

Fairford Flyer No. 85 May 2026



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 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 155 paid up subscriptions as of 1 May.

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

21 May 'Misericords of England and Europe: hidden Medieval art' by Miles Dodd

18 June A very brief AGM followed by 'Gloucestershire Follies' by Jonathan Holt

Next year's programme is being arranged at the moment; if anyone has any suggestions or would like to volunteer to give a talk themselves, please let the secretary know at enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk

Other events

May 16 Fairford Town Council Annual town meeting at the Palmer Hall, 1-3pm. Local organisations including FHS will have the opportunity to promote themselves.

June 6-7 Fairford Festival: Edwin Cuss and FHS Display in the Heritage Room, Community Centre 10-4; FHS will also have a display at the cricket field on both days.

August 15-17 Fairford Steam Rally

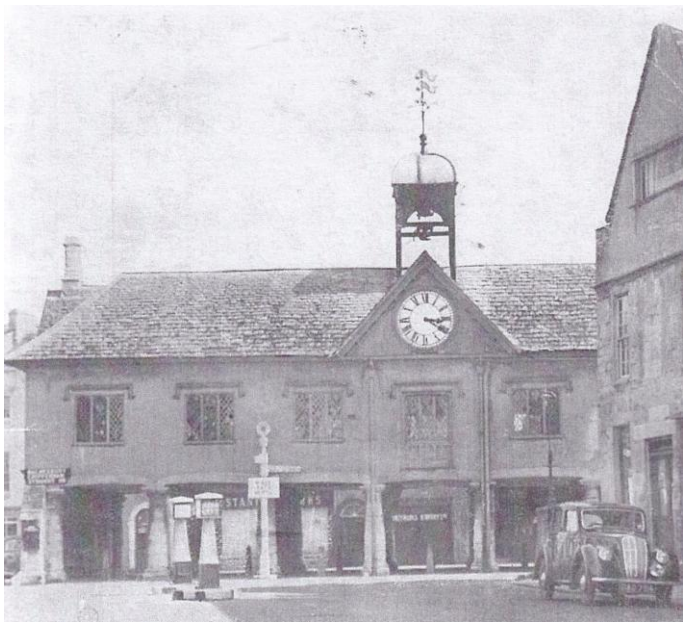
The Chairman would like to thank all those who help in clearing up the chairs after the meetings, it is very much appreciated.

Following the article in last month's Flyer on Fairford Peace group, Syd Flatman tells us that the reason for Paul Eddington's involvement was that he owned a house in Milton St that he rented out to two actresses.

April Meeting - A brief history of Tetbury by Jane Haines

Jane Haines, Chair of the History of Tetbury Society, gave a very interesting and entertaining talk on the history of Tetbury. The place received a charter in 681 when King Ethelred granted land near Tetta's monastery, hence the town's name. The town passed through several Norman lords including the Braose family and the Lords of Berkeley and prospered to become an important wool market town. In 1633 control of the town was passed to a system of self-rule by Feoffees, a small group of wealthy people of the town. The Feoffee system still continues in Tetbury today, but their power is greatly reduced. Tetbury has retained many of its old buildings including the Market House in the town centre, several fine houses including The Priory, and Bath Bridge. The church

was rebuilt between 1777 and 1781 and is unusual in that it still retains its box pews and is the only church in



England that it is dedicated to both St Mary the Virgin and St Mary Magdalene. A smaller church, St Saviour's, was built in 1848, ostensibly for the poor. The 19th century saw much development in Tetbury with the founding of a brewery in 1800, a gas works in 1836, the building of a cottage hospital in 1868 and the opening of a railway line to the town in 1889. During the First World War airmen of the Australian Flying Corps who were under training at nearby Leighterton were accommodated in Tetbury and in 1944 rooms in the brewery were occupied by the US Army for the planning of D-Day and a large model was constructed of Omaha Beach in Normandy.

Fairford and Tetbury have several connections including the fact that the Tame family of wool merchants owned property and land in and around Tetbury and the Swing Riots affected both towns.

Tetbury Market House in 1948

The Plague in Fairford in the 17th century by Chris Hobson

The latest volume of the Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society contains an interesting article by Sarah Wordsworth titled '*In Great Danger of Infection*'; *Gloucester's plagues 1565-1645*'. This is an investigation into seven outbreaks of plague in Gloucester and Bristol using burial information in the parish registers of the two cities. The plague is known to have been prevalent in Gloucester and Bristol in 1565, 1575, 1579-80, 1593, 1603-4, 1637-38 and 1645. Having transcribed the burial registers for Fairford some years ago I looked to see if there was any correlation with the epidemics in Gloucester and Bristol. Unfortunately, the surviving Fairford parish registers only start from 1617 when Christopher Nicholson became Fairford's vicar, so it is only the years 1637-38 and 1645 that could perhaps be reflected in the Fairford parish registers.

