

Fairford Flyer

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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. Extras will be now be issued monthly. FHS Meetings will restart in September unless....

Ranbury Ring by Syd Flatman

I wonder how many of you are aware, that a short distance from Fairford, there is an ancient encampment as old as Stonehenge? This 5,000 year old Iron Age earth fortification, which forms an 11 ½ acre site, sits high on the brow between the villages of Poulton and Ampney St Peter.

Whether the fortification was inhabited full time or was a place of refuge in times of danger is unclear. The hot dry summer of 1976 revealed crop markings showing past disturbances in the fields surrounding the Ring.

The site was protected by an inner 30 feet wide ditch, 12 feet deep and a smaller outer ditch. Some backfilling has taken place over the centuries but two thirds of its half-mile circumference remains intact.

It was a well-chosen site giving a commanding view of the surrounding countryside and had a good water supply from the streams that run nearby. This hidden gem is well worth a visit.

How to Get There

Visiting the Ring really needs to be done in conjunction with a visit to The Gilbertine Kitchen at Poulton Priory (take the Down Ampney road from Poulton and look for the green and gold sign). The kitchen, sat on the edge of the Priory office block complex has good car parking facilities and constant gardeners keep the whole area looking absolutely immaculate.

Recently opened, it is already famed for its sourdough toasties and sandwiches, many other delights are also on offer. All dining is alfresco with the exception of a Bedouin-style marquee that wouldn't look out of place in the deserts of Saudi Arabia. Lunchtimes can be busy, as the office workers emerge for a bite. The place is also popular with the ladies who lunch and the cycling fraternity clad in their Rudolph Nureyev figure-hugging lycra tights. That's quite enough of me promoting the Gilbertine Kitchen (no, I haven't got shares in it!) so to Ranbury Ring which can only be reached on foot.

From The Gilbertine, cross the entrance road, look for the wooden style to the right hand side of the fancy wrought iron gates with their golden finials. Follow the gritted farm track down, keeping the woods on your left hand side. Glance into the woods and you will see the medieval fish ponds once used by the Gilbertine Monks.

Cross the stream and then follow the public footpath sign which points you diagonally across two cultivated fields. Step through the 'V'-shaped wooden style, turn right once again onto a gritted farm track. Continue for 100 yards until the end of the hedge on your left.

Look for the green permissive footpath signs with a map. Following the hedge up until you are in the top right hand corner of the farmyard, glance to your right through the trees - you have reached your destination - Ranbury Ring. (SP 090009) See photographs overleaf.



Barrow Elm (SP1611304207)

This is a little-noticed round barrow at the junction of the roads from Netherton, Hatherop and Fairford, just north of the Salt Way. It is a late Neolithic to Late Bronze Age round barrow, from the period 2400-1500 BC. It would have contained burial remains. Who knows what important local person or persons were buried there. The ditch that would have surrounded it has been infilled and part of the barrow cut through for road construction. It is important as it was thought to be the meeting point of Brightwell's [Bryghtwoleysberg] Hundred. In 1086 Brightwells Barrow hundred comprised Coln St. Aldwyns, Williamstrip (then called Hatherop but later a part of Coln St. Aldwyns), Eastleach Martin, Eastleach Turville, Fairford, Hatherop, Kempford, Lechlade, Quenington, and Southrop and was part of the Seven Hundreds of Cirencester

The hundred court meeting-place 'La Berge near Hatherop' was in the centre of the hundred at the junction of the Droitwich – Lechlade saltway. The barrow was mentioned in 1400; a tree growing on the barrow later gave the name Barrow Elm to the meeting-place, (the tree had blown down by 1885). In the early 15th century Gloucester Abbey provided overnight hospitality for the court's officers in nearby Coln St. Aldwyns and in the 1530s the lessee of Hatherop manor entertained Cirencester Abbey's steward when holding courts at Barrow Elm. In the later 16th century views were held there in the spring and autumn and the tithings made presentments and paid cert money, that for Coln St. Aldwyns and Eastleach Martin being called hole silver. It is difficult to imagine now that this site was once a most important twice-yearly meeting place where medieval locals gathered, but it does give the place a sense of history.

Mainly from <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol7/pp1-4>

Ranbury Ring and Barrow Elm are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and must not be disturbed.



Barrow Elm 2012 and even less impressive in 2021

Fairford Amateur Dramatic Society

FADS was formed in 1976 as a result of the success of the Fairford Woman's Institute Augmented Drama Group and the need to support a Fairford annual drama programme without solely relying on a small group of people. Were you ever in FADS? Recently a box of FADS items was donated to FHS from a former member who has now left the area. It includes a file of FADS Committee meetings, the Son et Lumiere script and items, press cuttings, a more or less complete list of programmes (some undated) and some photographs, a few with cast names.

If you are interested in the photos or programmes of any of the productions (there are too many to list) please contact Alison at enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk and I can email copies.

