

Fairford Flyer

Extra No 8

June 2020

FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

We hope you are enjoying these online newsletters. If anyone has anything they would like to contribute or any local history questions please email enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk. What about those Fairford memories?

Two wills and an inventory have been added to the Topics - Inventories and Wills section of the website. We shall be adding more. See <https://www.fairfordhistory.org.uk/inventories-and-wills/>

Once again Eric Jones has sent in another very interesting article, this time on William Cobbett and there is another ready for the next issue from Syd Flatman. Thanks for their support and to the other contributors who have contributed.

William Cobbett at Fairford by Eric Jones

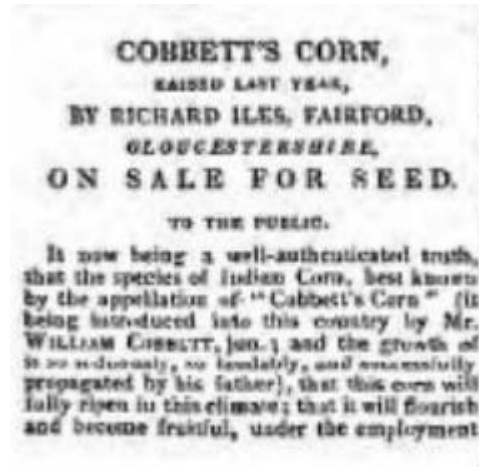
Just off Park Street, in the old environs of Park Farm, is a False Acacia or Locust Tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). I like to fancy it was planted by William Cobbett, or through his influence, or is a successor to one that he did plant.

Cobbett, Tory Radical, political activist and farmer, had connections with Fairford, 'this pretty little town'. In the 1820s it was a stop noted in his well-known book, *Rural Rides*. He rode from the house of one prosperous sympathizer to the next, such as Budd (a Newbury lawyer) at Burghclere, and Blount, a larger-than-life farmer at Hurstbourne Tarrant near Andover. In Fairford he used to stay with Richard Iles, presumably at the original Park Farm. Iles took him on to the Arkells of Kempsford, who were sufficiently impressed to name a son William Cobbett Arkell - the Cobbett Arkell name passed down the generations. And from Kempsford he went to Tuckey at Haydon, Swindon.

Cobbett loudly touted the benefits of three crops: Indian corn or maize, Swedish Turnips, and False Acacia or Locust tree, and made money by selling them. He was right about Swedes, which weather frost better than common turnips, but the maize varieties then available did not like our climate, and Acacia timber was too inclined to split. Nevertheless he sold 1,000 trees to Lord Folkestone at Coleshill, where one survived when I looked a few years ago. A further survivor is still to be seen at Eynsham, outside Oxford, by the house of another of his hosts, Swann, the printer. Perhaps Cobbett gave it to him; perhaps he gave one to Iles too.

Iles was a great fan of Cobbett. From 1826, together with J. and S. Vines of Fairford, Richard Iles (sometimes given as Robert, doubtless by mistake) was engaged in raising funds to elect Cobbett to Parliament. What the local landowner, J. Raymond Barker, thought of such insubordination on his doorstep may be guessed - he was Captain of our own military, the Fairford and Cirencester Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry, raised in response to the Last Labourers Revolt of 1830. Iles was not deterred. In 1831 he wrote a trenchant letter in the *Political Register* describing his maize crop. And in 1832,

with the labouring population as part of the intended market, he placed an advertisement for 'Cobbett's Corn, raised last year by Richard Iles, Fairford, Gloucestershire, On Sale for Seed.'



Text from Rural Rides by William Cobbett 1830

Online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34238/34238-h/34238-h.htm>

"All the villages down to Fairford are pretty much in the same dismal condition as that of Withington. Fairford, which is quite on the border of Gloucestershire, is a very pretty little market-town, and has one of the prettiest churches in the kingdom. It was, they say, built in the reign of Henry VII.; and one is naturally surprised to see, that its windows of beautiful stained glass had the luck to escape, not only the fangs of the ferocious "good Queen Bess;" not only the unsparing plundering minions of James I.; but even the devastating ruffians of Cromwell.

We got in here about four o'clock, and at the house of Mr. Iles, where we slept, passed, amongst several friends, a very pleasant evening. This morning, Mr. Iles was so good as to ride with us as far as the house of another friend at Kempford, which is the last Gloucestershire parish in our route. At this friend's, Mr. Arkall, we saw a fine dairy of about 60 or 80 cows, and a cheese loft with, perhaps, more than two thousand cheeses in it; at least there were many hundreds. This village contains what are said to be the remnants and ruins of a mansion of John of Gaunt. The church is very ancient and very capacious. What tales these churches do tell upon us!

In coming to Kempford we got wet, and nearly to the skin. But our friends gave us coats to put on, while ours were dried, and while we ate our breakfast. In our way to this house, where we now are, Mr. Tucky's, at Heydon, we called at Mr. James Crowdy's, at Highworth, where I was from the 4th to the 9th of September inclusive; but it looked rainy, and, therefore, we did not alight. We got wet again before we reached this place; but, our journey being short, we soon got our clothes dry again."



