

FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

news
November 2021



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The Forest of Dean
Local History
Society

News

November 2021

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Editors Notes

The front cover shows Ian Standing, Vice President and New Regard Editor, presenting copies of the newly published New Regard Issue 36 to the Mayor of Lydney (Anne Harley), and the Town Clerk (Stephen Holley). This new edition of the New Regard carries articles which are exclusively about the history of Lydney and its inhabitants. You can find 'pull out' order forms for the New Regard in the centre pages of this newsletter. Thanks to Sue Newton, (our new Publicity Officer), for the photo, and for organising the photo-shoot.

Also, thanks to member Venk Shenoï for getting in touch after he read Stephen Carter's article on Edward Protheroe in the last newsletter. The piece by Stephen revealed Forest industrialist Protheroe's connections with the slave trade operating out of Bristol. Venk made several interesting points in his email;

"Slavery was widespread all through history and in all lands. That the African slave trade went on an industrial scale was due to opening up of new lands and large-scale plantations which needed huge manpower readily supplied by the Arab and tribal traders who were already in the business of raiding and enslaving people in Africa. Apart from the African trade, slavery existed in Asia and in the New World well before European Empire builders discovered and set up plantations for the newfound tropical crops. Even today exploitation of one sort or the other is endemic in many parts of the World. Interestingly following abolition in 1833 plantation owners found new ways to recruit cheap labour via the indentured Labour system shipping hundreds of thousands from the Indian subcontinent and also from Britain to the Caribbean Islands and also to South East Asia and the Pacific".

From my traditional local historian centric view of the Forest of Dean, 'a land and people enclosed between two rivers', it was a bit of a shock to learn from Stephen Carter's article that the slave trade made incursions into our local history. Venk has reminded us that we should remember that there is always a wider view to such troubling times in our history.

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.

Welcome to our new Chair, John Lane

John Lane was voted in as our new Chair at the AGM. Read the questions and answers below to learn more about John and his aspirations for the Society.



John, members reading this may be aware that you have been a committee member for a while now. But can you let us know a little more about your background?

I was born and brought up on the high Cotswolds, son of a Plasterer and Slater, which is almost certainly where I gained my interest in buildings. I spent my early working life as a police officer, moving around the county before settling in Gloucester. After 30 years in the Police, I joined Gloucestershire County Council in the Public Rights of Way Team, looking after the 3500 miles of footpaths and bridleways in the County. A role which allowed me to explore the countryside in even more detail. In 2019, I retired from the Council, shortly after moving to the Forest of Dean, where I now feel more 'at home' than I have done since leaving my parent's home as a teenager.

How did you come to join the History Society?

I have an almost unquenchable thirst for local history. While I was living in Gloucester I became a member of Gloucester Civic Trust and trained as a Tour Guide. When I moved to the Forest it seemed like a natural progression to learn more about the area in which I now live. While walking my dog here in the Forest, I started to discover all sorts of 'hidden' gems of history and set about trying to find out about them. I soon discovered the best place to look was the History Society! So, I joined and soon became intrigued by the breadth and depth of knowledge of the Society's members. I subsequently joined and became involved with the Committee.

Which elements of the Forest's long history interest you the most?

That's a difficult one to answer really, there is so much to choose from! I guess, if I had to pinpoint one particular aspect, it would be the industrial heritage, which, for me, includes the huge numbers of buildings, structures and feats of engineering present in the Forest. My 'favourite' would probably be Dark Hill Iron Works but I am equally fascinated by the engineering involved in the numerous mills, mines, quarries, built water courses, railway bridges and lime kilns etc.

You are now starting your term as History Society Chair. What will you be focusing on, and what do you hope to achieve during the next three years?

