation). The Forest community's voice was articulated by the Jury Foreman, Baptist minister Arthur Price, and the dead boy's father, Sidney Kear. By today's standards, the Coroner's comments seem less than neutral at decisive points. Three key issues emerged. Should the Company fence the Creeper to protect local children? Did the Company have any policy for the workers to follow? Should there be notices warning of the danger?

The Jury Foreman challenged the Colliery owners by asking if the tram line had ever been fenced. He was told, 'Never'. Director E J Hale pointed out that there were many such lines on Crown property and in no case had they been fenced. Safety Board Inspector Mr W E F Jones said that when he made an inspection a month ago, he asked if there were any complaints and was told, 'No'. The Colliery Surface Manager Mr Barter stated that he had never seen boys on the line. Sidney Kear, the dead boy's father, questioned this; and added, when he was a boy he went there and had many a ride, and boys had been going there regularly. The Coroner said, "Are they going there frequently? I would not say frequently, but I shall not believe Mr Barter on that point." Rev Price argued that if there was a danger to children, then some protection should be placed there. The Coroner responded, that would be almost impossible. The Company's solicitor Mr Clarke said: the Company would be anxious to do all it could to help, but it was practically impossible to fence everything. The Coroner added, there is no legal liability for the company to fence. (*Today we might say 'expensive', rather than 'impossible'.*) Employee George Kear, colliery fettle, stated: No member of the public had any right over that stretch of the incline. There was no protection on either side. There were no recognised footpaths there. The clipper workman at the top would see half-way down the incline, and the man at the Lydbrook end would see almost half-way. During the last six months he had seen no children on the line, but previously when he was clipper (for twenty years) he had seen some riding on the carts. He had stopped the rope and they used to go down to chase the children off, but before they could reach them they had run away. This had not happened very often – they might go months without seeing any children there. Naturally the moving trucks would be an attraction to children. He had stopped the rope *because he appreciated the apparent danger*. When questioned by the Coroner, George Kear said he may have told the management about it,

but he could not recollect having done so. He thought they were very aware – *quite probably they had seen for themselves, but the men took the responsibility themselves of driving the children off.* They might go 12 months without seeing any children, then they might come twice or three times in one week. *He had no instructions from the company about children,* but he had not to let employees travel in the carts. Rev Price asked whether there were any notices warning people. ‘Not now’. There are notices at the approach to the colliery and the screens. There were previously notices, which had gone through decay. The Coroner said notices were all right for older people, but he did not think a child of ten would bother to read them. Mr Clarke said, the notices to which he had referred *had not been up for six or seven years.* Anybody on the line would be trespassing. At the only points which were authorised entrances to the colliery there were notices. It would be impossible for a man to protect the line against children unless there was a ten-foot fence. He had known it for 30 years and that was the first accident in his memory to a member of the public. The Inquest’s verdict: the decapitation was caused when the deceased trespassed on the Arthur & Edward colliery and was killed jumping off a truck. The colliery officials and the workmen should be absolved from blame.

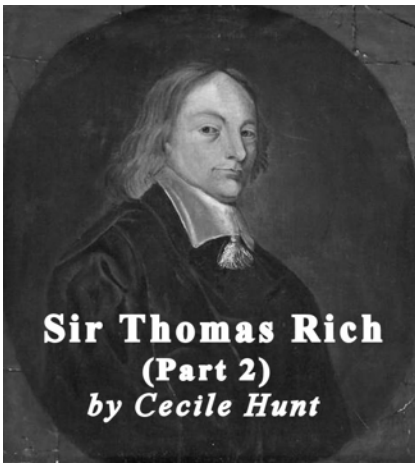
The tragic effects of this episode hurt the Kear family in the years that followed. Clifford’s brother Dennis recalls: *“My father never did speak about it. The only time I ever got any information about it, was when I used to accompany Mum to chapel. She’d always become tearful half-way through the service. Then she’d utter little words about this and that; but that was the only sort of information that I got. I’d have been about five or six when Mum was suffering. She’d also lost a daughter back before then with meningitis, quite quickly. I’d glean little bits of information, when I was with her, from conversations she was having with other ladies. Usually after the chapel service, they’d ask how she was. That was my first information of the accident. When I think back now, and, gosh, I don’t know how they managed it, how they pulled through it all.”*

