

Fairford Flyer

No 48

January 2023

FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

A Happy New Year to all FHS Members

As the Fairford Flyer is now well established as a monthly issue, we will revert to the pre-Covid title of 'Fairford Flyer' but it will remain a monthly feature.

FHS Meetings 2023

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

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

February 23: a 4th Thursday daytime meeting on Sport by Edwin Cuss

March 16: Kathy Haslam on Kelmscott Manor

April 20: Royal Progression 1535 by Alan Pilbeam

May 18 Bill King on a topic to be decided

June 15 AGM to be arranged

The Railway is coming to Fairford!

On January 15 1873 the East Gloucestershire Railway from Witney to Fairford was officially opened, 150 years ago. This issue is devoted to that topic mainly through the medium of newspaper cuttings

The East Gloucestershire Railway Company was formed in 1861 after previous plans for an extension beyond Witney failed. The GWR then withdrew their support for the railway to run between Cheltenham to Andoversford and thence along the Coln Valley to Lechlade. In 1864 a well-attended meeting was held in Fairford Crofts Hall. After much discussion the Rev T Morton on behalf of the vicar stated 'that the proposed East Gloucestershire Railway (EGR) is of essential importance to the town of Fairford and its neighbourhood as affording a direct communication with London as well as Oxford ...' James Cornwall Esq proposed 'that petitions in favour of the line be presented to both Houses of Parliament, and be signed by the Chairman on behalf of this meeting'. The EGR drew up new plans and the revised bill was passed in 1864 and an 1867 Act allowed extension of the time to complete the railway.

Oxford Times 3 June 1865

Fairford East Gloucestershire Railway: We are given to understand that compensation for growing crops is being rapidly assessed in the part of this parish through which the line is intended to pass, and that before many days have elapsed the picks and shovels of the navvies will be at work to the no small delight of the inhabitants and neighbourhood.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette 8 August 1865

To the Editor of the Cheltenham Journal - East Gloucestershire Railway

Sir, Editors are supposed to know everything and in that belief I write to ask you to be so good as to inform your readers when we may expect to see some preparations for the construction of the above railway. On 31st March the Chairman informed the meeting, over which he presided at Cheltenham, that the portion of the line

between Fairford and Witney would be open in nine or twelve months. It is now August 7th and there are no men or materials in preparation in my part of the country for making the way, and myself and neighbours are very anxious to know when we expect to see both.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant

A SMALL SHAREHOLDER Grafton, near Lechlade 7 August 1865

Gloucester Journal 13 July 1867

East Gloucestershire Railway: We understand that the Company has commenced legal proceedings against a large number of shareholders in this town and neighbourhood, in accordance with what was stated at the sixth half yearly meeting, which was held at Witney on the 29th March last, for non payment of calls; and as the shareholders feel themselves aggrieved at the delay which has taken place in making the line, and by the apparent breach of faith between themselves and the directors, they have resolved almost unanimously to contest the matter at law, and force the directors either to at once proceed with making the line, or else abandon the project altogether. From a Correspondent

Cheltenham Examiner June 24 1868

East Gloucestershire Railway: We understand that the works on the portion of the line between Witney and Fairford were commenced last week, the whole of the land having been handed over into the hands of the contractor.

Faringdon Advertiser Vale of the White Horse Gazette 27 November 1869

East Gloucestershire Railway: Some indications of the construction of the above line in this locality are at last being verified. A wooden house has just been erected close to the turnpike road midway between Alvescott and Blackbourton. This is intended as a workshop and is put up in readiness for the men to arrive in this neighbourhood. A ponderous engine (taking 20 horses to convey it to its destination) has been placed on the portion of the line between Fairford and Lechlade; so great was its weight that the arches of many of the bridges over it were propped underneath, as a precaution against the excessive and unusual pressure put upon them.

Witney Express and Oxfordshire and Midland Counties Herald 24 August 1871

East Gloucestershire Railway: As great dissatisfaction has existed in Fairford for some time past respecting the proposed site of the Station for the above railway, the matter is to be taken into consideration at a meeting at the Bull Hotel this day (Thursday 24 August).

Cirencester Times and Cotswold Advertiser 25 September 1871

East Gloucestershire Railway: The works on this line are rapidly being proceeded with. A large number of masons are now employed erecting the station, the walls are nearly breast high already.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 18 November 1871

Accident on the East Gloucestershire Railway: An accident occurred on this line on Thursday last, to a youth named Charles Brind, aged 15 who is employed on the works. It appears that Brind with 6 or 8 other workmen, was going down the line with a load of stone, about half a ton, on a trolley, a kind of truck propelled by hand, when for some purpose he attempted to get off, and in doing so fell on the rails, the wheels passing over his legs, the flesh of one calf being severely lacerated. The poor lad was at once conveyed home, and Dr Iles was promptly in attendance and rendered every necessary assistance. Fortunately no bones are broken but both legs are much injured

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 2 March 1872

From the East Gloucestershire Railway 16th half yearly report: ... The Fairford station is about a mile from the town, and easily reached by a good and level road. A wide gateway gives entrance to a broad space by the side of the rail, well adapted for the evolutions of carriages, vans etc. The passenger station is a building of moderate size and neat design, roofed with brick tiles. The interior remains to be completed. When finished it will contain waiting rooms, ticket offices and provide rooms for the officials. There is a long shunting space

behind this, with a goods shed, built in character with the passenger station, and also roofed with brick tiles. The line itself consists of a single track; and immediately after the station passes under a bridge....

