

# Fairford Flyer

## Extra No 30

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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). Extras will now be issued monthly. The FHS June Meeting would have included the AGM which now will be held when meetings restart in September.

### THE SWEDISH WOODEN HOUSES IN THE PLIES by Edwin Cuss

I was born in 1940 and brought up at Five Elms, London Road, so I had a grandstand view of the Plies development from my bedroom window.

In 1945 before these houses were erected the Plies was a large open field that was used for a variety of things. A circus came and set up there, but the field was used for cattle, and also for pigs that were fed on food waste from the US Hospital in the Park.

In 1946 my father was in the process of hoping to buy a part of the field but Arthur Goodman who was on the Parish Council came down and told him not to buy it because it was soon to be a compulsory purchase for the erection of houses.

The five large elm trees alongside the main road were pulled down. In 1935 my father and mother had named our house Five Elms after it was built and it was sad to see them going down.

I watched as lorries started to arrive with building materials, gravel, sand and cement etc, and in 1947 an access road was put into the site from the main road. It took until 1949 before this road was eventually laid with tarmac.

Once the foundations and drainage were completed things started to move quickly and soon large lorries arrived with flat-packed houses which were soon erected and fitted out inside. These twelve houses were wooden and were a gift from Sweden to help alleviate the post-war housing problems and they were intended to last short term for ten years, but they are still there after more than seventy years!

Initially they were called the Swedish Houses but this was later amended to The Plies Numbers 1-12 after the name of the field.

In 1947-48 the houses were quickly filled with families with children but prior to that as a little boy I had no-one to play with except Edward Newport who lived further up London Street and my sister had Angela and Pamela Gearing from the bakery opposite our house.

All of a sudden there were lots of children of all age groups and there were enough to have small teams for rounders, cricket and tag etc. I can still remember the names of the original families and how many children and younger adults there were:-

No 1 ex Police Sergeant Mr and Mrs Fluck with 5 children

No 2 Mr and Mrs Cowley with 4 children

No 3 Mr and Mrs May with 4 children

No 4 Mr and Mrs Herbert with 5 children

No 5 Mr and Mrs Bartlett with 2 children

No 6 Mr and Mrs Cook with 1 child

No 7 Mr and Mrs Griffin with 1 child

No 8 Mrs Payne with 2 children

No 9 Mr and Mrs Lonsdale with 2 children

No 10 Mr and Mrs Morse with 2 children

No 11 Mr and Mrs Richens with 2 children

No 12 Mr and Mrs Marks with 2 children



Later in the 1960's when Courtbrook was proposed there was no access to the site but the gap between the gardens of No 4 and 5 was used and the late No 5 was demolished leaving No 6 standing on its own and a proper road was made into Courtbrook. Mrs Bartlett was then re-housed in one of the new builds just round the corner.

Photo: Richard May and Michael Marks on bicycles in The Plies in 1958. The houses shown from the right are Nos.3 and 4. Behind them are Nos.5 and 6, with the end bit of No.7 on the extreme left

From the website <https://www.prefabmuseum.uk/>

Costs: -In many recipient communities the homes are, to this day, reputed to have been a post-war gift from the Swedish government as a "Thanks" for our war effort. This was not the case and there is in fact a great deal of evidence of the costs involved, both to the government and to the local area. The 1944 memo suggests that the cost of a house would be about £240 on import with a total of more than £7,000,000 being paid to Sweden. The total cost per house erected in this country was expected to be about £800. A further letter dated 25 September 1946, from the Treasury to F. Sorrell at the Ministry of Works, reports on discussions with the "Swedish Financial Delegation" and says that "They seem much less keen to sell us houses than they were a year ago. It is fairly clear that they have adequate other markets"

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### **THE HONEYBONES OF FAIRFORD by Chris Hobson**

For over 100 years four generations of the Honeybone family carried on a watch and clock making business in Fairford. Honeybone clocks are now much sought after today, particularly in the Cotswolds as they represent fine examples of local craftsmanship and a link to Fairford's past.

The original head of the Fairford branch of the Honeybone family was Richard who moved to Fairford from the family home in Wanborough near Swindon towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Richard's father, Thomas, and grandfather, Richard, were both clockmakers who worked at Wanborough, although Richard is originally thought to have lived in nearby Liddington. Richard the elder was born in 1718 and was making clocks and watches by at least the 1740s. His son, Thomas, took over the family in business in Wanborough and when he died in 1807 two of his sons, William and Richard, and his wife Ann, carried on the clock making business. William died very soon afterwards and control of the Wanborough business passed to his mother. Meanwhile Richard had married Jane Elizabeth Boucher and had moved to Fairford to set himself up as a clock and watch maker in premises in London Street.

When Richard's mother became incapable of looking after the Wanborough business he took it on and for a few years at least maintained his own business at Fairford as well as in Wanborough. Between 1809 and 1817 Richard was contracted to maintain the Lechlade church clock. Richard's wife Jane died in 1813 and three years later he married again, Elizabeth Margetts, originally from Sherborne. She set up business as a grocer in Fairford, probably in adjacent premises in London Street. The couple had six children, three of whom would also become clockmakers. The eldest son was Thomas who was born in 1802 and moved to Brentford near London where he is recorded as a watch and clockmaker from at least 1839 to 1871. His younger brother Richard learnt his trade from his father at Fairford before moving to Nottingham where he married Amy Margetts (possibly a relative of his stepmother) who was a member of a well-known family of clockmakers from the Midlands and a clockmaker in her own right. It fell to George, born in 1810, to carry on the family business at Fairford. In 1835 George married Sarah Hewer of Fairford. In the 1841 census George is recorded as being a silversmith but is listed as a watch and clockmaker in the 1851 census. Trade directories of the time also list the Honeybones as jewellers as the skills and craftsmanship required for making timepieces are the same as those needed to make and repair jewellery.