Today, Dennis considers the inquest a case of ‘justice dismissed’: *“To think, when I read the article, they put it down to two trespassers; they were trespassing and they shouldn’t have been there. The site, it was almost impossible to fence it. But my father, even during the inquest, pointed out to the Coroner, that he used to go and ride on them when he was a boy.”*



Clifford’s parents, Katherine and Sidney Kear, outside their home on Worrill Hill. Although himself a Waterloo worker, Sidney challenged the bosses’ version given at the Inquest. Years after, the loss continued to bring Katherine to tears.

Sidney Kear spoke up and put forward his case, with support from the Jury Foreman, Baptist minister Arthur Price, but both were effectively overridden by the powerful colliery owners. The Inquest into the horrific and brutal death on the Waterloo Creeper of ten-year-old Clifford Kear reveals the relative powerlessness of the Forest community. This tragic episode matches the Forest miners’ story of exploitation and harsh treatment, overridden and brutalised by colliery owners who consistently prioritised profits over human welfare. This case epitomizes the overwhelming power that was not only crushing the miners, but also the wider Forest community – as evidenced by Sidney Kear’s struggle to get recognition for what happened. Today, Sidney Kear’s quest for justice might not be so easily dismissed.



Sir Thomas Rich, born in Gloucester with several Forest of Dean connections, became an immensely rich merchant by his trading with Turkey, possibly in malmsey wine. He became a Liveryman of the Vintners' Company and an Alderman of the City of London, he was a philanthropist and was created Baronet of Sunning, Berkshire by Charles II in 1661. He died at his home near Reading, Berkshire.

He was educated firstly in London and then at Wadham College, Oxford. When he died October 15th 1667, he left a handsome fortune to his sixteen children plus £16,000 (£3,871,454 in 2019) to the Mayor and burgesses of Gloucester for 'charitable purposes'.

Extract from Sir Thomas Rich's will dated 16th May 1666:... *I give and bequeath to the Mayor and burgess of the city of Gloucester, and their successors for ever, my capital messuage or tenement, with appurtenances, in the Eastgate Street, near the Barley market on said city of Gloucester, to be employed by them as an hospital for ever, for the entertaining and harbouring of so many Blue Coat Boys... I give also unto the said Mayor and burgess the sum of six thousand pounds, to be laid out and disbursed, with all convenient speed, in and for the purchase of the inheritance of certain lands, to them and for their successors for evermore, that shall be of the yearly value of three hundred pounds or upwards and which shall not be distant from the city of Gloucester more than fifty miles, unto and for the uses following: ... one hundred and sixty pounds, part of the rent thereof, shall for ever go and be employed for the yearly maintenance of twenty poor blue-coat boys... that £20 a-year shall be for ever paid to an honest able schoolmaster ... that £60 a-year ... for ever, go for the placing our yearly and clothing of six poor boy apprentices, ...*

By January 1668, less than one year after his death the 'Common Council of the City' had appointed a committee, chaired by the Mayor, for furthering the contents of the will. The incentive to act quickly was helped along by Sir Thomas decreeing in his will that a failure to act according to the terms of the will for any one year would lead to a forfeiture of all his bequests. The bequests would go to Christ Church Hospital in London – incentive indeed for the Common Council of Gloucester to act quickly. The committee, following the instruction that land was to be purchased with £6,000 (£1,443,780 in 2019) bequeathed within 50 miles of Gloucester. The committee started negotiations to purchase property in Churchdown. Problems were encountered from the start and the Churchdown purchase fell through quite quickly.

