

Fairford Flyer

Extra No 34

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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

The next meeting on October 21st was recommended by Edwin Cuss and is by David Nathan on Frank Hornby, the man responsible for Hornby Trains and Meccano. Hopefully, he will bring some items for members to look at (not to play with!) Attendees are reminded that social distancing in the Farmor Room is difficult, as much ventilation as is possible will be carried out; but you may feel more comfortable in a mask. There was an excellent attendance at the last meeting and FHS has over 100 members already this season. Membership renewal was due in September. At the AGM the Committee was re-elected but no further volunteers for the Committee and the problem of the lack of Chairman still remains.

Fairford Park

Over 50 members attended the talk by Syd Flatman on the remaining treasures of Fairford Park. Built in 1661/2 by stonemason Valentine Strong whose grave is in the churchyard, the house was demolished in 1955. The resident family, the Raymond Barkers, left in the 1890s and the house was let first to Colonel Porter and then to Colonel Palmer of the Huntley and Palmers biscuit business in Reading. The floor of Palmer Hall came from one of the Huntley and Palmer buildings when it was built in 1936. Arkell's gave the land and Colonel Palmer paid for the building which was constructed on the site of the 'Assembly Rooms'. Colonel Palmer remained at Fairford Park until he died in 1940. It was requisitioned by the military during World War 2; the church windows were placed in the cellars to save them from damage. Ernest Cook, grandson of Thomas Cook (travel agent) bought the estate in 1945; he wanted to sell/give the estate to the National Trust but they didn't want it so the Ernest Cook Trust educational charity was formed. The Trust has its headquarters in the former stabling of Park House, next to Farmor's School. After the War the house was in a dilapidated state, no one wanted it and the town was desperate for a new secondary school, so Farmor's School was built on the site and opened in 1962. Some of the walling of the former gardens remains; the ha-has have been filled in but can still be traced. The Orangery was taken to Sledmere House in Yorkshire; the Doric Temple to Barnsley House; and ironwork of the grand staircase to Corsham Hall in Wiltshire. Some of the paving slab flooring of the house went to the church which Colonel Macfie, Countess of Rothes' husband paid for so that he would be allowed to put a memorial to his wife (a Titanic survivor) on the wall of the Church. One of the fireplaces, found abandoned in the stables is at Milton Farm.

The grounds of Fairford Park were landscaped by James and Esther Lambe in the early 18th century and then by John Raymond Barker in the late eighteenth century. The features of the landscaping including the Cascades, the Broadwater, and the boathouse all remain and the Obelisk, which is an unmarked landscaping feature, stands isolated in a field next to Leafield Road. From 1947-1959 it would have gazed down on the Polish Hostel, situated on the former deer park from there to the house, home to over 1,000 Polish refugees during these years. Nothing of these remains except a plaque in the wall by the path on Leafield Road to the Cascades.

Syd showed the Palladian Bridge with the dates of the draining of the Broadwater (an artificially widened part of the River Coln adjacent to the Fairford Park Pleasure Ground created by 1751 landscaping) that happened every 50-60 years or so, that is in 1868, 1923 and 1998. Soil drains off the fields and is deposited in the fast-flowing River Coln causing it to silt up. In 1868 they may have used traction engines but perhaps they used

men with spades! In 1923 they used a traction engine on either side of the Broadwater with buckets between them. In 1998 it was big yellow diggers!

We suspect there are other remnants of Fairford Park concealed in gardens and houses in the town, their provenance may have been long forgotten.

Not all the features in the talk have been mentioned here, it certainly was an interesting and entertaining talk by Syd – thank you.

The Palladian bridge behind the mill pond



Draining of the Broadwater in 1998



'A famous authoress'

September has brought a flurry of local history queries. One of the more interesting in that we knew nothing of the Sinclair family who lived at Mount Pleasant House or Cottage from 1879-1882. Not long-time Fairford residents but one of the family was to become a famous author.

William and Amelia Sinclair were originally from Ireland, but settled in Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Cheshire where William was a Liverpool ship owner. He went bankrupt in 1870 when their daughter May (Mary) was 7 years old. They then moved around the country ending up at Fairford in 1879, this may have been for the good of William's health as by this time he was an alcoholic. William died in 1881. In the same year May Sinclair, the only daughter, aged 17, is recorded in the census as being a boarder at Cheltenham Ladies College where she came under the influence of Miss Beale who recognised her talents and encouraged her writing. May wrote her first philosophical essays and poems for the *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine* between the years 1882 and 1898.

