

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

Best Wishes for 2022 to you all

The next meeting is on January 20 when Chris Hobson will talk on the Legacy of the Cotswold wool merchants. Chris is giving the talk to the Richard III Society in Cheltenham in May but he will gear this talk to our local wool merchants. Please note that masks must be worn in the Community Centre. This month we have to thank Syd and Edwin for their articles.

NOM 19

Before I go another inch forward, no, this is not another Covid variant, but the registration plate of my very first motor car, bought just before the Christmas period of 1964. I often laugh to myself when I think back to that car and the things I did as a 17-year-old engineering apprentice on low money to try to do motoring on the cheap.

The car in question was a 1953 beige-coloured, one litre, side-valved upright Ford Popular for which I paid the princely sum of £10, bought from Mr Basil Winney of Quenington. Mr Winney bought the car as a restoration project, but never got round to it due to family commitments. Hearing that I had just signed up for driving lessons, he offered me the car.

Getting my father to give the car the "once over", the upside was the car had only a few miles earlier been fitted with a reconditioned engine (worth more than £10). The downside was a 12-inch-long rust line along the bottom of the boot lid, the front wing on the driver's side was torn at the back and the chromium plating on both bumpers flaking off but, as my father said, "I'm sure we can do something with it." Luckily for me, my father had just finished building himself a double garage so I had somewhere in the dry to work on the car.

Going to Walker Jackson's, the Ford agents in Swindon, in my father's grey Austin A35 van, he treated me for my Christmas present two new bumpers, a battery, steering track rod ends and wiper blades, total cost £15 (thanks Dad!).

With the boot lid removed, chicken wire was hammered into the rusty slot, with his pump-up brass blow lamp and a large stick of solder, the rusty area was filled, then sanded off, you could hardly feel the join.

In my father's van we went to Carterton scrap yard. There was an Alsatian on a long chain guarding the gate. The yard was full to the gunnels with cars stacked two high. Finding a grey Ford Popular plonked on the top of a Ford V8 Pilot, we could have the wing for ten shillings provided we took it off ourselves; it was held on by 8 bolts.

Working at the Pressed Steel Company at Cowley (now the Mini Plant) Dad's gang of fellow worker's jobs was to completely fit the interiors into the Hillman Minx cars, quite convenient, as it turned out, for me. Over the coming weeks, things started to appear in our garage. A gallon of light blue Hillman Minx paint, a complete set of two-tone blue seat covers, a tin of rubberised glue and masking tape. All "borrowed" shall we say, from the company.



My father loved his tools and luckily for me he had a small spray plant. We masked the car with tape and newspapers then he re-sprayed it. It looked brilliant in its new light blue colour. The Minx seat covers were glued on top of the Popular's seats which were showing signs of wear.

Sneaking the untaxed and uninsured car to Busby's Garage on the Town Bridge, Stan Edwards the foreman, MOT'd the car, passing with flying colours.

My driving test was booked for 5th April 1965. At this point of my apprenticeship at Godwin Pumps I was on the drill section working alongside fellow apprentice Alfie Tilling. Preceding my test, all day long Alf would fire questions at me from my Highway Code (thank you Alf - I passed first time).

Being a Union Member, one of the perks was discounted motor insurance. Jack Collett, chargehand of the drill section, who had a habit of calling everyone "Kid", we called him "Old Rubber Neck" behind his back. Jack had been a Desert Rat during World War II. He made the phone call on my behalf getting the quote. All I had to do was send off the postal order and my insurance document was sent by return of post. Cyril Shuttlewood, the Fairford Postmaster, stamped my six months tax disc. I was on the road!

The car drove well, except the back axle would whine at speeds above 30 miles an hour. With a top speed of 55 miles an hour, or 70 with the aid of Blunsdon Hill, a three-speed gear box, six vault lighting, no heater, no power steering or servo assisted brakes, compared to cars today, my car was decidedly Stone Age.



By October the whining back axle was getting worryingly loud. Gassy Nash (real name Sid), a near neighbour hearing of my plight came to the rescue. Gassy, who drove a Ford Popular the same as mine, said he had a spare axle complete with wheels and a prop shaft stored under the Elder bushes next to the Number One Gas Holder at Fairford Gas Works; I could have it for free. Gassy's son Robert and I, by torchlight, hauled the axle free from the bushes, tying the prop shaft to my rear bumper and with baler twine, taken from Milton Farm, we towed it home.

Setting the rear of the car up on concrete blocks left over from the garage construction, by lead light within three hours I changed the axles.

Not wanting the expense of buying new tyres I was always on the lookout for spare wheels. By the winter time, I had a few but most were almost bald. I was informed of an abandoned car on the front driveway of Barrow Elm Farmhouse. It had on it a set of almost brand-new tyres, the same size of mine. The house had been rented by American Service personnel who had recently gone Stateside and left the car behind. I was determined to have those tyres. So, under the cover of darkness, aided and abetted by my father, with four spare wheels on the back seat we approached the house on tick over and with the lights out. Within 15 minutes we had swapped all four wheels.

