

Fairford Flyer

No 63

May 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.

The FHS now has 159 members. We welcome all new members who joined this month. One of the new members is Bev Hewer from Australia who is re-visiting her roots in the town. She is a descendant of Jeremiah Hewer of Milton End. Her branch of the family went to Australia about 1913. She would be very interested if contacting members of the family in Fairford.

2023/2024 Programme

May 16: 7.30pm Chris Peachey on Fairford walls, house, garden, and field

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

Dates for your Diary

May -As part of 'Local and Community History Month' there will be a display in Fairford Library entitled 'From School to Library' and a 'Where is this in Fairford?' quiz in the children's section.

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

Fairford Cubs 'Recollections Cafe': Thank you to all those who attended this event. It was a pleasant afternoon with lots of tea and cake, beautifully served by the Cubs. Gill Peachey was a 'star' with her old coin collection. The Cubs were allowed to take 6 coins home with them, and Gill had made little bags for them to put the coins in. There was some interest in the displays. This event helped the Cubs to earn various badges including Local Knowledge, Helping in the Community and maybe towards their Collector's badges. Perhaps FHS could get a badge for helping the Cubs!!

April meeting

FHS Chair, Chris gave an informative and interesting talk on the Fairford Retreat Asylum and its patients. Founded by Alexander Iles in 1822, it started as a private asylum but because of the lack of county asylums it also took 'pauper patients' until 1859. At its peak in 1851 it had almost 200 patients reducing to less than 40 by the 1880s. Some of the patients only stayed a short time and then were discharged. About a third of all patients died in the Retreat; only one committed suicide by jumping down a well when out for a walk (in Dr King-Turner's time). There were three deaths from accidents, two from choking and one from accidental burns. 276 were buried in the Churchyard but only a few graves are marked. Chris then gave background information about some of the patients: e.g. Robert Coles from Winson, the Retreat's first patient, arrived in 1822 and died there 58 years later of senile decay. Samuel Hallam was admitted in 1871 and died there 60 years later. One of our favourites is Ebenezer Pocock, an inventor and son of an inventor who invented a wind driven carriage, a

caning machine (for boys) and an inflatable paper globe (one of which was on sale recently for several thousand pounds). Ebenezer's sister was the mother of WG Grace, the famous cricketer.

The Retreat had a policy of non-restraint and humane treatment, encouraged by Alexander Iles and Dr John Hitchman, for which it became famous. Some of the patients arrived in a very debilitated condition and were 'cured' by good food, rest, and fresh air. They were encouraged to help in the Retreat's gardens and farm. Over the 122 years of its existence the Retreat had about 1,500 patients and was one of the longest lasting private asylums in the country. After its closure in 1944 it became a girls' private boarding school (one of the pupils was Pat Moss the famous show jumper and racing driver and sister of Sir Stirling Moss). In 1951 the building was re-opened as Coln House School for children with special needs. The school closed in 2017 and the building will shortly be converted to private residences and called 'Fairford Green'.



Fairford Highway District

The Highways Act 1862 (25 & 26 Vict. c. 61) enabled justices of the peace of each county to divide the county into highway districts consisting of a number of parishes. The purpose was for the much needed maintenance and repair of roads.

The Fairford District consisted of Bibury, Coln St Aldwyns, Down Ampney, Eastleach Martin, Eastleach Turville, Fairford, Hatherop, Kempford, Lechlade, Meysey Hampton, Poulton, Quenington and Southrop and each of these parishes were to have a waywarden. These waywardens would make up the Highways Board and the Board would appoint a surveyor. The first Chairman of the Fairford District was J R Raymond Barker, the secretary was G S White and the first surveyor was Charles Hope.

There was some animosity towards the scheme mainly from local farmers who thought that the 'old law' was sufficient to maintain good roads and thought that it would cost more. Twelve of the fourteen districts had presented a petition against it but Sir Michael Hicks Beach in seconding the proposition thought that these petitions were not a good representation of the ratepayers. The petitions were only signed by a few names in each district (only six names in Fairford) and in no district had any of the major landowners signed. The order was passed fifty-six for versus seven against.

Mr. John R Raymond Barker wrote a letter of explanation of the New Highways District to the local papers to explain the new scheme and allay fears.

"On the advantages of having good Roads, and of its economy and comfort to all classes, I need not dilate. I trust I have shown clearly that under the 25th and 26th Vict, chap 61, the Surveyor under his new title holds the staff of power, and that the Act will not entail on Parishes much (if any) additional expense; but, on the contrary, it will be the means, if well worked out, of giving to the public good Roads at the same expense as it now incurred for very bad ones."

From the Banbury Guardian 12 February 1863 (the letter had been circulated to many local papers)

In 1894 the Highway Districts were abolished and the Rural District Councils took over the powers and duties, in the Fairford area it then came under the Cirencester Rural District Council.

Newspaper Cuttings

The newspaper cuttings this month all relate to the Fairford Highway District and the surveyor's work. Each year the surveyor had to get tenders for hauling materials, he also had to find sources for obtaining gravel and stone. Being responsible for the maintenance of 120 miles roads seemed to be the least of his problems. He seemed to spend a lot of time at the Petty Sessions prosecuting people for letting their animals stray onto and grazing their animals on the highway without permission and in conflict with local landowners and farm workers.

