

Fairford Flyer

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FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

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Fairford War Memorial – 100 years old

On October 21 1920 Fairford's War Memorial was dedicated by Doctor Edward Gibson, the Lord Bishop of Gloucester, in a ceremony that was arranged to coincide with the consecration of an extension to the existing churchyard. The ceremony was brought to a conclusion by the sounding of the Last Post and Reveille by two buglers of the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars. Among the many floral tributes laid at the base of the cross was a wreath made by some of the boys of Farmor's School using flowers grown in the school's garden. This was a fitting tribute as many of the men commemorated on the war memorial attended the school in their youth.



Fairford's war memorial, like the majority throughout the country, was paid for mostly by voluntary public subscription. In Fairford's case, a cost of £300 was estimated and a War Memorial Committee was set up to raise the funds and arrange for the design and building of the monument. The Committee asked Ernest William Gimson of Sapperton, an eminent local architect, to design the memorial. Gimson designed a simple stone cross mounted on an octagonal base of two tiers, all of Cotswold limestone. The small cross on the top of the stone shaft is enclosed in a gabled lantern adorned with a carving of branches and leaves. According to the correspondent of the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard who reported the memorial's unveiling, the design is "...intended to express the truth that life springs from sacrifice. It represents a tree severely pruned, but sending forth leaves at the ends of its branches."

The names of Fairford's First World War dead are inscribed on four of the eight panels on the upper tier. Thirty-three names were originally inscribed but that of E G Morse was added, out of alphabetical order, at a later date. In December 1945 it was proposed that a war memorial be built to commemorate those who had lost their lives during the Second World War. Again a committee was set up but it seems that enthusiasm and funds for a new memorial were lacking and it was not until 1948 that the names of 12 men who had died during the recent conflict were added on the lower tier of the existing memorial.

The war memorial was constructed by Messrs Farmer Brothers of Fairford under the supervision of Norman Jewson, a pupil of Gimson and another renowned architect who, like Gimson, was a follower of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement. Jewson supervised the final stages of the building of the memorial as Gimson was ill. In fact the war memorial is believed to have been Gimson's last design as he died on 12 August 1919. It was originally intended that the memorial should stand in the market place but at a late stage in the project it was decided to relocate it to the churchyard of St Mary's. A brief announcement in the Cheltenham Chronicle of 27 September 1919 stated that it would be erected between the two trees in the churchyard facing the High Street. The memorial has outlasted both trees.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The FHS meeting this month would have seen a presentation by a representative of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). So to keep in mind the sacrifice of those who served and died in the two world wars this is a short piece on the work of the CWGC.

Originally titled the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was established by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917 with the aim of commemorating the dead of the First World War. The three core principles were: equality in the design of grave markers regardless of rank, race or religion; no repatriation from overseas to the UK; and memorials for those who were missing. These principles remain largely unchanged with the exception that repatriation of the deceased back to the UK started after the 1982 Falklands War and has continued through Afghanistan and the Gulf Wars.

In overseas military cemeteries and plots in civil cemeteries and graveyards all graves are marked by a small CWGC stone with an inscription. Where remains could not be identified the stones carry a phrase such as "Known unto God" or "A Soldier of the Great War". The families of those men and women who died in service in the UK were given the option of a CWGC headstone or a private grave marker of some kind. The Commission commemorates, by either headstone or on a memorial, 1.7 million British and Commonwealth dead from the two world wars. In addition those who died between the wars and after 1947 can also be commemorated by the CWGC; they usually have a slightly different shape to the top of the headstone. The CWGC uses the dates 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for First World War commemoration and 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947 for Second World War commemoration reflecting official Government dates for the start and end of the wars. The extended dates would include those who died of wounds after the end of the war.

In contrast to the vast cemeteries in France and Belgium maintained by the Commission, many town and village graveyards in the UK have small numbers of the distinctive white CWGC headstones. St Mary's churchyard in Fairford contains the graves of nine men who died in service. Five of these men are from the First World War, three from the Second World War and one is post-1945. At Fairford eight men have CWGC headstones (one of whom is also commemorated by an adjacent private stone), and one man just has a private grave marked by a cross.