Initially, I want to get to know more about the workings of the Society. Adopting the old adage, "if it isn't broke, don't fix it", I want to build on all the good work that has gone before. Under past chairmen the Society has prospered and I would like to ensure it continues to be the successful, vibrant organization it has become. The hugely successful collaboration with Andy Seed and the Forester's Forest Project produced a fantastic book (The Story of the Forest) which has been well received by local schools, I believe there might be more scope to get more Forest schools involved. The Society's members are all, mostly, 'of a certain age', and to ensure the Forest's past isn't forgotten, I think it important to involve the younger generation in any way we can. I would also like to build on the links with other local history societies and, hopefully, arrange reciprocal visits for our members.



MEMBERSHIP

We are now into membership year 2021/22 and a huge thank you to the vast majority who have renewed their subscriptions to the Society. Membership cards for those who have renewed are included with this newsletter. For others, a renewal form is included to make renewal easier for you.

If you believe you have renewed but not received a card, please email me at membership@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk or call 01594 510533 so I can correct my list, apologise, and send out your card. A reminder too – if you pay by BACS, do email me a form as well, or even just a note to say you've paid by BACS, if no details (including Gift Aid) have changed. It helps the admin, thank you.

As well as renewals, I'm pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society: Dr Andrew Tittensor, Simon and Caroline Phelps, Adrian James & Valerie Burrows, Judith McNamara, Stephen and Linda Price, Karen Stevens, Tina Kelly, Andreas Barrier, Mrs Glen Morse, Steve Parkes and Kelly Denham-Reid, Neil and Sally Morley. We do hope you enjoy your membership and look forward to seeing you at meetings and events.

Cheryl Mago (Membership Secretary)

Join the FoD local history society

forestofdeanhistory.org.uk/join-the-fod-history-society/

Many members will remember June Webb, who sadly passed away on 25th July, aged 86 years. June Webb was co-founder with husband Keith of The Diamond (disabled riding) Centre, which they established over 50 years ago. In 1974 June was awarded The Martini International Award, for services to the Equestrian World. Among her other achievements, June was co-author of "Guide to Riding" that enabled disabled people to get the best out of riding. June and Keith retired to the Forest of Dean in 1986 where June fell in love with the Forest and its history, and the forest became their adopted home. Keith (a former Chair of the Society) died in 2012, but until recently June continued to live at Marefold, in Gorsty Knoll, Coleford. She took an active role in the Forest of Dean Local History Society as Indoor Meetings Secretary between 1989 and 1997 and was awarded (jointly with Keith), the FODLHS President's Prize 1997 "for notable Services to the Society".



June Webb

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 13th November - 3pm

West Dean Centre, Bream, GL15 6JW

Roger Deeks & Jason Griffiths - "Reading the Forest & Voices of the Forest"

Saturday 11th December - 3pm

West Dean Centre, Bream, GL15 6JW

Chris Sullivan - "The Uncovering of Lydney Park Roman Temple"

On Saturday 9th October, retiring Chair Mary Sullivan welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting. She presented her report, starting with a retrospect of her 4 years in the role as Chair. Mary went on to say “2020 was not a normal year, so we decided to make subscriptions optional for that year. I want to say how grateful I am to the 50% of the membership who still paid their subs to help keep the Society going. Nevertheless, we did run a near-full programme. Personally I missed being with you all for meetings in person, and our finances further suffered from the lack of raffle, publications sales and teas which all swell the funds.



Many thanks go to all the people who have served on our committee over the past 4 years. In particular, the society owes a huge amount to Cecile Hunt, our retiring Treasurer, who has kept our accounts straight for many years as well as serving a stint as Chair in the middle of that. A huge gap around our meetings was caused by the death of our unmatched Publicity Officer, John Powell. As well as his work for us, he was very well respected for his knowledge of salmon fishing and the Severn. Today we have New Regard Vol 36 on sale. Another 80 page edition and a Lydney Special. An especial thanks here to our editor, Ian Standing, who managed to soldier on after serious illness and get the volume completed with exceptional help from David Harris, New Regard designer, and wife Cheryl. One thing I hoped to achieve as Chair was to increase networking with other related organisations. I am very pleased that our involvement with the Foresters Forest HLF scheme has resulted in our well-received 'Story of the Forest' book, produced with a lot of effort again from Cheryl and David. As a result, we have far more links with local schools now. Simon Moore, our conservation officer, has also been heavily involved in the built heritage project. Our current Vice Chair, Sue Middleton, is the project manager for Forester Forest, and Nicola Wynn, our Secretary, is also Collections Manager for DHC. Both important links for our Society.

