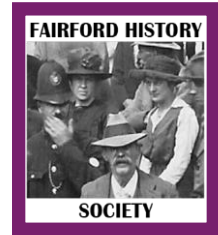


# *Fairford Flyer*

## *No 76 July 2025*



### **FHS Meetings 2025-26**

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 which are at 2.30pm)

There will be no Fairford Flyer in August.

### **2025 Programme**

The programme for the 2025-26 season will be published in September. The dates for your diary are:-  
2025

18 September, 16 October, 20 November.

2026

15 January (pm), 19 February (pm), 19 March, 16 April, 21 May, and 18 June.

### **Other Events**

18-21 July RIAT

8-10 August FairFest in the Walnut Tree Field

16-17 August Fairford Steam Rally, Rhymes Lane, Fairford

\*\*\*\*\*

### **FHS AGM 2025**

Chairman's report:

We are coming to the end of yet another year in the life of the Fairford History Society. I think it is fair to say that it has been a good year. Our membership remains high at 163 just one less than last year's record figure and we have had an average attendance of 55.25 members at the meetings this year.

In addition to our nine meetings with their varied presentations by invited speakers and FHS members we also had the annual World on Your Doorstep display for Farmor's Year 7 children **AND** we have also been involved in several external events this year. These have included a display at the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Milton Street Chapel in October 2024; the VE-Day celebrations at The Bull and the Cricket Field in May and the Fairford Festival in June. Also I was 'invited' to give a short talk about Fairford in the Second World War at the Cotswold District Council's Flag-raising Day in Cirencester on 7 May.

As you have heard from the Treasurer's Report our finances are quite healthy so the Committee has decided that the annual membership subscription of £5 will not be increased for the next year despite increases in various costs. I think £5 a year is still decent value for money in a world where rising prices are very much the norm.

This year we have had to reprint some of our older publications including Brian Routledge's history of RAF Fairford in the Second World War which is now available as an A5 Occasional Paper and which sold very well during the VE-Day event. During the VE-Day and Fairford Festival events we sold FHS publications to the value of about £100. However, overall our publication sales are down by £79 compared with last year.

Our healthy financial position will allow us to consider the printing of some new publications. Some topics that I have in mind are: a history of the Fairford Cottage Hospital; a history of the non-conformist churches of Fairford; and law and order in Fairford.

The FHS continues to exist and thrive thanks to its Committee and to all of you who continue to support the Society. Special thanks go to the Secretary and Treasurer who between them manage the sometimes tedious but vital administration of the Society. Also we are grateful to Ann Wightman who puts the meeting notices on various notice boards around the town and to Joanna Petty for assisting in the Archive Room, and thanks to all those who help put the chairs away at the end of each meeting.

### **Show and tell**

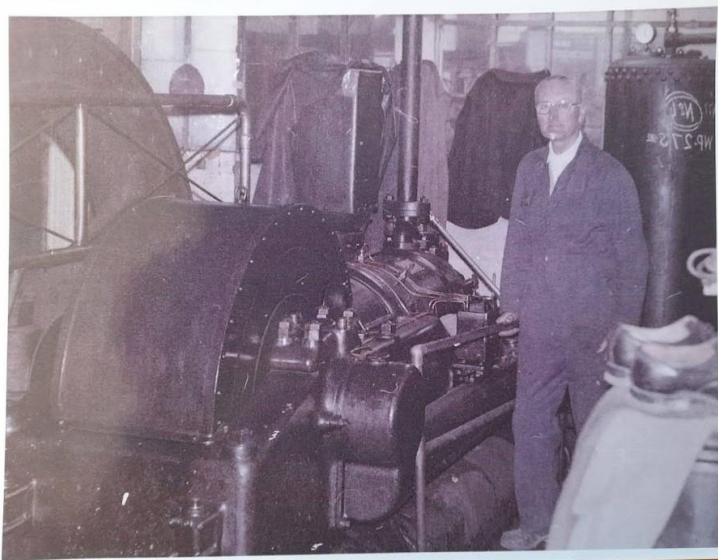
Items shown following the AGM were: a beautifully crafted wooden hat stretcher; two yardsticks; two commemorative spoons from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake; a Madonna picture thought to be the inspiration for our Fairford Window 4; a picture of the opening of the Glasgow Clyde tunnel built by the owner's family firm; a CBE medal of the owner's father; a very special watch presented to the owner's ancestor by James Garfield, President of the USA for rescuing American sailors at sea from the vessel 'Trimountain' in February 1880; pictures painted by Sarah Biffen 1784-1850 a very early foot and mouth artist, one of which was restored by the BBC 'Repair Shop'; Syd talked about the Anglo-Saxon graves at West End and Wylie's book; Chris talked about the owner of his own copy of the same book, John Duke Coleridge who became Lord Chancellor; and Margaret had had an interesting visitor to the Church who was the great grandson of Francis Witts whose complete diaries have been published in 11 volumes. He came for Upper Slaughter and had local interest as he travelled widely and knew everyone. It was a very interesting and enjoyable session and we shall do it again.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Quenington Fielding Engine by Syd Flatman**