The war graves in St Mary's churchyard are:

First World War

Comley, Seaman Redvers Thomas, Royal Navy, died 13 October 1918 (private memorial)

Fox, Air Mechanic Arthur Henry, Royal Air Force, died 23 August 1918 (CWGC and private memorial)

Giles, Private Edward George, Gloucestershire Regiment, died 20 May 1917

Painter, Private George, Royal Defence Corps, died 19 February 1920

Tagg, Private Walter Joseph, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, died 4 October 1914

Second World War

Giles, Private William Evelyn, Gloucestershire Regiment, died 12 February 1940

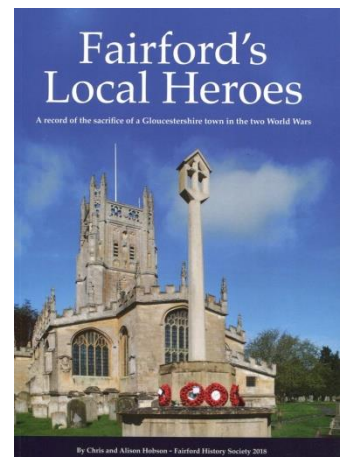
Nash, Lance Corporal William Charles, Royal Army Service Corps, died 26 February 1944

Wheeler, Private Arthur John, Home Guard, died 20 October 1943. Private Wheeler is not listed on the War Memorial but is recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website (www.cwgc.org).

Post-War

Pugh, Sergeant Alan, Royal Air Force, died 18 May 1980

The stories of the men of Fairford who died in the two world wars are told in the FHS publication 'Fairford's Local Heroes'. This 70-page book includes an account of all the men who are listed on the town's war memorial; 34 who died in the First World War and 12 who died in the Second World War. Also included are details of 12 men who had Fairford connections and who died in the two world wars but who are not



recorded on the war memorial. In addition, brief details are included of 87 Fairford men who are known to have served in the First World War and who survived to return home. The book also contains an account of the design of the war memorial by the celebrated Cotswold architect Ernest William Gimson and a section on the Home Front in Fairford during the two world wars. 'Fairford's Local Heroes' is available from St Mary's Church or from the Secretary, FHS. Price £8

This photograph shows the graves of (from left to right) Arthur Fox, Redvers Comley (white cross), Walter Tagg and Edward Giles



We must remember all those who gave their lives for us

IN MEMORY OF FAIRFORD MEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

J BENFIELD	A H FOX	C HARRIS	C SEACOLE
J BRIND	P GROVES	R V K-CORNISH	C W SHURMER
W BENNETT	G GARDNER	S R MAJOR	W J TAGG
F W CHANDLER	W GARDNER	V C MAY	G J VARNEY
J CLARGO	E G GILES	H W RUSSELL	F W WADE
J CURTIS	L GOODMAN	F SCRIVENS	R WALL
R T COMLEY	E HART	W SYPHAS	C WINSTONE
E F DEAN	R G HOPE	R J STEVENS	R WINSTONE
			E T WITCHELL
			E G MORSE

ALSO 1939-45

J BENFIELD J S G CRAWFORD
 W E GILES A E HAYWARD
 D J HODDINOTT C INDGE
 E H JEFFERIES W J LOVEDAY
 H W MUTLOW W C NASH
 R O V THOMPSON



From the Newspapers

From the Wilts and Glos Standard 24 February 1940

FAIRFORD SOLDIER'S DEATH

The funeral took place on Thursday of last week at Fairford Church of Private William Giles of the National Defence Corps.

The deceased who was 53 years of age, joined the Worcesters in the early days of the Great War and served in France and Salonica. Returning to civil life, he was employed as head gardener to Dr A C King-Turner at the Fairford Retreat. When volunteers were asked for shortly after the outbreak of the present crisis, the deceased was one of the first to answer the call and was called up for service again in August of last year. He passed away after only a brief illness.

Mr Giles was of a conscientious and unassuming disposition. A popular comrade of the British Legion, he was a standard bearer and a member of the General Committee, also of the Flower Show Committee.

Members of the British Legion lined the pathway to the Church. An impressive service was conducted by the Rev Dr S W L Richards, C F and the Rev F A W Gibbs, vicar of Fairford. Miss Hedges was at the organ and the hymns 'Lead Kindly Light' and 'Rock of Ages' were sung. Officers and men were present. The chief mourners were the widow...

From the Wilts and Glos Standard 30 August 1943

HOME GUARD'S DEATH

Unusual happening at Quenington

A verdict of accidental death was recorded by the District Coroner, Mr R Russell Smith at an inquest held at Fairford Police Court on Saturday morning as to the circumstances attending the death of a member of the Home Guard, Mr Arthur John Wheeler, aged 49, a cowman in the employ of Mr Richard Tinney, and residing at Netherpton.

