

Fairford Flyer No 59 January 2024



FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

FHS Meetings 2024

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.

2024 Programme

January 18 - 2-4pm an afternoon meeting. This year as an experiment we are trying an afternoon meeting with tea and cake, displays, publications for sale and visits to the Archive Room. We will need some idea of numbers so please email enquiry@faifordhistory.org.uk if you would like to attend. Thank you to those who have already contacted FHS. Visitors will not be charged but donations towards the refreshments would be appreciated.

February 15 - 10.30 am morning meeting - Edwin Cuss Along the road through Fairford. **Please note the later start time due to a previous class in the room**

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

April 18 - 7.30pm, Chris Hobson on the Retreat Asylum: the patients' story

May 16 - to be arranged

June 20 - AGM Social 20th anniversary of the FHS

Fairford Cub Scouts email from Kerrie

I help run Fairford Cub Scouts and we have been discussing with the Cubs ways they can help the local community. They were thinking about loneliness and bringing people together to reminisce, so we hope to arrange a community event in March for local people to attend, a 'Memories Cafe' where they can share their memories of Fairford and talk to other people about the past.

We wondered whether some members of the History Society might be willing to come to the event and maybe bring some information to share with the attendees and be there to chat and share knowledge and stories?

Any volunteers?

Family history enquiries

We get many family history enquiries during the year. Most recently FHS was able to put a Philip Cowley in Canada in touch with his fourth cousin one removed, Chris Barrett, an FHS member who is the Cowley family expert and has charge of a most comprehensive Cowley family tree. We were also able to send Philip a picture of the gravestone of Robert and Mary Cowley in the churchyard. We are often asked about burials in the churchyard and it is most rewarding to send the enquirer a picture of the family gravestone. However, some enquiries are not always so successfully answered.

Janet Benge contacted FHS re the Wall family. Her father was Richard James Wall (1917-1979) who was brought up by Ellen Wall (1894-1957) who later married William Winstone. Also in the family was brother Percival Phelps Wall (different father) and May Wall, daughter of Elizabeth Wall, Ellen's sister. She is looking for Elizabeth Wall. In the 1911 census Elizabeth is working as a housemaid with the Lees family in the High

Street, but cannot be traced after that. Janet happens to be visiting Fairford at the time of the January meeting so I have invited her to attend the tea meeting. So if anyone has further information on this family, Janet would be pleased to hear about it.

A HISTORY OF CROFT HOUSE: Part 1 by Chris Hobson

Croft House is one of the most impressive and distinctive houses in Fairford in terms of both its size and its architecture. The core of the house was built in the late 18th Century and was considerably enlarged over the next 100 years or so. The house was originally constructed for the Wane family who had lived in Fairford from at least the 1650s, several of whom had become successful grocers and mercers with some of them having made their fortunes in London before returning to Fairford.



The earliest specific mention in local newspapers of Croft House is in 1824 when Jonathan Wane died. Two years later his son, also Jonathan, an auctioneer and solicitor, contracted the Lechlade architect and builder Richard Pace to add single-storey bow-fronted wings to the house thereby almost doubling the frontage of the original building. In addition Pace also built a stylish pedimented porch, a new curved staircase and a service range behind the house. The 1841 census shows Jonathan Wane and his wife Elizabeth and their two servants living in the house; the Wane's three children having left home by then. In March 1842 Jonathan Wane died and three months

later the house was advertised in the Gloucester Journal and other newspapers for sale by private contract. The advertisements give detailed information on the property which included:

“ a handsome entrance hall with geometrical staircase, splendid lofty dining room, 25 feet by 16 feet, drawing room of the same dimensions, breakfast parlour, library, good airy bed chambers, store room, and useful attics, servants' hall and kitchens, water closet, good cellarage, with other apartments and offices embracing extensive domestic accommodation; stabling for four horses (with loose boxes), double coach-house, and other buildings, a greenhouse, and about an acre of garden and pleasure ground surrounded by lofty walls, and planted with choice shrubs and fruit trees in full bearing; the whole forming a very desirable residence for a family of respectability.”

The advertisement continues: “The above property is in perfect order and the mansion having been erected by the late proprietor for his own residence, expense was not spared to render it as complete as possible.”

As Jonathan junior had been born in 1779 it is more likely that it was his father who was responsible for the original building of the house.

Apparently no private contract sale was forthcoming so in September the house was advertised again, this time by Daniel Evans the auctioneer. Another advertisement in the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard announced that an auction would take place at the house on 10 November 1842 of “all the remainder of the household furniture” which gives an insight into the furnishing of a substantial family residence in Fairford in the early-Victorian period. The items for sale included:

“... mahogany dining, Pembroke, circular, and pillar tables; two sets of painted rosewood chairs, cane seats, and cushions; mahogany chairs, in hair seating; Brussels carpet and floor cloth; oak bureau and writing desk; three pier glasses, in gilt frames; handsome dressing glass, in mahogany frame; dressing tables, and mahogany circular basin stands; four-post, French and tent bedsteads and furniture; convenient double chest of drawers; exceedingly good barometer and thermometer; several prints, framed and glazed; thirty-hour clock, in oak case; block tin dish covers; kitchen requisites, etc.”

Soon after the death of her husband Elizabeth Wane left Fairford to live with her daughter in Chipping Norton and Croft House was eventually rented or leased out to Robert Thomas Mawley, a wealthy gentleman from London.

