

# NEWSLETTER

Gloucestershire Local History Association

## OAKRIDGE

### A HISTORY

A social history of Oakridge and its surrounding hamlets of  
Far Oakridge, Waterlane, Bournes Green, Tunley and Daneway



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Welcome to the eight edition of the GLHA newsletter. This edition will be the first with our new 'queries' section – can you help Averil Kear, from the Forest of Dean Local History Society, to locate her two elusive brass rubbings?

There is also a small change to how pieces can be submitted to the newsletter. Please send any queries, questions, comments or articles to [glhanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:glhanewsletter@gmail.com)

Wishing you all the best,

Ben Berry,  
Editor

## News from the GLHA

### **Members' Forum, 4<sup>th</sup> September**

Twenty-five people, representing 19 of the Association's members, attended our quarterly Forum at Gloucestershire Archives on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> September; apologies were received from representatives of a further seven member groups.

The meeting began with a presentation by Chris Webb, Project Officer for the HLF-supported project to extend the successful Bristol City Council 'Know Your Place' website to the adjoining counties, including Gloucestershire. The project is currently developing a digital mapping project through a range of pilot activities, until November 2014.

Reports were received from the County History Trust (a summary of which is included in elsewhere in this Newsletter) and from Gloucestershire Archives. The latter focused in particular on the Archives' current partnership with 'Ancestry' to digitise a number of classes of record, including land tax records and electoral registers, and on forthcoming events and activities. A copy of the Archives' Report to the Forum has been circulated to GLHA members.

The Chairman reported on a number of past and future GLHA activities, including the very successful Summer meeting, hosted by the Forest of Dean Local History Society at St Briavels on 12<sup>th</sup> July, the Industrial Archaeology walk around Stroud, led by Dr Ray Wilson on 28<sup>th</sup> July, and the 'Behind the Scenes' tour and document display at the Archives held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September. The Archives tour was attended by 15 GLHA members and we are grateful to Vicky Thorpe and Helen Timlin of the Archives' staff for facilitating it. The Chairman also reported on plans for the Association's Local History Day, to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> October, an account of which is included elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The Treasurer reported that the Association's finances were in a healthy state, with a balance of £1,396 in the bank. Member groups (of which we have 46) were gradually renewing their annual subscriptions for the current year.

The Forum discussed ways in which member groups might be encouraged to contribute to meetings without reverting to the former ‘round the table’ format, which was felt to be too unfocused and time-consuming. It was agreed to set aside a part of each future Forum from March 2015 onwards for a discussion of a specific topic of general interest to members, the topic for which would be included with the Agenda.

## **GLHA Local History Day, 11<sup>th</sup> October**

The Association's second Local History Day was held at Pate's Grammar School in Cheltenham on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, the theme being 'The Effects of World War One on Gloucestershire Communities'. This year's event was funded by the HLF-supported 'Gloucestershire Remembers World War 1' project, which enabled the 100 + people attending to do so free of charge. GLHA is particularly grateful to the project – and to the project sponsors – for their support.

The one disappointment of the day was that Dr Christopher Hutchison and Maria Soriano from the London-based 'Radio Days Vintage Music Project', who were to speak (and sing!) on the topic 'Music Will Win the War', had to cancel at very short notice, after Maria had fallen seriously ill (though I am pleased to say that she is now out of hospital and recovering well). Valiant attempts by one of our other speakers, Geoff North, to find a substitute 'musical speaker' for us were unsuccessful, but this did give each of our three remaining speakers a little longer for their talks, plus additional time for viewing the displays, which those present certainly appreciated.

The three remaining speakers were Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, Chairman of the Trustees of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, who is preparing the Gloucestershire volume in The History Press 'Great War Britain' series, and who talked on 'Gloucestershire and the Great War'; Dr Sally Dickson from Kidderminster Archaeological & Historical Society (which is, as yet, the only local history society in the country to have produced a volume on the effects of the War on their Community for The History Press series), who talked on 'Kidderminster's War: a local history society project'; and Geoff North from Cheltenham, who talked about the sources for his current research into the County's Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospitals. All three speakers gave excellent and wide-ranging talks, which were well received, and which we hope might provide 'inspiration' for member groups to undertake comparable research of their own, if they are not already doing so. GLHA is very grateful to each of the speakers for giving up their time to take part in the Day.