I have so much enjoyed my 4 years leading this society and look forward to many more years as an active member and committee member. Lastly, thank you to members, many of you have been so appreciative and helpful to me that it has made the job of Chair very worthwhile”.

Chris Sullivan gave a short speech to thank Mary Sullivan and Cecile Hunt for all their work for the Society over the years, and Mary & Cecile were each presented with a bunch of flowers by secretary Nicola Wynn.

The winner of the Cyril Hart Prize of £50 plus certificate, for the best written and researched article in the New Regard, Vol 35, was awarded to Cherry Lewis for her piece entitled 'My Beloved, I am thine affection husband, David Mushet'. The Scott Garrett Prize of £50 and certificate for the best presentation at meetings was awarded to Andy Mellor for his talk on 'The Glosters at Waterloo'. Unfortunately, Andy was not able to attend the meeting to receive his prize.

The following officers of the Society were elected or re-elected:

Chair: John Lane	Vice Chair: Sue Middleton	Secretary: Nicola Wynn
Treasurer: Chris Sullivan	Membership: Cheryl Mayo	Conservation: Simon Moore
Indoor Meetings: Cecile Hunt	Publications + GLHA	Publicity: Sue Newton
Enquiries: Averil Kear	Representative: Mary Sullivan	Newsletter Editor: Keith Walker
Member: Di Standing	Member: Ian Gower	

The retiring Treasurer, Cecile Hunt, presented the Annual Accounts for 2020-2021. The General Fund total receipts for the year ending 31st July 2021 were £2203.00, whilst total payments were £3159.17, leaving net receipts for the year at -£956.17. Regarding the Publications Fund, sales of the New Regard (both direct and via the eshop) produced £3255.85 income, slightly down from last year. The cost of production of the New Regard was £1580.90. The total receipts for the Publications Fund were £4122.35, whilst total payments were £2062.25, leaving net receipts for the year at £2060.10.

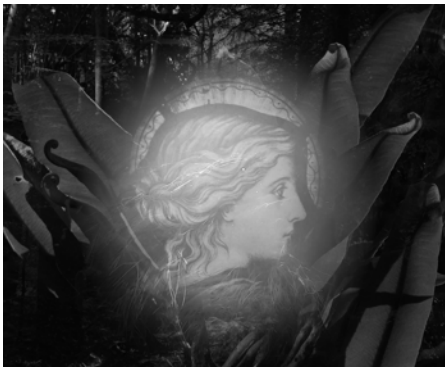
The monetary assets of the Society at 31st July were declared to be; General Fund, £4510.25; Publications Fund, £8999.16; Reserve Fund, £10688.25.

Winter opening hours

During November and December we will only be open Thursdays Fridays Saturdays and Sundays (apart from 18th-23rd Dec when we are open every day). We will be closed in January to put in flood resilience measures on the ground floor.

Until 31st December Foresters' Forest exhibition

Find out about the key achievements of the 38 projects that make up the programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund from 2017-2022. The many and varied projects in the Forest of Dean have helped sustain, protect, celebrate and reveal our built, buried, cultural and natural heritage.



Happy is the Eye film

As part of the Forest Oral Histories project, Dean Heritage Centre commissioned artist & documentary filmmaker Ryan Powell to create a film. The film uses recordings and photographs sourced from the Dean Heritage Centre archive and the Voices from the Forest project, to build up an image of life in the Forest of Dean during the 20th century, with a focus on ways that people directly interacted with the natural landscape as part of their way of life. A beautifully created and fascinating film on Forest life.