After 1881 the family left Fairford and finally returned to Cheshire, however this was a bad time for the family as May's four elder brothers had all died of hereditary heart disease between 1887 and 1896. By this time she was writing in part to support the family. She published *Audrey Craven*, her first novel, in 1897. Her mother had a heart attack in 1900 and died in 1901.



May Sinclair was a novelist, poet, philosopher, translator, and critic. She was both popular and extremely prolific, writing 23 novels, 39 short stories, and several poetry collections throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. *Divine Fire* was written in 1904 and was the novel that made her famous and was particularly well received in America. After this she was financially secure and moved to London. She was also becoming increasingly involved with the suffrage movement, writing letters in the suffragist periodical *Votes for Women*, and joining the Women's Freedom League in 1908. She was part of ambulance unit that served in Belgium in the First World War and wrote *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* (1915). In 1913 she was involved in the establishment of the Medico-Psychological Clinic in London, which offered psychoanalytic treatment and was one of the first clinics in England to offer psychoanalytic training. As well as novels, poetry and critical articles, she also wrote ghost stories. For more information see

<https://maysinclair society.com/biography/> Some of her books are still available. May Sinclair suffered from Parkinson's disease in the final years of her life, and disappeared from public view. She was living with her companion and housekeeper Florence Bartrop in Buckinghamshire but her friends lost contact with her from the late 1920s onwards, and she eventually died in 1946.



Transport

The recent fuel supply crisis reminds us that transport around the country is still so much easier than in the distant past. No longer does it take 16 very uncomfortable hours to get to London

Bell Savage Inn, Ludgate Hill

The Proprietors of the Original HAMPTON and CIRENCESTER Machine Intend to leave off travelling on nights, and go to London in sixteen hours; will set out from the Salutation Inn, [Minchin]Hampton every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at four o'clock in the morning; from the King's Head, Cirencester at six; George Inn, Fairford, at seven; New Inn, Lechlade at half past seven; Bell and Dragon, Farringdon, at half past eight; Abingdon, at half after ten o'clock; to the Bell Savage Inn on Ludgate, London. Will return from thence every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings at four o'clock for the above places.

Performed (if God permit) by EDWARD BIGG and ROBERT KEMP

Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser 19 September 1780

The *Salutation Inn* was situated on Tetbury Street, Minchinhampton, and closed in the 1960s.

During 1840 the GWR line from the west and from London eastwards was opened and the coaches from Gloucester etc. joined the railway line at the station known as Farringdon Road (opened 20 July 1840, 2 miles south of Stanford in the Vale on the A417 road between Wantage and Farringdon). In 1864 the Farringdon Railway opened between Uffington and Farringdon and the station name was changed to Challow. This cut the journey time by several hours.

The Public are respectfully informed that an elegant new COACH to LONDON 'THE PRINCE' Leaves Heath's Coach Office, GLOUCESTER EVERY MORNING AT Seven (Sundays excepted): by the most direct route, through Stroud, Cirencester, Fairford, Lechlade and Farringdon, to the Railway Station, leaving by train at one o'clock, arriving in London at half past Three in the afternoon, to the Old and New White Horse Cellars, Piccadilly, Old Bell Inn, Holborn and Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside. Leaves the latter Office, mornings at half past eight ... Paddington Station at 10 arriving at Cirencester at half past Three and Gloucester at half past six; meeting coaches to all parts of the South West.

Wilts and Glos Standard 1 August 1840

But it wasn't long before the GWR was up and running was from the west to London and passengers could travel by rail all the way. Our Fairford Station to Witney and Oxford was opened in 1863 and Swindon in 1842, this marked the demise of long coach journeys.

The GWR ran many excursion trains to Weymouth, Brighton, London and to regional events like the Malvern Agricultural Show, Bath and West of England Agricultural Show at Worcester, the Agricultural Show at Birmingham etc, etc. The following was a mammoth day out:-

TRIP TO PORTSMOUTH On Tuesday last the Great Western Railway Company ran a special train to Portsmouth for the Isle of Wight. About 300 persons availed themselves of the opportunity of getting tickets from the Witney Committee, making up parties, for which compartments were reserved, and having also the privilege of going across to the Isle of Wight and back for a shilling and of travelling by any train on the Island Railways during the day at single fares for return tickets. The trip was much enjoyed by the large party, who scattered themselves over the Island in small groups, seeing its notable show-places, and admiring the lovely views and picturesque scenery, some returning to Portsmouth and inspecting the Victory, the docks, the fortifications, and so on. Ten hours by the sea, and ten hours of travelling to and fro made a long day of it and by the time they reached Witney the excursionists were thoroughly tired, but otherwise all the better for their taste of sea air and the pleasant change. The train run from Fairford and from the hour of rising to catch it in the morning to the moment when they reached their home again, the Fairford passengers must have been afoot nearly a whole day and night - a real 'long holiday'.