As always, an essential part of the Local History Day is the displays on the chosen subject that have been prepared by some of our member societies. Eleven societies prepared displays this year, and the judging for the 'best display' was undertaken by Dr James Hodsdon, Chairman of the Gloucestershire County History Trust and Sam Bairstow, Project Officer for the 'Gloucestershire Remembers World War 1' project, to both of whom we are most grateful.

In their 'report back', the judges commended the efforts of all the exhibiting groups and the huge amount of work that their displays represented, noting that the general high standard meant that they had difficult decisions to make. But in the end they chose Painswick Local History Society's display as best fitting the theme of the day, on the grounds that it had a particularly clear narrative, set out at the start and maintained through to a stated conclusion at the end, with good evidence of analysis and a creative approach to the choice of material and its presentation, and a good 'marriage' of the local and the global. As this year's winner, Painswick will be given a year's free membership of the GLHA – and will be invited to nominate one of the judges for next year's Award (which they will not be eligible to enter!).



*Members of Painswick Local History Society with the 'best display'.  
From left to right: Peter Jackson, David Harley, Carol Maxwell (photo:  
Geoff North).*

The judges also made a special mention of Stonehouse History Group's display, as a close 'runner up', and of the Forest of Dean Local History Society's display, which exhibited 'an awesome amount of research on a tremendous range of topics, many unique to the region' – but which was felt to be ineligible for the competition as the actual display panels had been professionally produced for a display at the Dean Heritage Centre.

The other Award that is announced at the History Day is the Bryan Jerrard Award for what the judges believe to be the best article on an aspect of Gloucestershire's history in a local journal during the previous year. This year's Award was won by Dr Jan Broadway for her article on 'Gloucester Gardeners 1650-1763' in the *Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* **131**, with a 'runner-up' Award to Russell Weston for his article on 'Hazelton Manor' in *Glevensis* **46**. Both the winner and the 'runner-up' received book tokens, and GLHA is most grateful to The History Press for sponsoring this year's Award.



We were delighted that Bryan Jerrard was able to travel to Gloucester from his home in Hampshire to present the Award; unfortunately, Jan Broadway was unable to attend due to a prior engagement, but the Editor of *TBGAS*, Dr Simon Draper, received the Award on her behalf. The GLHA Chairman, Steven Blake, thanked his fellow Award judges, David Aldred and Michael Greet, for the time and effort that they put into the judging.

In addition to the speakers and the displays, the event also included two book stalls – one of recent publications with a World War One theme from The History Press and the other, also largely focusing on World War One material, organised by Geoff and Elaine North. Gloucestershire Archives were also present to promote their activities, including those relating to the ‘Gloucestershire Remembers World War One’ project. GLHA is very grateful to all of them for their contribution to the day.

At the end of the event, the Chairman thanked all those who had helped to make it a success, especially his fellow Committee members, and in particular Vicki Walker for her secretarial support, Alison Hobson for co-ordinating the refreshments and David Scriven for organising the technical side of the meeting. He was especially grateful to Pate’s for allowing us to hire the Hall & Gallery for the event (and to the School’s Drama Group for moving into the gym for their regular Saturday meeting) and for allowing us free access on Friday evening to prepare for the event, which took a great deal of pressure off us on the Saturday morning. Special mention was made of those who came along on Friday evening to help, namely Vicki & Andrew Walker, Geoff & Elaine North, David Scriven and Frank Colls. The Chairman also thanked those who helped with the final stages of preparation on the Saturday morning (and those who would help dismantle everything at the end of the day) and all those who had baked cakes and helped with the refreshment rota.

The theme of the 2015 Local History Day will be ‘Immigration and Emigration: to, from and within Gloucestershire’ – and we would be very pleased to receive ideas for a more ‘snappy’ title and for possible speakers. The exact date is yet to be decided, as we are hoping to avoid a clash with other local history events in the County, including the Cheltenham Festival of Literature, but it will certainly be on a Saturday in October.