Showing at DHC until the end of November. Also accessible via a link on our website so you can watch at home.

Saturday 20th November Oral History talk on Cinderford

at 11.00-12.00 in the meeting room at DHC

Presentation drawn from interviewees recordings who lived in Cinderford along with photographs from the DHC archive. Opportunity to listen to the fascinating experiences of people in the early to mid-1900s. What was life like back then? Descriptions of Cinderford, shopping, school, singing a miners song, and more...

BOOKING for the oral history talk: FREE but need to book as places restricted to 20 with well-spaced out seating to ensure visitor safety as per Covid regulations. Book by calling DHC on 01594 822170 or email nicola@deanheritagecentre.com giving your name and contact details.

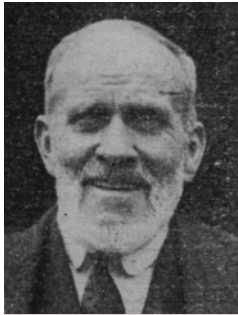
Christmas at DHC

From the 18th to 23rd December Father Christmas will be taking time out to spend some time in our cosy Forester's Cottage and will have gifts for all the children who visit him. There are also festive craft activities for children. Enjoy Christmas fare in the Coffee shop or pre-book from our festive menu. Our gift shop is an ideal place to shop for a Christmas gift that is a little different. We stock unique, locally produced, quality items, a range of local gifts and books and there are plenty of toys and collectables to appeal to our younger visitors which would make perfect stocking fillers.

The Need for Tolerance - by Ian Wright

Local history records provide plenty of evidence of public service by members of the wealthier classes throughout Victorian times and into the 20th century. In this short article Ian Wright uses the example of Frank Ashmead to show that folk from more humble beginnings also held important public positions and gave much of their time to public service. His own period of service taught Frank 'the need for tolerance'.

Frank Ashmead was born on July 14th 1856 in Upton St Leonards, the son of a farmworker who died in 1862 as a result of an accident at work. Frank was brought up by his mother, Isabella, with seven siblings. Isabella worked on farms whenever she could and was otherwise dependent on poor law relief. Frank started work on a farm at the age of eight or nine. When he was 11 years old, he attended the Gloucester Mop Fair Day standing for hire in the appointed place and was employed by a farmer with wages of £2 per annum (less than a shilling week) plus food and lodging.



Frank Ashmead

The next year he moved to Soudley in the Forest of Dean to work for Richard Nelmes who ran a flock of sheep. After three years he obtained work at the Wooden House screens for the Bowson Colliery company near Cinderford. In the winter of 1874/75, there was a strike in the Forest pits which lasted three months through the coldest winter in 25 years. The hardship, cold and hunger forced the miners back to work defeated but the experience taught the young Frank for the need for strong labour organisation and so he became active in the miners' union, the Forest of Dean Miners' Association (FDMA).

After the strike, Frank commenced work as a hodder and filler at the Crump Meadow colliery and over the next 30 years worked through all the various phases of colliery work ending up as a hewer. He married Mary Baker in 1878 and went on to have five children. In 1904, now exhausted by work in the pit, he obtained a job at the Cinderford Co-operative Society as a baker's clerk where he remained for 25 years. He organised the Co-operative Employees into the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees and was instrumental in bettering their working conditions and pay. At the same time, he continued to be involved with the FDMA as one of its auditors. He held many public positions, including being a member of the Westbury Board of Guardians, Chairman of East Dean Parish Council, a member of East Dean District Council where he was Chairman of the Housing Committee, a School Manager, a Trustee of the Cinderford Miners' Welfare Hall and a magistrate.

