

Fairford Flyer

No 57

November 2023

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 January and February 2024)

Membership fees were due in September and remain at £5. Visitors are always welcome at £3.

FHS now has 125 members.

Thank you to everyone who helped with the chairs at last month's talk. We are working with FCC to improve the sound system.

2023/2024 Programme

November 16 - Samantha Harper on 'How to read a Medieval Church: Church and community in Medieval England. Samantha is writing a book on the subject above and has previously talked to FHS on the Tudor Court Rolls which gave us an interesting insight on Henry VII's and Henry VIII's connections to Fairford.

There is no meeting in December.

January 18 2-4pm - afternoon meeting. This year we are trying an afternoon meeting with tea and cake, displays, publications for sale and visits to the Archive Room will be on offer

February 15 10am, Edwin Cuss morning meeting - Along the road through Fairford

March 21 7.30pm David Aldred on Hailes Abbey and the Mystery of the Holy Blood

April 18 - Chris Hobson on the patients of the Retreat Asylum

May 16 - to be arranged

June 20 - AGM Social 20th anniversary



In November we remember those that have died in conflicts around the world. Recently FHS had an enquiry from the Guards Museum in London about Ernest Morse of the Coldstream Guards who is commemorated on the Fairford War Memorial. The Museum has his medals and is writing up biographies of their former Guardsmen. We were pleased to send the information that we had on Ernest Morse and supply a copy of our book 'Fairford's Local Heroes' which gives information on all those named on the War Memorial and others from Fairford who took part in the two World Wars. This book is available from the FHS at a special Member's price of just £5.

October 19 - Nick Humphris - The early development of Concorde at Filton.



Nick Humphris gave members an interesting and informative talk about his time at Filton working on the development of Concorde. He gave background on the flying test beds that were used including the Avro Vulcan which tested the Olympus engines.

Nick specifically worked on the de-icing systems, air intake controls, the fuel development system and finally on project management. The companies that worked on the project were BAC and Aerospatiale and for the engines Bristol Siddeley/Rolls-Royce and Snecma. He then explained

what happened on the fatal crash which led to its withdrawal from service. However, it was a masterpiece of British/French engineering of which we should always be proud and especially with its link to Fairford.

A visit to Hursley, Hampshire by Chris Hobson

At the end of September when returning from a family holiday in Hampshire we decided to return home via Hursley, a little village near Winchester which was some distance out of our way back to Fairford. So why the detour to Hursley? The answer is that Reverend John Keble, the well-known clergyman, poet and co-founder of the Oxford Movement is buried in the churchyard there along with his wife and sister, having spent his last days at Bournemouth.

Although born and raised in Fairford John Keble never held an official position in St Mary's church. He was the curate of the church of St Michael and St Martin at Eastleach Martin from 1815 to 1825 and then a curate to his father the Reverend John Keble senior at his church of St John the Baptist in Coln St Aldwyns from 1825 to 1835. However, John and his father and brother Thomas did officiate in 45 baptisms, 51 weddings and 62 burial services at Fairford between 1775 and 1831. The younger John performed a small number of these services possibly due to the difference of personal views with Fairford's vicar the Reverend Francis William Rice on the style of church services.

While living in Fairford John Keble spent much of his time at Oxford University in his role as Professor of Poetry and was first offered the living at Hursley in 1825 by his pupil and friend William Heathcote, baronet. However, it was not until 1835 after the death of his father that John felt able to take up his position as the



vicar of All Saints church. The church had been largely rebuilt by the Heathcote family in 1752 but it did not meet John Keble's high standards and ten years after he arrived at Hursley he started to make plans to build a new church. This was finally achieved in 1848, being largely funded by the substantial profits from Keble's published works. The church is large for such a small village as Hursley and has two aisles that extend to almost the full length of the church. Oliver Cromwell's son, Richard has a memorial in this church. Charlotte Yonge who wrote 'The Heir of Redclyffe' was confirmed by John Keble and was inspired by him in her writings which helped spread the word of the Oxford Movement.

John Keble faithfully served the inhabitants of Hursley while continuing his academic work until his death on 29 March 1866 at the age of 74. He was buried near the south door of Hursley church and on 11 May his wife Charlotte (who had been in very poor health for many years) also died and was buried under a similar grave stone by the side of her husband. The graves are situated close to the large brick-built mausoleum of the Heathcote family in which 38 members of the family are interred. Set into the floor of the church close to the altar is a brass memorial commemorating John Keble's 35 years as vicar.

Immediately after John's burial a group of his friends met in William Heathcote's mansion to plan a memorial which resulted in the building of Keble College in Oxford in 1870. Keble's friend and co-founder of the Oxford Movement Edward Bouverie Pusey took a major role in the founding of Keble College. Pusey also had a connection to Fairford as his wife Maria Catherina was the daughter of John Raymond Barker of Fairford Park.



Interesting Discovery: Fairford's connection with a shocking national event by Chris Hobson

For many years I have been transcribing the wills of Fairford's past residents together with those who had some close connection with Fairford. The wills date from 1500 to 1858 and include people from all levels of society. Many of the wills offer little useful information about the day-to-day lives of the deceased but can often be useful to build family trees. Occasionally something really surprising turns up!