Steven Blake, GLHA Chairman

## **Dates for your diary 2014 -15**

### **Forum date for 2014**

Monday Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 2.00 pm. John Putley, “A Bit More Interesting”: Education and Outreach at Gloucestershire Archives. Christmas refreshments.

### **Forum dates for 2015**

These meetings will include discussion topics.

Monday March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2.00 pm. Friends of Gloucestershire Archives

Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm. AGM. Speaker from local media, radio and/or newspaper.

Thursday Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm. Sally Self from Cheltenham and Linda Viner from Cirencester will talk about what volunteer researchers are doing to support the work of the paid VCH staff.

Monday Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2.00 pm. Speaker TBA

### **Events**

Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2105: Summer afternoon meeting at Lechlade

Saturday October 2105 (date to be confirmed): Local History Day ‘Immigration and Emigration’ at Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham.

### **Newsletter deadlines**

December 19<sup>th</sup> - pub January 2015

March 20<sup>th</sup> – pub April

July 10<sup>th</sup> – pub August

Sept 25<sup>th</sup> – pub October



## Oakridge History Group

In 2002 a small booklet was produced on the history of Oakridge and in 2004 the Heritage Lottery Fund, through its Local Heritage Initiative Scheme, granted the newly formed Oakridge History Group over £18000 to research and produce a full length history. The group consisted of three ladies - Pat Carrick, Kay Rhodes and Juliet Shipman - who carried out the research and wrote up the various chapters. We were most fortunate to have in the village a professional editor who freely gave her time to put the material together and an enthusiastic and helpful publisher.



*On the 24th February 2006 the book was launched in the village hall by Dame Margaret Weston*

One of the conditions of the lottery grant was the involvement of members of the community in contributing to the research so it was agreed to invite villagers to join the group and to organise research evenings each month. In the end we agreed to hold research evenings every other month and talks in the months in between. A programme was established for 2004/5 and the theme of the research was village shops and pubs. Talks were given on various aspects of research.

Each year a new subject is agreed for research and these have included tracing local families, transcribing wills and inventories, manorial documents, history of houses, farming, photographs and village life. Every other year an exhibition is held in the village hall showing the results.

The area around Oakridge was the home of many members of the Arts and Crafts movement such as Ernest Gimson, the Barnsley brothers and Norman Jewson. Other artists included Sir William

Rothenstein, Alfred Powell and William Simmonds and speakers were sought to talk about these characters and their friends who regularly visited the small villages around Oakridge. These talks have attracted large audiences who, in many cases, were unaware of the famous people who once lived and visited the area.

Each year, in July, we visit an historic local house at the invitation of the owner and this has proved very successful, attracting many members.

In 2009 we were asked by the Oakridge Society if we would take over responsibility for the objects which were in the museum, establish several years earlier in the Methodist Chapel school room. The chapel was being sold for conversion to housing and we agreed to store the objects and arrange for occasional exhibitions of some of the more interesting items. We now find that villagers often donate historic items and documents or photos for us to add to this collection. Pat Carrick now has a large archive of local photographs donated by many people who were brought up in the area.

On the outskirts of the Oakridge Lynch is the site of a Roman villa, Lillyhorn. Nothing visible remains of the villa, which was excavated by a local land owner in the 1840s, but there continues to be an interest in establishing the extent of the villa and in finding any other archaeological evidence. In 2012 the group was successful in obtaining a grant from the Heritage Lottery fund to carry out geophysical surveys of the area around the villa, field walking and test pit excavations. Many members of the public took part and exhibitions were organised to display the findings including many prehistoric flints and some Roman pottery.