The *Gloucester Journal* 3rd August 1929 asked: "what has your long service on behalf of your fellows impressed upon you the most?" Frank replied: "The need for tolerance. When I was young, I was, like most youths, keen, impetuous, and as I now believe, somewhat intolerant of the opinions of others. Now I realise that there are two sides at least to every question, so my motto is: Give the other side a fair hearing, and reason is more likely to prevail." Frank died in 1940 after a lifetime of public service.

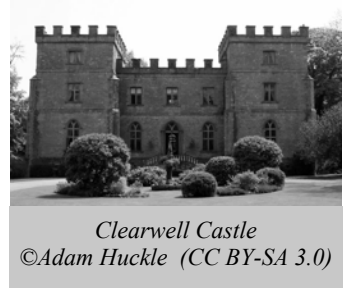
Read more Forest social history on Ian Wright's website: <https://forestofdeansocialhistory.co.uk/>

Countess Dunraven - Part 2 by Cecile Hunt

Caroline, Countess Dowager of Dunraven and Mount Earl, married into Irish royalty and lived in Adare, Co Limerick all her married life. When widowed she moved to Clearwell Court, Forest of Dean, which she had inherited after the death of her father in 1814. Daily diaries kept by Caroline from her eighteenth birthday until her death, plus numerous letters, form part of her archive at University of Limerick's Special Collection.

Caroline's childhood home was Dunraven Castle, Glamorgan (demolished 1963); where she lived with her parents, Anna and Thomas and her brother Charles. Charles died when Caroline was eight years old leaving Caroline as the sole heir. She married Windham Henry Quin, (2nd Earl of Dunraven and Mount-Earland and heir to the Quin estate in Adare), when she was 20 years old. They lived in the newly built manor house in Adare with their three children: Edwin Richard Wyndham-Quin, Anna Maria Charlotte Wyndham-Quin and Windham Henry Wyndham-Quin.

Clearwell Court, built in 1727 for the Wyndham family by a Thomas Wyndham, replaced an earlier building dating to the early 1600's, of which the ballroom in the current Clearwell Castle was part of. This ballroom was in Caroline's time used by the villagers as a chapel; before St Peter's Church, next door to the then Court was built. The Thomas who oversaw the rebuild in 1727 had a son, also called Thomas, this Thomas 'of Dunraven and Clearwell' was Caroline's father.



Clearwell Castle
©Adam Huckle (CC BY-SA 3.0)

As a widow, Caroline received royalties from her prosperous Dunraven estate coal mines'; Clearwell Court was the least prosperous of the two estates she inherited. Caroline was left in the will of her husband: "*... as a residence, the mansion of Clearwell with £1000 a year... linen, china, horses, carriages, absolutely, and the use and enjoyment of the furniture, books, plate and pictures for her life..*" Edwin, Caroline's eldest son, had taken over the Adare estate on the death of his father. (NB: £1,000 in 1850 was worth £80,186 in 2017).

The Monmouthshire Beacon reported in May 1851: "*Clearwell Court...Her ladyship came by rail to Chepstow, and proceeded by post horses from the Beaufort Arms, attended only by her servant. After spending a few hours in inspecting the capacious mansion and the pleasure grounds, her ladyship returned to Chepstow. ...it is generally supposed that Lady Dunraven contemplates putting the Court in repair, and taking up her abode there...*"

Before Caroline took up residence, Clearwell Court had been empty for several years. Its last tenant had been a James Haffenden. During the period the mansion and manor had been let to Mr Haffenden he destroyed the deer and converted the park into grounds for training racehorses. From Haffenden's support of the 'turf' came 'the Clearwell Stakes' a plate contested for over the Epsom Downs and at Newmarket.

In 1855 Caroline was presented with a table made of Forest of Dean maple oak by her Clearwell tenants as a mark of the esteem they all held her in. This table is mentioned in her will. Also known for her philanthropic work, Caroline funded the building of, in Clearwell, a church, school and hospital. St Peter's Church, Clearwell, designed by J Middleton of Cheltenham, was consecrated in April 1867.

