

Fairford Flyer

Extra No 46

November 2022

FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

The next FHS meeting is on November 17 when Steve Parkes of the Cotswold Sheep Society will talk on Cotswold sheep and their history. Steve has worked as a cowman and a shepherd for many years and worked on the Princess Royal's estate at Gatcombe Park. He is one of the dedicated group of agriculturists who have ensured the survival of the remarkable 'Cotswold Lion' breed which made Cotswold wool famous.

Thank you to all who renewed their £5 membership. Membership renewal was due in September. An easy way to pay is either at the meeting or by bank transfer (Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-92-06 A/C Fairford History Society No 02170130).

FHS Meetings 2022-23

All meetings are at 7.30 pm in the Farmor Room, Fairford Community Centre except for the February meeting which is at 10 am during half term

There is no meeting in December but on January 19 the long awaited talk on the Renovation of Big Ben will be given by Fairford's own Keith Scobie-Youngs, 7.30 pm at The Community Centre

Gloucestershire church monuments and memorials through the ages - October talk

In October our Chairman gave a very interesting and informative talk on the evolution of church monuments from the 11th to the 21st centuries using examples that can be seen today in Gloucestershire. Burials inside churches and their associated monuments became more common after the Norman Conquest with the earliest form being coffin-shaped grave slabs, often decorated with a carved or incised cross. From the 12th Century effigies (the most impressive form of funerary monuments) became popular and Gloucestershire has a large number of surviving examples ranging from Edward II's alabaster effigy in Gloucester Cathedral to Roger and Katherine Lygon in Fairford's own church. Of particular interest are cadaver or corpse effigies that show the body in a state of decay which reminds the viewer of their own mortality perhaps in an attempt seek salvation.

Brasses can be found in many of Gloucestershire's churches and those commemorating medieval wool merchants of the Cotswolds form a very distinct and interesting group. The Renaissance of the 15th Century and the Reformation of the 16th Century resulted in major changes across the whole spectrum of art and architecture including the design of church monuments. Effigies were still popular with the figures in either casual reclining or kneeling positions, some in what is commonly called the 'contemplation' or 'toothache' pose. Demi effigies which show only the upper half of the body proliferated in the 16th and 17th centuries and the Vault monument in Meysey Hampton church is a particularly interesting example. New forms of funerary memorials after the Reformation were ledger stones (or floor slabs) and wall tablets. The latter became the most common form of memorial to the present day and come in all shapes and sizes.

Grand Designs

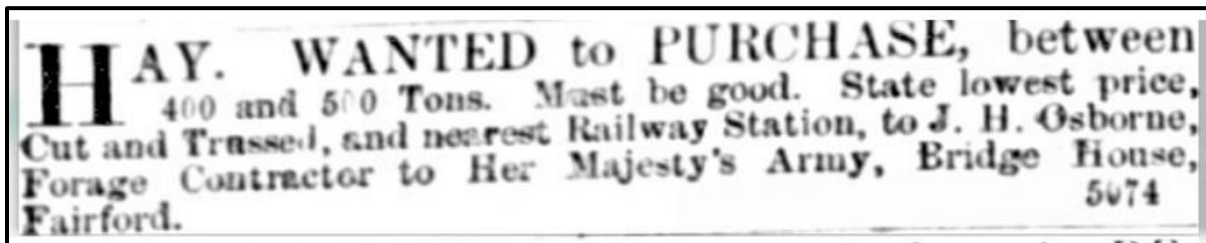


The design of later memorials from the 18th Century onwards followed the earlier forms but the styles changed following developments in art including the Baroque and Rococo and the Gothic, Neoclassical and Greek revivals. Two new developments in the 19th Century were portrait busts and the making of new church windows to commemorate deceased family members.

Several themes were then presented to further illustrate the variety and quality of church monuments. Four sculptors (Michael Rysbrack, Richard Westmacott, John Flaxman and Joseph Nollekens) were chosen to show that high-quality monuments were produced in great numbers by England's top sculptors in the 18th and 19th centuries. Another theme was the inclusion of children in memorials, some of whom died along with their mother during childbirth. Another theme was family memorials and several churches in Gloucestershire have a set of memorials to important local families. War memorials are common throughout the UK and either collectively commemorates the dead of the parish or town or to specific individuals. Examples from the Crimean and Boer wars and the two World Wars were illustrated. Finally, images were shown of monuments in churches in other parts of Gloucestershire with have connections to Fairford residents. The talk was illustrated with 96 images taken by the speaker over several years.