*Oakridge History Exhibition*

Some time ago we started a very basic website using the free template provided by Google. This

website - [sites.google.com/site/oakridgehistory/home](https://sites.google.com/site/oakridgehistory/home) - gives information on the talks and events and some further information on the book together with old photographs. We also started a blog for the archaeology project: [oakridgearchaeology.wordpress.com](https://oakridgearchaeology.wordpress.com)

The group currently has around 40 members and talks usually attract between 20 and 50 members and non-members depending on the subject. We charge an annual membership of £3 and members pay £1 and visitors £2 for each meeting. The current research project is to investigate the services in the village which we all take for granted such as water, electricity, telephones, buses, refuse collection, post, etc. If anyone has experience in researching this subject we would be delighted to hear from them.

Finally, for a small group such as ours, being a member GLHA is of great help in providing contacts with other organisations and societies.

John Loosley

# Launch of the Heritage Lottery-funded Single Gloucester Project



The Single Gloucester project has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Grant of £27,000 to publish Gloucestershire traditional songs and tunes online.

The project was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> August in Gloucester Folk Museum in the presence of the Mayor of Gloucester, the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire and the Chair of Gloucestershire County Council together with local funders and families of traditional singers and musicians.



Gloucestershire has a rich history of folk music and song. Some of our local songs are known the world over, for instance the popular Christmas songs *The Holly and the Ivy* and *The Gloucestershire Wassail* - the latter was even covered by Blur. The success of these songs is partly the result of them being published in collections by Ralph Vaughan Williams in the early C20th. However, there are hundreds more Gloucestershire songs that lay forgotten and unpublished in manuscript and sound archives across the country as well as in Scotland and the USA.

In partnership with the Gloucestershire Archives and the Gloucestershire Music Makers, the non-profit-making organisation Gloucestershire Traditions have a plan to put this right and publish all of the known songs and tunes from the county on an easily accessible website to be called *Gloucestershire Traditions*. The launch event provided an overview of this exciting project featuring musicians and singers from across the county to showcase some of the material from the Single Gloucester project.



*Julie Courtenay of Gloucestershire Archives and Mark Bick of the Gloucestershire Music Makers sign the partnership agreement with Stephen Gale and Carol Davies of Gloucestershire Traditions*



*Billy Buckingham - last of the Woodchester massailers. Photo: G. Davies*

This was the launch of the first major county-based internet folksong and music publishing project in England, and the start of a story that will run and grow over the next two years. It will involve volunteers, schools and communities from across the county. We will be working closely with the EFDSS's national full English project. The full un-edited digital archive collection will be preserved permanently at Gloucestershire Archives and a dedicated point in the public search room will provide means of access to the collection.

### **About the Gloucestershire Traditions organisation**

Established by a group of volunteers interested in all aspects of folk traditions from academic research, to education and performing, Gloucestershire Traditions is a small organisation dedicated to making our local folk heritage more accessible. Its Chair is Stephen Gale, with project management by Carol Davies and research and musical expertise provided by Gwilym Davies, Charles Menteith, and Veronica Lowe.



*Johnny Hopkins, village fiddler. Photo: Gloucestershire Archives*

### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**



Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 36,000 projects with more than £5.9bn across the UK.

For more information see [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).



## The Forester's Forest

Two years ago a large number of varied community groups came together to compile a bid for the largest type of lottery funding – a Landscape Partnership Award. All that work has now been rewarded with the HLF setting aside £2.9 million to be spent in the old Hundred of St Briavels over the next six and a half years. The Forest of Dean Local History Society will be a key member of this consortium with a seat on the Programme Board.

The bid was successful because it tied together ecological, social and historical aspects of the community's unique heritage.

The 18 month development phase will now include an extensive ecological survey with an archaeological survey of the results from a recent LIDAR survey. Additionally, to start returning some of the open spaces in the Forest to their former condition, controlled grazing will be trialled. All of these events will include the use of volunteers from the local community.

It is hoped that the 5 year delivery phase will result in new heritage trails and village histories, captured photographs and oral histories, recording of dialect, an online Heritage Atlas, Open Days and training in all sorts of skills for younger people in the community.



