

Lydney Notes

Forest of Dean

The Forest of Dean is a geographical, historical and cultural region in the western part of the county of Gloucestershire, England. It forms a roughly triangular plateau bounded by the River Wye to the west and northwest, Herefordshire to the north, the River Severn to the south, and the City of Gloucester to the east.

The area is characterised by more than 110 square kilometres (42 sq mi) of mixed woodland, one of the surviving ancient woodlands in England. A large area was reserved for royal hunting before 1066, and remained as the second largest crown forest in England, after the New Forest.

Traditionally the main sources of work have been forestry – including charcoal production and timber for ship building – iron working and coal mining. Archaeological studies have dated the earliest use of coal to Roman times for domestic heating and industrial processes such as the preparation of iron ore.

An important harbour for shipping timber, coal and iron from the Forest of Dean. It is now a harbour for pleasure craft.

People from Lydney

Steve James

Stephen Peter James (born 7 September 1967) is an English journalist and former cricketer who played two Test matches for England in 1998, making 71 runs in four innings. James was captain of Glamorgan for three seasons before injury forced his retirement at the age of 36 in early 2004, after 17 seasons with the club. He played a total of 245 first-class matches, making 15,890 runs at a batting average just above 40, with a total of 47 centuries and a highest score of 309 not out against Sussex in 2000 – which is the Glamorgan record highest score.

H W Harvey – WWI Poet

<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/ducks>

Ducks (1919)

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From troubles of the world
I turn to ducks,
Beautiful comical things
Sleeping or curled
Their heads beneath white wings
By water cool,

Or finding curious things
To eat in various mucks
Beneath the pool,
Tails uppermost, or waddling
Sailor-like on the shores
Of ponds, or paddling
- Left! Right! - with fanlike feet
Which are for steady oars
When they (white galleys) float
Each bird a boat
Rippling at will the sweet
Wide waterway...
When night is fallen you creep
Upstairs, but drakes and dillies
Nest with pale water-stars,
Moonbeams and shadow bars,
And water-lilies:
Fearful too much to sleep
Since they've no locks
To click against the teeth
Of weasel and fox.
And warm beneath
Are eggs of cloudy green
Whence hungry rats and lean
Would stealthily suck
New life, but for the mien
The bold ferocious mien
Of the mother-duck.

Harvey wrote "Ducks" whilst a prisoner of war in the Holzminden camp in Germany. His whimsical observations on the ducks were prompted by discovering a fellow inmate had drawn a picture of ducks in a pool of water at the camp. Harvey had been captured in 1916 and spent the rest of the war in various Prisoner of War camps in Germany.

Harvey's highly popular and often anthologised reflections upon the life and times of a duck see him conclude that the duck is both beautiful and comical. After the first two sections describe the duck in various settings the third stanza becomes amusingly philosophical when Harvey cheerfully pontificates upon the place of the duck in the great scheme of things. The duck is one of the "little" things that God decided to create after he had finished with the "big things" and Harvey cheerfully suggests that God himself may have been amused by his own creation and the sounds that "came out of its bill".

About the poet

Frederick William Harvey became well known and admired as a war poet during the Great War and wrote many of his war period poems whilst incarcerated as a prisoner of war in Germany after he was captured in 1916. By then he had already been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and written for one of the first trench newspapers writing poems full of humorous insights, a longing for home and an appreciation of the camaraderie of friends.

Strongly committed to his home county of Gloucestershire he continued to write after the war and worked as a popular broadcaster for the BBC in Bristol and as a solicitor specialising in defending those who could not normally afford representation. He was deeply committed to remembering his fallen comrades and was an eloquent advocate for veterans of both wars. He married and had two children in the 1920s settling in his home county where one commentator observed that Harvey was "a poor man as the world understood riches, but how many he enriched with his simple goodness and fidelity."

Artwork

Points of View: Sculptures; David Yeates

Standing Stones created by local sculptor David Yeates. As you walk around the rocks, you will see compass directions appear as the letters on the rocks become aligned. When you can read a compass direction that is the direction in which you are looking.

The former Lydney Docks, once a thriving commercial hub, now a pleasant marina and harbour.

Commissioned by the Environment Agency as part of their restoration of Lydney Harbour. A series of stone based sculptures on the banks of the estuary playing with the idea of views across the estuary and "compass points" (which are so vital in navigation).