I ran that car for almost two years selling it for £25 to a fellow school mate, Lester Aldis, who wanted to upgrade from his 1930 Austin 7 Ruby.

Photo captions: Syd and NOM 19 in 1965; Gassy Nash on his retirement in 1983 outside Gas House

Syd Flatman (thief in the 1960's)

Hope Dene/Milestone House

In 1924 a detached house was built alongside the Lechlade Road out of Fairford. It was mid-way between the Railway Station (now the Industrial site) and the Whelford Road turning. The house was a gift from some grateful children to their father and mother, possibly on their late retirement.

The man was George Hope who was born in 1857 and died in 1932 age 75, and his wife Mary Ann who was born in 1853 and died in 1937 age 84.

George had been a small tenant farmer and a general dealer selling his wares around the Fairford district using a small horse and cart. With his wife Mary Ann they raised five children, four boys and a girl. These were Stan, Seymour Harold, Charles Lowther, Raymond and Kate, all brought up in a small East End Cottage close by the Eight Bells, but not Gable Cottages. Sadly Raymond was lost in World War One in 1918.

The house carried a datestone dated 1924 and was called Hope Dene. It was built of concrete blocks rendered on the outside and the joints were then drawn into the wet render to give the appearance of Ashlar stone. After George died the house name was changed to Milestone House probably because there was a turnpike milestone nearby on the grass verge of the road.

The house was later lived in by the Parry family and was also a small garden centre. The whole site was later acquired by Lakes by You for the development and building of luxury chalets around an enlarged lake, and the house has been demolished.



1.1910 c the four Hope boys Stan, Charles Lowther, Seymour and Raymond

2.1923-24 Back of Hope Dene during construction.

3.1925 Front of Hope Dene

4.1925 Mary Ann, George, Joyce Kate, Stan, Gladys outside front porch



From the Newspapers – 1700s

London Evening Post 12 January 1738

After the business of Bridewell Court were over, the Right Hon Francis Lord Middleton, and Alexander Ready, of Fairford in the County of Gloucester, Esq., who married two of the Relations of Mr Colston of Bristol, deceased, were unanimously elected Governors of the united Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem, and Staves order'd to be sent them, which was done to preserve the Respect which Governors must always bear to the Memory of that truly charitable and good Man, Mr Colston, who had been so large a Benefactor to several Hospitals in this City.

Oxford Journal 17 January 1768

Last week the Under Ostler at the Hind's Head at Kingston in Berks, (who was a poor lad) became possessed of a legacy of between two and three thousand pounds, left him by a relation who died at Fairford in the County of Gloucester.

Oxford Journal 7 January 1769

John Prior, Writing Master and Accountant, from the Charter-House School, London, formerly Assistant to Mr Richard Green, deceased, late Master of the Free School at Fairford in Gloucestershire; being now appointed his Successor in the said School, hereby informs the Publick that he shall, immediately after the Expiration of the Christmas Holidays, open the said Free School at Fairford, for the Instruction of young Gentleman in Reading, Writing and Arithmetick which he proposes to teach in all their respective various Branches, and according to the Methods now approved and practised by the most Eminent Masters in London.

Mr Prior, has fitted up the School House for the reception of Boarders, and hopes to give Satisfaction to the Parents of all such as committed to his Care, by the greatest attention to their Morals, Learning and whole Conduct, and will take them on the most reasonable terms

Fairford School, Dec 30th 1768

Oxford Journal January 12

At a Meeting of the Protestant Dissenters of the Town and Neighbourhood of Fairford in Gloucestershire. The Rev Josiah Townsend, in the Chair Resolved unanimously Thus in the Opinion of this Meeting, it is expedient to make and publish a Declaration of our Attachment to the Constitution of this country

Declaration

We the Protestant Dissenters of different denominations in the town of Fairford in Gloucestershire, and its Neighbourhood, observing with the deepest Concern the Prevalance of a lawless and Malevolent Spirit, esteem it is our duty in the most publick Manner to protest against it. We therefore declare 'our Loyalty to the King' of whose illustrious House is the peculiar Boast of Protestant Dissenters to have been uniform and steady Adherents...

And in the Gloucester Journal 14 January 1793

At a general Vestry, holden this day, in compliance with public notice given by the VICAR and CHURCH-WARDENS, the following resolutions were proposed and unanimously assented to, and have been signed by the most respectable inhabitants of this town and neighbourhood.

We, the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Fairford, full of gratitude to Almighty God, for the blessings we enjoy under our present excellent Constitution, and having reason to boast, as we with honest pride, that the number of those amongst us, who would befriend the mischievous projects of levellers and republicans, is very small and contemptible; yet reflecting at the same time, with abhorrence and terror, upon the dreadful evils which may be caused by the intrusion of that spirit of irreligion and anarchy now prevalent in some parts of the world, think it is our duty, as Christians and good citizens, to stand forth at this crisis, and thus publicly declare;

That we do, and ever will, bear true allegiance to his Majesty King George;

These declarations were written when violent unrest in France was at its highest. Later in January 1793 Louis XV1 was executed. Thomas Paine's Rights of Man which supported the Revolution had recently been published in response to Mr Burkes's attack on the French Revolution.