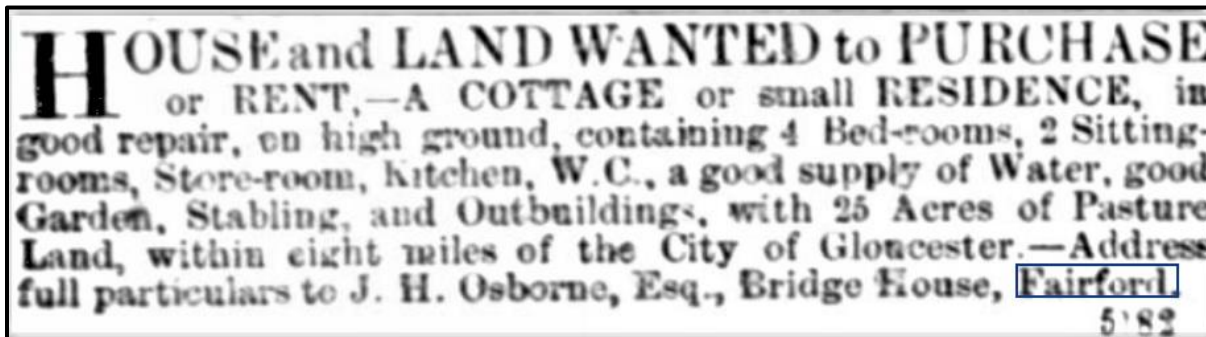
A fraudster in Fairford

In the Gloucester Journal of Saturday 27 July 1872 an advertisement appeared in the name of J H Osborne, a forage contractor to the Army, of Bridge House, Fairford requesting tenders for up to 500 tons of hay for use as forage for the Army which he later stated were for the forthcoming Autumn manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain.



HAY. WANTED to PURCHASE, between
400 and 500 Tons. Must be good. State lowest price,
Cut and Trussed, and nearest Railway Station, to J. H. Osborne,
Forage Contractor to Her Majesty's Army, Bridge House,
Fairford. 5074

A fortnight later Mr. Osborne placed an advertisement in the Gloucester Journal of 10 August this time he was looking for a cottage to buy or rent within eight miles of Gloucester. His address was still given as Bridge House, Fairford



HOUSE and LAND WANTED to PURCHASE
or RENT,—A COTTAGE or small RESIDENCE, in
good repair, on high ground, containing 4 Bed-rooms, 2 Sitting-
rooms, Store-room, Kitchen, W.C., a good supply of Water, good
Garden, Stabling, and Outbuildings, with 25 Acres of Pasture
Land, within eight miles of the City of Gloucester.—Address
full particulars to J. H. Osborne, Esq., Bridge House, Fairford
5182

The next time that J H Osborne's name appeared in a newspaper was in the 21 September 1872 edition of the Western Daily Press under the heading 'INGENIUS FRAUD'. He had been arrested in Fairford on 16 September charged with obtaining 10 tons of hay by false pretences. Osborne had rented an expensive mansion at Chaxhill near Gloucester and had ordered £300 of upholstery for his house as well as 250 tons of hay. It was soon discovered that Osborne owed money to traders in Fairford and that the farmer who sold the 10 tons of hay (which had been sent to London) had not been paid. While on remand Osborne claimed that not only was he was a forage contractor for the Army but had also been a surgeon in the 2nd Dragoon Guards and had been wounded at Lucknow in India.

At the trial at Gloucester on 16 October a number of witnesses were called to give evidence. Officials from the Army stated that not only had Osborne never been a contractor for the Army but that there was no trace of him ever having served in the 2nd Dragoon Guards or in any other capacity in the Army. Letters provided by Osborne purporting to be contracts with the Army were proved to be completely false. The several referees named in the supposed contracts were found to have no knowledge of Mr. Osborne. In fact the 10 tons of hay had been despatched for sale to the London Omnibus Company but was refused due to its poor quality so Osborne sold it to a haulier of Paddington.

John Henry Osborne was found guilty of fraud and was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment to be followed by two years of police supervision during which he had to be on good behaviour. He had been on remand in the Gloucester County Gaol since 28 September. The entry for Mr. Osborne in the gaol register is quite revealing. It states that he was a 34-year old salesman resident in Fairford with his wife Emily. It also records that he was a Baptist and had been known to Fairford's Police Sergeant Charles Mason for two months prior to his arrest. What is interesting is the fact that Osborne had a previous conviction but no further details are given. However, in the County of Gloucester Calendar of Prisoners dated 15 October 1872 his previous conviction was stated to have been at the Ilford, Essex Petty Sessions on 31 October 1871 when he was sentenced to two months hard labour for larceny. Even more interesting is that he was calling himself John Harvey at the time and also used the name Henry Harvey.

John Henry Osborne (or Harvey) was discharged from Gloucester Gaol on 15 October 1873 and was placed on the UK's Register of Habitual Criminals. He is not been found in any of the annual censuses before or after his imprisonment so probably 'adopted' another name or he may have fled abroad after his release perhaps before his period of police supervision had expired. It is highly unlikely that whoever he owed money to in Fairford or elsewhere ever saw a penny of it.

Penny Readings

Penny Readings were a form of popular public entertainment that arose in the United Kingdom in the middle of the 19th century consisting of readings and other performances, for which the admission charged was one penny.