Lydney Harbour

<https://www.visitdeanwye.co.uk/things-to-do/lydney-harbour-p1312571>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc8QtPTRSTg>

More modern light industry

Promotional material from Lydmey issued in 1983:

"Lydmet Limited, Tutnalls, Lydney, GLOS.

The home of the cast iron camshaft.

The Associated Engineering Group of Companies took the decision to establish a foundry at Lydney in 1962. The original company was called British Piston Ring, and later changed its name to Brico Metals. In 1978 it again changed its name to the present Lydmet Limited, signifying its gradual development as an autonomous Company within the Associated Engineering Group.

Casting over 400 tons of iron a week, the Company produces engine components for the automotive industry. Its products include Valve Seats, Valve Guides, Tappets, Rockers and Camshafts. The last named product is now the principal component manufactured at Lydney. Throughout the seventies the Company's reputation in this field has developed to the point where it is now recognised as the leading manufacturer of cast camshafts in the U.K. and Europe. Our customers are household names and include Ford, BL, Vauxhall, Talbot, Volvo, Saab, BMW, Daimler Benz, Porsche and Fiat. Around 420 people work at Lydmet, and there are several examples of families in employment with us, while certain employees have worked for the Company since it came to Lydney in 1962. Our managing Director, Mr Alan Deardon, joined the Company in January 1972, and under his direction the company has established a stable position in the Foundry industry with every hope of further development in the future".

Naas House, Lydney.



William Jones (c.1545/1550 – January 1615) was a London haberdasher, born in Newland, Gloucestershire, England. He is remembered for his bequests, which led to the establishment of schools in Monmouth and Pontypool, almshouses at Newland, and the so-called "Golden Lectureship" in London.

Jones was apprenticed in Monmouth, but moved to London at about the age of 20. According to one source, he left Monmouth after being unable to pay a fine, and in London became first a porter and then a factor before setting up business in Hamburg, trading in so-called "Welsh cottons",^[1] which were in fact made from cheap woollen fabric.^[2] The suggestion that he rose from poverty to great wealth has been questioned.^[3] The most recent history of Monmouth School suggests he may have been related to Monmouthshire gentry and suggests; "it seems unlikely that his considerable commercial success could have been achieved without initial capital behind him."^[3] He became a successful businessman and trader, and a very wealthy member of the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers. According to the antiquary Charles Heath, writing in 1804, Jones returned to Newland at the height of his prosperity, and "instead of appearing in the character and circumstances of his real situation, he assumed the garb and distress of a pauper."^[4] Jones is believed to have died in Hamburg in January 1615.^[5]

Jones also bequeathed to the Haberdashers' Company a house in Size Lane, London, "to some learned and faithful preacher, to be appointed by the Company". As part of the endowment, an annual lecture was to be given, originally at the Church of St Margaret in Lothbury. The duty became known, because of its monetary value to the appointed preacher, as the "Golden lectureship".^[6] The "Golden Lectures" continue to this day, organised by the Haberdashers' Company and now held in the church of St Bartholomew-the-Less in the City of London.^[7]

It is unclear why it gained this epithet. One possibility is that the stipend that once accompanied the appointment was seen to be rather generous for preaching just one sermon. Today the Haberdashers' Company makes a gift of £500 to a charity of the Lecturer's choice. In 2023 Bishop Rose chose the Bishop's Justice Appeal as her charity, which works with refugees in Kent.

History

The Jones family built and owned the site from at least the late-16th century until the early-20th century (William Jones was the founder of the Haberdashers' Company in London) The current house, and most probably the walled garden also was built during the 17th century. The earliest reference to the garden is from the mid-18th century. The house was tenanted as a farm for much of the 19th century. The house was being restored in the late 20th century.

The central turret, with its lead-covered cupola, is a sophisticated touch. From here the owners could walk out on to a viewing platform and look towards the River Severn (to the right) or towards Lydney and the Forest of Dean (to the left).

The Jones family upgraded the interior in the early 18th century, installing paneling in a number of rooms, but in 1771 Mary Jones, daughter of the owners, was murdered on her way home from a dinner at the rectory at Lydney. Soon after this the family moved to another house near Newnham on Severn. Although the family kept Naas House (a Rev Edward Jones lived there in 1839) it was no longer their main residence and this was probably why there were few further alterations and the house keeps its Jacobean character in its quiet backwater.

Virtually nothing remains of either the gardens or grounds with the exception of most of the main walls around the house and walled garden and the belt of planting along the track on its western boundary. There was no ornamental planting left in-situ with the exception of a few mature plants, none of which were considered of significance.