On the previous Wednesday evening he attended a meeting of the Home Guard at the Quenington Reading Room and was dismissed about 8.50pm. After calling at the residence of the Commanding Officer, he left just before 9 o'clock to proceed to his home down the snake drive heading to the Netherpton Road. A few minutes after 9 pm Mr J H Smith of 11 Council Houses, Quenington who had been visiting his mother at Quenington, and was returning home on his cycle, on reaching the gate leading from the snake drive on the Netherpton road, heard groans. It was a very dark night and he thought first a cow was there, but turning his cycle lamp in the direction of the sounds he found Mr Wheeler on his back with his head through the rails of the gate. Both his hands were in his trouser pockets and he was apparently unconscious. Mr Smith obtained the assistance of Mr George Burge of Grandage Cottage, and the injured man was conveyed in an ambulance to Fairford Cottage Hospital where he was seen by Dr Bloxsome and found to be suffering from a fractured skull and cut on the head. He died the following morning at 6.30 am without regaining consciousness.

From the evidence of PS Fluck, it was revealed that a rod is attached to the gate to prevent traffic passing through, but leaving sufficient space for pedestrians to do so and in the darkness Mr Wheeler had apparently gone to the wrong side and tripped over the bar. This was the first accident that had occurred there since the bar had been fixed.

Formal evidence was given by the widow Mrs Mabel Hannah Wheeler, Mrs Edith Cox and Mr John Henry Smith Quenington and Dr H E Bloxsome. The Coroner expressed sympathy with the widow and relatives in their sad loss.

From the Wilts and Glos Standard 2 September 1944

FAIRFORD MAN KILLED

Mr and Mrs Edward Benfield have been officially informed that their youngest son, Sapper Joseph Benfield, Royal Engineers was killed in action in August. Familiarly known as 'Joe' this young soldier - he was 21 June last - attended Farmor's School and on leaving served as an apprenticed carpenter with Messrs Yells Bros of Fairford, for 4½ years until joining the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry at the age of 18½ years. Prior to his enlistment he served for a period in the local Home Guard. After service at Gibraltar he was transferred at the Royal Engineers and following home leave and a period of illness went to France. He was of quiet and unassuming disposition and very popular amongst his school friends and acquaintances, who will share with his relatives sincere regret at his passing and extend their heart-felt sympathy with the bereaved parents and family in the sad loss they have sustained.

From the Wilts and Glos Standard 25 November 1944

FAIRFORD MAN KILLED IN ACTION

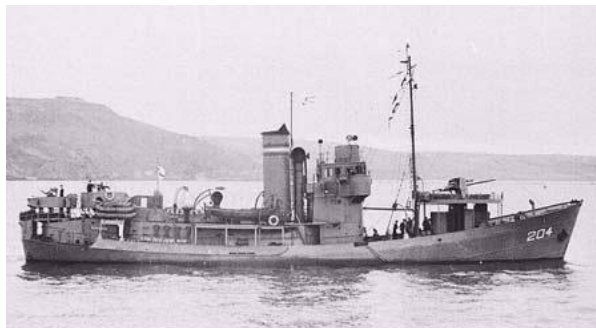
Mr and Mrs F E Hayward of Mill Lane, Fairford have received the news that their son, Pte Albert Edward Hayward, aged 19 had been killed in action in October while serving with the Central Mediterranean Force. After leaving Farmor's School, 'Bertie' as he was familiarly known to his many friends, was employed by Mr T Rhymer, Waiten Farm. This employment would possibly have exempted him from service in the Forces, but he was anxious to serve his country in another sphere and at 18 became a private in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. After training he was stationed for a time at Belfast and after embarkation leave last March went to Italy with his battalion. His parents have received a sympathetic letter from his platoon commander, who stated that Pte Hayward was on guard outside a house when a shell landed right beside him. He was killed instantly and suffered no pain. The officer refers to him as a brave man who did a tough job well. For a time Pte Hayward served with the Fairford Home Guard. He was of pleasant disposition and wide sympathy is extended to his bereaved parents and relatives.

