

Fairford Flyer No 80 December 2025



Seasons Greetings to all FHS Members

Membership

Membership fees were due in September and remain at £5. You can pay at a meeting or by bank transfer, Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-92-06 A/C Fairford History Society No 02170130. Important - we are very sorry but this year we cannot accept cheques as the bank now charges for each cheque paid in. You can also leave the subscription at the Community Centre in the FHS post slot by the FTC office door. Thank you to all who have paid already, we have 143 members as of 1 December.

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)

2025-26 Programme

2025

There is no meeting in December

2026

15 January at 2.30 pm Gloucestershire men at the Battle of Waterloo by Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, KCVO, OBE, DL

19 February 2.30 pm Fairford in Close up by Edwin Cuss

19 March 'On two wheels - the fascinating story of the bicycle by Bill King

16 April Brief History of Tetbury by Jane Haines

21 May Misericords by Miles Dodd

18 June Gloucestershire Follies by Jonathan Holt

FHS News

Please ensure that you visit the sign-in desk when attending a meeting. We don't only tick your names off to get subscriptions and to count meeting numbers; it is also a Health and Safety requirement that we have a list of members attending the meeting. Again, thank you to all who helped put the chairs away at the last meeting. It is really appreciated.

November meeting - A Titanic effort

Maritime historian Paul Barnett gave a very interesting and entertaining talk about the *Titanic* disaster and the parts played by the RMS *Carpathia* and the SS *Californian*. After talking about the RMS *Titanic* and its sister ships the *Olympic* and the *Britannic* he then outlined the fatal voyage of the *Titanic* which ended prematurely when it struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic during the night of the 14th/15th of April 1912 with the loss of about 1,500 passengers and crew. Paul then continued to talk about the myths and controversies that followed the sinking. The possible reason why Captain E. J. Smith chose to sail at full speed when ice had been reported was discussed. The most controversial element of the *Titanic's* story was that the lights of a ship were seen perhaps just five miles away from the *Titanic* but it did not come to the rescue. The ship was believed to have been the SS *Californian* as some of the crew reported seeing distress rockets being fired but failed to take any positive action. However, Paul argued that the SS *Californian* was too far away for the two ships to have seen

each other and that there may have been a third ship involved which was never identified. The reason for this is that when the wreck of the *Titanic* was discovered in 1985 it was several miles from its originally reported location and also further away from the SS *Californian's* known location. When the captain of the *Californian* heard of the *Titanic's* sinking, he steamed through the ice field but was too late to rescue any of the survivors. The loss of the *Titanic* was not due to any one single cause but, like many accidents, was the result of a number of errors of judgement and several other issues which combined to result in a tragedy.

The information below is taken from the *Titanic Connection* by Graham Young. Published by FHS, 2012

When *Titanic* sailed from Southampton on her ill-fated maiden voyage on April 11th 1912, there were among the first-class passengers the Countess of Rothes, her maid Miss Roberta Maioni (sometimes reported as Malone) and the Countess's cousin, Miss Gladys Cherry. Miss Lucy Noel Martha Dyer-Edwardes had married Norman Evelyn Leslie, the 19th Earl of Rothes, on 19th April 1900.

In 1912 the Countess was on her way to join her husband in the USA to celebrate their 12th wedding anniversary and as the Earl was considering buying a citrus farm in Florida he wanted to show her the financial possibilities in America; in fact the purchase never took place. Her first class ticket on the *Titanic* cost £86 10s.



Countess of Rothes in 1917

At about 11.45pm on April 14th 1912 the *Titanic* struck an iceberg. At 1.10am lifeboat No. 8 on the portside was lowered and drew away from the ship. On board were 35 women and children including the Countess, her maid and her cousin, and four men from the crew of the *Titanic*. No. 8 was the second lifeboat successfully launched. Before rowing away, some of the passengers, including the Countess, wanted to turn back in an attempt to pick up some of those in the water – there was room in the boat as it was designed for 65 people – but they were overruled by the majority. One of the boat's crew, Able Seaman Tom Jones, having noted the Countess had been rowing or steering most of the night, said later, "There was a woman in my boat ... when I saw the way she was carrying herself and heard the quiet determined way she spoke to others I knew she was more of a man than we had on board." In fact, the Countess was not totally ignorant of boats and the sea; her husband had a yacht and although it is unlikely that she took part in boating activities she would to some extent have been familiar with boats. At one stage the Countess was able to console 17-year old Señora de Satode Penasco, a Spanish woman on her honeymoon, who joined the ship at Cherbourg and whose husband had 'delivered' his bride to the Countess's care and was left behind on the ship and was lost.

