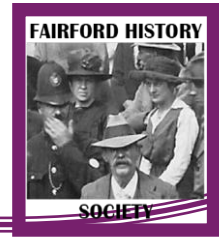


Fairford Flyer

No 71 February 2025



FHS membership runs from September to August and remains at £5. Visitors are always welcome at meetings at £3 each. You can pay your subscription at the meeting or by bank transfer, Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-92-06 A/C Fairford History Society No 02170130). You can also leave the subscription at the Community Centre in the FHS post slot by the FTC office door. Regretfully from 2025 we are no longer able to accept cheques as Lloyd's Bank is now charging 60p per cheque deposited to charity accounts.

FHS Meetings 2025

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 2025)

2025 Programme

20 February Fairford's during the Second World War Chris Hobson (**afternoon meeting at 2.30pm**). Beverages and biscuits will be served from 2pm before the meeting. (Change of topic)

20 March Remember! Remember! by John Putley - Gloucestershire has been involved in several plots, rebellions and conspiracies, and this presentation looks at some of them

24 April (4th Thursday) Maps and LiDAR imagery for historic studies in and around the Fairford and Cirencester areas by Peter Vujakovic of *GlosGeog* (Gloucestershire Branch of the Geographical Association)

15 May Along the River Coln in Fairford - Edwin Cuss (postponed from February)

22 May 2.30 Cirencester Civic Society is giving FHS a guided walk in Cirencester - more details later

7-8 June Fairford Festival

19 June AGM Show and Tell

In July Syd Flatman is giving Cirencester Civic Society a guided walk round the town, FHS to provide teas

Lawrence Pitts

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Lawrence Pitts. He had been an FHS member for many years and was exemplary about attending meetings. Syd Flatman has written a short piece.

On Tuesday 21st January we heard the sad news that one of our members, Larry Pitts, had passed away aged 80. He was a life-long Fairfordian, an only child and grew up in Milton Place, just off Coronation Street.

He had a great love of motorcycles and I very much admired one bike of his in particular, a silver 500cc Norton Dominator 88. Larry served an Engineering Apprenticeship at H J Godwin Ltd at Quenington.

His father, Josh, owned a The Garden Shop which was situated to the right-hand side of Peking House Chinese Take-away in Fairford which is a gift shop today. At the age of 21 Larry left Godwin's to join his father's business and helped with their mobile shop serving fruit and vegetables to the local villages.

Married life was spent at Prince Charles Road. He was widowed 7 years ago and is survived by a daughter and two sons.

January meeting

Robin Burton brightened up a cold and damp January afternoon by giving members a presentation on the History of Christmas and Wassail. Most of our present Christmas traditions are of relatively recent origin e.g. Father Christmas's jolly red Christmas outfit was a product of a Coca Cola advertising campaign. The original Father Christmas dressed in green and was a woodland spirit thought to be based on Odin. The kissing bough

was greenery and berries, a kiss was given for each berry when they were used up there were no more kisses, this seemed to develop into kissing under the mistletoe. Traditionally the mistletoe had to be cut with a golden sickle and not touch the ground before display.

At Durrington Walls where the builders of Stonehenge were thought to have camped there is evidence of feasting, probably for the 'shortest' day. The Puritans tried to ban Christmas but to no avail. In those days it was always a more community event with communal feasting and jollity when a 'Lord of Misrule' would be chosen to rule the feasting period.

There are many forms of 'wassail'. It is thought to derive from a Saxon Princess 'Rowena' daughter of King Hengist presenting a 'cup of cheer' to a new overlord and saying 'Wass hael' of course he fancied her but she poisoned him and got recovered their lands. The tradition developed in different ways in different areas, one was that poor, starving agricultural labourers visited their wealthier neighbours and performed in return for money or food, if no reward was given then tricks would be played. This tradition went to the USA and came to the UK as 'trick or treat'. The costumes worn were usually to disguise identities and to make the wearer look larger than he or she was. Robin was wearing his traditional raggy coat and hat.

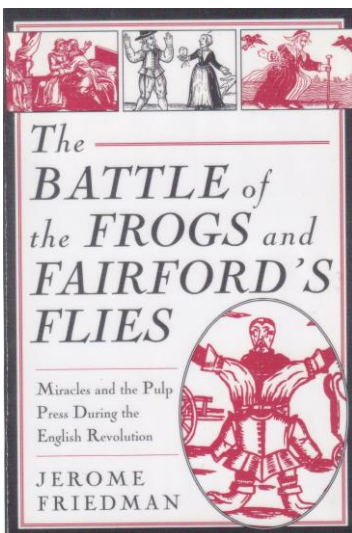
Another tradition is lighting bonfires in orchards and 'sacrificing cider' to the ground to ensure a good harvest.