The committee were also looking to purchase in the Forest of Dean at the same time as the Churchdown purchase. Part of the Manor of Awre and Etloe was Box Estate, it was owned in 1668 by Sir John Winter and his sons William and Charles, unfortunately initial negotiations were marred by a Nicholas Webb, a burgess of the city, who, for his own advantage inflated the purchase price by £150 (£36,095 in 2019). The Box estate was eventually purchased for £1,500 by the Committee to hold in trust as per the will of Sir Thomas Rich.

This was the start of numerous land and farm purchases in Awre and Lydney parishes. More farm purchases next time.

John Powell - An Appreciation *by Keith Walker*

You could summon up a pretty short list of those who could truly be described as ‘a man of the River’, those who have or had a life-long intrinsic connection to and deep knowledge of the River Severn and its environs. Perhaps the list might include Fred Rowbotham, Brian Waters, Fred Larkham and Chris Witts. Now one more name must be added to the list, that of John Powell, our own much respected Publicity Officer and committee man, and who recently suddenly passed away.

John was an active salmon fisherman for all his life, who in previous years would fish off Newnham using the Long Net method, and latterly with his own rank of putchers, adjacent to his home on the banks of the Severn. He was hugely concerned about Government efforts to stifle and potentially shut down the traditional methods of salmon fishing in the river and estuary, and, as Secretary to the Severn Estuary Fisherman’s Association, actively campaigned to try to preserve the heritage methods of fishing. He tapped into his interest in history to restore the fishing hut at Newham, and then create a museum of Severn Salmon Fishing inside the hut. Regrettably, his unexpected death has robbed the pantheon of Severnside history of his highly anticipated book about the history of the river and its people.



Of course, before his retirement, John had a day job. For 30 years or more he was the editor of the Forest & Wye Valley Review, the wonderful free newspaper with the ‘sparky’ letters pages and slightly zany sheep cartoons featuring ‘Kev and Dave’ that used to drop through our doors until the current pandemic stopped its production. During John’s tenure as editor local history articles were featured prominently, particularly the work of Bob Smyth, which was usually presented as a double page spread in the centre of the paper. I remember the first time I met John, I had written a piece about local history intended for the Review, and I was told I had to deliver it in person to the editor. I must have watched too many films featuring grumpy editors who shout at their reporters, because it was with some trepidation that I approached John in the Review Office. How wrong were my preconceptions! John was kindness itself and took the time to have a chat about the article and encourage me to carry on researching and writing.

It was many years later when I next met John, when, after retirement, he and Theresa started regularly attending History Society meetings. At the time, the committee were desperately searching for someone who could manage the Society’s publicity. After some gentle arm-twisting John agreed to become our Publicity Officer. His superb journalistic skills coupled with an extensive contact book ensured that our history society events received generous continuing coverage in the Forester, the Review, other regional papers, and local radio. At tea-time during the meetings John would often be sought out by many members seeking his advice and help, whilst Theresa and her helpers served up copious cups of tea.

John was a friendly and generous man who had a deep and wide-ranging knowledge of the Forest of Dean and the River Severn which he was always willing to share. He will be greatly missed by all his friends in the History Society, and our condolences go to Theresa and family.

Meetings in Review *with John Powell & Keith Walker*



There's more to the straggling village of Bream than meets the eye. It has been said — tongue-in-cheek, I hope — you need to be born and brought up there to really, really, appreciate what it has to offer. An early critic was the author John C. Moore. In his book *The Welsh Marches*, he is scathing of “dull, hopeless, unimaginative building” and recommends improvements by way of either a Town Planning Act or a stick of gelignite. OOUCH! Never fear... the village has its champions and none more so than the redoubtable Geoff Davis, he of SunGreen fame, the go-to internet site for anyone wishing to step

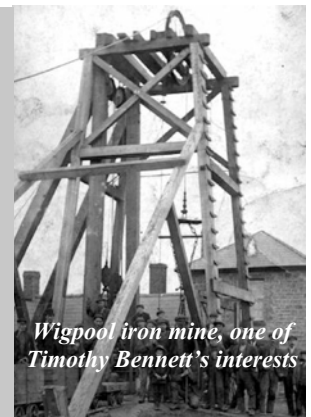
back in time to see the way it was, not just in Bream but in every town, village, and settlement throughout the Dean. At least Moore conceded that coal - mining had not spoiled the Forest and noted Bream possessed views as lovely as any he knew. A pity our visitor, long gone, had not attended - by Zoom - our November meeting at which Geoff expounded on all that is good about living in and around some fascinating landscapes, mostly shaped by our ancestors, but now reverted by nature to wrap the village with a surround of interesting walks.