## Gloucestershire County History Trust

Our contracted historians continue to make good progress in their respective areas. The really exciting news is that Rose Wallis has completed her study of Yate and, after editing, the VCH central office has agreed to publish it (scheduled for April 2015) as a stand-alone fully illustrated paperback in advance of its eventual inclusion in Volume XIV of the county's Red Book series. This will not only bring the work of the Trust to a wide audience, but be evidence that the financial support we have had from many quarters is being transformed into physical products. The Trust is also very pleased to have acquired more funding so that Rose can continue in South Gloucestershire by starting work on the three neighbouring Sodbury parishes.

Further good news has come from the Duchy of Cornwall. As you might know, the Duchy holds many of Cheltenham's early borough records and these have been studied by Beth Hartland. The Duchy has recently informed the Trust that it will finance the conservation of Cheltenham's earliest known court roll, dated 1275. This could be a tremendously important document throwing new light on the young borough. In fact Beth has almost completed her trawl of Cheltenham and Cirencester medieval sources and is beginning to write up histories derived from them. John Chandler has completed the history of Norton in draft, and is making good progress on Twynning, the last parish for Volume XIII, which is scheduled for publication in late-2015. Alex Craven and Antonia Catchpole with our volunteers have also been making significant inroads into the research for early modern Cheltenham and Cirencester respectively, and Jan Broadway is continuing to refine and monitor our note-taking database. We have recently launched a project in conjunction with Gloucestershire Archives to transform the traditional VCH sources checklists into a much broader online resource which can be used as a reference tool by GA staff and users as well as for VCH work.

Our volunteers have not been idle either! The VCH Academy continues to meet on the third Thursday each month in the Frith Centre where John Chandler and his colleagues provide workshops on a variety of research topics and where the progress on our various projects is discussed. These are friendly and stimulating occasions, and potential new volunteers are very welcome – the next will be on 16<sup>th</sup> October, just turn up!

Sally Self from Cheltenham Local History Society deserves special mention for putting on an

afternoon tea and talk to raise funds. It was a great success, so look out for the next one. Sally already has ideas for future speakers! Our next profile-raising event will be David Vaisey, formerly Bodley's Librarian, speaking on our behalf (and sponsored by the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire) at the Cheltenham Literature Festival about the links between Gloucestershire and the Bodleian, on 8 October.

Finally, you should all have received an electronic copy of the inaugural Academy newsletter, which we hope to publish twice a year, containing progress reports and short articles emerging from the ongoing research. Feedback has been extremely positive. As always the Trust appreciates the support of GLHA members, either financially or by the giving of their time and expertise.

*David Aldred and John Chandler*

*For the Trustees*

## Liz Jack's Literary Review

### **The Churches and Chapels of the Parish of Tidenham**

Edited by Carol Clammer & Keith Underwood, Tidenham Historical Group.

ISBN: 978 0 9928722 0 5

Published in 2014, this A5 size book contains 200 glossy pages, 16 of them in full colour. Each church or chapel is given its own individual chapter with its history, grid reference, maps, photographs, plans, drawings and a 'tour' describing the building and contents. Three appendices cover memorial plaques in Tutshill St Luke's, a list of Tidenham clergy since 1339 and a glossary that is an education in itself.

The parish of Tidenham with Lancut and Beachley forms a triangle bounded by R Wye and R Severn, and the parishes of Hewelsfield and Woolaston. The book opens with a map showing the places of worship in the area since 625AD and mentions those no longer in existence. Separate chapters discuss some wonderful stained glass windows and the two lead fonts from the area; one from Lancut which is now in Gloucester Cathedral, and the other still in Tidenham church. For the family historians amongst us, many local families are mentioned throughout the book and there are many transcriptions of memorials including those drowned in river accidents, soldiers who died in India and the daughters of one Reverend Bridges, despite the fact that they died in Jamaica. Did you know there was a tiny island in the River Severn about half a mile south-west of Beachley, with a little chapel on it? St. Tecla's Chapel on Chapel Rock is believed to have been there since before 1290, although no records have been found to prove the existence of a hermit's cell there. Moving forward in time, the congregation of St Luke's Church in Tutshill were unhappy with their Sunday services and sent a petition to the vicar which began:

"To the Vicar of Tidenham, we the undersigned while expressing our great satisfaction with the way you conduct the services in the parish church, nevertheless hope that you may meet our wishes in materially shortening the morning service in any way you may think fit."