I recently finished transcribing the wills of two of the Raymond Barker family, James and his wife Mary. At first I was unsure if James was actually one of 'our' Raymond Barkers as he lived in Everton near Liverpool and Fairford is not mentioned in the will but his bequests to his brothers and sisters proved that he was one of the 14 children of John Raymond Barker (died 1827) and his first wife Martha (died 1796). James left most of his property to his wife but a sentence in the will intrigued me because it ended with a bequest "*for the use and benefit of her three sons James William and Henry*". Did this mean that Mary had been married before? So I started to do a bit of digging and discovered that James and Mary were married on 14 June 1813 in Thornton-in-Craven, a small village in North Yorkshire. The marriage register stated that James was a resident of Fairford and Mary was from Liverpool but was staying in Thornton-in-Craven. The register was signed by '*Mary Neville alias Bellingham*' and a quick search found a reference to a Mary Ann Neville who married John James Bellingham in Ireland in 1803. The next search revealed a startling result.

I started an online search on Ancestry.co.uk for John James Bellingham and the first hit showed that he had died in 1812 but the second hit was from the Middlesex Criminal Register which had the word '*murder*' next to his name! Another search soon revealed that John James Bellingham was the man who had shot and killed Spencer Perceval on 11 May 1812, the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated whilst in office. After a short trial in which Bellingham had convinced himself he would be set free, he was found guilty and hanged at Newgate Gaol on 18 May. His body was taken to St Bartholomew's Hospital for dissection as at that time it was mainly the bodies of murderers that could be legally used in anatomical demonstrations.

By 1812 Spencer Perceval had become one of the most unpopular Prime Ministers that Britain has ever had. His economic policies had virtually ruined trade with Britain's major trading partners France, the Netherlands and the United States of America. John Bellingham was by no means the only person who wanted Perceval out of office, by his death if necessary. There was speculation that others had encouraged Bellingham to kill the Prime Minister but he needed no encouragement as his delusional belief in the injustice that he had suffered and his absolute refusal to accept any blame for his own actions was enough for Bellingham to take the action that he did. During the trial his defence counsel tried to reduce Bellingham's sentence on the grounds of insanity. John's father had spent some time in the notorious London Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam) but the plea was dismissed by the judge. John James Bellingham was certainly unstable, a poor businessman and perhaps a fantasist but he was not insane.

John James Bellingham had a short, unhappy and most unusual life. He was born in St Neots in 1769 to a good family and was well educated. After the family moved to London he became first an accountant, then a merchant specialising in trading for iron and timber in Russia. During his second visit to Russia in 1804 he was arrested for non-payment of debts to a broker and spent five years in prison in Archangel and St Petersburg until he was released and returned to England in December 1809. He never recovered from what he saw as his gross mistreatment in Russia, claiming that he was completely innocent and demanding "justice and compensation". He spent the next three years attempting to claim compensation and apologies from the Russian and British governments for his debts and the damage to his reputation. His financial problems put his wife and children into near poverty and he neglected and deserted them as he spent all his energy trying to get what he saw as 'justice' for himself. The murder of Spencer Perceval was the final act of Bellingham's 'crusade' to address what he saw as a gross injustice on the part of the British and Russian governments and he apparently had no thought for what this would do to his family.

After Bellingham's death a large amount of money was raised by public subscription to support his wife and family. His wife Mary tried to distance herself from the scandal and reverted to her maiden name of Neville as

did her three sons. It is inconceivable that James Raymond Barker did not know she was the widow of a convicted murderer; in fact John James Bellingham's cousin Ann Billett was one of the witnesses to James and Mary's marriage in 1813 just over a year after Bellingham's execution. As could be expected the wills of James, who died in 1832, and his wife Mary, who died in 1853, make no mention of the connection to Bellingham. One wonders if any of this became public knowledge in Fairford.

Newspaper Cuttings

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 17 March 1882

TEA ! TEA ! TEA !
CHEAPER THAN EVER.
GOOD FAMILY - - 1/- 1/4 1/6 and 2/- per lb.
WELL-KNOWN BLENDS 2/4 2/6 2/8 and 3/- per lb.
W. COBBETT ARKELL,
FAIRFORD

North Wilts Herald Friday 3 March 1883

CONSIDERABLE EXCITEMENT was caused in the neighbourhood of the Retreat, on Tuesday last, by the fact of a hardly-pressed fox having most unwisely taken refuge in its grounds. The meet was at the Magpies, and a find was effected at Fursey Hill. Reynard made for Horcutt Hill, thence across the river, but having been turned, was forced back again across the stream at Horcott The pack being in hot pursuit, "any port in a storm" was evidently Reynard's motto, and, not having taken the precaution of not looking before leaping, he landed himself in the garden aforesaid; whence owing to the sunk fence which he easily cleared from the outside, escape became impossible, and Reynard speedily fulfilled his destiny, being broken up on the tennis lawn, after a brief scurry round the scrubs.

In no way does FHS condone fox hunting, however does appreciate the journalistic style of writing of those days.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 28 October 1882

At Fairford, the deluge of rain and snow of Tuesday following so closely on the heavy downpours of Saturday and Sunday last, proved a source of great inconvenience and discomfort, not to say any actual loss in many instances. May houses in Milton Street were flooded, and the water came pouring down the street like a river, the road for several hours being impassable for pedestrians for several hours, the water being several inches deep even on the footway. On the abatement of the storm, however, the water quickly subsided. Several houses in other parts of the town were flooded. On Wednesday train service were interrupted and no train could be got out until 2.30pm., and consequently the day mail to London which leaves by 10.20 am train was delayed until that hour. During the night the river had so risen to overflow, and a considerable volume of water found its way down Back Lane, flooding houses and stables to a considerable extent, Fortunately the river having been well cleared of weeds during the summer by Mr Gibbs, the course was tolerably free, and the water soon subsided much to the satisfaction of those who were suffering the effects of the temporary inundation. Round Castle Eaton, Marston and Kempford, the floods were much more extensive and serious, and several families have been compelled to leave their houses.