

# Fairford Flyer

## Extra No 22

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FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

We hope you are enjoying these online newsletters. If anyone has anything they would like to contribute or have any local history questions please email [enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk)

FHS is a member of the British Association of Local History (they provide our insurance). This year, they are trialling a new initiative to offer benefit members through a discount scheme for BALH events. Initially this benefit will be in the form of a discount on selected online webinars, workshops and talks, but it will be reviewed over the course of the year. The unique code for Fairford History Society: **F-27878I**. See [www.balh.org.uk](http://www.balh.org.uk) for further details.

### Avoiding Fairford: conjectural drove-ways by Eric Jones

The standard view is that Fairford played an important role in the droving of livestock from Wales en route to London. The beasts supposedly came down the Welsh Way and through Fairford to Lechlade. After that they are assumed to have crossed the wet clays of the Vale of White Horse by the shortest route. The drovers would then have pushed them along the Ridgeway to East Ilsley fair, where buyers from counties close to London bought them to fatten for the metropolitan market.

Is this scenario likely? Traffic nowadays finds it hard to negotiate the A417 through Fairford. The route has been awkward ever since it was forced into a sharp bend immediately east of the town bridge and through the narrows outside the former White Hart Inn. Pevsner's *Buildings of England* says that the west side of the market place, 'probably represents late medieval infilling', but the blockage seems a little north of that. The old Gloucester road presumably went straight on at the bridge along the line of one of the alleyways in the High Street and via the Croft to re-join the present A417 near the 'Railway'. This deviation seems to be classic 'road capture', whereby private interests usurped the original route and put the public to inconvenience and danger on the town side of the bridge.

Local farmers brought their own animals to the market in Fairford, as would have been expected in a country place. A large through passage was different. Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep made a lot of noise and mess in addition to churning up the roadbed. The road surface was muddy at the best of times – just look at the boot scrapers outside doors on London Street. In some towns 'sheep sheets' were hung in shop windows to prevent the sheep panicking at their reflections and maybe breaking the glass. Drovers were otherwise said to skirt around settlements via back lanes to keep out of central streets. That was not easy at Fairford given the choke points of its two bridges, the one at the mill reachable only by a twisty lane and the town bridge leading into the constricted widths of Bridge and London Streets.

Perhaps the animals or the bulk of them were not brought right through the town at all. That said, a single solution to questions about droving routes is not to be expected. There were numerous lanes and droves across country, many in this part of Gloucestershire running down to the Thames. Snippets of information, which are all we have, show that livestock on London-ward journeys from as far as Wales were pastured in Thames meadows from Walcot in Swindon to Kelmscott and beyond. But how many of the routes were used – and when – by animals from afar, as opposed to movements from farm to farm or village to village, is unknown. In the nineteenth century at least, the two biggest fairs in south-central England, Weyhill near Andover and East Ilsley on the Ridgeway, did more trade in local sheep than in ones from a distance.

Nevertheless, there clearly was a long-distance trade heading down Cotswolds towards Fairford. But did it pass right through the town? More than one alternative is possible. A route might have veered off the Welsh Way and run down the side of the Common where there is now only a footpath on the west side of the new housing estate. It might then have jinked across the A417, where I was once told two small fields were used to rest cattle coming off the Welsh Way en route to Kempford; I do not know exactly where they were but one was called Timbuctoo! The most likely pair of little fields was next to the A417, at the 'jink' where the electricity sub-station now is.

This route would then have run down Rhymes Barn Road to cross what is now the airfield. A long stretch of that road has a wide grass verge and is a causeway, as Syd Flatman pointed out. It is fifteen feet above field level on the west side and is prominent to the eye without being sufficient of a feature to show up on maps. Causeways are not uncommon in wet country like this, although the labour of building them up with pick and shovel hardly bears thinking about. They may have been made in winter when there was little work on the farms.