The effects of war on the local community are discussed with damage to Tidenham church occurring during the Civil War when there was a Parliamentary garrison there. More drastically and much more recently, Beachley villagers were given only 11 days' notice before they were evicted from their homes

so that the government could build a new shipyard. Those affected included the Curre family from Beachley Lodge, the school, four cottages near the pier and the Old Passage House pub. Eventually, 2 rows of cottages were built in the shadow of the first Severn Bridge. 6000 Royal Engineers moved into the area and, later, some German prisoners of war. Eventually, the Army Apprentices College appeared on the site.

The title of this book tells you exactly what you will find inside its covers but does not give any hint of the variety of information within it. It covers a wide range of aspects on the area, from disasters on the river, one during which 14 people were drowned and the only survivor was a dog, to the sale of 187 pairs of socks during an appeal for a new curate at Tidenham. Despite the fact that it does not have an index this book is very readable and interesting throughout.

The book is priced at £15 plus £3 p&p and is available directly from the Tidenham Historical Group, c/o 2 Westbourne Villas, Sedbury Lane, Tutshill, nr Chepstow, NP16 7DZ. It can be ordered by email on: [info@tidenhamhistory.co.uk](mailto:info@tidenhamhistory.co.uk) or by phone on 01291-623-736.

Liz Jack

## Forest Lives of the Far, and not so Far, Past

### **Forest of Dean Local History Society – *The New Regard* No. 29**

31<sup>st</sup> October 2014

The 19<sup>th</sup> century tragedy of Frances Bennett and her illegitimate children is one of several articles in this year's *The New Regard* - the journal of the Forest of Dean Local History Society - about life in the Forest as it affected ordinary Foresters. When the coroner's inquest found a verdict of willful murder against Frances for the deaths of the babies, she was remanded to gaol, dying there only a short time later of a long illness.

Happier articles give us George Beckmann's detailed and fond memories of boarding at St Briavels Castle during World War II, when his Bristol school was evacuated to the Forest; and Iris Beard's reflections on growing up in Lydbrook from around the same time - when village life was made that much more interesting by the influx of American soldiers - until the 1960s. Lydbrook is also the centre of another story, this one set in the 1920s when Cornelius Simmonds was recuperating from an aneurysm at the home of a better-off family in Wales. The article reproduces many of the frequent letters between himself and his wife Sarah, giving us a rare insight into the daily happenings in the family, and much village gossip, as well as illustrating life before the NHS.

Coleford is also prominent this year, with an article on the history of the Coleford Market Hall Company (1865 – 1943), and one on Highmeadow House, the home of the Gages, and one of the largest houses in Gloucestershire in its time. The Journal moves from grand houses to workhouses, with a fascinating article on the Poor Laws of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and their impact on the Forest poor.

The Journal's full table of contents can be found on the Society's website, [forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](http://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk). *The New Regard* is priced at £7.50 and is available at many Forest outlets. For a full list of outlets or to order directly via the Society's e-shop, go to [forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](http://forestofdeanhistory.org.uk). The journal is also on sale at the Society's meetings, details of which are available on the website.

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## Can You Help?



Can you help identify these two brass rubbings, sent to us by Averil Kear from the Forest of Dean Local History Society?

The rubbings were recently passed to Averil by a local gentleman who believed that the original brasses are in Newland church - which they are not! Each brass rubbing is 25 inches tall; they are stuck down on board, so any identification that might have been on the backs has been lost!

Any 'flashes of inspiration' as to where the original brasses might be would be gratefully received by Averil, who would like to 'repatriate' them to their rightful church if she can find out where they are. Averil may be contacted at [EnquiriesOfficer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk](mailto:EnquiriesOfficer@forestofdeanhistory.org.uk).

Anyone with a local history enquiry that they would like assistance with are welcome to send it to the GLHA Newsletter Editor for inclusion in what we hope will become a regular 'queries' section.