

Fairford Flyer

No 61

March 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. FHS now has 147 members. Six new members joined at the February meeting and we welcome them.

2023/2024 Programme

March 21: 7.30pm David Aldred on Hailes Abbey and the Mystery of the Holy Blood! Hailes Abbey was once one of the most significant pilgrimage sites in medieval England. Visitors flocked to see the Holy Blood of Hailes - a relic so prized that it was mentioned by Geoffrey Chaucer in The Canterbury Tales.

April 18: 7.30pm Chris Hobson on the Retreat Asylum: the patients' stories

May 16: 7.30pm Chris Peachey on Cotswold Walls: or why didn't I use my eyes when I was younger?

June 20: 7.30pm - AGM Social FHS 20th anniversary

Dates for your Diary

March 23 - Book launch of the River Coln Trail from Winchcombe to Lechlade a joint project by Fairford and Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome. 10.15 -12.30 at Fairford Community Centre, booklet retails at £5 but £3 at the book launch. All are welcome.

April 20 - Fairford Cubs 'Recollections Cafe' event at the Palmer Hall from 2-4 pm, free entry and refreshments. FHS will be supplying a display. All are welcome. See attached poster

May - A display in Fairford Library as part of 'Local and Community History Month'.

June 6-7 Fairford Festival - Edwin Cuss's photographs and FHS Display in the Heritage Room at Fairford Community Centre

... and for your information

July 19-21 Royal International Air Tattoo

August 9-11 FairFest

August 17-18 Fairford Steam Classic and Retro Show

September 28 Town Crier Competition

FHS New Archive Laptop

After 10 years of faithful service the FHS Archive laptop finally died just after Christmas. It had been kept going by our IT expert over the last few months and he was recommending the purchase of a new one, so we had been expecting it and everything was backed up. Luckily, we had enough FHS funds and the Committee approved the purchase a new laptop and this is the first Newsletter to be issued from it. So, for the last few weeks I have been transferring and updating files - getting used to it hasn't been as tortuous as I feared!

FHS February meeting

At the February morning meeting Edwin Cuss gave an excellent presentation of pictures 'Along the main road through Fairford'. This was a repeat of a presentation in 2009, (who can remember talks of 15 years ago!) and the audience immensely enjoyed the pictures which took us from telegraph poles tilted after an ice storm at Waiten Hill to the 1904-07 steam bus at Lechlade which took 1 hour 20 minutes to get to Cirencester. As usual Edwin's commentary enhanced the presentation, with some of his own family history, as well as his wealth of local knowledge!

Mostly the scenes had not changed much and were easily recognised even after 50 to more 100 years ago. Especially of interest the rear of Hyperion House when it was a vicarage (c1900) that had changed immensely, the newly built Swedish Houses in the Plies (1950s) with no bungalows opposite (see below) and Pinks Restaurant in London Road during the 1970s. Does anyone remember the date Pinks closed?



Weather

This month the weather has been very much on our minds and the River Coln levels have been watched with trepidation. Below are a few pictures of flooding events and the Newspapers cuttings from the 19th century all relating to weather.

20th century weather events -1921



21st century weather events - 2007





Newspaper Cuttings

Weather events in 19th Century Fairford

The **SNOW STORM** which raged last Sunday caused heavy snowdrifts in many places, delaying the mail carts and trains, and quite disorganising the usual arrangements for delivery and despatch of letters. The first train from Fairford on Monday after proceeding about a mile and a half was brought to a standstill by a drift, and in consequence of similar enforced stopping did not reach Witney till about 1 o'clock, nearly two hours after the London train, due at 9.20, had arrived the latter being two hours late. A special engine was despatched from Oxford for the Witney line, and the traffic worked between the two places as before the East Gloucestershire was opened. The train on that line, having at length cleared a way, was run to and fro between Fairford and Witney, and all the passengers were thus accommodated. So deep was the snow that some of the railway arches were nearly filled and even on Tuesday there was five feet of snow in places on the line; all round the neighbourhood, too, the snow lay very deep on some of the roads, and several persons had to be dug out, but no serious casualty has been reported.

Witney Express and Oxford and Midland Counties Herald 6 February 1873

SEVERITY OF THE WEATHER - As proof of the severity of the season, we may mention that 123 loads of ice were collected on Monday week and deposited in the ice house at Hatherop Castle.

Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Gazette 15 December 1851

THE HURRICANE - Considerable was the damage done here by the hurricane of Sunday night last. At the Dynevor Terrace, the roof of a workshop and all the timber and slates belonging to it were uplifted and thrown right across the high road into a pasture field the property of Mr Tovey, and it is not known how far the debris would have been carried had not its progress been arrested by two large elm trees. A great number of trees were torn up by their roots in different parts of the neighbourhood. We hear of 90 being thrown down in one plantation.

North Wilts Herald 14 December 1872

THE WEATHER - The weather towards the latter end of last week had been unusually tempestuous, culminated in a storm on Sunday morning last, the like of which has probably not been witnessed in this neighbourhood, and at this time of year, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. The wind had been blowing with great severity from the S.W. all through the night, and distant flashes of lightning were visible, but shortly before four o'clock, the storm rapidly approached and the flashes of lightning were peculiarly vivid, and the roll of the thunder was heard far above the roaring of the wind; the storm soon expended itself though

the wind continued to blow for some hours. Unfortunately, we hear that a valuable ox, the property of Mr Dowdeswell, of Castle Eaton, was killed by lightning.

North Wilts Herald 30 January 1875

THE SNOW STORM - Owing to the very severe snow storm and gale on Friday last, telegraphic communication on our local railway was very seriously impeded, much damage being done to the poles and wires between Fairford and Lechlade stations. The postal telegraph wire escaped with only one breakage, although the weight of frozen snow which had adhered to the wires had most severely strained them, and there was no material delay in the service.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 29 January 1876

THE WEATHER - Such weather has scarcely ever been known. Business is almost suspended, and more than one mail cart has failed to arrive. The cart from Fairford was missed for two days. On Tuesday night it started, and indeed made part of the journey, meeting with no accident beyond having for a time been snow bound. A man named Cook started with a milk cart from Walcot, and reached the Great Western Railway station, but on his return got embedded in the snow on the highway near Old Swindon, and wandering across the fields for home was lost in the snow. After his fellow labourers and their master, Mr Thorne, had searched day and night, his lifeless body was found. A man who had taken another milk-cart from Highworth to the Great Western Railway Station, failed to reach home, and was found frozen to death.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal 22 January 1881

THE GALE - The gale on Friday in last week was as in other places, most severe, and its effects are all too plainly visible in the numbers of fallen trees which lie on every hand, Telegraphic communication was entirely suspended until Monday. A young man named Little, at Horcutt, had his head severely cut by a falling limb of a tree. In a field adjoining Mr Cole's farm, only an acre in extent, nine trees were blown down, three of them fell on a thatched shed belonging to Mr Cole, in which were two bullocks. These were with the utmost difficulty extricated, fortunate having escaped any serious injury. Many ricks have been stripped of their covering and otherwise damaged. Mr Iles of Park Farm, had his ricks unthatched, and a quantity of timber trees thrown down by a gale; and in Fairford Park, many trees, and one close to the mansion, were uprooted. A number of chimney stacks were also blown down in the town.

Wits and Gloucestershire Standard 22 October 1881

At Fairford, the deluge of rain and snow of Tuesday, following so closely on the heavy down pour of Saturday and Sunday last, proved a source of great inconvenience and discomfort, not to any actual loss in many instances. Many 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, the water being many inches deep even on the footway. On the abatement of the storm, however, the water quickly subsided. Several houses also in other parts of the town were flooded. On Wednesday, train services were interrupted, and no train could be got out until 2.30pm, and consequently the customary day mail to London which leaves by the 10.20 am train was delayed until that hour. During the night, the river had so risen as to overflow, and a considerable volume of water found its way down Back Lane, flooding houses, stables etc to a very 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 Kempsford, the floods are much more extensive and serious, and several families have been compelled to leave their houses.

Wits and Gloucestershire Standard 28 October 1882



cubs
1st Fairford

RECOLLECTIONS CAFE

Saturday 20th April 2024

14:00 - 16:00

Palmer Hall, London Road, Fairford

Join us and members of Fairford History Society
to share community memories of
Fairford and surrounding areas

Refreshments | Free Entry

Donations Welcomed



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