Oxford Journal Saturday 19 June 1880

Fairford History – Month by Month

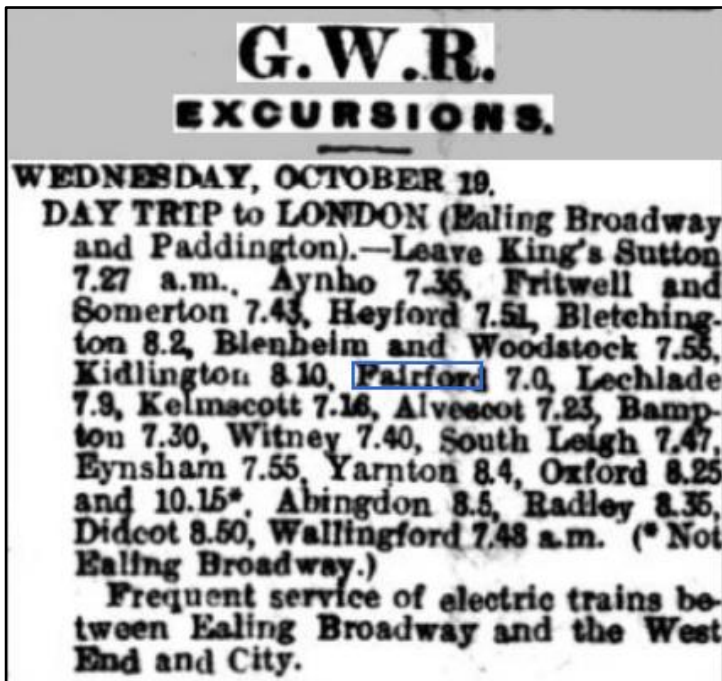
From the Newspapers & other Records

100 Years ago this month

Continuing the transport theme are two items from local newspapers.

The Gloucestershire had a regular column for anonymous correspondence and this item appeared in the issue for 6 October 1921:

“PRO BONO PUBLICO” (Fairford) points out the great desirability of a motor ‘bus or some such vehicle, between Fairford and Cirencester at an hour which would admit of the inhabitants of Fairford and the intervening villages attending the cinema and concerts in Cirencester.



G.W.R.
EXCURSIONS.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19.
DAY TRIP to LONDON (Ealing Broadway and Paddington).—Leave King’s Sutton 7.27 a.m., Aynho 7.35, Fritwell and Somerton 7.43, Heyford 7.51, Bletchington 8.2, Blenheim and Woodstock 7.55, Kidlington 8.10, Fairford 7.0, Lechlade 7.9, Kelmscott 7.16, Alvescot 7.23, Bampton 7.30, Witney 7.40, South Leigh 7.47, Eynsham 7.55, Yarnton 8.4, Oxford 8.25 and 10.15*, Abingdon 8.5, Radley 8.35, Didcot 8.50, Wallingford 7.43 a.m. (* Not Ealing Broadway.)
Frequent service of electric trains between Ealing Broadway and the West End and City.

The Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette of 14 October 1921 had the following advertisement:

Not sure what the attraction of Ealing Broadway was as it didn’t have a cinema until 1934!

200 Years ago this month

In the Oxford Journal of 20 October 1821 Robert Wood, carpenter and wheelwright of Fairford advertised a house for sale as he was retiring from his business. The house must have been quite substantial as it had “an excellent, garden, orchard, and extensive workshops, stable, barn and yard...” adding that “The premises are very spacious, and in excellent repair, and may be converted into two comfortable dwelling houses, at a small expence”. Robert Wood died on 28 August 1824 at the age of 68 and his grave can be found in the churchyard.

300 Years ago this month

John Tackley, a yeoman, was buried on 16 October 1721. He was born in or about 1649 and married twice, first in 1676 to Anne Gearing who died in 1685 and second to Mary Howse in 1714. Mary also predeceased John.

400 Years ago this month

On 11 October 1621 John Morgan married Dorothie Hinton in St Mary’s church. John was the son of Edmund Morgan, the earliest known Morgan to have lived in Fairford and who was probably the first to occupy Morgan Hall. When Edmund died in 1616 John and his two brothers Anthony and Thomas each received a legacy of £140, a substantial sum of money in those days.