The average number of burials per annum for the 1630s in Fairford is 7.8 and for the 1640s it is 8.9. During this period four years stand out as having a significantly higher number of burials than the average. In 1638 there were 15 burials in Fairford and in 1639 there were 12 burials while in 1643 there were 19 burials and in 1644 there were 13 burials but only six in 1645. The Fairford burial registers for the 17th Century rarely give any information apart the name of the deceased and the date of the burial and hardly ever is any cause of death given unlike some of the Gloucester registers which do cite plague as the cause for some of the dead. The large number of burials in Fairford in 1638 appears to match the figures for Gloucester although in 1637 only two burials took place in Fairford so if the plague was a factor in the Fairford deaths then it may have started later in Fairford and perhaps continued well into 1639.

The number of burials in 1643 and 1644 do not match the burials in Bristol during the 1645 epidemic and there is no evidence that Gloucester suffered an outbreak of the disease although there was a surge in the number of burials in some of the city's parishes which recorded three times the average burials in 1645 than in the preceding six years. However, it is known that plague occurs at different times in different locations due to transmission of the disease caused by travel from infected sites to other locations. It should also be remembered that the English Civil War started in 1642 so it is possible that an increase in burials throughout Gloucestershire during the 1640s could have been the result of the movement of large numbers of soldiers throughout the county or deaths in battles.

Another way of investigating plague deaths is to look for family relationships. In some of the epidemics houses were shut up by order of the authorities to avoid the spread of infection. However, this also increased the chance of infection to the family members who were, in effect, locked in with the infected plague victims.

There is some evidence in the Fairford burial registers that members of the same family died in a short space of time which might have been due to the policy of enforced quarantine, but some other infectious disease or coincidence should not be discounted. For example, on 28 September 1638 William Harbert was buried followed by Ann Harbert (probably his wife) on 3 October. On 5 January 1639 Christopher Betterton was buried and his brother John two days later. On 25 June 1645 John Winterbourne, who was 25-years old was buried on 16 June and his father Richard was buried nine days later.

It is unfortunate that the Fairford parish registers offer no information regarding the cause of death, so the link with the plague epidemics in Gloucester and Bristol must remain speculative but a possibility.



Every year May Day was celebrated at the Infants School and here the children, appropriately dressed for the occasion, are posed round the Maypole in the playground in 1932.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 4 June 1844

Whitsuntide Amusements – The past week has been pregnant with very great events. Many and varied have been the amusements partaken of by both young and old, and almost every village has been the theatre of some rustic entertainment. We have received a number of letters from neighbouring towns and villages telling us of fine processions, excellent dinners, May poles, jingling matches, foot steeple chases, and other sports which would occupy too much of our space to insert in detail. On Monday last the large [Old] club at the White Hart Inn, Fairford held their anniversary...

Note: Jingling matches – A jingling is an old English game in which blindfolded players try to catch one not blindfolded player who keeps jingling a bell

Foot steeple chases presumably cross-country races perhaps with fences or other obstacles

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 4 June 1844

The 13th anniversary of the Whit-Monday sports took place in the Park, by kind permission, and owing to the perfect weather and the undoubted attractions of the beautiful park, now looking at its loveliest - both its flower bedecked award and stately trees being clad in the unblemished beauty of early summer - drew together an immense concourse of people, probably as numerous a gathering as had yet been witnessed since the introduction of the sports. What is more, all had evidently come together with a full determination to enjoy themselves, and happily nothing occurred during the whole of the day to act as a deterrent to the carrying out of this purpose. Besides the large and distinctive party of guests staying at the Park, Colonel and Mrs Porter had, with characteristic hospitality, issued invitation to very many of the local clergy and gentry to luncheon, and they afterwards honoured the occasion by their presence, so that many of the leading families of the neighbourhood were present. As usual, every effort had been made by the Committee for the comfort and convenience of visitors, and for the due carrying out of the programme, and consequently there was no hitch in the whole of the day's proceedings.

The judges were, for the athletic contests, the Rev F R Carbonell and the Rev C F Thomas; for the driving competitions, Mr Thomas Hewer, Dudgrove, and Mr Robert Rickards; and for the other horse events, Colonel Porter and Mr Thomas Hewer. Mr Alexander Iles, junior noted as starter. The services of the Swindon Town Band had been retained for the day, and they played an admirable selection of music, their performances giving very general satisfaction. The refreshment tent was very well served by Mr Curtis of the George Inn; no intoxicants being allowed. At the close of the sports, dancing was indulged in until 8pm, when a return was made to the Market Place, where the band concluded their day's performance by the National Anthem. Afterwards the gipsies had a lively time of it with their 'coker nuts'. The crowds of people began gradually to disperse, and before midnight the town had resumed its normal quietness...

[The programme and race results followed]

Coker nuts - coconuts - not sure what they were doing with them!

Empire Day

Do you remember Empire Day which was on May 24th? This was Queen Victoria's birthday. We used to parade around the school playground waving our Union Flags, I have the flag to this day! We also used to have to draw the flag showing how it was made up of the St George's, St Andrew's and St Patrick's flag. It was instituted in 1902 to promote patriotism, unity, and loyalty to the Crown, and officially recognized in 1916. It featured school parades, flag-waving, and lessons on the Empire, designed to inspire duty among children.



EMPIRE DAY, 1909. Empire Day was celebrated with a school gathering of the pupils and teachers of the Infants School and Farmors School. Most of the boys and their teachers are seen to be saluting the raising of the Flag.