If a different route via Horcott was used it might explain why the Marlborough was known as the drovers' pub. That track would have skirted Horcott Hill via Totterdown lane. Both the Rhymes Barn and Totterdown routes avoid a climb up Horcott Hill, besides missing the centre of Fairford. The distance to what is the modern airfield is about the same but whereas the Rhymes Barn route headed towards Kempford, the Horcott one crossed to Washpool Lane and the rich pastures north-east of Kempford. It avoided the main street of that village. Drovers from anywhere near Kempford would then have had to make for Hannington Bridge and via Pentyland lane to Highworth. The cattle market there was not unimportant although it is not clear how droves of through traffic could have been got round that town. At least the distance from Highworth to the Ridgeway, passing by Shrivenham, is not especially great.

What are the counter arguments to the case that 'downtown' Fairford was dodged? One is that there is some slight evidence of livestock traffic through the ford next to where the town bridge stands, because Irish copper coins have been found. They may have been tossed in by drovers as luck pennies. Another is that no one route may have been selected at all times - routes were not mutually exclusive. The case here is merely that there were good reasons for drovers to avoid the Fairford and Lechlade route, and that viable options were available.

**From : An Early Reference to the Welsh Cattle Trade By H. P. R. Finberg in the Agricultural History Review 2: 1954 pp 12-14**

What route, one wonders, did the drovers follow when they travelled further into England, as we are told they used to do before 1253? Did they leave Gloucester by the Ermin Way, the old Roman road that led to Cirencester? If so, it would bring them, after some thirteen miles, to a track which branches off from the Ermin Way near Bagendon, and leads through Barnsley and Fairford to the Thames at Lechlade. On the Ordnance map this track is called the Welsh Way. It is certainly a drove road; one would like to know at what period it acquired its present name.



**This is an extract from the website <http://www.localdroveroads.co.uk> (Hereford and Gloucestershire while the author was following a drove road route.**

"Fairford is such an unexpectedly beautiful place - well, 'fair' means pleasant or beautiful, so it's aptly named...[The visitor liked the Oxpens and he finished with the sentence] 'And that's not the end: a perfect millpond, a unique church with all its medieval stained glass intact and a thriving market square outside The Bull, a splendid pub. "Fair ford" indeed.'

## Ready Token

Syd has been exploring again, taking exercise on his bike to Ready Token woods. You may wonder why it is called Ready Token. It once possessed an inn, recorded in 1738 as under the sign *Ready Token Ash*. One explanation for the name is that the inn extended no credit and would only accept cash payment, i.e. "ready cash" or "tokens" or another theory is that the name is a fusion of the Celtic word *rhydd* (free) and the Saxon word *tacen* meaning the way to the ford - the ford being that across the River Coln at Fairford.

In the woods Syd found these gravestones. Presumably the small ones are Mr Joicey's dogs with some nice inscriptions, he obviously thought a lot of his 'friends'.



On the other side of the large stone is the verse

'When I am dead, my dearest  
Sing no sad songs for me.  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree.  
Be the green grass, above me  
With shower and dew drops wet  
And if thou wilt, remember  
And if thou wilt, forget.

After research it was found that this stone belongs to Mr James Joicey. In the 1901 Census he is listed as living (on his own means) in the Mansion at Poulton Priory with 8 servants. He had the mansion built near to the old Priory in 1897. He was born in Gateshead, Durham in 1861, son of a coal mine owner, and he married Mariska Christabel Oppler (a Hungarian) in Austria. She died in Richmond, Surrey on 2 January 1963. James was still living at Poulton Priory when he died in London on 6 July 1926 leaving probate effects of £188,123 1 shilling and 8 pence. He left a bequest of £250 to Fairford Cottage Hospital. The RNLI was left £70,000 from the Joicey estate and the Peterhead, Aberdeen lifeboat launched in 1969 was named 'The James and Mariska Joicey'.