The gardens at Naas House retain sections of walling from a 17th-century walled garden, contemporary with the house. Two derelict garden buildings survive and a belt of tree planting.

To date it has not been possible to discover what the building on the outside of the north wall of the garden was, the rubble from its demolition is still evident, near a large stone from the base of a press, possibly for cider or perry. Two other small buildings in the northwest corner of the wall, one inside and one outside, are still there but in a derelict state. There is also evidence that a wall abutted the house at the west end of the garden, with gateways being at the points shown by the paths, both to the north and south of the house. Map evidence of planting of small evergreen and deciduous trees in front of the east elevation of the house. One of these yews remains to the southeast of the house, probably one of a group of three.

One lime remains in the position of the original Lime Avenue, but the new driveway does not follow this line precisely.

The area to the north and east of the house and garden was quite extensively planted with deciduous trees, with three conifers planted parallel to the Lime Avenue but to the east and nearer to the house. It will be noted that the Lime Avenue stopped short of the house by a distance approximately the length of the walled garden. This was the area that was shown on the 1839 map as being pasture and orchard. It is considered that the entrance to the house would have been from the south, with a possible carriage entrance off Naas Lane to the north of the house. It is considered that the southern courtyard would have been uncultivated being laid to grass.

The size and layout of the walled garden are in keeping with descriptions of gardens of the period that the house was built, the more formal Dutch and French influence not reaching this country until nearer the end of the 17th century. It is likely that archaeology would provide the exact locations of both the trees and the paths within the garden if such accuracy were desired.

On July 18th 1771, William Morgan murdered Miss Mary Jones a daughter of Naas House, Lydney after dining at the vicarage, Lydney.

The Murder happened in a meadow, known as East Marsh, located near Lydney Church.

As Miss Jones walked home from Lydney with her friend, Miss Harriet Gough, Morgan passed the girls, said goodnight to them. He carried on through the meadow for 200 metres, doubled back, snuck up behind them, and attacked. He hit Miss Jones with a heavy oak stick, the first blow knocked her to the floor, the second blow killing her.

Miss Jones died at the scene, her body lying across the path in the meadow after receiving the fatal injuries to the back of her head.

Miss Gough, fled. Morgan chased after her and attacked again, striking her multiple times and leaving Miss Gough badly injured in a ditch.

Morgan was convicted and executed on March 11th, 1772

The location of his execution is unknown.

There have been many sightings of William Morgan's ghost over the years, mainly of a big man, wearing a stovepipe hat, Khaki coloured cape and thigh boots.

Although a big man, silence is usually described surrounding him.

The forest history e-book newly posted on this site reveals, on page 209, that the murderer of Mary Jones of Naas House was a young labourer named Morgan. In the course of the murder, Mary was robbed of her jewels. When the crime was discovered, everyone turned out on a hue and cry except for one man, Morgan. He, by contrast, was found at home in bed, with bloodstains about him and the jewels in the thatch. Unsurprisingly, he was convicted and executed. Perhaps 'tis Morgan's ghost still stalking the neighbourhood, unable to rest for his folly of failing to dispose of the evidence. Or perhaps 'tis Mary Jones, for her folly of flaunting the bling.

Art-lover Paul Burnett had no intention of buying a rundown historic house, even less of becoming an antique dealer, when, in 1997, he spotted an advertisement in Country Life announcing the sale of Grade II*-listed Naas House on the north-west bank of the Severn, near Lydney, Gloucestershire. The late-Jacobean house, built for wealthy merchant William Jones in 1620, was extended and improved in 1670 and about 1720, but little changed thereafter. It stands in the middle of an estate owned by the Biddle family since 1916 and was home to the US army's 144th Field Artillery Group on the run-up to D-Day. After the war, the crumbling 20-room house was patched up from time to time, but was in need of serious repair when, 'on an impulse', Mr Burnett and his partner decided to buy and restore it.

'Water was pouring through the roof as we moved in, and it took a good two years to complete the main structural work, which included repairing the terracotta-tiled roof with tiles salvaged from around the country, and lifting the floors to install underfloor heating,' Mr Burnett recalls. Thereafter, 'as time and money allowed', they worked their way systematically through the entire house, gradually filling it with period furniture, which provided the basis of what is now a thriving antiques business. As a result, imposing Naas House has all the refinements of a modern country house, yet retains its original character and charm.

Trial:

https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Space:The_Murder_of_Mary_Jones_of_Lydney%2C_Gloucestershire