

Fairford Flyer

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FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

FHS Meetings 2023

All meetings are at 7.30 pm in the Farmor Room, Fairford Community Centre on the third Thursday of the month, (except for February)

April 20 - Henry VIII's Royal Progression through Gloucestershire 1535 by Alan Pilbeam. This will be a talk and slide presentation

May 18 - Bill King - 'The Home Front in World War Two'

June 15 - AGM and Items from the FHS Archive - Committee members' choice

We are at present planning the programme for next season's meetings so we would appreciate it if anyone has any ideas or requests please let us know.

Tomb Trail 2

Owing to the success of the tomb trails in St Mary's churchyard last year, our Chairman Chris has devised a route for a new selection of interesting former Fairford residents buried in the section north of the Church to start in May. If you are interested please let us know at enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk It is always difficult to know what day and time would suit people best, so please let us know your preferred day and time. More tours are also planned of the original Tomb Trail in the churchyard south of the Church.

Kelmscott past present and future project- March meeting



Postcard - The Back Yard, Kelmscott by Marie Spartelli Stillman

William Morris described Kelmscott as a 'Heaven on Earth'. He loved the Manor house and adjoining farm buildings as a work of true craftsmanship, totally unspoilt and unaltered, and in harmony with the surrounding countryside. Kathy Haslam gave an interesting talk on the £6 million project of the restoration of Kelmscott Manor, half funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the rest by other donors. Inside the House, spaces have been re-created as they would have been known to the Morris family. Every placement of furniture and objects, together with each new paint scheme or choice of wallpaper, has been informed by visual or written sources consulted during extensive research. For example, using photographs as comparison the extensive architectural surround of the fireplace in William Morris's bedroom has been completely refurbished to its

original state. William Morris loved thatch and an outbuilding has been newly thatched to represent this. The peculiar 'Dragon or 'Fafnir' hedge is being reshaped to its former glory.

Kelmscott Manor is open from April 1st to the end of October from Thursday to Saturday.

This was the first meeting using the new screen. The quality of picture was excellent however we now know that PowerPoint slide space has to be fully used and small text is difficult to see from the back of the room, also the microphone system needs a bit of attention but it should be rectified by the next meeting. Thank you to everyone who helped with the chairs.

A recent donation to the FHS Archive from the United States of America



This apron was sent from the niece of Priscilla Ann Meixler of Jay, New York, who found this amongst her aunt's possessions after she died in 2022. Priscilla would have been 16 in 1962 so it is likely that her father was stationed at RAF Fairford with the US Air Force in 1962. All the signatures are of females so it was probably the American wives who got together to make this. It was kind of Heather Meixler (the niece) to take the trouble of sending it all the way from Charlottesville, Virginia.

A further note on dovecotes

by Eric Jones

Although there is no direct evidence of the management of dovecotes in Fairford, it is interesting to note that historically pigeons were used for several purposes. Their dung or guano incorporated saltpetre, a constituent of gunpowder. Accordingly George I decreed that pigeon dung was Crown property. It was also employed as fertiliser, until undercut from 1847 by the large-scale import of Peruvian guano (seabird droppings) - coincidentally by the family firm of the late Nigel Gibbs, a Fairford resident.

John Read tells a nice tale about when he and Jane visited a French manor house which had a very large dovecote. The story was that a prospective mother-in-law would assess the wealth of a potential son-in-law's family by counting its dovecote's nest holes. This was quite clever: the aspiring groom might temporarily drive in livestock belonging to a friend or neighbour but could not fake the number of holes. They were fixtures, like the windows and hearths that English governments taxed.

How many tures can you find?

by Eric Jones

The question appears in the town guide to Stow-on-the-Wold, which is criss-crossed by alleyways. A 'tuer' is Gloucestershire-speak for a narrow walled alley, at its most typical leading into a market square and making the counting and management of sheep easier than it might otherwise have been. In that case, the answer for Fairford may be none. But I live in hope and think the question as posed may be misleading.

Fairford does not contain much along typical 'tuer' lines but the alley from the Croft into the High Street may have served the same end. Inn yards may have done so too, and so may the little alleyway next to the Fish Bar. What we seem to lack is the name 'tuer' or ture.

As soon as one looks, tuers can be found in many Cotswold towns and villages, sometimes persisting today on road signs under quaint spellings such as ture, tuery, tchure, tewer, chure and so forth. We can discount the long 'tures' reconstructed by Natural England above Stanway - they had the quite distinct purpose of getting sheep down to water from hilltop pastures. The chief concentration in the sense of alleyways lies in a triangle between Banbury, Shipston-on-Stour and Stow. Shipston was presumably sheep's

town and an example from there is illustrated. The nearest to Fairford seem to be those only half-a-dozen miles away at Broughton Poggs.

Local antiquarians have tried to interpret the variously named alleyways in towns and villages, coming up with a range of undocumented origins such as following the curves of the old ox furrows over which settlements were built. Alternatively bends in the alleys have been suggested as a means of preventing sheep from making a dash for the light at the far end. Unlikely as that may sound, there were places where shops put sheets over their windows on market days to prevent rams barging their own reflections. Tuers are sometimes related to aisles in churches and there are muddles with respect to Old French for abattoir (butchery and the verb to kill).

Alleys were used for many purposes, not all mutually exclusive. Sheep-farming was so widespread they may have been employed everywhere for animal management, just not under a dialect name and its eccentric spellings. They exist far outside the Cotswolds, although the distant ones were hedged rather than walled. 'How many tuers can you find?' may therefore be a linguistic question relating to local dialect rather than a topographical one referring to features on the ground.