(to be continued)

Trow Ditch Iron Mine Level *by Dave Tuffley*

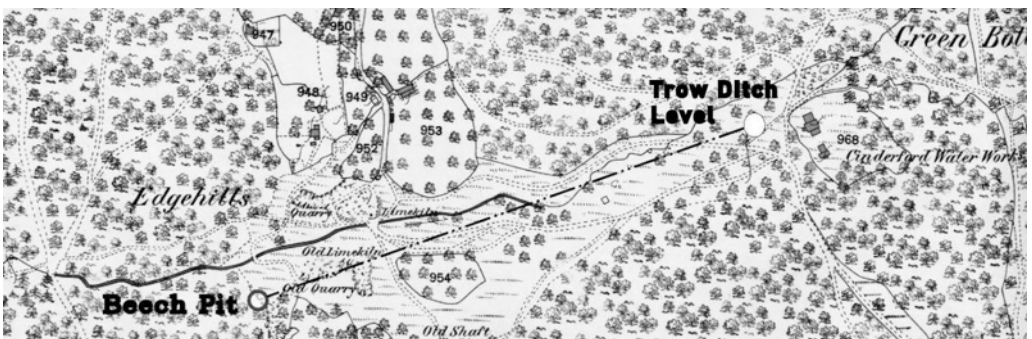
Following on from the article in the last newsletter about Green Bottom (Cinderford) Waterworks, Dave Tuffley has kindly provided some more pieces for the 'puzzle'!

The Green Bottom Water Works water flows from the old Trow Ditch Iron Mine Level, which is the 400 yards long drainage level from the Beech Pit Iron Mine. The level gets its name from the similarly named Trow Ditch surface trough above the mine level and which conducts surface water down the hillside. The trough was probably built several hundred years ago and prevented its waters from seeping into the Beech Pit and adding to its water drainage burden. The Trow Ditch Mine Level itself is extremely old and was conveniently used by Thomas Sopwith, and the other Dean Forest Mining Commissioners, as the gale boundary dividing line between the St. Annals and Westbury Brook Iron Mine Gales, when deciding the adjoining limit of both gales.

The mine level height originally varied from four feet, six inches; to six feet, and encountered numerous beds of clay and shales. These beds would have been originally timbered to the same height as the bed rock to keep the level free of any falls or obstructions.

The East Dean Council, early in the last century, decided that the supply of the level's waters into the Green Bottom Works would need to be increased, to keep up with demand of water to the ever-expanding Cinderford and district. In May 1903 it hired a small team of local colliers from the Plump Hill (B. Wakefield and T. Barnard) to investigate the level and for them to give a report on the level's condition and to see if the amount of draining water could be increased. The miners dutifully cleared away all the falls and silt obstructions to the draining water and built new stone arches through all the areas of bad ground. However, these new arched sections were to be much reduced in height and anyone trying to explore the level, will certainly get a very wet bottom from having to sit in about six inches of cold running water in many places. The superb quality of the two miners' work shows in the fact that approximately 120 years later the water is still flowing freely out of the mine and emerges at an average of around 24,000 gallons per hour.

The quality of the water is so good that in recent years the Water Works and the water from the mine were leased by a syndicate as a hatchery to bring on salmon and trout fry which were to be used to restock the River Wye and other suitable waters. However, for some unknown reason, the hatchery has now ceased its operations.



The dotted line above represents the approximate route of the Trow Ditch Iron Mine level. The darker line just to the north shows the line of a masonry trough built around 1830 to conduct water draining from higher coal measures across the outcrop of limestone. OS Map 25 inch Glos XXXI.8 1881.

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Meetings in Review *with Chris Sullivan*



Mary Cole

Saturday 11 September was another little Freedom Day, our first return to in-person rather than on-line talks since last year. Everyone was glad to be back at the West Dean Centre, despite the ease of Zoom. With chairs a bit more spread than in the past, everyone looked comfortable.