In April I took a trip to Gloucester Quays with some ex-employees of H Godwin (or Godwin Pumps of Quenington as it was known locally) now called Xylem Pumps. The reason for the visit was to see the giant Fielding engine manufactured in 1929 by Fielding and Platt of Gloucester (only a few yards from where it is today. They ceased trading in 1938.

This engine evokes memories for us ex-employees. Purchased brand new by H J Godwin in 1929, its sole purpose was to drive all the belt-driven machinery in the No 1 and No 2 machine shops via 500 yards of shafting mounted in the roof. We must remember that this was before the National Grid and the scene inside the factory would have been reminiscent of the Lancashire cotton mills of old. With its 6-ton flywheel and 14-inch diameter piston it ran ten hours per day and through the war years, when a nightshift was introduced, it ran for 20 hours. War work was taken on alongside pump manufacture after the Oxo factory was bombed out by the German Luftwaffe. The work consisted of manufacturing swivel turntables for Ack Ack guns.



In 1945 the Fielding engine was converted to generate electricity via a large generator mounted at the back of the flywheel, this helped to boost the incoming grid supply. The 1950s saw the engine go into semi-retirement, as new machinery came through with their own independent electric motors. It was then only brought back into use during power cuts and proved a godsend during the three-day week of 1974 enabling Godwin employees to work 5 days.



At 3pm on Saturday 17 May 1980 disaster struck – a fire which started in the paint shop quickly spread to most of the main factory. Fourteen fire tenders and their crews fought the blaze drawing their water from the River Coln. Funnily enough the fire was brought under control right at the spot where the Fielding engine was situated. This at the time was Gloucestershire's worst ever fire. Pump manufacture was very quickly resumed with the aid of the remaining outbuildings and as luck would have it, a sizeable proportion of the industrial estate on the outskirts of Fairford was available to lease.

Cirencester District Council was called to an emergency Planning Meeting due to the 100

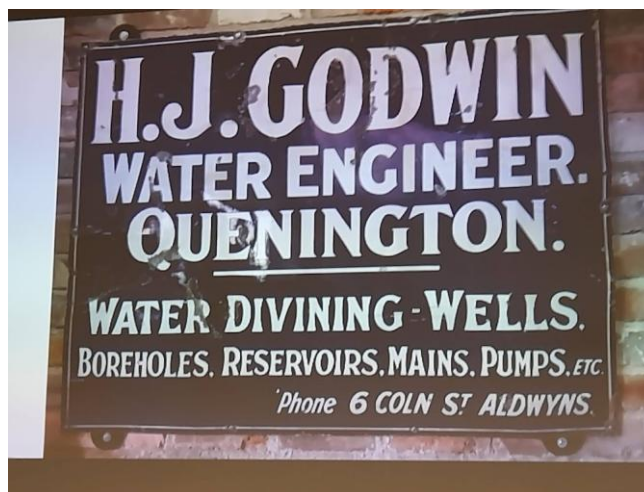
employees jobs at stake. Permission was given for a new factory to be built, 20 per cent larger on a site to the west of the old one.