When Robert Mawley and his wife Marian moved into Croft House in 1843 they had two children but over the next six years three more were born in Fairford. The 1851 census shows Robert and Marian with four of the children (the youngest being two years old) and three domestic servants. Little is known of the Mawley's residency in Fairford apart from Robert being president of the town's Mechanics' Institute and that by 1861 (and probably much earlier) the Mawley family had moved to Halford House in Richmond, Surrey. In 1851 or 1852 Croft House became the leasehold property of John Dance, a druggist (i.e. pharmacist), stationer and grocer who had a shop in the Market Place and who built the Croft Hall meeting place across the road from Croft House. In May 1857 an advertisement appeared in the local newspapers announcing the sale of household furniture and a large amount of grocery provisions from Croft House, Croft Hall and a warehouse in Horcott. The reason for the sale was that John Dance had become bankrupt and was charged with fraud. A lengthy court case ensued when Dance and his partner Henry Wane accused each other of fraud and it was not until December 1859 that John Dance was eventually acquitted as not guilty of the charge.

Although by 1861 John Dance was trading from a shop in London Street he left Fairford in September 1862 by which time Doctor Albert Iles and his wife Ellen Matilda had moved into Croft House. Albert was the second son of Alexander Iles the proprietor of The Retreat asylum in Milton Street. From at least 1850 Albert and his family lived in Park Street in Cirencester where he had his general practice before moving back to Fairford. However, Albert's tenure of Croft House was short lived because on 12 July 1863 as he was making his way to his surgery in Cirencester he was accidentally thrown from his carriage in Dyer Street when his horse bolted and he died later the same day.

To be continued in the next Fairford Flyer.

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS

North Wilts Herald 6 January 1879

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR - Nothing, beyond the customary special gatherings and merry makings has occurred to mark this festive season, which may be said to have been a comparatively dull one. Thanks to the exertions of several ladies, who generally interest themselves in this matter, our noble old church has been neatly decorated with evergreens &c., and its appearance is, we think, an improvement on that of former years. The ringers too, must have a word of praise for their efforts in enlivening our dull winter evenings and for lending their aid to make this season a joyous one. Perhaps at no time since his lamented decease has the loss of Lord Dynevor, our ever-to-be-remembered vicar been so felt among the poor at this present time, for his lordship's generosity at this season of the year brought joy to many a home, and will not soon be forgotten.

North Wilts Herald 1 January 1881

AN ENTERTAINMENT of a pleasing nature, in connection with the Band of Hope, took place at the Croft's Chapel school room on the night of Monday, 27th inst., the chair being taken by the Rev A Redshaw. Programme:- Dr Quack and his patients, Mr and Mrs Wheeler, Thomas Webb and H Garlick; reading by the Chairman; song Miss Pritchard; sung 'Won't you come and join us', H Garlick; Recitations for prizes, 1st prize, Percy Simms; 2nd prize, H Garlick; special prizes awarded to Lizzie Dunn and Helen Law. The recitations were most commendable throughout. Spelling bee - 1st prize, C Burge; 2nd Thomas Benson, 3rd A Peyman; others coming to grief at the words thyme, palatial, crochet, dahlia &c., Song by Miss Pritchard. The attendance was very large and all were highly pleased with evening's entertainment.

1898 1 January Wilts and Glos Standard

MARKET DINNER - The New Year's market dinner was held on Tuesday last, in the large market-room at the Bull Hotel. The room was tastefully decorated by Mrs Busby for the occasion. The tables fairly groaned under the bountiful and excellent fare provided, which consisted of roast turkeys from the Cotswolds, roast beef and mutton from those good purveyors Messrs Perry and John Woodward, Christmas plum puddings and mince pies, followed by the famous cheese from the Dudgrove cheese factory of Mr Hewer, and some famous Dorset blue. Upwards of sixty sat down. Mr Tayler as usual took the chair and Mr Charles Barton the vice-chair. On the removal of the cloth, a few appropriate toasts were given, amongst them "The Queen and Royal Family", "The Visitors", "The Chairman," "Success to Agriculture" proposed by old Fairfordian Mr Charles Cowley, in a humorous and telling speech, his new word "agriculturalism" bringing the house down. Mr Hewer's name was coupled with the toast "The Town and Trade of Fairford," and was replied to by Mr E Chew, and that of the neighbouring town of Cirencester by Messrs Cook and Dike. Mr and Mrs Busby were heartily congratulated on the great success of this their second New Year's market dinner, and hopes were expressed that they might long continue to be at the head of the affairs at the Bull Hotel.

Wilts and Glos Standard 11 October 1884

MORRIS DANCERS AT FAIRFORD IN 1772 (From the Lady's Magazine)

About eight lads in new shirts, with their sleeves tied with ribbons, who were dancing near a public house on our right, made us stop the driver. Their legs were surrounded by bells with which they kept time to the fiddle not very well played. The quickness of their evolutions; the rosy tint of health on their cheeks brightened with the whiteness of their lines, did not contribute a little to their embellishment. We seemed pleased with their performances, and the farmer, who was their dancing master, was pleased at the compliments we lavished upon them. A short harangue in which he described his toil in bringing them to such perfection was concluded in presenting his hat to us. I dropped something in it, and did my cousin, but we both joined as went on wishing that the playhouses had adopted scenes of this kind in their representations of rural life.

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Raising eyebrows and cash



If Fairford parish church had eyebrows it would have raised them on New Year's Day when an unlikely assortment of travellers trotted through the town. The event was the annual bed race organised by Lechlade Lions. Among the push, pull or push/pull teams was this one — the Waiten Hill Wanderers, who claimed the prize for the best decorated bed. Proceeds of the event will go to the Lions and to Research into Cot Deaths.

From The Wiltshire Star and Cirencester Advertiser 9 January 1986