Our speaker was our long-standing Treasurer, Cecile Hunt. Her subject was 'The Berkeley Affair', a complicated story of aristocracy, bastardy and a claimed double marriage, well-illustrated by 'nearly-like' pictures where pictures of the original houses or objects were not available.

The leading lady in Cecile's story was Mary Cole, a pub owner's daughter from Gloucester, born in 1767. The lead male was some 22 years older, Francis Augustus, 5th Earl of Berkeley. Resolutely unmarried, he was dissipated and uninterested in maintaining his huge estates across the country. While mustering troops in Gloucester, he noticed sweet-sixteen Mary nearby, and set after her with a huntsman's zeal. Mary was sent far away, into domestic service in Kent with her sister Susan. Within weeks, Susan tired of being a scrubber and became a kept woman, with Mary resisting this career change, until.... When Mary was at Susan's house in London, ruffians burst in threatening to abduct Susan unless she paid 100 guineas, about £15,000 nowadays, of supposed debt. Who then should arrive, but Francis, offering those 100 guineas if Mary would get into his carriage?

Two years later, in 1785, Mary believed that she was married in Francis' Berkeley church, by a priest whose job Francis controlled. She was told to keep the marriage a secret and she was known as Miss Tudor. On her children's birth certificates, she was Mary Cole. Her baggage travelled with her, not with her 'husband'. However, she proved good at estate business and was popular with tenants, thus being useful doing things Francis failed to do.

Eventually, a second marriage followed in London in 1796, as 'bachelor and spinster'. This created a major problem. Subsequent children were legitimate and could inherit titles, but the illegitimacy of their existing children was confirmed. Nevertheless, Francis set about trying to legitimise his long-denied first marriage. Someone had tampered with the Berkeley church register, a capital offence, and there was no trace of the surviving supposed witness. With this and other damning evidence against a real 1785 marriage, the House of Lords Privileges Committee repeatedly declined to rule their first-born son, 'Fitz', entitled to succeed Francis. Mary took herself out of the jurisdiction for a while in Madeira.

Francis died in 1810. 'Fitz' inherited Berkeley Castle under his father's Will and much later was awarded his own peerage. The first child after the 1796 marriage, Thomas, declined to take his father's Earldom in deference to his father's wishes. Mary still lived in seclusion from society, though as the Countess of Berkeley. She died in 1844 and was buried in a family vault at the dower house in Cranford, by modern Heathrow.



*Church of St Mary the Virgin, Berkeley,
David Stowell , CC BY-SA 2.0*

Early October, the 9th to be exact, and it was time for our Annual General Meeting. We weren't packing 'em in, because we spread the chairs out a bit nowadays. But we had a quorate meeting, which heard from outgoing Chair and Treasurer Mary Sullivan and Cecile Hunt. Both were thanked, and presented with flowers, for all the service they have done – so far. Mary keeps publication sales. Cecile moves to Indoor Meetings Organiser. Chris Sullivan will replace her as Treasurer.

Business dealt with, Di Court – as she was at the time of the events of her talk – spoke about the origins of the Dean Heritage Centre. In 1979, a number of people were getting concerned about how items of redundant industrial heritage were simply being thrown away. And Forest culture was going. When cottages became empty, they were simply cleared. A hundred people crowded into a meeting at the Speech House to consider how to stem the loss. A Committee of 12, led by local builder John Joynes, set up four working parties, arranged meetings around the Forest, gained media and MP support. More artefacts were offered from personal collections, but where to display them?