So off we set from the comfort of our kitchens and lounges to tramp the hillsides and valleys, completing in an hour or so a journey that, if you stopped to take in the views, would consume half a day. Geoff, with friends, has been the prime mover in plotting the Bream Heritage Walk, an uphill and down dale stroll that can be completed in one visit or undertaken in bites to suit the time you have to spare. The whole is a productive peep into our long-lost industrial heritage.

Without the Heritage Walk booklet, funded by the Foresters Forest project, you could enjoy the natural history provided by walking in woodland and by streams. But part the fern and there are tantalising discoveries of old iron ore workings, coal pits and forges. It's a gem of a stroll. Early in its development the walk extended to eight miles but some pruning has reduced the yomp to six and a half. But with so much to see the time will fly by. Society members will get a chance to take in one section - around Whitecroft - on Saturday 8th May 2021, a three mile canter devised by Geoff to introduce us to the bigger challenge.

J.P.

Society member Steve Carter's 'discovery' of a major new player in the Forest of Dean's crowded 19th century iron ore and coal winning wars has opened the door on the prospect of some fascinating research options. Steve's Zoom talk at our December meeting introduced us to Timothy Bennett who he described as a 'forgotten Mitcheldean benefactor and Forest industrialist'. The story was, to say the least, intriguing. Firstly, how on earth has Bennett slipped through the net of so many researchers? He has certainly not received the credit afforded to the likes of the Mushets and Crawshays and the many other men who dominated the district throughout the 1800s. How did he fit into the wider picture as the decades-long fight went on to decide who was 'Mr Big' in the cut-throat world of heavy industry?



Forgetting for the moment Timothy Bennett's very deep and obvious affection for Mitcheldean and its people, here was a man not afraid to face up to the challenge of getting into the ring with the big boys. One advantage was being a local. Although born on the Forest

edge at Weston-under-Penyard, his wealthy family roots were in Ruardean and he and his family would have known many small mine owners. Bennett was certainly up there with the best of them: his financial interests included Foxes Bridge colliery and the Wigpool iron mine — workings he bought for £7,000 and owned for just a couple of months before selling for £12,000. Locally he did much good work and was highly regarded by the hard-pressed Mitcheldean community. At Christmas he gave a half-crown to each of the poorest 200 while two fat heifers were also butchered and given away. The church also benefited with much financial assistance. Timothy Bennett died in 1861 at the age of 57 and 700 people are said to have attended his funeral. Steve's assumption is that his departure at a comparatively young age contributed to his fall from public acclaim.

Meanwhile the transformation of the Forest continued apace with outside capitalists' intent on exploiting the deep coal deposits. In the 1880's the Bennetts moved on to Wales and Birmingham but, thankfully left enough scent to put our man on the trail. Here's hoping for a fascinating follow up in a future *New Regard*. The meeting ended with Steve playing a recording of a group singing the old favourite, *We Are the Jovial Colliers*, said to be the Forest's national anthem. It was a foot-tapping end to an excellent hour.

J.P.

The hot concrete wall of the magnox reactor containment vessel, the high radiation levels around the cooling ponds, the thundering generators, all colour my fading memories of a guided tour around Berkeley nuclear power station, which took place during the 1980. One thing they didn't explain was what went on in the 'labs' next door, so I was especially interested in seeing Geoff Wheelers Zoom presentation 'Science and Engineering in Berkeley', which was the highlight of the January meeting. Geoff is now the leading light of the Berkeley Research Group, who are dedicated to documenting the history of the Berkeley Nuclear Labs (BNL). Before retirement he was a physicist there, so he was able to give an erudite, authoritative and wide-ranging talk.