Robin finished his presentation with a selection of wassail songs from different parts of the country and then played us out with his melodeon.



Fairford Frogs: National news 360 years ago! Kings Pamphlet August 2nd 1660 (Flyer No2)

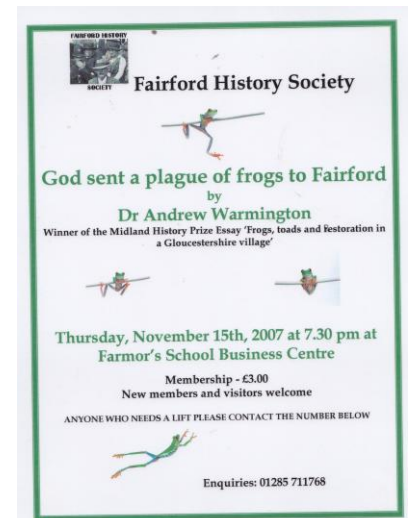
"Strange newes from Gloucester, a perfect relation of the wonderful and miraculous power of God showed for injustice at Fairford, between Farringdon and Scicister, where an innumerable company of frogs and toads (on a sudden) overspread the ground, orchards, and houses of the Lord of the town, and a justice near adjacent, and how they divided themselves into distinct bodies, and orderly, made up to the house of the said justice, some climbing up the walls and into the windows and chambers; and afterwards how strangely and unexpectedly they vanished away."



This curious story, recorded in the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, tells how a group of Anabaptists were roughly treated in Fairford and received no help from the Lord of the Manor, Esquire Andrew Barker. The implication of the pamphlet is that the plague of frogs was the just punishment!

In 2007 Dr Andrew Warmington came to FHS to talk about the topic. He has won the Midland History Essay Prize entitled 'Frogs, Toads and the Restoration in Gloucestershire village' [Fairford].

'The battle of the frogs and Fairford's flies: miracles and the pulp press during the English revolution' by Jerome Friedman was published in 1993.



There were several pamphlets 'Phanatical wonders', 'Lying Wonders', 'Phanatical Forgeries' as well as 'Strange and true news from Gloucester' published in 1660. This was how the news was spread.

How the other half lived

Inventories attached to wills can often provide interesting and useful details of the lives of past residents of Fairford. Inventories listed what was termed moveable property and did not include land ownership. The inventories are particularly useful for intestates who died without making a will as they are usually the only document that gives some useful information about an individual. The inventories were often taken by friends, neighbours or family members, rarely by trained legal professionals. This has probably resulted in inconsistency and perhaps even the occasional 'shady' dealing by purposely reducing or exaggerating the value of various items of property. However, the valuations provided in inventories do give some idea of the relative wealth of people living in the same community at the same time. Most surviving inventories date from the mid-1600s and were rarely required after the end of the 18th century. Perhaps the most interesting information included in inventories is the wide range of personal property that is listed, some of it revealing the trade or profession of an individual. Also inventories can be used to provide information about the size and layout of a house.

Two inventories from the late 17th Century show the sometimes huge difference between the rich and the poor. William Chaunler wrote his will on 18 November 1676 and was buried in Fairford's churchyard on 7 February 1677. His inventory is arranged room-by-room starting in the parlour then followed by the hall, the shop, the brew house, the buttery, the chamber over the parlour, the great chamber, the chamber over the kitchen, and the little chamber, a total of eight rooms on two floors. The inclusion of a brew house is a common feature of 17th century inventories as many people brewed their own beer which was safer than drinking the untreated water. Also included in the inventory were eight beds and 12 flock beds (mattresses stuffed with woollen refuse) in the various rooms. Property outside the house included wheat, barley, grain of all sorts, hay and wood. This was not a small cottage for William, his wife Penelope and four children but neither was it a large imposing house. William was obviously a tradesman as he had a shop as part of the house. All these items amount to £56 and 5 shillings but this does not give a true account of William's wealth. He had leases on his house and lands to the value of £60 and he was owed the large sum of £159 of 'debts owing on bond & otherwise' bringing the grand total to £275 and 10 shillings. William is known to have leased land in Milton End and may have lived there. According to The National Archives currency converter a skilled tradesman would have had to work 3,061 days to earn that much. In 1677 this money would buy you 51 horses or 66 cows. William appointed his wife as his executrix and Daniel Hawkins and Alexander Betterton were the overseers of his will and valuers of the inventory.