From 1866 to the 1874 during the winter from October to May monthly 'Penny Readings' were held in Crofts Hall. The Hall was opposite Croft House in the Croft possibly the present Linden End which had formerly been a twentieth century school.

The Penny Readings were an opportunity for Fairford residents to show off their skills in literature readings, reciting poetry, singing, and musical entertainment. The meetings also sometimes included the hand bell ringers of Coln St Aldwyn and local Brass Bands. Quite often in the newspapers lists of the performers and their party pieces were given. There seemed to be no lack of volunteers including children (the Chew family), the local organist, Mr Cockbill and other well-known residents.

The profits from the meetings were donated to the Fairford Rural Hospital which had opened in Park Street in April 1867 to serve Fairford and the nearby rural area. Dr James and Mrs Cornwall were the organisers of the first events, Mrs Cornwall being skilled at the piano. A Chairman led the proceedings with the first being Fairford's vicar the Reverend Francis William Rice followed by Dr James Cornwall and then Doctor Iles. The meetings were immensely popular sometimes latecomers had to be turned away at the door as there was no more room in the Hall.

Cirencester Times and Cotswold Advertiser 6 May 1867

PENNY READINGS - On Friday se'night one more, and we believe the last, of these highly pleasing entertainments took place in Crofts Hall, which, as on other occasions, was uncomfortably filled, several being unable to obtain admission. The chair was occupied by J Cornwall, Esq. The programme was a very long one, but all ably acquitted themselves, and the evening was a most enjoyable one. These entertainments throughout the season have been well patronised by friends from the neighbouring villages, who, one would imagine from their smiling faces, did not either grudge their time or return journey home in the darkness. To Mr and Mrs Cornwall, the originators of the Readings, a vote of thanks was accorded.

Newspaper Cuttings

North Wilts Herald 1 April 1872

ORDNANCE SURVEY

A company of the Royal Engineers are located at Fairford noting the several alterations and deviations in the roads in the neighbourhood since the regular survey some years ago was made. They have erected a wooden stage upon the tower of the parish church, some twenty feet above the level of the lead roof, for the purpose of enabling them to make the necessary observations, their instruments being protected from the weather by a canvas tent lashed to the stage with strong ropes. The presence of the soldiers upon the church tower under a tent has caused a considerable amount of speculation amongst the gossips as to the precise object of their business, and numerous conclusions, each different, have come to on the subject, some of the 'knowing ones' declaring that in their belief the Queen (of course as head of the country), is going to war with America, and of course wants to know the roads to cut off the supplies of the enemy and prevent their troops marching through the country!

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 11 May 1872

FAIRFORD PARISH CLERKSHIP - To the Editor

Dear Sir

Allow me through the medium of your valuable columns to endeavour to contradict an impression, which I think rests upon the minds of most people here, namely, that I made application for the office of Parish Clerk, rendered vacant by the illness of the late holder of that office (whose recent decease we now have to deplore). Now of course there would be nothing unjustifiable in making such an application under ordinary circumstances. But I am accused of a sacrifice of principle by so doing, in that for a long time I had been an attendant of a Dissenting place of worship but now attend Church. This seems a sore point. Many who it seems to me have the least reason for so doing; accuse me of having taken this step solely for the purpose of attaining the office in question. Now the very fact of my having made no application for the same either by word or letter should make it apparent at once that I was not influenced by any such motive. My reason for having taken this step I hold no man has a right to call in question. I write this as well for the enlightenment of those whose good opinion I respect and trust shall ever maintain as for the discomfiture of those whose meanness has been made manifest by their exultation over my seeming failure in attaining to an office for which in reality, as already stated, I have made no application whatever. I am, dear sir

Yours faithfully

A E Caldicott Fairford May 2nd

North Wilts Herald 26 October 1872

FIRE at Fairford House

On Tuesday morning, about half-past six o'clock, the inhabitants of Fairford were alarmed by the ringing of the fire-bell, and the cry of 'Fire! Fire! Fire!' a fire having been discovered raging in the loft and stables belonging to the house occupied by Capt David Archer, situate in the Market Place. The members of Fairford Fire Brigade quickly brought their engine to the spot; in fact the burning premises were only a few yards distant from the fire-engine house. There being an abundant supply of water (the premises abutting upon the river Coln) the engine was soon got to work, and by the exertions of the brigade and some of the inhabitants, who wrought with a hearty good will, the fire was confined to the building in which it originated, but we regret to say that a valuable pony, the property of Capt Archer, and usually ridden by Mrs Archer, was suffocated in the stable before the fire was discovered. The origin of the fire is a mystery. It appears from examination of the premises to have begun in the pony-stable, and proceeded upwards to the loft over, in which was a quantity of straw which had been put in only the day previously. Mr Archer and family were away from home at the time, and no one had been upon the premises, it is believed, from the time that the groom left the stable about seven p.m. the previous day. Various conjectures as to the cause of the fire are hazarded; one being the pony caused it by pawing the ground and so producing combustion of the straw. We hear the buildings are insured. The damage done is about £60.