The labs were opened in 1961, and originally consisted of the Engineering Hall, the Administration Block, and the Shielded Area. Over the subsequent years, until closure, the site was much expanded, with a maximum of 750 staff working there. Much of the work there concerned improving the performance of the reactor fuel rods, extending their working life, and maximising the energy output from them. This required recovered fuel rods to be dissected in the 'Cave Line' in the Shielded Area, where skilled operators, safe behind lead glass windows, would manipulate robotic arms. Between 1962 and 1980, the energy that could be extracted from a fuel rod had doubled, due to design improvements underpinned by investigations at the labs. This work was significant enough for the Royal Society to present its 'Energy Award' jointly to BNL and UKAEA for major improvements in nuclear fuel utilisation in magnox reactors. Another Royal Society award (The 'Esso Award') was given in 1997 to scientists at BNL for their work on extending the life of the magnox reactors. The Berkeley labs also hosted the 'zero energy' reactor, which Geoff explained was a very small scale configurable nuclear reactor which was used to test various geometries of the fuel rods and graphite moderator blocks, to help determine the safest and most efficient configurations for full scale reactors.

After privatisation, the ownership of the labs changed a number of times, until closure, when the site was reinvented as the Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park.

K.W.

Book Review by Ian Wright

In 1986 Ralph Anstis published *Warren James and Dean Forest Riots* (Self-Published) which has become the most popular and widely read account of the events surrounding the 1831 riot. The Forest of Dean uprising of 1831 received scant attention from historians before 1975 when Chris Fisher started researching the subject as part of his MA in history studies at the University of Warwick. His MA dissertation was the first thorough study of the riot and is up to now unpublished. Bristol Radical History Group decided to publish it in its original form as we believe that it provides an alternative and critical insight into the events surrounding 1831.

Fisher argues that the Forest of Dean Riot of 1831 was fundamentally a miners' riot. He contends that it was the product of conflicts of interest generated after 1800 in the assertion by the State of its claim to rights in the Forest of Dean and the related penetration of, and transformation of, the old free mining coal industry by capitalists from beyond the borders of the Forest. His analysis of the changes in mine ownership reveals that in the years between 1790 and 1830 the mining industry in the Forest of Dean had passed, in the main, from the hands of a relatively large group of working proprietors of small-scale co-operative pits into those of a small group of men, mostly outside capitalists, who brought with them the steam engine, deep mining, railroads and iron furnaces. As a result, most of the inhabitants of the Forest became wage earners.

Fisher's discussion of land use, encroachments and the construction of enclosures reveals that the inhabitants' opportunities to use the Forest for timber stealing, pasture and cottages had also been curtailed. Tensions were exacerbated by a growing population and an influx of foreign workmen. Fisher argues that three factors were of critical importance in the processes which brought about these changes; the determination of the State to reassert its control, the expediency for the State of an alliance with outside capitalists and the willingness of some free miners to take on outside capitalists as partners.

Fisher backs his arguments up with critical use of the primary sources and accounts of the riot which often represent differing points of view and places them in the context of the social and economic status of their authors. In doing so he challenges the view presented by some at the time that the rioters were misguided, naïve, ignorant, simple, and deluded. On the contrary, Fisher contends that the riot was a clear expression of considerable and justifiable resentment towards the State and the foreign capitalists as they encroached on the free miners' control of the Forest's resources. However, he argues the situation was complex as different free miners responded in a variety of ways to the changing circumstances depending on their aspirations and economic status. Fisher explores the fundamental changes that were taking place but considers the outcome, in the form it took, was not inevitable.

The book can be bought here:

<https://www.brh.org.uk/site/pamphleteer/the-forest-of-dean-miners-riot-of-1831/>