From the Wilts and Glos Standard, March/April 1945

FAIRFORD SIGNALLER PRESUMED KILLED

Mrs Frances Edna May Jefferies (née Morse) of Park Street, Fairford, has been notified that her husband, Signaller Eric Hubert Jefferies of the Royal Navy is missing presumed killed in February. Educated at Farmor's School where his wife, a Fairfordian whom he married in February of last year, also attended. Eric was a very useful member of the School football team, a team which could give a good account of itself in those days - and was very popular with his school fellows. He was in the employ of Messrs Woodward Brothers, butchers and served with the local unit of the Home Guard before joining the Navy in January 1943.

His parents who formerly resided in The Crofts are now living in Swindon. He was 22 years of age.



Eric was aboard the 560-ton armed class trawler HMS Ellesmere, pennant number FY204. It was torpedoed and sunk by the U-boat U-1203 north west of Brest, France on 24 February 1945.

A RELIEF FOR THESE RELATIVES

Missing men reported prisoners

Mrs Handy of Coronation Street, Fairford whose husband Pte W H Handy of the Gloucestershire Regiment was reported missing on June 18 has received information that he is a prisoner of war. Last Saturday she received a postcard written by him on June 15 from a Stalag Camp, Germany. Pte Handy was married last Christmas, is the son of Mr and Mrs Handy of Oaksey.

Sergeant G Trinder, Royal Engineers missing since May, has now been officially notified as a prisoner of war at a Stalag, Germany. Sergeant Trinder is the son of Mr and Mrs Trinder, Mill Cottage, Whelford. He served 12 years in the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards, and was on active service in Turkey in 1922-23. Mr and Mrs Trinder are grateful to all friends and neighbours for their kind sympathy and enquiries.

THE LOXLEY BROTHERS

The Reverend Arthur Smart Loxley, a minor canon of Gloucester Cathedral, became the vicar of Fairford, succeeding Lord Dynevor, in 1878 until his death in 1888. Three of the four sons of Reverend Loxley died during the First World War. Arthur Noel Loxley was the eldest son and the only child of the Loxleys who was not born in Fairford although he lived at the vicarage (now Hyperion House) in the town from the age of four. Arthur Noel was born in Lamport, Northants in 1874 and joined the Royal Navy at the age of 14 and was commissioned to serve initially as a gunnery officer. He eventually rose to the rank of Captain in command of the battlecruiser HMS *Inflexible*. He was later appointed Captain of the 15,800 ton battleship HMS *Formidable* which was torpedoed by a U-boat in the early hours of New Year's Day 1915. He was last seen on the bridge overseeing the evacuation of the ship and was one of the 35 officers and 512 men who died that night; 233 men were rescued by other ships. Arthur's body was not found so he is commemorated on the CWGC's Chatham Naval Memorial.



Capt. Arthur Noel Loxley, R.N.,
Who went down heroically in H.M.S. *Formidable*. Eldest son of the late Rev. A. S. Loxley, vicar of Fairford, and of Mrs. Loxley, the Cloisters, Gloucester.

Arthur's brother Vere Duncombe Loxley was born in October 1881 and was educated at the Royal Military College Sandhurst after which he was commissioned in the Royal Marine Light Infantry in 1900. He commanded a Royal Marine battalion in the Dardanelles during the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign and then served in France where he commanded the 1st Royal Marine Battalion of the Royal Naval Division during the Battle of the Somme. He was wounded on 15 July but returned to the front line two months later. He was killed leading his battalion in the Battle of the Ancre on 13 November 1916; 20 of the battalion's 22 officers were either killed, missing or wounded during the battle. Vere Duncombe Loxley is buried in the CWGC's Knightsbridge Cemetery near Mesnil-Martinsart.

The youngest brother, Reginald Victor Byron Loxley known as Roy, was born in Fairford's vicarage on 14 March 1887 and was commissioned in the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1906. In 1915 he transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service and served in an armoured car section. He transferred to the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918 and served as a Staff Officer in France. He died of pneumonia as a result of influenza in a hospital in Paris on 18 October 1918 during the dreadful influenza pandemic of 1918/1919. Reginald is the only British casualty buried in the City of Paris Cemetery at Batignolles on the northern sector of the Boulevard Périphérique, the main Paris ring road.

The fourth brother, Gerald Herbert Loxley, was also born in Fairford's vicarage and also served in the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Air Force but, thankfully, he survived the war and died in 1950.

The three younger brothers, along with their sister Gladys Marjorie, were all baptised in St Mary's Church in Fairford. The Loxley brothers are not listed on the Fairford war memorial as they had all left the town by 1888. They are commemorated on the war memorial at Northchurch, Hertfordshire, the family home of the Loxleys.