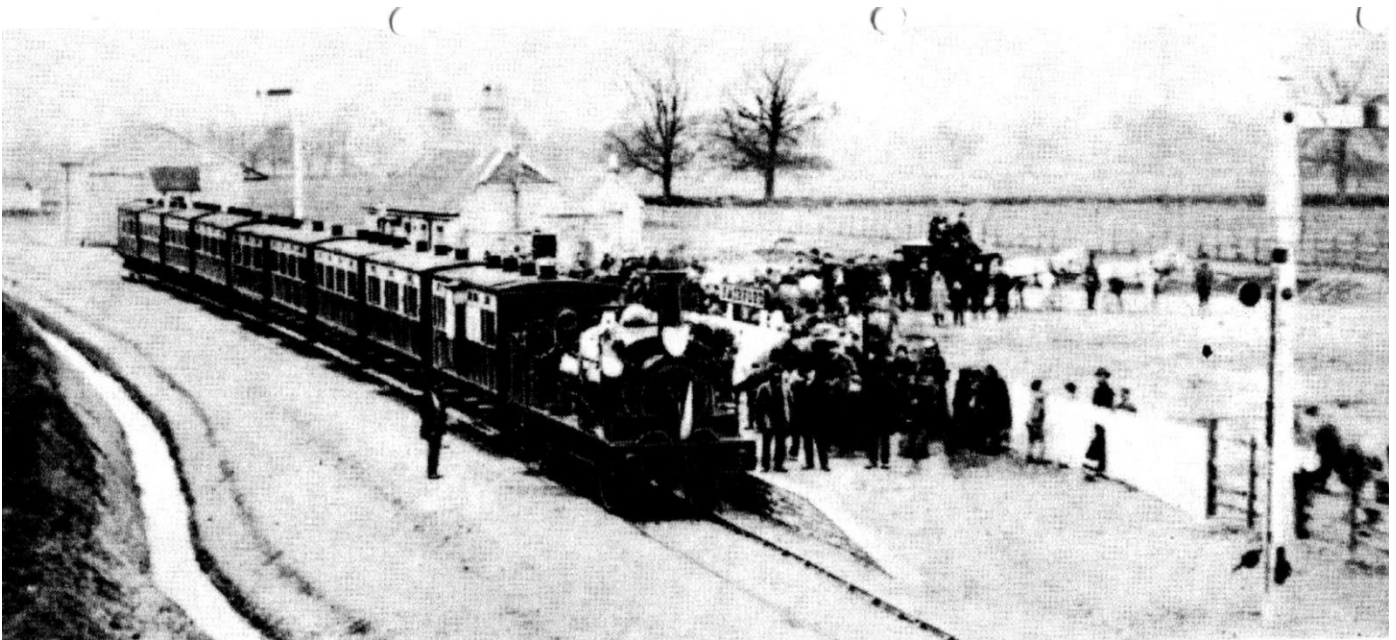
... it is estimated the line will open midsummer...

North Wilts Herald 14 December 1872

This line was inspected by a party of officials belonging to the Great Western Railway on Wednesday last. A special train was sent from Witney, containing Mr Tyrell, Mr Richards, engineer, Mr Dixon, agent for Messrs Wythen & Co., the contactors, and a number of others. The line is reported as being in good working order, and it is understood that the Government inspection will take place in a few days, so that it is now confidently believed the line will be opened for traffic at the commencement of the new year. Mr J R Raymond Barker, director of the East Gloucestershire Railway, accompanied by a party of officials the whole distance from Witney. On arriving at Fairford station they were entertained with a cold collation laid out in one of the waiting rooms, by host Gibbs, of the Bull Hotel, Fairford. We understand the return journey was made from Fairford to Witney in a few minutes under half an hour.

Witney Express and Oxfordshire and Midland Counties Herald 2 January 1873

Colonel Yolland, the Board of Trade Inspector, went over the East Gloucestershire line from Witney to Fairford on Thursday last. Though expressing a general approval of the manner in which the works have been executed, he pointed out defects in the signal arrangements and the points, especially at the Witney Station. The alteration of these has entailed a delay of several days, as the Government certificate will not be given until the Inspector's requirements are complied with. It was hoped the line would be ready for the opening on New Year's Day, but the delay thus occasioned its postponement to next week. There will be no additional trains, the present service being extended to Fairford instead of terminating at Witney. The train will run from Fairford to London in about three hours, and to Oxford in about an hour and ten minutes.



Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 18 January 1873

...The auspicious morning at length arrived and was ushered in by a merry peal from the church bells. As will be seen by timetables, the first train leaves at 7.30am and notwithstanding the somewhat early hour many were tempted by the idea of being among the first travellers by the East Gloucestershire line to take the trip. Amongst the passengers we noticed Sir M E Hicks Beach, Bart M P and the Rev A Kent, Coln St Aldwyns, J R Raymond Barker Esq and the Hon Miss Moreton etc, etc. All the other trains throughout the day were crowded and we think we may say the majority of our townfolk availed themselves of the opportunity so long looked for, of being enabled to ride on a veritable railroad so nearly connected with Fairford. Everyone seemed in holiday humour, shops were closed and business generally suspended, the church bells ringing at intervals throughout the day. Mr Gibbs, with his usual spirit, ran a bus to and fro, to meet the several trains,

drawn by four spanking greys, the 'ribbons' being in the hands of Mr F Gibbs, junior. This equipage was liberally placed at the disposal of the public for the day, and not a few availed themselves of Mr Gibbs' kindness. All the arrangements of the day were carried out in a most excellent manner and gave general satisfaction, and, happily nothing occurred calculated to mar the day's enjoyment. We must not forget to mention that through the kind interposition of J R Raymond Barker Esq a number of the schoolchildren (both girls and boys) were provided with a luncheon from the Bull Hotel, and started off on a trip to Witney, where they enjoyed their luncheon and returned to Fairford in high glee at the kind consideration which was thus shown them. A gratuitous luncheon was also provided for the ringers at the Bull Hotel. In the evening a party was held at Croft Hall to commemorate the event which passed off very enjoyably. Mr Gibbs has been appointed by the Railway Company as an agent for parcels delivery. All parcels being left at the Office, Bull Hotel, will be promptly dispatched without extra charge. A bus will run for the convenience of passengers at a nominal charge.

Banbury Guardian 5 August 1873

EAST GLOUCESTERSHIRE—OXFORD TO FAIRFORD.

DOWN TRAINS.			WEEK DAYS.						SUNDAY			UP TRAINS.			WEEK DAYS.									
Dis Mls	STATIONS.		A.	M.	A.	M.	P.	M.	P.	M.				Dis Mls	STATIONS.		A.	M.	A.	M.	P.	M.	P.	M.
	Oxford	.....	8	50	12	10	4	35	8	40	..	..	..		Fairford	.....	7	30	10	15	2	40	6	45
	Yarnton	.....	9	0	12	20	4	45	8	50	..	..	..		Lechlade	.....	7	37	10	23	2	48	6	55
	Eynsham	.....	9	7	12	27	4	52	8	57	..	..	..		Alvescot	.....	..	10	32	2	57	7	4	
	Southleigh	.....	9	13	12	23	4	58	9	3	..	..	..		Bampton	.....	7	50	10	40	3	5	7	12
	Witney <i>Arrive</i>	....	9	20	12	40	5	5	9	10	..	..	..		Witney <i>Arrive</i>	....	7	59	10	50	3	15	7	22
	Witney <i>Depart</i>	....	9	22	12	42	5	7	9	12	..	..	..		Witney <i>Depart</i>	..	8	2	10	55	3	20	7	25
	Bampton	.....	9	32	12	52	5	17	9	22	..	..	..		Southleigh	.....	8	8	11	1	3	26	7	31
	Alvescot	.....	9	40	1	0	5	25	9	30	..	..	..		Eynsham	.....	8	14	11	8	3	33	7	38
	Lechlade	.....	9	50	1	10	5	35	9	40	..	..	..		Yarnton	.....	8	25	11	17	3	42	7	47
	Fairford	.....	10	0	1	20	5	45	9	50	..	..	..		Oxford	.....	8	35	11	25	3	50	7	55

Cheltenham Examiner 29 January 1873

Projected New Railway: The opening of the East Gloucester Railway from Witney to Fairford has revived the idea, which has long been mooted, of a connecting line between Cirencester and Fairford.

Witney Express and Oxfordshire and Midland Counties Herald 21 August 1873

Fairford Accident: A singular accident, happily unattended by any personal injury, occurred at the Railway Station on Saturday evening last. It seems that, previous to the arrival of the down train at 5.35pm, two or three trucks had been shunted off the main line; it is said from the force of the strong wind which was blowing. The driver in charge of the engine, who has recently been stationed here as assistant driver, thought he could easily propel the truck, and allowed the engine to run against it. Unfortunately this was the means of throwing the engine off the line, and the ballast was ploughed up for several yards before it could be brought to a stand. The steam crane was at once sent for, but on arrival proved useless. The engine was ultimately got on the metals by the assistance of a screw-jack, and some planks, and by putting on steam. Two or three of the wheels are said to be injured, and otherwise it has sustained considerable damage. There was no hindrance to the traffic.

Oxfordshire Weekly News 3 June 1874

Slaughter of lambs by a train: on Saturday se'nnight a flock of lambs which got on the East Gloucestershire line was run over by the last train from Witney to Fairford, and a considerable number killed - said to be upwards of 50. It is reported that the ewes were placed in a field on one side of the line and the lambs on the other, and the bleating of the former attracted the lambs towards the sound, and they found their way through the fence.

Sadly, the line from Fairford to Witney closed on 18 June 1962.