In that case Fairford may have had 'tuers' like any small town with a market for sheep, though not called anything so fanciful. My guess is that there may have been holding pens in the obscure area east of the marketplace, which anciently was not built up. I seem to recall June Lewis-Jones mentioning a

horn window, i.e. pre-glass, surviving as late as 1945 in the inn called the Swan, where the Co-op now is. How much more archaic can one get? And how many traces of past activity lie unrecognised in Fairford's streets?



Newspaper Cuttings

North Wilts Herald 9 August 1880

FIRE: What might have been a very serious and destructive fire was narrowly averted, on Wednesday night last, on the premises of Mr Cowley, draper known as London House [now Mr Earnest]. Mr Cowley had closed the shop at the usual time in the evening and saw "all safe". He had occasion to go to the shop again taking with him a benzoline lamp. Sometime afterwards he noticed a smell of fire, but thought it proceeded from the kitchen; not feeling easy Mr Cowley went to ascertain the cause and was alarmed to see through the door to the dwelling house, which was fortunately open, that the shop was full of smoke. Mr Cowley lost not a moment in raising an alarm and promptly dashed a pail of water on the fixtures which had just burst into flames. A few neighbours were speedily on the spot and the fixtures were promptly cleared of their rapidly smouldering and charred contents, which were submitted to a good drenching of water, and all danger of a further spread of fire was thus happily prevented. Of course a considerable quantity of the stock was more or less damaged. Mr Cowley wishes heartily to thank all those who lent such prompt and ready aid in averting a calamity, the consequences of which to himself and others might have been most serious.

Witney Express and Oxfordshire and Midland Counties Herald Thursday 31 July 1879

THE BRIGHTON EXCURSION: On Saturday and Monday evenings last the Excise Office at the Corn Exchange was visited by some access of people, whose object was to have a personal interview with the Supervisor - not with the view of contributing to Her Majesty's revenue (a matter which the British taxpayer is

never in a hurry about) but rather to obtain certain bits of coloured cardboard, which should authorise them to travel to Brighton and back on Tuesday, in the carriages of the Great Western Railway, for the sum of seven shillings. A local Committee had (it will be remembered) succeeded in inducing the Directors to put on a special train for the day in question by guaranteeing a certain number, and this number was far exceeded. By previous arrangement, all those who took their tickets from the Committee had carriages specially reserved for them, and made up parties of eight for the separate compartments, which were duly labelled and kept for them both going and returning. The Committee travelled in a saloon carriage. The Company ran the train from Fairford stopping at all stations on the Witney and E. G. line, and at Oxford and Reading. The Fairford train arrived at Witney about 5.30, and ten minutes later the additional carriages were coupled, and the train steamed away. A large number of persons accompanied their friends to the station, to see them off, and amongst the excursionists were two cartloads of holiday folks from Ramsden, who must have got up tolerably early to arrive in time. The party reached Reading at 7.10, and Kensington about 9, and from thence a Brighton engine took them rapidly down to the Queen of Watering Places, where they speedily dispersed – some making their way to the Aquarium, some to the Pavilion and some to the beach where those who cared to do so enjoyed a dip in the sea whilst others went on it. The day was extremely fine and pleasant, with a cool breeze blowing, and the party enjoyed their trip. The return journey was commenced at 7pm and the train reached Witney at 12.15. Such were the admirable arrangements of the superintendent, Mr Smitheman, that there was not a single hitch, and everything was carried out, from the hour of starting to the hour of returning, in the most satisfactory way. About 200 persons went from Witney and about 500 from the other places.

Stroud News and Gloucestershire Advertiser Friday 20 August 1880

THE PROFESSIONAL IMPOSTER AGAIN: It may surprise our Chalford readers to know that the professional gentleman, who so impudently entered the church in this village a few Sundays ago, and presented a begging petition to the officiating clergyman, has undergone his term of ten days imprisonment, and has derived such benefit from his incarceration that he is now undergoing a further term of two months' hard labour for felony. It appears that on his release from Gloucester Gaol, he made his way to Fairford, where, seeing an opportunity to steal a watch, afforded him by the absence of the watchmaker Mr Beale from his shop in London Street, in that town, he walked behind the counter and put the time-piece into his pocket. As he had completed the robbery, a resident in the town, named Mr Simpson, happened to be passing, and observing a strange man in such a strange place, entered the shop and asked for Mr Beale, when the man replied that he was engaged; and the intruder walked out of the shop, and proceeded in the direction of Lechlade. The police were soon on his track, however, and within a very few minutes he was safely lodged in a cell at the police station, where he gave the name of George Cooper, and said he was a printer – this clearly showing that he has more than one string to his deceptive bow. Here he affected a sudden illness, and would have caused the constable a deal of trouble, but for the determination of the sergeant in charge to “have no nonsense there,” which convinced him that he had better recover. The performance of the next item on his speculative programme will undoubtedly be watched with interest.

A description of George Cooper appeared in the Police Gazette

Description of a man giving the name of GEORGE COOPER, a tramping painter [or printer], committed to H M Prison, Gloucester, for 2 months on 14th instant for larceny: - he is 46 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches high, brown hair, whiskers and moustache, slight pock marked, and medium build; dressed in round black hard hair, blue necktie, black ribbed cloth frock coat, vest of the same material, dark grey trousers, and light lace-up boots, states he is a native of Dublin. Information to Mr Supt Wood, Cirencester, or to Sergeant Mason, Police Station, Fairford, Gloucestershire – Bow-street, August 16