Titanic sank about 2.20am. Lifeboat No. 8 was picked up after five hours at sea by the SS *Carpathia* later that morning, and on April 18th that ship docked in New York. The Countess, her maid, and her cousin were

among the 711 passengers and crew who survived. At least 1,490 persons died. While on board the *Carpathia* the Countess continued to assist her fellow passengers by making clothes for the rescued babies and as one paper reported 'devoted' herself ... to the care of the steerage women and children. So impressed was Able Seaman Jones with the courage and commonsense of the Countess that he subsequently framed the metal number plate from Lifeboat No. 8 and presented it to her. That, and the covering letter, are still in possession of the family. Able Seaman Jones retired to a seaman's home in Southampton but kept in touch with the Countess for the rest of his life. They exchanged Christmas cards for 43 years.

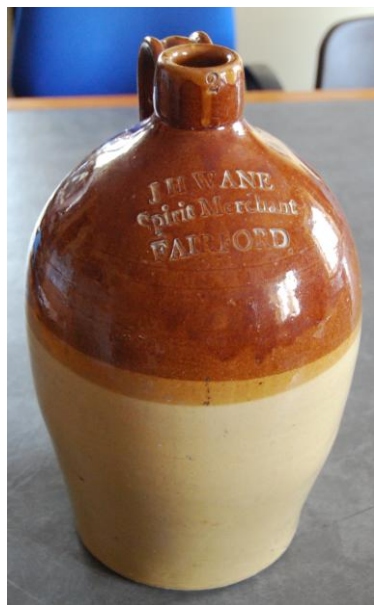
The Countess has been described as a petite, gentle person with a strict Victorian upbringing, and often referred to as 'frail'; but there must have been enormous hidden strengths. It is said that when she embarked on the *Titanic* she had auburn hair but on return to this country having spent some weeks recuperating, her hair was completely white: no doubt caused by exhaustion, shock and what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder. A year after the disaster, while dining out with friends, she suddenly experienced the awful

feeling of cold and intense horror she always associated with her ordeal; she then realised the orchestra was playing 'The Tales of Hoffman', the last piece of after-dinner music played that fateful Sunday night.

The Countess's husband died on March 19th 1927 at the comparatively early age of 50 – the death no doubt brought on by his war wounds. On December 22nd 1927 the Countess married Colonel Claude Macfie. They lived for many years at Kilmalieu on the north side of Loch Linnhe, Argyll. They also had a flat in London, but this was irreparably damaged in the Second World War; that fact, and their ages, persuaded them to come south and they came to live in Fayre Court in Fairford, soon after the war. She died 12 September 1956.

The Memorial Tablet: Colonel Macfie was determined that his late wife should be remembered. The then Vicar, Edward Keble and the PCC were, however, equally determined that there should be no further tablets placed in the church. At the time of these discussions, which took place over the summer and autumn of 1957, the Vicar had purchased 20 tons of flagstones from the recently demolished Fairford Park with a view to laying them in the Church to replace some of the Victorian tiles. In the end a compromise was reached whereby Colonel Macfie paid for the laying of the stones on condition that the tablet was allowed. By September 1958 the stones had been laid and are still there today in some parts of the church. Colonel Macfie commissioned Cecil Thomas, OBE of Brompton Road, London, a celebrated sculptor, to prepare drawings and in due course execute the tablet. Mr Thomas advised that no space should be left to record, in due course, the life of Colonel Macfie, "any alternative would not be permitted". That no doubt explains how the addition to the tablet referring to the Colonel really does look like a marble postscript.

JOHN HURST WANE OF FAIRFORD



John Hurst Wane was the eldest son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Hollister Watts (nee Read) Wane and was baptised in St Mary's Church, Fairford on New Year's Day 1805. Jonathan Wane of Croft House was a very successful auctioneer and broker, wealthy enough to be able to lease the manor of Kempsford from the Lord of the Manor.

John's father died in 1842 and his mother in 1854. By at least 1830 John Hurst Wane was a wine and spirit merchant who had a shop in the Market Place for about 40 years. He also inherited the Fairford brick and tile works on Waiten Hill when his father died.