Fifteen sites were considered, with the choice going to Camp Mill, with the scrap metal tenants moving to the then-new Cinderford Industrial Estate. A Trust Deed was signed in December

1980. Di was instrumental in creating and running the 'Friends of' scheme. This was the era of the MSC providing trainee labour, many of whom did well subsequently. But the MSC didn't fund materials. Forestry Commission provided machinery, Westbury Homes a project manager, KW Bell the scaffolding, John Joyce £10,000, amongst



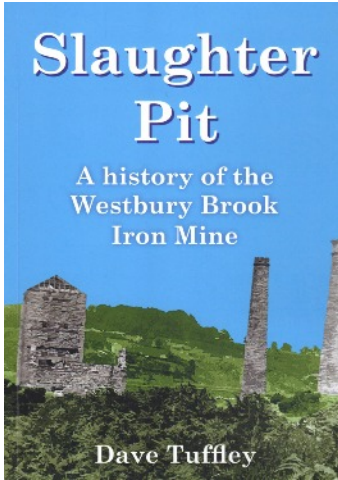
other generous local donations. So, work continued, but in Portacabins on a flooding site because of planning delays. The pace quickened with the arrival of electricity, and further with the arrival of the telephone. Then heavy machinery - a sawmill, the Lightmoor engine – could be considered. There was a lot of community involvement. The existence of the new Museum, the DHC, attracted donations such as the Ruardean Voyce longcase clocks and the Gage Library.

Could such a thing be accomplished now, with so much extra bureaucracy and box-ticking? No, thought Di. So, what of the future of the Museum we have, thanks to all that effort? Much new housing in the Dean means new people interested in 'Nature' and to some extent in the history of their new locality. Nicola Wynn, the DHC Collection Manager, had brought along a range of the artefacts in the care of this largely volunteer-run Museum. Mark George introduced himself as the new Centre Manager. He was very impressed by the way Foresters Forest had brought disparate groups together and hoped that DHC would be a hub for its legacy. Di then showed the film 'In the Shadow of the Hills', with the broad accents of the old Forest - and a younger version of the New Regard Editor.

BALH
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

If you are looking for some intellectual stimulation in short bursts, why not try the BALH 'Ten Minute Talks'. They cover a wide range of interesting subjects, and can be found at: <https://www.balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks>

Book Review by Keith Walker



Society member Dave Tuffley has used all his long experience as a local historian and ‘caver’ to produce a fascinating short history of the Westbury Brook Iron Mine, aka Edgehills Mine, otherwise known as ‘Slaughter Pit’.

The contents of the book are an adaptation of a previous article in the New Regard, but with a fresh look we learn that after passing through the hands of various free miners, the mine came into the possession of the Dowlais Iron Company around 1830, and they continued to work the mine until the final closure in 1893.

Dave provides a very readable account of the development of the mine and the associated tramroad, (which ran from the site of the mine at Edge Hill to the Whimsey area of Steam Mills).

He focuses on the technology used and the skills of the miners, including a description of the methods of accessing and extraction of the ore, its conveyance to the surface and transport to its markets. The lives of the miners are illustrated by recounting their stories, tragedies, and conflicts with the mine owners.

There are some 24 wide-ranging chapters packed into the 44 page book, covering diverse subjects such as ‘Sickness Funds’, ‘Economic Depression’, ‘Modern Exploration’, ‘Managers or Agents’, and somewhat inevitably with Dave’s particular skills developed when producing the ‘Miners Memorial’ record set, ‘Fatal Accidents’! That chapter has special significance to the nickname of the mine as the high accident and death rate lead to the local nickname of ‘Slaughter Pit’.

This short book is highly recommended as a really good read, the text being interspersed with rare old

photographs and contemporary maps. It is also particularly valuable in recording in some detail the history of one iron mine amongst many in the Forest. The written records of the history of Westbury Brook Iron Mine are incomplete and the stories of the miners and their families who lived and worked there are fragmentary, however Dave has collected the available evidence and has compiled it to create a history of this place. More on other pits please Dave!!



*OS 25 inch map - Gloucester XXX1.4 - 1881
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The book is available from <https://forestofdeansocialhistory.co.uk/slaughter-pit/> and is priced at £7 (including post & packing).