Below left is a photograph from the Wizard of Oz, 1995. From the programme I deduce this is:-

Tin Man - Dave Bowman, Scarecrow - Bill Williams and Lion - Barry Kilgariff

On the right is Stewart Benzies as Demon Discontent in Mother Goose (date unknown but possible 1990s)



From Fairford to Firbeck

A recent enquiry from the Friends of Firbeck Hall near Rotherham in South Yorkshire brought to our attention a link with the Raymond Barker family of Fairford. Firbeck Hall is a late-16th century mansion house which is currently being converted to apartments for the over-55s. The Friends are fortunate to have acquired diaries, account books and other documents from residents of the hall including a journal written in the late 18th century. The Staniforth family owned the hall from 1696 and the last remaining member of the family was Amelia whose diary survives.

Amelia Staniforth records several visits to the hall in September and October 1785 by 'Mr, Mrs and Master Raymond'. Amelia died on 30 January 1792 and in her will she left her estate to "John Raymond Esquire of Fairford". John Raymond had changed his surname to Raymond Barker in 1789 when he inherited the Fairford Park estate from his aunt Esther Lambe. John sold Firbeck Hall to the MP and writer Henry Gally Knight in 1800. More research is needed to find the original link between the Raymond family and the owners/residents of Firbeck Hall to complete this unexpected chapter in the Raymond Barker story.

Fairford History – Month by Month

From the Newspapers & other Records

100 Years ago this month

The Cheltenham Chronicle of the 14th of May 1921 reported at considerable length on a recent conference of Gloucestershire poultry keepers at which a paper was presented by Mr. Bruce Swanwick on the success of the Fairford and Cirencester Egg Depot Ltd which had “clearly demonstrated the possibilities of combination, given a basis of good stock, sound management, and average common-sense in producing and marketing”. The company had been formed in 1901 with a capital of just £55 and an initial membership of 77 of whom about half actually supplied eggs for sale. In 1903 the number of eggs collected was 118,000 and in 1915 this had risen to 306,258. In the following year the capital had increased to £1,275 allowing premises in Cirencester and a Ford van to be purchased. The war obviously required a great increase in food production and in 1917 the company collected 843,229 eggs for sale. By 1920 the number of members stood at 520 and in that same year 1,143,000 eggs were marketed giving a turnover of just under £19,000. Some of the profits were divided amongst the members of the company according to the value of the eggs they had supplied. In addition to selling eggs through its shop and other outlets the company also supplied many hospitals and colleges and held a Royal Appointment to HM the King. Despite this remarkable success an article in the Gloucestershire Echo of the 23rd December 1926 reported that the Fairford and Cirencester Egg Depot Ltd could not compete with the larger co-operative societies and had recently gone into voluntary liquidation and had been bought by the Gloucestershire Fruit and Vegetable Co-operative Marketing Society Ltd.

200 Years ago this month

On Monday the 14th of May 1821 a fair was held in Fairford. Throughout the 19th Century the biannual fairs at Fairford were set at May the 14th and November the 12th and were only moved if these dates fell on a Sunday. However, the original charter granted by Charles II to Andrew Barker in 1668 had set the dates at 3rd of May, 28th of July and 1st of November but were changed following the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752 and the July fair was subsequently dropped. The last May fair held in the market place took place in 1908.

300 Years ago this month

May 1721 was a quiet month for the Reverend Frampton Huntington, vicar of Fairford with just three christenings and no weddings or burials. One of the christenings was for Hannah, the daughter of John and Hannah Stratford. It is not known what happened to Hannah as she was orphaned by the age of eight; her mother dying in December 1724 and her father in April 1729.

400 Years ago this month

May 1621 was also a quiet month for the Reverend Christopher Nicholson with just two christenings and two burial services to perform. One of the babies christened was Lydia, the daughter of John and Marie Moorton. John was possibly the son of the John Moorton who was recorded in the 1608 survey known as ‘Men and Armour’. John was a smith of Fairford and was assessed in the survey as being of ‘lower stature, fit to serve with a caliver’. The caliver was a type of arquebus, a heavy, long-barrelled gun which was usually fired while resting on a stand. The caliver was the first handgun used in Britain to fire a standard size of shot which made reloading quicker and gave greater accuracy. John Moorton was one of 63 men of Fairford who were assessed as being liable to bear arms in 1608.

On the last day of May 1621 Humphrey Wilkes of Horcott wrote his will in which most of his bequests involved gifts of animals: 8 sheep to his son James; 1 ewe to his granddaughter Ann; 40 sheep and 16 lambs to be divided ‘equally’ between his wife Alice, his daughter Margaret, and his son Francis (56 animals divided equally for three people would involve butchery). Margaret also received a cow and Francis got a red heifer. Humphrey’s wife also “shall have the use of the bed so long as she keep her self unmarried” – so generous!