John Hurst Wane never married and died at the age of 69 on 8 September 1873 and is buried in the family vault in Fairford churchyard west of the porch where his parents were also interred.

This stoneware flagon was recently presented to Fairford History Society by its owners from Cheltenham who were downsizing; it had been in the family for some time but the exact family connection is not known. It matches the other flagon we have from the White Hart and is yet another item for the 'Fairford Museum'!!

SEARCHING FOR SARAH

The Fairford Flyer Extra No.10 of June 2020 included a brief biographical account of the life of Samuel Vines, a much-respected long-term resident of Fairford who died in 1892 at the ripe old age of 96. Samuel married Mary Ann Mills of Reading in 1832 but she died just five years later at the age of 37 years. Samuel and Mary are buried under a large chest tomb at the side of the path leading up to St Mary's porch.

Although Samuel and Mary did not have any children Samuel did have a daughter named Sarah. In the parish register of Lea and Cleverton near Malmesbury there is an entry dated 7 June 1826 that states "Sarah Matilda Vines daughter of Ann Reeve of Lea" followed by the word "Illegitimate". It is not known if Samuel's wife

Mary knew of Sarah's existence but at some point Samuel claimed that Sarah was his adopted child, presumably to avoid the public stigma which in the early 19th century would have affected both Samuel and Sarah.

It is not known if Sarah came to live with Samuel in Fairford but on 10 September 1846 she was married by the Reverend F. W. Rice to Joseph Bence Palser in Fairford church. The marriage certificate gives Samuel Vines as Sarah's father as does the wedding announcement in the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard of 22 September. By 1841 Joseph Palser was a card maker in Wotton-under-Edge but by 1843 he had become the owner of the Quenington paper mill. By 1851 he was also the co-owner of Woodland paper mill in Stroud but in May 1852 he put his furniture and effects up for sale as he was "leaving the area". In the following month he (and presumably Sarah) sailed to Boston, Massachusetts and may have set up a paper-making business in the USA. Joseph was apparently very keen to develop his product and in 1859 he was granted a UK patent for improvements in paper-making.

In August 1862 "Mr J. B. Palser and lady" returned from the USA on board the Cunard liner the SS *Europa*. In October 1862 Joseph, by then living in London, was granted a patent for "improved apparatus for the manufacture of paper pulp and recovering the alkali used in such manufacture". On 27 September 1863 Joseph adopted Mary Lilla whose mother was "now deceased" according to the baptism register. Indeed Sarah Matilda had died on 4 April 1863 and was buried at Arreton, a small village near Sandown on the Isle of Wight. Two things here are puzzling: why did Joseph need to adopt his daughter and what was Sarah doing in the Isle of Wight in 1863 when Joseph was living in Kensington?

The research for this article resulted in a Hobson family holiday in the Isle of Wight in late September to see if anything else could be discovered about Sarah Matilda Palser. A visit to the churchyard of St George's in Arreton initially proved disappointing as we could not find a head stone despite having brought a photograph of it discovered on the Find a Grave website! A second visit a couple of days later was more successful and a photograph was taken of the headstone. Although badly weathered the stone included the information that Sarah was indeed the wife of Joseph Bence Palser of Fort Edward, USA.

On 9 March 1865 Joseph went back to the USA and bought a paper mill at Fort Edward, New York in June that year and by 1870 he was living in Aiken in South Carolina still making paper. Joseph Bence Palser remarried and died on 20 August 1880 and was buried in Fairmount Cemetery, Newark, New Jersey.



NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

North Wilts Herald 2 January 1875

Fairford: The Church Bells rang merrily during Christmastide at intervals, thus enlivening the monotony of the place at the winter festival.

The weather continues cold and frosty. Much snow has fallen, which having frozen, renders the traffic in our streets considerably dangerous. Much precaution is therefore required to guard against accidents.

Servants' Ball at Williamstrip. On Tuesday night Lady Beach gave a ball to the servants and their friends of whom about one hundred were present. Sir Michael and Mrs Wardle, the housekeeper, opened the ball. Mr Hendry the gardener, showed much taste in his decorations, and the refreshments provided most admirable. Dancing at intervals continued till almost daybreak, at which time the happy party separated, having enjoyed themselves well, and expressing much satisfaction at the liberality of the donor.