FROM THE NEWSPAPERS

RISEN FROM THE DEAD

Two stories in newspapers over 70 years apart tell of apparently fatal incidents that have happy endings.

From the Hereford Journal of 1 July 1784:

“On Sunday last, in time of evening service, a travelling woman, decently dressed, under the unhappy situation of being left by her husband with two children, and again pregnant, hanged herself on a tree in Mrs. Lambe’s park, near Fairford. A man providentially passing by some time after, saw her and cut her down, to all appearances dead. Mr. Carter, Surgeon, at Fairford, upon hearing of the event, immediately gave his attendance. It was three quarters of an hour before there appeared any probability of restoring her. At length, through the indefatigable attention and skill of Mr. Carter, whose great humanity on this occasion cannot be sufficiently commended, the poor woman was, by Monday morning, perfectly recovered.”

From: the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard of 20 October 1855:

“A DEAD MAN RESUSCITATED - Hugh Downey, a hawkler, was at Coln St. Aldwins on the evening of the 17th instant, and being anxious to reach Fairford that night, although rather over laden with John Barleycorn, he engaged a person of Quennington to accompany him to his destination, They both set out for their journey, and travelled safely, with the exception of a few ups and downs, to within half a mile of the town of Fairford, when Downey found his load more troublesome, and fell. His companion at once supposed he was dead, and ran and obtained the assistance of Mr. Giles Harvey, who on examining him, also pronounced him dead. They then proceeded to the police station, and gave information to P.S. Cook, who at once visited the spot and found that the supposed dead body was gone, but on searching the ditch beside the road, he found Downey very composedly sleeping with his handkerchief round his head. The sight of the blue cloth quickly rendered him capable of proceeding on his journey, and when Mr. James Cornwall, surgeon, who was sent for, had arrived, he was perfectly recovered.”

A Hugh Downey, born in Ireland in 1802, is recorded in the 1851 census in lodgings in Faringdon. His occupation is given as ‘NK’, not known; he was most likely the subject of the article. Giles Harvey was a stone mason and builder who lived in London Street in the 1850s. Police Sergeant George Cook was transferred on promotion from Lechlade to Fairford in 1854 and remained at Fairford until his untimely death in July 1866 at 40 years of age. Doctor James Cornwall was in practice with his father Charles, then living in Keble House. Father and son were Fairford’s doctors for much of the 19th Century.

The John Carter mentioned in the first article was a very early proponent of the use of inoculation to induce immunity against various infectious diseases as the advertisement below from the Oxford Journal of 1767 clearly shows. In the 1760s inoculation was practised only by a few surgeons in Britain. It was not until 1796 that Edward Jenner started his experimental inoculations to prove that a vaccine could be produced to provide a level of immunity against the dreaded smallpox. John Carter was buried on 24 April 1811 in St Mary’s churchyard. He deserves recognition as a medical pioneer who probably saved hundreds of lives.

From the: Oxford Journal 26 September 1767

INOCULATION

“The great Utility of Inoculation can be no longer doubted; and the Superiority of the Suttonian, or new Method, to every other is sufficiently apparent from the very extraordinary Success which has every where attended it, in every Age of Life.

J. CARTER, Surgeon, has taken a House called Honey-Comb Leys, about a Mile from Fairford in Gloucestershire, and a little Distance from the Turnpike Road, leading from thence to Cirencester; where he proposes to inoculate. It is a healthy Situation; and, as the Patients, in this new Method, will not be confined either to their Beds or Rooms, there are pleasant Fields for them to take the Air in.

Terms of inoculation are Four and Five Guineas, and all Necessaries found, Tea and Wine excepted; and, as Mr. Carter proposes to reside at the above House, the Publick may depend upon constant Attendance, and genteel Treatment.

Those who chuse to be inoculated at their Houses shall be diligently attended, upon reasonable Terms. Mr. Carter may be spoke with every Monday at the King’s Head Inn, in Cirencester; Saturdays, at the George Inn, in Burford; and other Days at the above House; And, having served in His Majesty’s Hospitals abroad, during the greatest Part of the last War, he may be consulted in any Surgical Case, etc. at any of the above Places.

N.B. Servants will be inoculated upon more reasonable Terms.”

The ‘Suttonian Method’ was a safer, more painless method of injection developed by Robert Sutton and his son Daniel in the 1760s. Between 1763 and 1766 Daniel Sutton inoculated 22,000 patients, only three of whom subsequently died, which for this period was a remarkable result.

The war that John Carter mentioned in his advertisement is presumably the Seven Years’ War which was fought between 1756 and 1763. He could have served in North America, Europe, or even India. Hopefully more information will come to light in the future on this man’s interesting career. John Carter was related to Mary and Martha Carter who lived in East End House and he may have lived there himself towards the end of his life as Mary was the executrix of John’s Will in 1811. John Carter’s fee of four or five guineas for inoculations would be roughly equivalent to £370 and £460 in 2020 money, so only affordable by the wealthy.



John Carter is buried under a low, plain chest tomb next to the more decorative tomb of the Luckman family near the east end of St Mary's church. His will is lengthy and of some interest as it includes many legacies to family and friends as well as charitable bequests to various institutions. This document will be featured on the FHS website in due course.