With all traces of the old factory gone, the lower part was sold off for a housing estate and the top part became the employee's car park. The engine, still in its original position, now exposed to all the elements, was within the car park boundary. What saved it from the scrapyard was its sheer size.

For three years it lay unloved, its royal blue paint work faded to a light grey and surface rust covering the once bright metal parts. It was now an eyesore.

If it was not for the actions of one man (Fred Harding) there it would have remained. Fred was the retired ex-foreman of the No 2 Machine shop. He offered it to the mid Gloucestershire Old Engine Society based in Gloucester. Godwin Pumps, glad to get it off their hands, paid for the three-day crane hire and transportation. Restoration in one of the quayside buildings, nights and weekends, took five years. In tandem with this, using second hand bricks and a donated roof from a Victorian railway station, an engine house was constructed for the engine's final resting place. Now back in pristine condition, in its royal blue paintwork, it is run every Tuesday morning from 11.30 for two hours by the dedicated volunteer Trevor Hill.

If you fancy a visit, the engine house is situated to the left-hand side of the J D Wetherspoon Pub called the 'Lord High Chancellor of England'.



## NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

### North Wilts Herald 7 June 1889

Street improvement: A great improvement in the streets has just been effected by the paving of the footway from the Post Office to the Vicarage, with patent paving bricks. It is also intended to make a pitched crossing over the roadway between the Post Office and the Market Place Corner, and this will be a great public boon, as in muddy weather the street at this point is apt to be particularly sloppy.



### Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette 22 June 1889 (extract)

Ramble Round Oxford No VII

Just over the border of Oxfordshire, one hour and five minutes journey by rail and one mile distant from the station that bears its name stands the small town of Fairford.

How its inhabitants live, how its houses, from the huge stone box in the park, with its rows of square holes, down to the veriest cottage whose windows are aglow with geraniums and calceolarias, contrive to present such a prosperous appearance in the apparent absence of everything tending to create wealth, is a mystery I seek not to penetrate; my visit was not to them, not even to the birthplace of the saintly John Keble. Upon the finny denizens of the Coln I had no intent. I was not “agent in advance” of an equestrian troupe, or a regiment of Salvationists, but, in pursuance of an antiquarian project long since formed, I had a great desire to see the Church and its far-famed windows.

[The rest of the article is about the history of the Fairford windows]

### North Wilts Herald 26 July 1889

Seaside Trip: A goodly contingent from Fairford numbering 57 availed themselves of the facilities afforded by the Witney annual trip to visit Portsmouth – celebrated for its historic associations, and its well renowned dockyard and harbour – and to enjoy the many delightful sea trips to the Isle of Wight and other places. On this occasion a far greater interest than usual was attached to these trips, as most of them afforded a splendid opportunity of viewing the magnificent array of ironclads and battle ships now lying off Spithead to await the forthcoming review. On the whole the day was fine, though occasional storms somewhat interfered with the proceedings, but notwithstanding the day was one of thorough enjoyment. The train left Fairford at 5 am reaching Portsmouth soon after 9 am, returning at 9.15 pm reaching Fairford at 2.20 am. The Witney committee deserve cordial thanks for the careful manner in which all the arrangements were carried out. The Fairford Fire Brigade made this the occasion of their annual outing.

### North Wilts Herald 5 July 1889

Mr F P Bulley of Fairford is proposed a member of the West of England Magpie Fanciers’ Association. Mr Bulley will be the judge of the show in August.

[Frederic Pocock Bulley was the son of Dr. Frederic Bulley, President of Magdalen College Oxford who lived in Marston Meysey. Frederic Pocock was the House Bursar for Magdalen College but retired in 1897 and became a JP for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. He later moved to Painswick where he died in 1940.]