



# Fairford Flyer No 81 January 2026

Happy New Year to all FHS Members

## Geoff Hawkes

It is with great sadness we have just learned of the death of Geoff Hawkes. He was FHS treasurer from the start in 2004 and then succeeded Keith Cottam as Chairman in 2008 until 2020. Thank you so much Geoff for all your good leadership, support, and advice, he has been much missed, but we will always have such fond memories.

## 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)

## 2026 Programme

### 2026

**15 January** at 2.30 pm Gloucestershire men at the Battle of Waterloo by Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, KCVO, OBE, DL. Refreshments will be served from 2-m and after the meeting. There will also be a used book sale before and after the meeting. Proceeds will go towards new FHS display boards.

**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

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## A New Year's Day Walk



Our walk this year took us on the circular walk up Leaffield Road using the newly resurfaced path to the Primary School, up to the Polish Camp former entrance and down through Ernest Cook Trust land to the Cascades and back down to the Oxpens and then home. The sun was just peeping through the clouds, and we had lovely views of the river. The waterworks and the river gushing over the Cascades served as a reminder of Syd Flatman's article written about Fairford Water works in 2019. The area appears to have been tidied up since then but still essentially the same. The article below was in the Flyer in 2019 but reminded us of forgotten history.

Photographs by Nick Hobson

## Fairford Water Works by Syd Flatman

If you walk up the Pitham Brook footpath, or up the Leafield Road and then cross over the Cascades you will see two waterfalls; these were once part of the pleasure grounds of the now demolished Park House. If you have already walked that way, how many of you noticed the small stone building with its ivy glad wall and moss-covered stone roof at the side of the waterfall?

Some of you, of a more inquisitive nature, may have even ventured round the side and looked through the open doorway and saw the toll of flat chicken wire and short length of twisted iron fencing and thought "it's just a shed.' Dating from 1880 to 1900 this was much more than 'just a shed'. Dating from 1880 to 1900 this



Left -the 'shed' in 1890.  
and right, the 'newer'  
one in 2026



was much more than 'shed.' It was built to supply water to the Park House and many of the businesses of the town. Also, the better off in the Market Place area, those being prepared to pay a quarterly charge to the Fairford Estate for whom it was a 'nice little earner' for the next fifty years or so.

How did it all work? Let me explain.

Inside there used to be a six-foot diameter galvanised steel water wheel of about 2 foot in width mounted on a steel axle, which in turn drove a piston type water pump mounted at its side. The water wheel was force round by water flowing round the bottom of the wheel, known as an undershot type. Water entered the pump house via a tunnel leading from the upper side of the waterfall, (the wooden sluice gate is still there) and discharging through a tunnel to the lower part of the waterfall. Water from the pump was piped up the bank to the reservoir in the clump of trees by the cattle grid you see there today. Being the highest point on the eastern side of Fairford water was able to gravity feed down to the town.

When the American Hospital was set up a new pumping station was built next to it , they also enlarged the reservoir by the cattle grid and built a water tower next to it, After the Poles left the site in 1959 the new pump house was taken over by Thames Water to supply Fairford etc but the about 25 years ago it was mothballed and our water supply gravity feeds down from Bibury.

The western side was on a different system; this was pumped from a waterwheel in the Mill House, piped across the Oxpens, across The Gassons to the reservoir situated above Dynevor Terrace. It's still there among the trees on the side of Quenington Road. Again, this is the highest point on the west side of Fairford.

As youngsters, living at West End Gardens, we would climb down into the, by then, empty reservoir which we always called "the tank". At that time, the ballcock mechanism was still in place, complete with its giant copper ball.

Next time you are at the Mill Pond feeding the ducks, look into the water by your feet, there is still a length of the reservoir feed pipe laying along the bottom.

I remember the pump house at the Cascades was still in use in the mid 1950's. Our gang, from West End Gardens would sneak across there. It was still very private at the time. Though the pump house door was always locked you could hear the sound of the thrashing water as it went through the wheel.



The tower in Gassons field is a water tower. It was gravity fed from the reservoirs in the woodland between Pitham Brook path and the Quenington Road that served Dynevor Terrace. These two reservoir were fed from a pump in the Fairford Mill through pipes across the field and were put in place in the early 20th century. In the water tower was a large tank under which water tank on a cart was place was filled by pulling a chain/rope to release the water.

## NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

### *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 29 December 1860*

**Christmas Holiday:** On Wednesday last, business was entirely suspended at Cirencester, the fishpond in Earl Bathurst's park, which is so largely patronised when frozen, again exhibited a very animated scene. In the afternoon, the Cirencester Rifle Volunteers assembled at the Armoury, and proceeded, with their band, under the command of Sergeant Mullings to Poulton, where some of them were hospitably entertained by Mr Tombs, at the Manor House, the general body taking advantage of the 'Falcon's' proximity. After which it was decided almost unanimously by the volunteers to continue their march to Fairford, which town they reached about five o'clock, "to the great astonishment of the natives." The 'White Hart' kept by Mr John Allen, late of Cirencester, was the chief rendezvous. The landlord, with the assistance of the worthy hostess, soon supplied the creature comforts which were so much required after the invigorating march. At six o'clock, the 'assembly' was sounded for the return, and after giving the good folks of Fairford one tune, the company was marched to Cirencester without halting, reaching home nine o'clock. The snow which began to fall when they were about four miles from Cirencester had made a considerable deposit on their uniforms, and gave the volunteers quite a picturesque appearance, as they marched through the town.

### *Cirencester Times and Cotswold Advertiser 13 January 1868*

**Supper:** On New Year's Day, Mr F Gibbs, of the Bull Hotel, proprietor of the daily mail coach, gave its annual supper at the Crown Inn, Faringdon, to the servants of the GWR Company, for their obliging and civil conduct to passengers at the station where they are employed.