George died in 1867 and was listed in an 1863 Gloucestershire trade directory as still trading, as indeed was his stepmother Elizabeth whose grocery shop was listed as late as 1870 when she was 82 years old. George and Sarah Honeybone had five children, all born in Fairford. Two of the children died in infancy but the other three all followed in the family trade and became watch and clock makers. The eldest son, Richard, is described as a watchmaker while aged just 14 in the 1851 census. He later moved to Rugby where he had a business until about 1870 when he moved to Luton and carried on his trade there until at least 1881. Another son, Thomas Henry, moved to Bexleyheath near Dartford in Kent where his business flourished until at least 1882. The Fairford business was left to Charles John who was born in 1849 and who married Mary Mapson, daughter of a Cirencester watch and clockmaker, in 1872. By the time Charles took over the family business factory mass-produced clocks and watches had largely

replaced the much more expensive hand-made timepieces. However, there was still a requirement for repairs and custom-built pieces, even though many of the products sold by the Honeybones in their shop would no longer have been made on the premises. Perhaps in order to diversify his business Charles also took to selling flies and fishing tackle to supply those who fished the rich trout streams in the area.

The last Honeybone to carry on the family business in Fairford was George who was born in 1878 to Charles and Mary. George and his wife Rose continued to run the shop which is now the bar of the *Colosseo Ristorante* on London Street. An ardent supporter of local sporting events and in his youth a member of Fairford's cricket and football teams, George died in August 1939 while Rose passed away in November 1957.

Although perhaps not in the first rank of watch and clockmakers, the Honeybones of Fairford produced good quality timepieces which today fetch high prices whenever they come up at auction. The extended Honeybone family produced at least 11 craftsmen who took their trade to at least seven different parts of England but it was at Fairford that the Honeybones maintained a continuity of fine craftsmanship for over a century.



#### Honeybone Clock

Edwin Cuss has a Honeybone Clock for sale. It would require re-assembling at its new home. For details contact Edwin 01285 655532

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#### Marriage Announcements

1787 03.31 Oxford Journal

Married on Thursday last was married at Malmesbury, Wilts, Mr Matthews an eminent Surgeon and Midwife of Fairford to Miss Jenny Anderson of Malmesbury, a young lady possessed of every accomplishment requisite for rendering the marriage state truly happy

1773 06.12 Oxford Journal

Last Saturday Mr Byham of London, an eminent mercer was married at Fairford to Miss Sukey Morgan of that place: a lady of great beauty and fine accomplishments, who is also possessed of a fortune of £500 and sister to Councillor Morgan. Immediately after the ceremony the new married couple, accompanied by their friends, set out for London

This was the Morgan family of Morgan Hall. Councillor Morgan was Charles Tyrell Morgan. 'Sukey' was Mary Morgan who was born in 1744 and died at Fyfield near Abingdon in 1797, just a few days before her husband died.

## **Fairford History – Month by Month**

### **From the Newspapers & other Records**

#### **100 Years ago this month**

The Oxford Weekly News had a regular column titled 'With Rod and Gun' which reported on the more lethal types of sport in the region. The issue for the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1921 included the following item:-

"In the stomach of a Fairford trout weighing 3lb. 2 oz., was found an egg-cup full of May flies, two inches of bacon rind, and a mutton cutlet bone four inches long."

One often hears of sharks being found with various odd things in their stomachs including car licence plates and tyres, tin cans, glass bottles and unlucky bathers but this Fairford trout was also doing pretty well as would be expected in Mayfly season!

#### **100 Years ago this month**

The same newspaper for the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1901 reported a disastrous fire in Fairford:-

"A serious fire has occurred in the rickyard at Mr. Cole's Milton End Farm, by which two valuable bean ricks, the produce of 32 acres, from 25 to 50 tons of excellent wheat straw, besides a spacious and lofty Dutch barn, a portable fowls' house, and a thatched shed used as a carpenter's shop, was completely destroyed. The fire also threatened the safety of a large rick of old hay, another straw rick, and in short the whole of the contents of the extensive farm-yard and buildings. The fire was discovered within ten minutes of its outbreak, but by that time it had got a fierce hold of the ricks, and had caught on to the roof of the barn. Alarm was at once given by the ringing of the fire bells from the engine station and the church tower, and the captain of the Fire Brigade and the sergeant of police were immediately on the alert, and the fire engine was on the spot and playing on the flames from a pool fortunately close at hand."

The newspaper went on to say that it took until 5 o'clock the next morning to completely extinguish the flames. The report continued:-

"It transpired that the calamity was due to three little urchins, aged respectively six, five, and three years, who admitted to having taken some straw from the rick to set it on fire with a match. They then put more straw on top, and the rick caught instantly."

'Mr. Cole' was Richard Cole who was a farmer, a miller and a coal merchant at various times. After retiring from the farm he lived at Horcott House until his death on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1912.

#### **300 Years ago this month**

June 1721 was a very quiet month for the Reverend Frampton Huntington, Fairford's vicar, with just two christenings and no weddings or burials. The christenings were for Stephen, the son of John and Joan Weaver on the 4<sup>th</sup> and Thomas, the son of John and Elizabeth Green on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Stephen Weaver was married at Fairford on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1767 but by then he was living at Buscot.

#### **400 Years ago this month**

The Fairford parish register for 1621 records the burial of three children of George and Alice Browne. John was buried on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, Elizabeth on the 28<sup>th</sup> and William on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Even worse was to follow as Alice was buried on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. They were probably victims of disease, possibly smallpox or even the plague. Eight people died in Fairford in June and another eight in July 1621, unusually high figures. In fact 24 people died in Fairford in 1621, twice as many as in 1620 and six times as many in 1622.