Fairford Highway District: Wanted by the Waywardens of this District, a competent person to fill the office of SURVEYOR of the DISTRICT, containing 13 parishes, with a mileage not exceeding 120 miles; he will be required to keep a horse, to reside within the District, and to devote his whole time to the duties; he will also be required to give security to the amount of 200£. The salary will not exceed 130£ per annum. Application, in the candidates' own handwriting, stating present and recent occupation, accompanied with testimonials of a recent date as to character, abilities and general fitness to execute the duties, must be sent (free) to my office in Fairford on or before 17th inst. And such candidates who may be selected will have notice to attend at the time fixed for the election. Any further information may be obtained by application at my office. By order of the Board. April 2, 1863, GEO SYMMONS WHITE, Clerk

Jackson's Oxford Journal 4 April 1863

Cricklade Petty Sessions: Mr Charles Hope, surveyor to the Fairford District Highway Board, applied for a license to dig stones in the parish of Marston Maisey, in a field called 'Thoroughfare', belonging Mr Wm Lane for repairing the roads in the parish of Kempford. The owner did not appear. Service of the usual notice being proved, the license was granted.

Reading Mercury 29 August 1863

Fairford Highway District: The Waywardens for the above District will at a meeting on Saturday the 26th instant be prepared to consider tenders for hauling materials on the various Roads of the District.

All information can be obtained of Mr William Yells, the Surveyor, Fairford and Tenders must be forwarded to me on or before Friday 26th Instant and no Tender will be received after that date.

By order A Hitchman Iles Clerk

Fairford April 17, 1879

North Wilts Herald 19 April 1879

Look to your horses: Alfred Golding of Eastleach Turville, James Trueman of Ampney St Peter, William Roberts of Dunfield and John Harrison, baker, Poulton were summoned by Charles Hope, surveyor, for permitting their horses to stray upon the highway.

Mr Harrison said he only turned his horses out to water but left them in the road while the boy went into the field close by.

Mr Trueman said Mr Hope had not summoned all who offended: plenty other people turned their horses out, and Hope favoured them.

The Bench said he (Mr Trueman) could summon any person he liked and prove the case. The fine would be 2s 6d each, with the costs.

Mr Roberts: Well, that is nice. I was at work at Cheltenham and have walked all the way up here to be fined.

Mr Golding: Farmers and gentlemen who have land can turn out in the road, but them as works hard to keep their family off the parish and gets summoned and fined.

Charles Holder, slater, Poulton and John Harrison, publican, of the same place, were summoned by Mr Hope for a similar offence.

These cases differed from the others in as much as the defendants seemed to have acted under the impression that they were justified in grazing their horses where they did.

The Bench, therefore, inflicted the nominal penalty of 6d each and costs of 5s.

Mr Holder: Can my horse graze by the roadside with a halter on and keeper?

Mr Raymond Barker was understood to say, not unless the owner of the land adjoining gave his permission.

Mr Harrison: I don't know why Hope should summon me, when Mr Miller, Diannah Hobbs and Mr Simpson turns out their horses, and no notice is taken of them.

Mr Hope: I have never seen their horses without a keeper, or I would summon them as well as you.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 7 July 1866

Alleged damage: William Yells, surveyor of roads for the Fairford Highway District was charged by Robert Hayward, shepherd to Mr Thomas Painter, with doing wilful damage to a padlock on a gate. – Mr Yells, who, in answer to the Bench, explained that the charge rested on him in a private capacity and not as a surveyor, pleaded not guilty. From what could be gathered from complainant's evidence, Mr Hayward put the padlock on 5th December, and he when down to the ground, Mr Yells began abusing him and calling him all the hypocrites he could lay his tongue to. Mr Yells said complainant had put the padlock on the gate after his man who was working there had left the tools in the field as was the custom. He then went to look, after his man had told him what had happened and when near the gate the padlock fell off. There was much counter claiming against each other. The case was dismissed by the bench when a witness Joseph Wall said the complainant was a wicked storyteller and what he said was bare faced lies. Mr Yells said he was always in the habit of putting his tools in the nearest farmer's field and had never been interrupted until this time. Mr Yells wanted to have a summons against Mr Hayward but the Bench persuaded him to let the matter drop.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 16 January 1886 [paraphrased]

Highways: The County Surveyor reported that the road running from Cirencester to St John's Bridge, Lechlade was not kept in proper repair. Roads in the Lechlade and Fairford Highway Districts, especially that leading to Fairford railway station, were also in bad condition, and the roads near Northleach prison also wanted considerable repair. The Chairman, after reading the report in somewhat greater detail, said the Finance Committee had given directions that the several Highway authorities mentioned should be written to with reference to the matter, and notice given them that their county grants will be withheld.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 23 October 1886

Fairford Highway District Any person placing Rubbish on the Side of the Highways in this district without the sanction of the Surveyor will be summoned. By Order.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 3 March 1887

And finally, an early example case of stop and search instigated by social media!!

Rather to Fast: Our reporter was informed that on Monday last, a young man, named George Hope, was driving his pony and cart from Fairford to Cirencester, and when within a short distance of the latter town he was not a little surprised that he was stopped by a carriage, which is the property of Mr White, solicitor, Fairford, having in it the newly appointed sergeant of police, at Fairford, and a constable of the Cirencester police force as passengers. He pulled up and the police officers searched the cart, demanding what Hope had in his possession and a full explanation. After some little detention the police evidently found that the information they had received had put them on the wrong track, and the constable returned to Cirencester. From the report given us it is very evident that the police acted upon instructions from an informer. While it may not be thought that the police exceeded their duties, acting upon information, surely the young man has a right to demand the name on the informer, who will perhaps be surprised to hear that the suspicious cargo was simply old iron, purchased of two respectable townspeople, and the young man was taking it to market, a similar errand to that on which it is not unlikely the too clever informer was going. It is to be hoped that such cases as this will not pass unnoticed. Why was the trap stopped? Who was the informer?

Stroud Journal 6 February 1886

We were unable to find another report of this incident and perhaps the Stroud reporter was just causing a little bit of trouble!