**Note:** this was before there was a railway line to Fairford which opened in 1873

### *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 31 December 1870*

**Fairford - Christmas Holidays:** Monday and Tuesday last were observed as general holidays here. There was an entire cessation of business, consequently our little town was more than usually quiet. Owing to the favourable state of the weather for skating, many betook themselves to the canal distant about 3 miles, to enjoy this capital diversion. The ice was all that could be desired. As usual much amusement was afforded by the amateurs, whose perseverance was most praiseworthy, for their efforts to attain the art were not in the least abated by the many hard bumps they experienced. There were numerous family gatherings and the usual amount of Christmas merry makings.

### *Local paper, July 1898*

**Market Dinner:** The New Year's market dinner was held on Tuesday last, in the large market-room at the Bull Hotel. The room was tastefully decorated by Mrs Busby for the festive occasion. The tables fairly groaned under the bountiful and excellent fare provided, which consisted of roast turkey from the Cotswolds, roast beef and mutton from those purveyors Messrs Perry and John Woodward, Christmas plum puddings and mince pies, followed by the famous cheese from the Dudgrove cheese factory of Mt Hewer, and some famous Dorset blue. Upwards of sixty sat down. Mr Tayler as usual, took the chair, and Mr Charles Barton the vice chair. On the removal of the cloth, a few appropriate toasts were given, amongst them "The Queen and Royal

Family", "The Visitors", "The Chairmen", "Success to Agriculture", proposed by an old Fairfordian, Mr Charles Cowley, in a humorous and telling speech, his new word "agriculturalism" bringing the house down. Mr Hewer's name was coupled with this toast. "The Town and Trade of Fairford," was replied to be Mr E Chew, and that of the neighbouring town of Cirencester by Messrs Cock and Dike. Mr and Mrs Busby were heartily congratulated on the great success of this their New Year's market dinner, and hopes were expressed that they might long continue to be at the head of affairs at the Bull Hotel.

#### **Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 30 December 1900**

**The Fairford Men at the Front:** The Vicar has most kindly written a cheery letter of greeting to all our townsmen known to be in South Africa and has enclosed for each a quarter-plate photographic view of the church on a "Season's greeting" mount. These will no doubt come as a welcome surprise to our brave boys and hearten them up by the thought that they are not forgotten by their Vicar. That they may all be spared to receive them is the earnest wish of us all.

**Christmastide:** The Christmas season this year has been a singularly dull and eventful one. Shops were closed on Boxing Day, and also on the 27<sup>th</sup> instant, A couple of football matches were played, of which particulars are given elsewhere, and for the votaries of the 'sport' of rabbit coursing a meeting was held in the Gasson on Boxing Day. The usual festival services were held at the Parish Church on Christmas Day and were well attended. There were two celebrations of the Holy Communion, at eight a m and after the morning service: children's service, followed by the Litany, at three pm. The Vicar preached at both morning and evening services, which were fully choral. The anthems were, morning, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings," and evening, "There were shepherds abiding," when the treble solo was very nicely sung by Master J Busby. Distributions of coal and other comforts have been largely made in the parish by the kindness of Colonel and Mrs Porter, who as usual have entertained a house party at Fairford Park. At the Cottage Hospital, thanks to the generous response of many friends to Nurse Overend's appeal, excellent Christmas fare was provided for the patients, and on the afternoon of the 27th a capital entertainment was provided at the hospital for about 60 old patients. There were also numerous guests present, but a limit was of necessity put upon the number of invitations issued in accordance with the capacities of the building. Many ladies and gentlemen kindly lent their services in rendering an excellent and varied musical programme, and a good substantial tea was provided for all the inmates and the old patients.

#### **Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 8 January 1901**

**The New Year and Christmas Market Dinner:** The annual Christmas and New Year Market Dinner was held in the large market room of the Bull Hotel on Tuesday last. Notwithstanding the unpropitious weather keeping a lot of farmers and dealers from the market, the room was fairly well filled with a strong representative body of the leading agriculturalists of the neighbourhood and of the tradesmen of the town. To the tick of the clock (one) the gong announced to the almost frozen farmers and dealers that dinner was on the table, and the snow-clad Market Place was quickly cleared and the market room nearly filled with expectant and hungry men. The fare consisted of roast and boiled turkeys, geese, roast and boiled beef and mutton, plum puddings and mince pies, and the usual accessories. Mr Charles baron of Fyfield, occupied the chair, supported by Mr James Hobbs, Mr Albert Iles, and Mr Cobbett Arkell, with Messrs D Arkell, R Rickards, Lane and Woodward in the vice-chairs and assisting in the carving. After due justice had been done to the sumptuous fare provided by Mr and Mrs Busby and the cloth removed the usual loyal and patriotic toasts were proposed and duly responded to, as also were the health of the Chairman, the Masters of the VWH Hunt, Success to Agriculture, Mr James Hobbs, Mr Daniel Arkell and Mr Cobbett Arkell, Mr and Mrs Busby and the ladies. Mr John Woodward of the White Hart responded in an able and felicitous speech for the town and trade of Fairford. The absence of more than one old friend was particularly noticed, cause either by illness or other causes, Mr William Tovey and Mr Charles Cowley being amongst those unavoidably absent. The opening market dinner of the new century will long be remembered by those presents, who included, besides those mentioned above, Messrs Moore, Innocent, and Hobbs auctioneers, Mr Constable, Mr Perry, Mr Smith, Mr Raymond Collett, Mr F Caldicott, Mr 'Johnny Morgan', Messrs Lawford, Jenkins, E Chew, E Tovey, T Spurling etc. A collection was made for the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Fund Institution, and a good sum was collected.