The following extract from the Penrith Observer August 24 1926 explains the memorial stone in Ready Token woods.

### WEALTHY MAN'S REQUEST FOR A SIMPLE BURIAL

"Major James Joicey, Poulton Priory, Gloucestershire son of the late Mr James Joicey, left unsettled property of the gross value of £188,123. The testator left an annuity of £65 to his stud groom, and his wife or the survivor of them; an annuity of £65 to his former butler, and his wife; an annuity of £50 to his groom; and an annuity of £26 to E J Tolley, formerly house keeper to the Rev Richard Arnold; £200 to his farm manager; £100 similarly to his chauffeur; £50 to his cook Isabel Cook and £25 to his wife's maid Dorothy Banks. **He directed that his remains should be cremated and his ashes scattered in Ready Token Cover a part of the Poulton Priory Estate, that no hearse, coaches or black horses, or any sign of mourning whatsoever should be used or employed in connection with the removal of his remains or in consideration, regard or respect for him or his memory and that Ready Token Cover should not be sold.**"

## Fairford History - Month by Month

### From the Newspapers & other Records

#### 100 Years ago this month

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1921 the Fairford Hockey Club played away at Cheltenham. The following is an extract from a report of the game published in the Gloucestershire Echo:

“Early in the second half the [Cheltenham] Town forwards attacked, and Treadwell being unmarked, he gave the Town the advantage. Hartwell was the outstanding player on the visiting side. He played a splendid game and seemed to be in all places at once. H. Gantlett also showed good form. Hartley scored, putting Fairford level, and later he put in a very fine shot through from a difficult angle, but was ruled sticks. The game was well contested to the end, just before which Hartley again scored after some nice passing, thus giving Fairford the victory 2-3.”

The Fairford team of 1921 consisted of: E. R. Cole; F. R. Cole; W. V. Cole; C. Gantlett; E. Gantlett; H. Gantlett; E. Hartley; F. Innocent; F. Mills; J. Parker; and F. Prioleu. It was remarked in the newspaper reports that half of the team was provided by just two families; the Coles being the sons of Milton End farmer and coal merchant Richard Cole.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month the Fairford Ladies Team also played away at Cheltenham, the score is not known.

#### 200 Years ago this month

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1821 Mr. Daniel Evans, auctioneer, sold “household furniture, linen, china and other effects” at the Marlborough Arms inn in Witney. The items were new and intended to furnish a house built for a gentleman who, for some reason, decided not to take up residence. Daniel Evans was the son of the Reverend Daniel Evans, the vicar of Fairford from 1769 to 1777. Daniel junior was born in 1770 and was a very successful auctioneer at Fairford from at least 1804 until his death on 30 May 1843. He lived in East End and is buried in St Mary’s churchyard.

#### 300 Years ago this month

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1721 the Fairford parish register records the burial of John Hill. He was a yeoman farmer and had been a church warden at Fairford in 1684 and 1696. He and his wife Jane had four sons and five daughters, not an unusual number for the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. John made his will on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1720 when he was still “in health of body”. He left numerous bequests including to his son Thomas “that Piece, Paddock or Close of Land commonly called Waiting Hill containing by estimation about half an Acre”. John also owned another property in Milton End which was occupied by his tenant William Tackley.

John appointed his wife Jane to be the executrix of his will but she died early in November 1723 still not having completed probate. Their daughter Elizabeth, wife of Paul Silvester, a carpenter of Fairford, stepped in and was granted probate on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November.

#### 400 Years ago this month

The Fairford parish register for January 1621 notes that on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of that month the baptism of William Hyckes took place at St Mary’s church. He was the son of Morris and Alice Hyckes and the service was performed by the Reverend Christopher Nicholson, vicar of Fairford from 1617 to 1656. William could be the William Hicks who was buried at Fairford on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1677. However, his parents do not appear in the Fairford records after 1621 so the family could have moved away after William’s birth.

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