Six years after William Chaunler wrote his will William Collis died but had failed to write a will and so Elizabeth Fowler, probably his daughter, had to have an inventory made so that she could apply for probate. The contrast with the inventory to that of William Chaunler is shocking. It consists of just five lines and mentions only one room, the hall. The furniture listed was a bedstead and straw mattress, an old cupboard, a table, a form (bench), a chair, two stools, and an old chest. The other items listed were his clothes (eight shillings), a pair of sheets, a kettle, a pot, a skillet, a pail, a barrel, a spade, a shovel and a frying pan. The most valuable item was the reversion of a lease valued at £2. The sum total came to just £4 and 12 shillings; in 1683 this money was enough to buy one cow but not a horse. A skilled tradesman would only have had to work 51 days to earn this amount. Whether this really is a true and accurate account of William Collis's wealth at death it does show the huge range of personal ownership in late-17th century Fairford. It is possible that some of William's property had already been given away or removed from the house before the inventory was made by James Collins and Nicholas Luckman. William Chaunler was not a wealthy land owner, nor was William Collis a pauper but their lives must have been very different. What is particularly interesting is that both Williams were tradesmen, they were cordwainers working with and selling leather goods. Perhaps William Chaunler was making high quality goods for the well-off and making enough profit to be able to live in some comfort but perhaps William Collis was just making cheap leather shoes just enough to scrape a living. Whatever the exact circumstances, these two men are representative of the thousands of Fairford's past residents who have left documentation that shine a little light on the history of the town and its people.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 31 March 1846

On Thursday last, the 28th inst., a lecture on English History was delivered at the Temperance Room, Fairford by Mr J Beecham of Cirencester. The lecture was illustrated by a number of dissolving views, executed on the same principle as those which drew such crowds to the Polytechnic Institute and Adelaide Gallery. It was stated by the lecturer that the paintings, as well as the mechanical apparatus, were the work of the Cirencester Mechanics' Institute, and that they had been exhibited with great success in that town. The construction and dimensions of the Temperance Room are very unfavourable for an exhibition of this sort, but the effect upon the whole was extremely beautiful, and the audience, which was most respectable, gave repeated proofs of the satisfaction they felt.

The Temperance Room (no other references found) was probably the Crofts Hall

Gloucestershire Journal 30 March 1844

A large temperance meeting was held at Fairford a few days ago, about 20 took the pledge.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 2 April 1859

LECTURE: - On Monday evening, a lecture was delivered in the Crofts Hall, by Mr J Beard, of Cheltenham, the subject being "Intemperance, the nation's curse", in the course of which the lecturer clearly pointed out the various evils connected with the drinking customs of our land, as seen in the commercial and Christian world. He earnestly advocated the claims of the drunkard to the sympathy of the sober and philanthropic public. The lecturer argued for prohibition, as set forth in the Permissive Bill of the United Kingdom Alliance, the object of which was ably and efficiently defined at the close of the lecture. The meeting (which was a very crowded one) accorded a vote of thanks to the lecturer and the chairman, the Rev W Reynolds, after which the meeting separated.

Oxford Journal 5 March 1825

The parents of some boys who have been educated in the Free School, at Fairford, are desirous of placing them out as APPRENTICES to some plain useful trade, with Masters of established credit, who are householders, married men, and Members of the Church of England, and who have constant employment. – A suitable premium will be paid with each of them. Apply (if by letter, post paid) to Mr Adams, Fairford Gloucestershire.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal 13 November 1826

Fairford, Gloucestershire

Lunatic Asylum, a new Establishment on an improved Mode, which supercedes any severely coercive treatment, by Alexander Iles. The Public are informed, that the above Establishment is limited as to the number of its Patients, whereby Mr and Mrs Iles are the better enabled to pay strict attentions to every department of its economy, for the comfort, health, and safety of those of both sexes whose friends may think to commit them to their charge. This Establishment is well worthy of the attention of those Committees of Chancery Patients, who wish to see their charges comfortably and agreeably situated – The Patients have the constant enjoyment of walking in large gardens attached to the premises: - they are also led to join in a variety of amusements, calculated to exercise the mind and body: & thus are insensibly caused to abandon those erroneous ideas which tend to embitter their lives. Mr Iles considers it only due to his Establishment to state, that he has the pleasing pledge of reward for his care, in having, in a short period of time, returned home to their friends many patients, either improved in their intellectual state, or restored to health.

[There seems to be a 'slight' inaccuracy in the last paragraph as the Asylum's admission records show that of the eight patients who had been admitted since the Retreat opened in 1822 and were still there in November 1826, only one of them had been "returned home to their friends", the other seven were still in residence.]